



## ESL Podcast 280 – Viral Marketing

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### GLOSSARY

**buzz** – excitement and interest about something

\* In the early part of this year, there was a lot of buzz about a new computer that could do everything!

**viral marketing** – the ways that a company gets people to share its marketing messages with other people by using existing networks or connections between people

\* Viral marketing is inexpensive for companies because they can get their marketing messages to many people without have to pay for television or radio advertisements.

**to spread (something)** – to make something become known by more people; to make something familiar to more people

\* The use of cell phones is spreading across Africa very quickly.

**to get plugged into (something)** – to become involved in something; to become involved in a group of people

\* If you want to make more friends at the university, you can get plugged into some of the student organizations.

**social network** – an online community where each person has a profile page and can share information and communicate with other people within the community

\* MySpace and Friendster are two examples of popular social networks.

**blogger** – a person who writes a blog, an online journal that has many entries written by one person

\* Many companies are worried that their employees will become bloggers and say bad things about the place where they work.

**in turn** – one after another; as a result of something else

\* The teacher said to his class: If you are nice to other people, they, in turn, will be nice to you.

**so on** – et cetera (etc.); used at the end of a list to show that there are other things that could be listed but are not

\* Sheldon wants to find a boyfriend who is intelligent, successful, kind, loving, and so on.



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**low-cost** – inexpensive; cheap

\* Compared to television, radio is a low-cost way to advertise.

**word of mouth** – people learning about something because they hear other people talking about it

\* Dr. Rodriguez finds a lot of new patients through word of mouth, because her patients tell their friends and relatives how good she is.

**promising** – having a lot of promise and potential; likely to be good or helpful

\* The department is being led by a promising new manager. Everyone thinks she'll do a good job.

**to transform** – to change something in a significant way; to make something different

\* Jack transformed the company from a family business into a global corporation in just 10 years.

**enthusiasm** – energy and excitement; eagerness to do something

\* Everyone likes working with Diego, because he has a lot of enthusiasm for his work.

**to go over** – to be accepted or rejected; to be received and reacted to by someone in a particular way

\* How did it go over when you told your parents that you wanted to get married next week?

**sure thing** – a phrase used to show that one agrees with something or is willing to do something

\* When Byron asked Zia to lead the project, he said, "Sure thing!" and started working on it immediately.



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### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is viral marketing low-cost?
    - a) Because it sounds very promising.
    - b) Because it relies on people sharing information.
    - c) Because it is put in people's mouths.
  
  2. Why does Maksym want Jayna to make a presentation on Friday?
    - a) Because he wants Jayna to transform the way they reach customers.
    - b) Because he wants everyone to appreciate Jayna's enthusiasm.
    - c) Because he wants to know what the rest of the department thinks about it.
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### WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

#### **buzz**

The word “buzz,” in this podcast, means excitement and interest about something: “Have you heard all the buzz about the new store that’s opening?” The word “buzz” is also used to describe a continuous sounds, like an alarm, a bee, or a lot of conversations: “I didn’t hear the buzz from the oven timer, so the cake burned.” Or, “The vacuum cleaner made such a loud buzz that I didn’t hear the phone ring.” A “buzzer” is a button that is pushed to make a noise: “Please turn off the buzzer on your alarm clock!” As a verb, “to buzz” means to make a continuous sound: “The bees were buzzing around the flowers.” The verb “to buzz around” means to do many things and move around a lot: “Clarence was buzzing around the office, trying to organize everything for the interview.”

#### **to spread**

In this podcast, the verb “to spread” means to make something become known by more people: “The police can spread information very quickly by using television.” The verb “to spread” also means to move and cover a larger area: “The spilled milk quickly spread over the table and onto the floor.” “To spread” can also mean to unfold something and lay in down flat: “Let’s spread a blanket on the grass and look at the stars.” Another meaning of “to spread” is to move one’s legs, arms, fingers, or toes away from each other: “Camille spread her arms for better balance while she was crossing the river.” Finally, “to spread” can mean to put a layer of something onto something else, usually food: “Here’s a knife so you can spread butter onto your bread.”



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### CULTURE NOTE

The Internet makes viral marketing much easier and inexpensive for companies that want to sell a product or service. Viral marketing happens whenever people “refer” (recommend) a company’s products or services to other people. If a company has a fun and interesting website, online video, or email, then it is very easy for people to “forward” (re-send) these things to their friends and family members. When those people enjoy what they see, they often choose to forward it to their own friends. In this way, the viral marketing “scheme” (plan) grows very quickly and reaches many people.

For example, the company Hotmail used viral marketing very successfully. The company had few users, but it started putting “To get your FREE email account go to [www.hotmail.com](http://www.hotmail.com)” at the bottom of its users’ emails. As more people clicked on the link and opened their own accounts, the message was sent to even more people and the company grew so quickly that Microsoft decided to buy it.

Gmail is another email program that is using a viral marketing scheme. Originally only a small number of people had Gmail accounts. The only way to open a Gmail account was to be invited by a Gmail user. This created a lot of buzz about the new email program – so much buzz, in fact, that some people began selling their Gmail invitations!

Viral marketing can be used for other things too, including movies. The movie Snakes on a Plane allowed people to create messages in the voice of the movie’s “star” (main actor), Samuel L. Jackson. Then they could send those messages to any telephone number. When other people received the message, they learned a little bit about the movie, and then many of those people created their own messages, which let even more people learn about the movie.

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Comprehension Questions Correct Answers: 1 – b; 2 – c



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### COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 280: Viral Marketing.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 280. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

If you haven't visited our website recently, please go to [eslpod.com](http://eslpod.com) and take a look at some of the new features on our website. While you're there, you can download a Learning Guide for this episode, that contains all of the vocabulary, definitions, sample sentences, additional definitions not included on the podcast, cultural notes, and a complete transcript of this episode.

This episode is called “Viral Marketing.” “Marketing” is a way that companies let other people know about their products and services – what they are selling. Let's get started.

[start of story]

Jayna: I have an idea for creating buzz about our new product.

Maksym: What is it?

Jayna: I think we should use viral marketing. We can spread information about the product quickly and among the most likely customers.

Maksym: I really don't understand it. How would we do viral marketing?

Jayna: Well, the key is to get plugged into a few people who have large social networks already, such as bloggers and other people with popular websites. We get them talking about the product on their websites and people who visit those websites will tell their friends about it, and they will in turn tell their friends, and so on. If we use these existing social networks, news about our product will spread very quickly.

Maksym: What about the cost?

Jayna: That's just it. It's very low-cost because it works through word of mouth.



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Maksym: That sounds promising. Why don't you put together a short presentation about it to present at the department meeting on Friday?

Jayna: Great. I'll get working on it right away. I think it's going to transform the way we reach our customers.

Maksym: I appreciate your enthusiasm, but let's see how it goes over with the rest of the department on Friday.

Jayna: Sure thing.

[end of story]

Our dialogue between Jayna and Maksym is about viral marketing. The word “viral” (viral) comes from the word “virus” (virus), a noun. A “virus” is usually a word you will see in medicine to talk about something that spreads, or takes a certain kind of disease from one person to another. We would say it is something that “infects” the other person. “To infect someone” means to give someone a sickness or a disease. You may have heard of the expression “a computer virus.” This is a program or something that makes your computer sick, that is, does damage to your computer.

The word “viral,” as an adjective, means to spread quickly. Just like you can have a virus spread or move quickly from one person to another, the adjective “viral” refers to that same idea of having something move very quickly.

The term “viral marketing” means to get your message out, as a company, to get other people to share and to spread the news about your product or service. So, viral marketing it is not a negative thing. A virus is usually a negative thing, but viral marketing is just a way that companies use existing connections among people to get their message out – to get people to know about their product.

Jayna begins by saying, “I have an idea for creating buzz (buzz) about our new product.” “Buzz” means excitement about something. Someone may say, “What's the buzz on that new movie,” meaning what are people saying about it – what are the exciting or interesting things that people are saying. “Buzz” has a couple of different meanings; take a look at our Learning Guide for this episode for some additional explanations of how to use that word.

Maksym says, “What is it,” meaning what is your idea. Jayna says, “I think we should use viral marketing. We can spread information about the product quickly and among the most likely customers,” the customers who are most likely to buy



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the product – most probable to buy the product. “To spread (spread) something” means to make something known to other people. There are some other definitions of that word, “to spread,” that verb; take a look at our Learning Guide, again, for some additional explanations.

Maksym then says, “I really don’t understand it” – I don’t understand viral marketing, how do we do it? Jayna then explains: “Well, the key,” or the most important thing, “is to get plugged into a few people who have large social networks already.” “To be plugged,” or “to get plugged into something” means to get or become involved in something, to become involved in a group of people to get information to that group of people.

Jayna says we want “a few people who have large social networks.” A “social (social) network) is a group of people who communicate with each other, among themselves. They could do this online, for example, on a forum or bulletin board, by email. “Social networking” is a very common term you will hear in talking about online services, where people who have similar interests can connect – can get together.

Jayna gives some examples of this, including bloggers. A “blogger” is a person who writes a blog (blog). A “blog” is a “weblog,” or an online journal that usually one person writes, often about their own life – their own experiences. Sometimes they can be about politics, sports, religion, or any other topic.

Jayna says we need to get people “talking about product on their websites and people who visit those sites will tell their friends about it, and they will in turn tell their friends, and so on.” The idea of viral marketing is you get a small group of people to begin, who know a lot of other people and they spread, or give, that information to a larger group of people. Those people then give the information to other people, and so the message is passed along – it is transmitted – it is spread.

Jayna uses the expression “in turn” (two words) to mean one after another, or as a result of something. The expression is used when she says, “they will in turn tell their friends,” meaning after these people find out about it, they’ll tell other people. “And so on,” she says. The expression “so on” means the same as “et cetera.” It’s used at the end of a list to show that there are other things that you could list, but you’re not mentioning them right now. For example, “There are 50 states in the United States: California, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and so on,” meaning I’m not going to mention all 50 states. I could, but I won’t!



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Jayna says that “If we use these existing social networks, news about our product will spread very quickly.” Maksym asks what is the cost: “What about the cost,” meaning how much is this going to cost. Jayna says, “That’s just it.” Kind of an odd expression, “that’s just it,” meaning here’s the interesting thing about it – here’s the good thing about it, usually. What you say next after this expression, “that’s just it,” is related to something that the person you are talking to said. So in this case, the question Maksym has is: “What about the cost.” Jayna says, “That’s just it,” and then she says something about the cost, related to the fact that it will not cost a lot of money. We use this expression, “that’s just it,” when we are, in some ways perhaps, going to surprise the other person with the information that is related to something they said or asked.

“That’s just it. It’s very low-cost,” meaning it’s not expensive; it won’t require a lot of money, because viral marketing “works through word of mouth.” The expression “word of mouth,” like the mouth on your face, means people learning about something because they hear other people talking about it. There could be good word of mouth about ESL Podcast; other people will talk about it, and then their friends will find out about it, and so on, and so on. That’s what we hope, anyway, so tell all of your friends about us!

Maksym says, “That sounds promising.” When we say something “sounds promising,” we mean it has a lot of potential. It’s probably going to be good or helpful; it sounds like a good idea. “Why don’t you put together a short presentation about it to present at the department meeting on Friday,” Maksym asks. Jayna says, “Great. I’ll get working on it right away. I think it’s going to transform the way we reach our customers.” “To transform” means to change something significantly.

Maksym says, “I appreciate your enthusiasm.” “Enthusiasm” is your energy, your excitement about something. “Let’s see how it goes over with the rest of the department on Friday.” The expression “to go over” means let’s see if it is accepted or rejected, if people like it or hate it. You could say, “It is going to go over very well,” or, “It went over very badly,” depending on how people react.

Jayna ends the dialogue by saying, “Sure thing.” The phrase “sure thing” means that I agree with you, or you are willing to do something. Someone may say, “Could you give me that piece of paper?” You could say, “Sure thing,” as a way of saying yes, I will. Would you like to hear the dialogue now at a normal speed? And you say, “Sure thing Jeff!”





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Jayna: Sure thing.

[end of story]

The script for this podcast was written by our own Dr. Lucy Tse. Thank you Lucy!

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thanks for listening. We hope you'll be with us next time, here at ESL Podcast.



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