

Business Lessons from Lady GaGa



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Some say the meteoric rise of Lady GaGa to fame will be short-lived and that she will disappear from the music scene, nearly as quickly as she emerged into it. This blog puts the argument that there is a clear logic beyond the outlandish and eccentric new entry into the entertainment scene and that are five simple, yet powerful lessons, for every business to learn from the new first lady of the music industry.

*The credit for this blog goes to **Charlie O'Donnell** who wrote the original article (16th Jan., 2010) in www.businessinsider.com and to my Twitter friend Roy Osing who introduced it to me (www.bedifferentorbedead.com)*

A couple of weeks ago I watched Lady GaGa emerging as the biggest winner of the 2010 Brits awards. The 23 year-old US star won Best International Female, International Album for The Fame, and International Breakthrough Act. It is easy to mock her outlandish outfits, her simplistic child-like lyrics, and her over-the-top attention craving. But hate her, or despise what she represents – It is difficult not to admire her meteoric rise and her tremendous achievements. A year ago she was an unknown – now...

You might ask what does Lady GaGa have to do with business practices (and if you are of a certain age you might have not even know who I am talking about). Nevertheless, there five intriguing lessons businesses can learn from the shooting star of the music industry.

Lesson 1: Be Remarkable

Look at her picture. This outlandish outfit is typical of Lady GaGa. You cannot help but notice her. “What is it that she is wearing...? Does she wear anything underneath it? This business principle, it is about grabbing attention – about capturing the awareness of others and making them notice you. You want to your potential clients and customers to stop their daily routines and take note of your offering, service, product, or unique ideas. So – What is it about your offering that will make potential customers stop and notice?

Lesson 2: Stand on the Shoulders of Giants

To be great, you need to be able to recognise greatness and learn from it. Lady GaGa has clearly been influenced by the likes Madonna, Michael Jackson, and David Bowie. Rather than fight these

influences and declares herself different, bigger, and better than them, she incorporates subtle references to these superstars into her performance. She does not portray herself as a replacement to those that came before her. Instead, she recognises that there is a reason why others are successful. The same lesson applies to businesses – Identify the leaders in your industry and see what is working for them and made more successful than you are. Adopt well executed strategies rather than dismissing them, and vault beyond them to claim your unique position. Do not mistake different for new and better. If you cannot recognise greatness, and build on it or off of it, then your chances of being great on your own are rather slim.

Lesson 3: Repeat the Message

Some might say the lyrics of her songs are irritating and mind numbing -- “Pa-pa-pa-Poker Face”, “Rah-rah-ah-ah-ah;Roma, roma-ma: Ga-ga, ooh la la”, “Again and again, again, again, again, never stop”, “I want your love, love, love, love; I want your love”... Many of the Lady’s lyrics and sounds are repeated one right after another – simple, simplistic, yet highly memorable when listened to over and over again. As a business, you have to figure out what your key message is and repeat it again, and again, and again. Make it catchy and memorable – ‘It is all about people and behaviour’ or ‘from Tragic to Magic. Repeat it across your web-site, blog, Tweet it, make it the cornerstone of your marketing copy, PR, and business development activities. This helps creating clear and coherent brand awareness. Your audience looks at a massive amount of brand messages every day. To cut through, you have to be the same every single time someone experiences you. Trying to be everything to everyone will result in very small following. Sometimes, broken records aren’t so bad. Remember the classical impact creation practice – “first tell them what you are going to tell them; then, tell it them, and finally tell them what you have told them.”

Lesson 4: Be Relentless

On-hit wonders are not typical only of the music industry. Many businesses might have an initial success with a particular product, or service delivery; but resting on their laurels means that short life-shelf. The competition is catching up very quickly, and the market is constantly flooded with new products and innovations. Similarly, many start-ups display the one-hit wonder syndrome. They make a big noise upon launch, but quickly after the big fuss is over, they have no follow up and quickly lose momentum. Lady GaGa on the other hand, is a well oiled hit-making machine. Just when one of her songs starts losing steam, we are introduced to another tune that we just can’t get out of our heads. She keeps herself on our radar screen, and to do that, she releases a new song every three months. A business might be the new flavour of the month right now, but when the month is over... things are different. Constantly ask yourself what is going to be your next block buster... your next killer new feature... your next business development contract? If you don’t keep pace with the market dynamics, you soon become yesterday’s news.

Lesson 5: Create a brand with life of its own

At some point, a new company has to start acting like the real thing and stop behaving as if it is operating from the garden shed of one of its founders. Things take on a life of their own that is over and above the individual identities of the founders. Lady GaGa created, promoted and publicly displays a facade detached from her real self. To her family and close friends, she is probably still Stefani, but to the rest of the world she is something else, bigger than life – she is Lady GaGa. The

earlier the company founders behave like they have created something bigger than themselves, the sooner they will get there. This means getting non-exec Board members to regulate and control the business, taking strategy and process seriously, maintaining consistent corporate identities, delegating duty and responsibility, and adhering to procedure.

The learning's from Lady Gaga are definitely worth repeating and are not limited to start-ups. **Her success factors apply to all organisations** looking to be successful in the fast pace and highly changing world we live in.