

THE VOICE OF THE CONSUMER

When we talk about social media, we include words such as “interaction” and “exchange”. Very often companies who engage in social media marketing forget that interaction is not just a fancy word to describe their marketing campaign, but a communication activity that goes both ways. NBC experienced first-hand what interaction means for its loyal viewers.

On April 8, 2009, during the closer to the season finale of NBC’s TV series *Chuck*, a user named Serendipity78 posted an article, “Keep Chuck Alive - The Renewal Thread” on the blog Television Without Pity¹⁶. The user asked NBC to renew the TV series and motivated other fans to join the campaign. This post provided the idea to popular TV blog, Give Me My Remote.com to temporarily rebrand itself to Give Me My Chuck, and the consumer action began receiving phenomenal attention.



BE A **NERD**. JOIN THE **HERD!**
CHUCK SAVED >>

I've done my duty and written my letters to the network, but given the economy and the Jay Leno effect, I'm not confident that will be enough. I wanted to request your help to promote a 'Save Chuck' strategy that goes beyond the standard fare of sending letters or bobbles to the networks. What I'm proposing is a consumer driven campaign that will lend a voice to all the loyal Chuck fans that are not represented by Nielson ratings.

From blogpost of Serendipity78

Fans of the show started using the hashtag #savechuck on Twitter, customizing their profile backgrounds with images supporting the campaign, and even showing their love for the show by going to Subway and purchasing \$5 footlong sandwiches on the day of the show’s season finale.¹⁷ Subway was the main sponsor of the *Chuck* TV series and fans assumed that the rise in Subway’s revenue may help to prolong the life of their favorite tv show”

As a non-Nielson viewer, I feel the most effective means of making an impact is to wield my consumer power in a way that NBC and their sponsors will be able to measure. I've noticed that Subway has worked with Chuck/NBC to incorporate product placement within the show. To demonstrate my gratitude to that franchise for their support of Chuck, I'm pitching a 'Finale & FOOTLONG™' campaign to all the Chuck forums and boards. I'm also sending this idea out to key TV critics who've been supportive of Chuck, asking them to write articles and raise awareness for this effort. ... The 'Finale & FOOTLONG™' campaign will call on fans to show their dedication by pledging to purchase a \$5 FOOTLONG™ from Subway on the evening of the Chuck season finale (which hopefully isn't the series finale). If enough Chuck fans ban together to do this and Subway sees a rise in sales Monday April 27th as a result, it would give NBC/Universal an actual meter to gauge the fan dedication in relation to the return on investment of a key sponsor.

The best way to save Chuck is to give NBC/Universal a legitimate business justification for keeping their quality programming on the air. It's more likely that the network and sponsors will hear our pleas for a Chuck renewal if we speak their language...\$\$\$\$. So fans, please write your letters, mention the campaign, and buy a \$5 FOOTLONG™ from Subway on April 27th (bonus points for those that drop off a comment card saying they're buying their sandwich in support of Chuck.)

From blogpost of Serendipity78

In the end NBC agreed to launch a third season of *Chuck* but only for 13 episodes instead of the regular 22. In any event, the whole incident showed the capabilities of the "voice of the consumer" that is so widely praised by social media gurus. "Save Chuck" fan action was not intended to ruin NBC's reputation; rather it generated tremendous amounts of free publicity and probably an increase in *Chuck's* audience.

Subway also emerged as a winner. Some fans estimated that the company would receive \$1.2 million in profits from the 400,000 loyal fans who bought only one footlong. "Our customers love *Chuck* so we are happy to help bring the show back through our partnership with NBC," said Tony Pace, Chief Marketing Officer.

Lesson Learned: Social media goes both ways: companies try to influence attitudes and behavior of their customers, but consumers in turn can influence companies and be very powerful in their efforts.