

What is Newsjacking?

Brandon Andersen, Chief Strategist, [ceralytics](#)

Nestle did not run a commercial for Butterfingers during the 2018 Super Bowl, but it got the kind of awareness and engagement of a commercial spot by inadvertently* newsjacking a memorable moment in the big game.

NEWSJACKING



THANKS TO TOM BRADY FOR HELPING
PROMOTE OUR BRAND #BUTTERFINGERS



5:25 PM - 4 FEB 2018



You may be able to attach your brand to a newsworthy event and build it into the arc of the story as it's happening. This tactic is known as "newsjacking." While the most well-known versions of newsjacking are B2C, there is an untapped B2B play that we'll cover below.

David Meerman Scott literally wrote [the book](#) on newsjacking. The effective, and sometimes controversial tactic, is used by

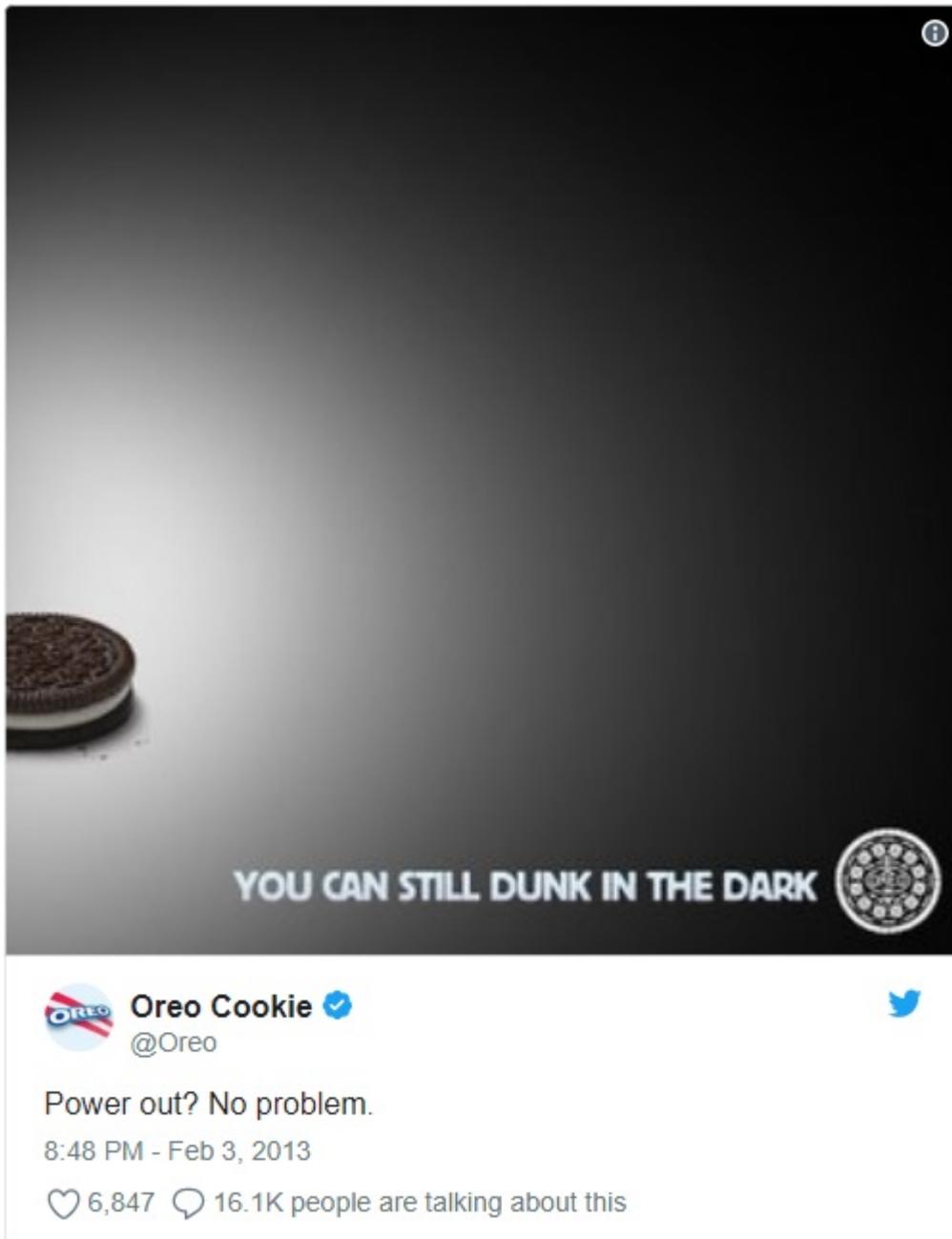
PR and marketing professionals to take advantage of a built-in audience around an event to gain publicity for their brand.

Newsjacking is done right after a story breaks, requiring real-time action on the part of the PR/marketing team.



Some organizations have their teams on standby for big events like the Super Bowl or Academy Awards. They either line up potential campaigns that go out during the event, regardless of events that happen, or they wait for something memorable to happen and then they pounce. This requires real-time monitoring of the event, which is fairly straightforward (watch it) and quick creativity, which can be harder to come by.

Arguably, the most famous and earliest example of newsjacking was Oreo's "You can still dunk in the dark" tweet during the Super Bowl blackout in 2013.



The Oreo team executed this campaign in a matter of minutes after the lights went out at the Super Bowl. It struck the right chord and got shared over 10,000 times within the first few minutes of the tweet.

A double-edged sword

The benefits of successful newsjacking can catapult your brand awareness and engagement. But newsjacking can also go terribly wrong.

During the Arab Spring, Kenneth Cole jumped on the #Cairo

trending hashtag with a tweet that deservedly invited the wrath of the Internet. The callous tweet gave no regard for the loss of life that was happening halfway around the world, instead opting to promote its new spring collection.



Millions are in uproar in #Cairo. Rumor is they heard our new spring collection is now available online at <http://bit.ly/KCairo> -KC

3 hours ago via Twitter for BlackBerry® ☆ Favorite ↻ Retweet ↩ Reply

While there are extremely good and bad examples that get the most attention, most newsjacking attempts simply fall flat. Organizations force their brand into something that doesn't fit, or they simply aren't creative. They waste a few tweets, a little creative energy, the attempt falls flat, and that's that.

But if done with care and with a focus on entertaining or informing your potential audience, newsjacking has the potential to give your brand reach that it normally may not have had.

B2B newsjacking

Some of us are in the B2B space, and we look at the examples above and think newsjacking doesn't have a place in our world.

But it absolutely can.

Big events in the B2B world probably won't come in the form of huge spectacles like the Super Bowl, but they do come in other forms, such as:

Large industry conferences

New guidelines from industry associations

Big moves by competitors

A global trend that fits into your audience's needs

When working your B2B brand into conversations around these events, be careful about being overly promotional, as it could sour your brand with the industry. Instead, focus on making something entertaining or highly useful for the audience.

For example, if your industry has a large industry conference, look for ways that your brand can help the attendees at the conference. It can be as simple as offering an online map of the bathrooms and areas to get food at the conference, or as complex as an augmented reality app that gives people information about the conference as they walk around it. You are giving value to the audience, they will tell others about it, and just like that you have newsjacked the conference audience to talk about how helpful your brand is.

Next steps

What are the big events that impact your industry? If you're B2C, which national or global events could you tie your brand into in a fun and creative way? If you're a B2B brand, what conferences or industry associations impact your industry? What upcoming trends do you see that your audience will be impacted by? How can you tie into them in a way that delivers real value to your audience?

Now prepare your team to monitor these events. Google Alerts, social media alerts, RSS feeds, or specialized tools should come into play as you get closer to the events. Be on the lookout, certain trends may happen before the event (such as the green pool in the Rio Olympics that every pool company should have newsjacked).

When you see an opportunity, you have to act fast, but not hastily. If there is any grief from the event, DO NOT newsjack it. If the event is controversial and your brand stays away from controversy, you may want to play it safe. Newsjacking

has the potential to backfire significantly.

But when you find the right time and have a great idea, go quickly, and aim to entertain and/or inform your audience. The natural rise of conversation around the topic could then include your brand as a key component.

Note: That tweet graphic at the top? It was actually based on a fake tweet that was created by someone unassociated with the Butterfinger brand. However, Butterfinger got the credit when it went viral and benefited from the exposure just the same.