

# 2019 TALK TRIGGERS AWARDS

REMARKABLE EXAMPLES OF CONVERSATIONAL  
CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND WORD OF MOUTH



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CONSULTING

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# 2019 TALK TRIGGER AWARDS

When we published *Talk Triggers: The Complete Guide to Creating Customers with Word of Mouth* one year ago, we set out to remind companies that the best way to grow any business is for the customers to do it for you.

Word of mouth is the oldest, most effective and most cost-effective form of customer acquisition, yet it remains understudied and underleveraged. As we discussed in the book, this is because the overwhelming majority (99%+) of businesses do not have a word of mouth strategy, per se. Instead, they assume that customers will talk about them amongst themselves, provided the business does a satisfactory job meeting expectations.

Alas, this is not how real people behave in the real world.

To get customers talking—to turn them into volunteer marketers—businesses must give them a story to tell. This story is spurred by an unconventional customer experience choice designed to create conversations. We call these “Talk Triggers” and finding and documenting these delightful outliers is one of the most rewarding and entertaining projects of our careers.

The book includes dozens of examples of successful Talk Triggers. But since publication we’ve traveled the world evangelizing the power of word of mouth, and we’ve found many more companies that embrace its potential.

Thus, this project, the 2019 Talk Triggers Awards. Among the dozens and dozens of word of mouth wins we found this year, we surfaced 18 examples that truly epitomize the Talk Triggers system of success. We organized them into six categories, and asked our followers and fans via social media, email, podcasts, and the Talk Triggers Facebook Group to vote for their favorite.

And so we present to you the very first award winners - each of them a spot-on example of making an unconventional, operational choice that customers notice, and talk about every day. For each finalist, we indicate which of the five types of Talk Triggers is in use (generosity, speed, usefulness, empathy, attitude), as well as occasional examples of online customer chatter about the business.

Thanks for participating. For more on the book, the Talk Triggers system, keynotes and workshops, our Talk Triggers development services for companies, and why there are alpacas on the cover of the book, please visit us at [TalkTriggers.com](https://TalkTriggers.com).

Keep on Talking,



Jay Baer & Daniel Lemin



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# RESTAURANTS

Of all the categories of business, we find more Talk Triggers among restaurants than any other. Possibly because there are SO MANY restaurants in existence, giving them a simple, mathematical edge in terms of overall likelihood for Talk Triggers to surface. But it's also an insanely competitive category where differentiation is an existential requirement. Plus, many restaurants are family-owned, and it's often the case that creating Talk Triggers is easier for smaller companies because they're less afraid of standing out. Regardless of the reason, this was the most difficult category to pick three finalists.

## HOWDY HOMEMADE

Dallas, Texas & Salt Lake City, Utah | **Talkable Empathy**

Ice cream has certainly earned its enduring place among the world's favorite foods. But how remarkable can any one ice cream shop really be? It's hard to be different in a category comprised of thousands of flavors, varieties and combinations. If you're in the ice cream business, how do you differentiate?

Howdy Homemade Ice Cream is a small, two location specialty shop that makes its mark through a unique mission. Founder Tom Landis is "on a relentless pursuit to provide employment for individuals with special needs."

Fourteen of his first 16 employees were employees with special needs. His customers clearly profess their love of his ice cream and his mission: ([see a recent Yelp review on the right](#))

His unique hiring philosophy also has impact beyond customer word-of-mouth. In a 2017 *People* article, Landis said:

**"MY EMPLOYEES ARE FRIENDLY  
AND LOYAL AND WE HAVE A ZERO  
TURNOVER RATE. WHEN THEY'RE GIVEN  
A CHANCE, EVERYBODY WINS."**



★★★★★ 1/19/2019

Quick recommendation: COME HERE. Whether you're local or out of town, if you're in need of a sugar fix, it would be a mistake not to come here.

- You are able to sample as much as you want
- The unique flavors are named after employees who are excellent, this place hires persons with special needs and it is amazing and heart warming to be in an environment like this, it's much appreciated
- i got the peanut butter chocolate which is packed full of Reese's and nutter butters!
- quantity is great--one scoop is easily equivalent to 2 or 3
- reasonable price!





# LA BOUCHERIE

Los Angeles, California | Talkable Usefulness

Located on the 71st floor of the downtown InterContinental Hotel, this French steak house has killer views, polished service and great beef. But customers expect all that. What they don't anticipate is a steak knife menu.

Each diner is presented with a large box containing 10 distinct meat-eating weapons. From large Aussie-style to delicate French-style to modern Japanese style, La Boucherie makes guest think about steak knives in a newly expansive way.

Written up in multiple blogs and mentioned in many customer reviews, the steak knife menu is a chatter-worthy aspect of this fine dining experience.



# LAMBERT'S CAFE

Sikeston, Missouri | Talkable Attitude

Generally speaking, most restaurants discourage diners from throwing their food. Perhaps it's in collective homage to good parenting. Yet one restaurant uses thrown food to distinguish itself: Lambert's Cafe. The company's three locations (two in Missouri and one in Alabama) are home giant portions of home-cooked comfort food and, yes: bread rolls thrown at customers from across the room.

It started on a particularly busy night when the bread server was unable to get to a table. The patron seated there suggested just throwing the bread. The big bread toss caught on and Lambert's Cafe is now known as the **"only home of thrown rolls."** The company even owns the [throwedrolls.com](http://throwedrolls.com) URL.



**Duane Johnstone**  recommends **Lambert's Cafe**.

55 mins · 

Buns are thrown to you and buns and hot and fantastic. Service was great as well as the food. Definitely a fantastic place to eat.

**Scenic views · Fine dining**



The rolls are clearly popular: they bake more than two million of them every year. At five inches each, that's 160 miles of bread rolls thrown at customers.

# HOTELS

## MAGIC CASTLE

Los Angeles, California | Talkable Generosity

The Magic Castle Hotel in Los Angeles is not an average hotel: it is a converted apartment building and affiliated with the Magic Castle Club, a private, members-only temple to magic in the heart of Hollywood. Membership is generally required to gain access to the Magic Castle Club, but guests at the hotel are also welcome.

An evening of magic might not always be in a guest's travel plans, so it's also worth mentioning the property's true talk trigger: the popsicle hotline. For guests lounging by the hotel's surprisingly petite pool who grow thirsty for iced confections, they simply wander over to the popsicle hotline and put their request in. A server will deliver it to them on a silver platter, no charge.

It's also worth mentioning the hotel's many other complimentary amenities: coffee delivered to the room, free snacks including full American-sized candy bars, free laundry service, and free afternoon soft serve ice cream. Its quirky amenities and unique guest experience add up: in a competitive hotel market like Los Angeles, Magic Castle Hotel is routinely among the top ten hotels on TripAdvisor. It outranks the Waldorf Astoria and Beverly Wilshire, two of the city's famed five-star hotels.



# O-HAIRE MOTOR INN

Great Falls, Montana | Talkable Attitude



The bar at the O'Haire Motor Inn is called the Sip 'n Dip Lounge. It has a story so successful that GQ Magazine named it the number one bar in America worth flying to visit. Note that the O'Haire Motor Inn is located in Great Falls, Montana - not a typical vacation destination for most folks.

The Sip 'n Dip snuggles up against the hotel pool at the O'Haire Motor Inn. And the back wall of the bar features two, large glass windows, giving bar patrons a view into the pool. It's like a DIY aquarium, Montana style.

And every night from 8 pm until midnight, bar patrons peer through those windows into the hotel pool and witness live, human mermaids.

It's a story told over and over and over again, offline and online. Here's a review on TripAdvisor:

**"WE WERE TOLD OF THIS PLACE, ESPECIALLY THE MERMAID SWIMMING, LOVED IT, THE MERMAID IS ONE GREAT SWIMMER AND PUTS ON A GREAT SHOW. WE HAD STEAK SANDWICHES ALSO AND THEY WERE SUPER, A REAL TREAT, FOR GREAT FALLS MONTANA THIS IS A DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH PLACE."**

— STRETCH007, SEEN ON TRIPADVISOR



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# WESTIN MISSION HILLS

Rancho Mirage, CA | Talkable Empathy

The Westin Mission Hills in Rancho Mirage, California, has a unique program aimed to provide creature comforts for humans and dogs alike. Through a partnership with Animal Samaritans, a nearby animal rescue, they feature dogs in the lobby that are available for adoption. Guests can take them out for a walk and, if they've found a match, adopt the dog and bring a new family member home from their holiday stay.

More than 100 dogs have found homes through the partnership, and guests consistently mention it on social media and in reviews.

**"THE SERVICE WAS EXCELLENT, STAFF WAS GREAT. I PARTICULARLY LOVED THAT THEY HAVE A RESCUE DOG TO ADOPT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE LOBBY, THAT THEY DO IN CONJUNCTION WITH A LOCAL RESCUE ORGANIZATION."**

— DIANNE K, SEEN ON TRIPADVISOR



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# RETAIL/E-COMMERCE

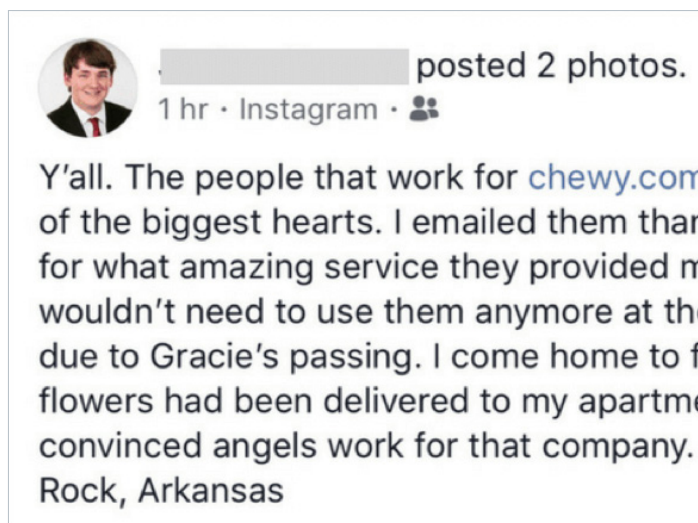
## CHEWY.COM

Dania Beach, Florida | Talkable Empathy

The subscription model is one method e-commerce retailers have used to make their customer's lives more simple. Why wait to order something that needs monthly replenishing, like pet food? Invariably, it will be forgotten until it is needed at the last minute. For pet retailer Chewy.com, the pet food subscription model is a meaningful time-saver for its customers.

Subscriptions like these are useful, but when a pet passes and the pet owner forgot to cancel the shipment it can be a devastating reminder. It's also an inconvenience: what to do with all of that food?

Chewy.com approaches this with talkable empathy. Their approach has been well-documented on social media and in news outlets. When this situation presents itself, Chewy.com refunds the order and encourages the pet owner to donate the food to a shelter. They will also often send a handwritten note or even flowers to honor the lost pet.



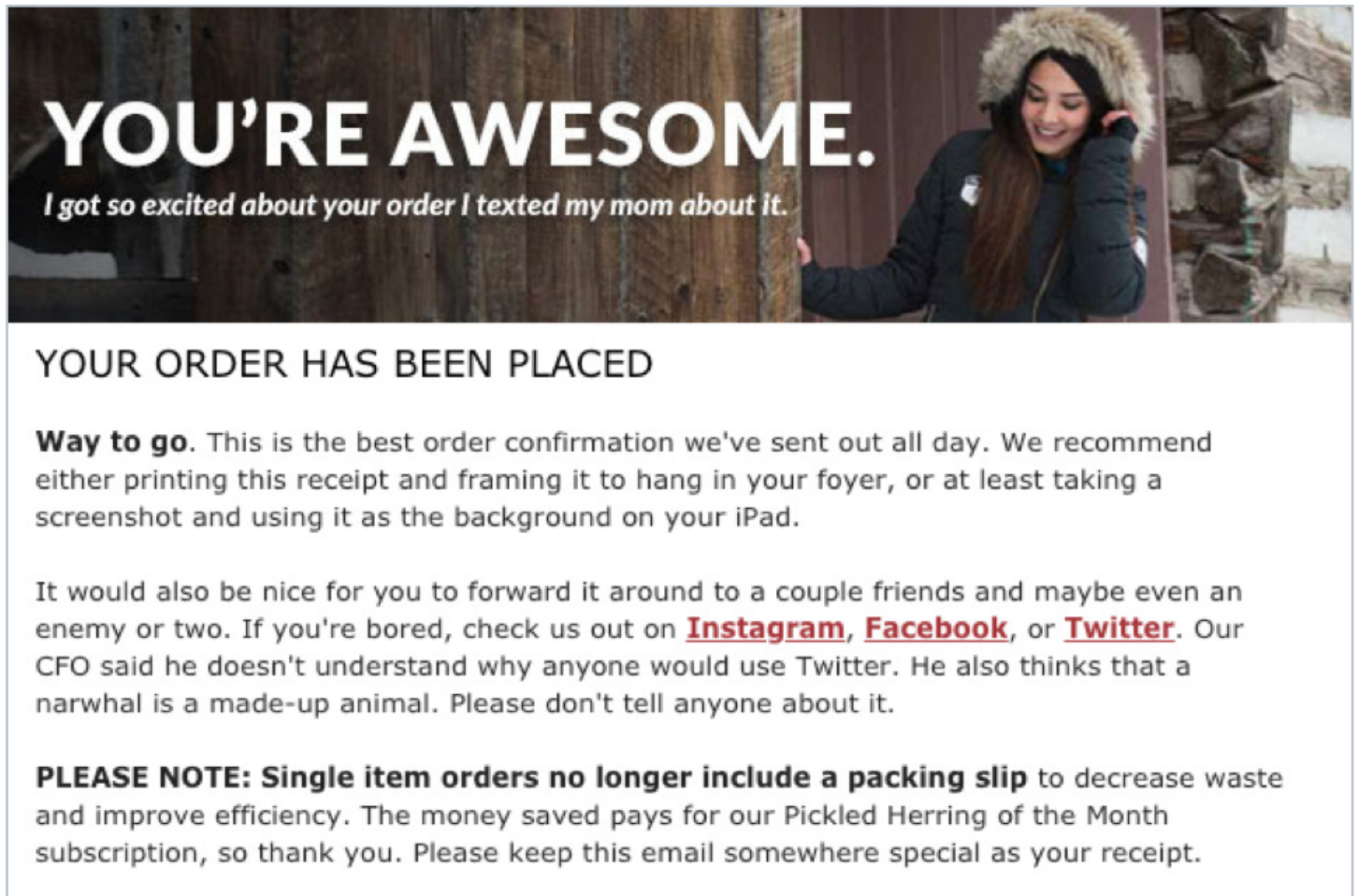
Some in the business community have connected Chewy's exceptional customer experience to its equally eye-popping valuation. In 2017 PetSmart acquired the company for more than \$3 billion.

## Madison Heights, MI | Talkable Attitude

E-commerce is usually a pretty straightforward, transactional affair. But not at outdoor retailer Moosejaw.com, where adding irony and humor throughout the purchase process is a big part of the experience.

Just about every piece of copywriting at Moosejaw.com is amusing, and sometimes hilarious. Their purchase confirmation email alone creates conversations and serves as an effective Talk Trigger. Every day, they demonstrate the power of talkable attitude.

Take a look at the order confirmation email customers receive:



# TONY'S CHOCOLONELY

Amsterdam, The Netherlands | Talkable Empathy

Chocolate bars are routinely made with scores in them so consumers can easily break off a small square to nibble, or share. Tony's Chocolonely bars are manufactured with an array of very uneven, crooked pieces. Why?

Dutch TV journalist Teun van de Keuken researched and produced a broadcast story about slavery in the cocoa industry. Horrified that these conditions persist in the modern age, Teun created 5,000 fair trade chocolate bars himself, to prove it could be done.

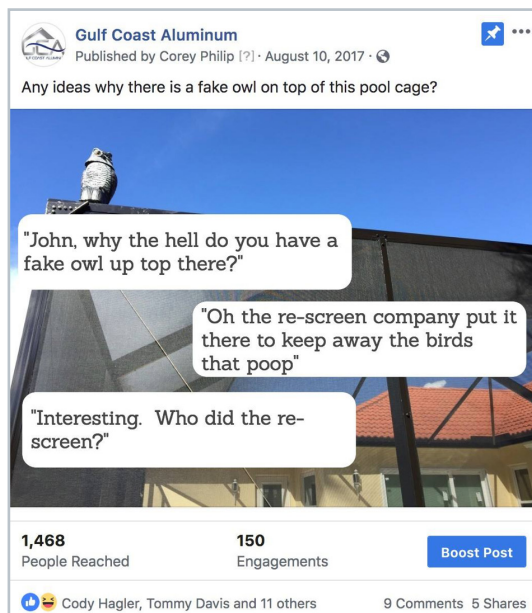
This spawned his Tony's Chocolonely company, and their uneven bars. They are created this way to remind consumers of the inequality in the chocolate industry. The bottom of the bars represents the equator. The chunks above are the Gulf of Guinea. From left to right you have Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo and Benin, Nigeria and part of Cameroon.



In its product design, packaging, and communications, Tony's Chocolonely is committed to creating consumer stories around inequality in the chocolate industry.

## SERVICES

# GULF COAST ALUMINUM



Estero, Florida | Talkable Usefulness

Many if not most homes in Florida have large screen enclosures over their yard or pool. And, anyone who has spent time outside in Florida quickly learns why: bugs aplenty. Some of them are large enough to carry small children off into the sunset. Screen enclosures provide a sanctuary relatively free of critters.

Gulf Coast Aluminum, owned by Corey Philip, is a contractor that specializes in these screen enclosures. A common issue for screen enclosures is bird management. Birds can run into the screen, create tears in it and leave a lot of mess in their wake. To help mitigate bird issues, Corey includes a complimentary plastic owl with every enclosure.





# MIKE DIAMOND PLUMBING AND DRAIN CLEANING

Los Angeles, CA | Talkable Attitude

Do plumbers smell...bad? Apparently so. Mike Diamond Plumbing, based in Southern California, has the answer: they are the **"smell good plumber."**

The Smell Good Plumber message helps them highlight their efforts to ensure cleanliness and sanitation. They wear clean gloves and booties in customer homes and have fresh, clean uniforms always available in their trucks.

It may not be the case that all plumbers smell bad, but for Mike Diamond, they differentiate by ensuring that their team smells good.



## TREE DROP

Orlando, Florida | Talkable Generosity

The entire Tree Drop premise is worthy of conversation: Christmas tree delivery and pick up, door-to-door, via mobile app. But it's their secret bonus that truly gets customers talking. With each drop off, Tree Drop includes chocolate chip cookies and a note for Santa Claus.

A smart and relevant example of talkable generosity, Tree Drop makes the holiday season easy, and adds an Instagrammable extra to boot.



# HIGHER EDUCATION

## ALFRED UNIVERSITY

Alfred, NY | Talkable Attitude

Campus tours are an important part of the college selection process, yet the experience itself often leaves much to be desired.

"That's the business school."

"There's the dining hall and look now kids, there are actual students dining in it."

"These are trees that we planted."

Mr. Toad's Wild Ride they are not.

Alfred University in upstate New York aims to change that. Their brand motto is **"Outside of Ordinary."** They bring that to life on the campus tour with a conference bike painted Alfred University purple. Take a tour, meet some other prospective students and zip across campus on a shared bike.



Participants are also given purple "Tour Hard" shirts to help them remember their campus experience.

# ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

Tempe, Arizona | Talkable Attitude

After making one, unconventional choice, student attendance at basketball games has increased 230%.



Doug Gottlieb  
@GottliebShow

One of my favorite things in college basketball is the [#CurtainofDistraction](#) [#ForksUp](#)

How? With a Talk Trigger called The Curtain of Distraction.

Each game, at the start of the second half when the opposition is shooting at the basket in front of them, student volunteers erect a portable curtain. Each time the other team shoots a free throw, the curtain is pulled back to reveal a cavalcade of increasingly bizarre and distracting scenes.

The other team's free throw shooter now has to stifle a laugh, shake it all off, and try to make a pressure-filled shot while starting at God knows what.

It might be an Elvis Presley impersonator.

Someone rubbing mayonnaise on their chest might be behind the curtain.

One time they opened the curtain to reveal Michael Phelps, the most decorated Olympian in American history.

It's like a roulette wheel for weirdness, and it's absolutely awesome.



Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps, center, performs behind the "Curtain of Distraction" during an Oregon State free throw against Arizona State in the second half of an NCAA college basketball game, Thursday, Jan. 28, 2016, in Tempe, Ariz. (AP Photo/Matt York)



## Kanazawa, Japan | Talkable Attitude

A key part of the marketing for this small art school is consumer chatter about their graduation ceremony, which is very unusual. At the ceremony, students can wear WHATEVER they want. And because it's an art school, the graduates take that opportunity and go WILD!

It looks like a costume shop exploded. Super Mario brothers. A student dressed as a giant violin. A guy that created a meat for sale at the grocery store costume.

And of course, there's a bunch of other weird and cute characters represented because....Japan.

The whole thing is just a blast, and media coverage of this very special graduation experience spans the globe.



# HEALTHCARE

## CVS

### Woonsocket, Rhode Island | Talkable Usefulness

You may have experienced the Talk Trigger of this massive chain of pharmacies....the very, very, very long receipt.

For even small purchases, members of the CVS loyalty program are given exceptionally long receipts filled with savings on other products. The "CVS long receipt" Talk Trigger is so successful that it's essentially its own meme, with constant commentary and examples photographs on Twitter and beyond.

When people are posting photos every day of just how long your receipts are, you know you've successfully created word of mouth.



andrew  
@andrewnolan2

One of my blinds broke in my bedroom so I just went to CVS



10:57 PM · Dec 4, 2018 · [Twitter for iPhone](#)

56.7K Retweets 255.1K Likes

# DR. SNIP

Seattle, Washington | Talkable Generosity



Dr. Charles Wilson is a surgeon. A vasectomy surgeon, to be specific. Every patient of Dr. Wilson receives three things after the procedure is finished: insurance paperwork, post-operative care instructions, and a tiny, black box.

Inside that tiny, black box at the office of Dr. Charles Wilson (aka Dr. Snip) is an engraved, silver, pocket knife.

A remarkable instance of talkable generosity, you can imagine friends of Dr. Wilson's patients asking: **"where did you get that knife?"** The ensuing conversation creates a steady influx of new business.

# THE HEART HOSPITAL PLANO

Plano, Texas | Talkable Empathy

The team at The Heart Hospital in Texas is one of the top-ranked heart facilities in the United States. At least some of that comes down to good patient experience scores.

The experience is all about making the stay as comfortable as possible. Patients notice the small touches, like heart-shaped pretzels offered as snacks to family members.





# ABOUT CONVINCE & CONVERT CONSULTING

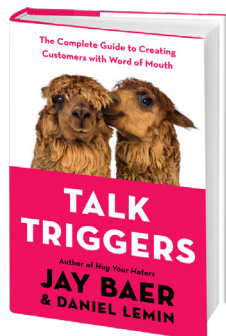
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Convince & Convert Consulting, led by Jay Baer, is an experienced, highly focused analysis and advisory firm that creates effective, best-in-class digital marketing, social media, and word of mouth strategies for the world's most interesting organizations. Your audience expects more from you than ever. And what is required to be remarkable continues to escalate. Are you certain you are meeting that demand today? Do you know how to get there specifically and in what sequence of steps? We do.

We work with the world's leading brands and organizations to help them gain more customers, or retain a larger portion of the customers they've already earned. We use our decades of experience, proprietary audience insights, competitive analysis, 6As metrics system, and operations optimization framework to provide strategies and operations plans that take you to the next level. Our clients include The United Nations, Cabela's, Oracle, Cisco, adidas, The Motley Fool, Allstate, Pella Windows and Doors, Hilton, The Grand Ole Opry and more. These organizations trust us because we provide sound recommendations in a straightforward, hype-free fashion. From word of mouth marketing to content and social, email and messaging to online reputation, we are your expert.

For information on our comprehensive, research-backed strategic marketing plans reach us directly at: at [ConvinceAndConvert.com](http://ConvinceAndConvert.com) or or 602-616-1895.

Talk Triggers is the definitive, practical guide on how to use bold operational differentiators to create customer conversations, written by best-selling authors and marketing experts Jay Baer and Daniel Lemin.



Word of mouth is directly responsible for 19% of all purchases, and influences as much as 90%. Every human on earth relies on word of mouth to make buying decisions. Yet even today, fewer than 1% of companies have an actual strategy for generating these crucial customer conversations. Talk Triggers provides that strategy in a compelling, relevant, timely book that can be put into practice immediately, by any business.

Combining compelling stories, inspirational examples, and practical how-to, Talk Triggers is the first indispensable book about word of mouth. It's a book that will create conversation about the power of conversation.

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