

smack

## Building Brand Community Around a Commodity: A Case Study

Smack took a long look at some of the world's top brands and found the most successful businesses all have one thing in common: a loyal following of everyday consumers. Consumers that form vibrant and loyal communities around a brand, what Smack calls Brand Communities.

*This whitepaper will give you a quick look at how a product considered an everyday commodity was able to engage their consumers in such a way that created a community that, well, really sticks to the brand.*

### Duck Brand Duct Tape: The Commodity with a Community

Yes, we know that was a really bad pun. But honestly, we are talking about duct tape. Super sticky. Super strong. Super versatile. Yet, undeniably a commodity. So what can be so fascinating about duct tape that consumers would actually care enough to form a community around?



#### The Duck Brand Duck Tape Club

Regardless of your age, where you live, or even your Do-It-Yourself prowess, we'd bet that you have a story where duct tape saved the day. Perhaps you used it to cover holes in your leaky roof, patched a flat tire on your mountain bike, or even covered a gouge to slow a sinking boat. Whatever the story, you're not alone. Just take a stroll over to the Duck Tape Club at [ducktapeclub.com](http://ducktapeclub.com) and check out the wealth of stories where duct tape saves the day.

The Duck Brand Duct Tape Club is a membership-based online community built to help you connect with thousands of other duct tape innovators. But of course, these innovators aren't using any old duct tape, they're using Duck Brand Duct Tape.

Yet the question still remains; as extraordinary a product as duct tape may be, duct tape is still duct tape, right? But in the world of commodities, consumer perception is everything. And when you nurture key characteristics of a Brand Community, and allow your most loyal consumers to voice the superiority of the brand on their own terms, you can influence consumer perception around your commodity product. So let's take a quick tour around the Duck Tape Club community and see what tools and incentives they used to drive the key Brand Community characteristics of Consciousness of a Kind, Shared Rituals and Traditions, and Moral Responsibility.

### Contests. Contests. Contests!

In case you were wondering, yes, there is a Contest section on the Duck Tape Club site which describes Duck Tape contests currently on the go. There are four of them in fact, but for the sake of time we'll describe how two of the four contribute to building and nurturing the Duck Tape Brand Community.

#### Duck Tape Saves the Day

One of the three pillars of Brand Community is Consciousness of a Kind, where members of the community feel a close affinity towards one another based on their belief in the brand. One way to exhibit a member's belief in the brand and its superiority over its rivals is by sharing brand stories with others in the community. The Duck Tape Saves the Day contest helps members do just that.

To date, there are over 1,500 harrowing Duck Tape tales posted on the Club site. Every one is viewable, and every one is a first person Duck Brand Duct Tape experience. Topics range from Car Repairs, Outdoor Activities, to First Aid and Survival. Here's an example from Debbie B, in Gastonia North Carolina:

*My dad always had duck tape in the house and I remember him using it on big jobs: I bought a boat and we were fishing, a storm came up quick and the boat was taking on water we had a small inflatable boat that seats 4 and we inflated it and noticed there was a big hole in it mercy me I said as I looked at the sky everybody was starting to panic I remember I had put the duck tape in my emergency bag and I grabbed it started taping like crazy and said oh please work like you did for my dad, taped it inflated it and it held and we safely got to shore and I still had the duck tape in my life preserver when we got to shore (thank) you duck tape for saving our lives.*

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### Stuck at Prom

Stuck at Prom is a scholarship contest that turns one of North America's time honoured traditions into a promotional exhibition for Duck Brand Duct Tape. And there's no doubt that this event is an exhibition. Just take a look at some of the photos at <http://ducktapeclub.com/contests/prom/entries.asp>

To win the contest, your job is to create the most artful, creative and often most shocking prom outfit made entirely out of Duck Brand Duct Tape. The contest is housed entirely online, with entry forms, rules, contest FAQ's, How To's on creating fabric from duct tape, and more. Once you're done, you simply submit the photos to Duck Tape where they are posted online for the entire world to see. Through a nice little photo viewer and rating system, the winners of the contest are actually chosen by members of the Duck Tape Club and site visitors.

By engaging in this once-in-a-lifetime event, you can surely imagine the dedication and loyalty participants have to the brand now and well into the future. But what is really important to realize in terms of building Brand Community, is that the brand itself has taken the necessary steps to associate the American societal tradition of the Senior Prom with its own Brand Tradition. In other words, through a host of online tools and clever creative, Duck Brand Duct Tape is helping its customers create their own Shared Rituals and Traditions around the Duck Tape Brand.



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### Members to the Rescue

When you consider the strength and versatility of Duck Tape, it's really no wonder how it comes to the rescue of consumers in need, day in and day out. So with that in mind, it also seems quite natural that Duck Tape would be the weapon of choice for the Brand's superhero Rock Tapewright in his quest to rid the world of villains like the crafty Dr Fiona Headley, or the waxy Oliver Wickman.

Of course brawn doesn't always come with brains, so a little help from community members is always appreciated. In fact, every heroic ending to a Rock Tapewright comic strip is written by a community member. The scenarios are as follows: an evil villain hatches a dastardly plan to ruin the day's events, Rock and his side kick catch wind of the plan and members have to figure out how Rock can use his role of Duck Tape – and other miscellaneous items – to save the day. Submissions are sent to Duck Tape where a winning ending is chosen and illustrated.

More than simply being whimsical and fun, the Rock Tapewright comic strips actually act as a key factor in helping Duck Tape build and nurture its Brand Community, especially in the key Brand Community characteristic of Moral Responsibility. By devising the most interesting and usual ways of using Duck Tape, and relating them through the use of a superhero, members are contributing to the community by helping each other consume the brand in new and interesting ways.

### So, what's missing?

The Duck Tape Club really does a wonderful job of finding ways to transform their commodity product into a living brand by building and nurturing their Brand Community. And although we've only touched on three aspects of the site, there are at least another eight online tools at [ducktapeclub.com](http://ducktapeclub.com) that act to engage the consumer and help them interact with the brand.

There is one aspect to this community that we would like to dearly see: tools to encourage conversation between community members. Although Duck Brand Duct Tape has found numerous ways to help consumers voice their brand experiences online, there are no tools such as message boards or even comment fields that allow members to join together in conversations about the brand or other common interests. By adding these tools to an already content rich site, Duck Brand Duct Tape would be able to further strengthen the ties between their community members and ergo to the brand itself.

### Building Your Brand Community

Building a Brand Community around your brand can be both prosperous, and beneficial to the growth and maturity of your company. But you don't have to tackle building your own Brand Community or any other of your marketing objectives alone. Smack Inc can help.

Smack Inc is a brand management agency that specializes in executing fully integrated marketing strategies that help develop your Brand Community.

To learn more about Smack services or Brand Communities, please feel free to contact us at [communicate@smackinc.com](mailto:communicate@smackinc.com) or browse to [smackinc.com](http://smackinc.com).