

The Amazing Case of Worishofer Sandals

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Slate ran a [fascinating article](#) this week analyzing the improbable surge in popularity of most unlikely product: Worishofer sandals. Worishofer sandals are hardly the latest offering from DKNY; they were, until recently, a mostly forgotten line of sandals with an insole designed by a German podiatrist back in 1940. "Worn primarily by European woman as medicinal sandals," Slate reporter Jessica Grose tells us, Worishofers are jokingly known to at least one shoe seller as "the bunion shoes." Now, suddenly, they're appearing on the feet of celebrities like MIA and Maggie Gyllenhaal, not to mention urban hipsters everywhere.

The story of Worishofer's "overnight" success isn't just heartwarming; it also contains lessons about the power of PR.

Lesson #1: PR Works

The sandals themselves are known for being comfortable, and they are even stylish in a granny-chic way. That didn't bring many people to the cash register, however, until Lucky Magazine wrote them up in 2006. More press followed: Women's Wear Daily, the Today Show, and ultimately the New York Times.

Results followed too: one wholesaler quoted in the article says his business has gone up by 25% a year since 2006-the year of the Lucky article.

Lesson #2: PR Generates PR

This is a point that doesn't get emphasized enough: PR campaigns have benefits that go far beyond immediate results.

The time and effort spent introducing a professional in your organization to a reporter may yield fruit the next day, when you see that professional quoted in the paper. But that's not the end of it. Now that the reporter and the professional have a relationship, the reporter might return for another quote six months from now. Or a reporter at another outlet may take notice and call up. Or perhaps an organization needs a speaker on the issue, and your professional is out there being quoted on it.

There are innumerable ways in which PR builds on itself, a phenomenon that seems to have happened here. One mention in Lucky Magazine, it seems, was the engine that drove Worishofer all the way to the Today Show and the pages of the New York Times.

Lesson #3: PR Generates "Social Influencing"

A successful PR placement doesn't lead merely to the possibility of more PR, but to an even more powerful kind of snowball effect: endorsements from influential customers or clients.

In the case of Worisher, the newly popular sandals have recently been seen on celebs like Maggie Gyllenhaal, who sported them on a [People magazine website](#). Maybe more importantly, as Slate notes, is the terrific word of mouth the sandals get among circles of friends. These endorsements from celebrities and friends can be traced back to the original spark of a successful PR placement, but they spread influential, ever-widening circles that soon dwarf the immediate impact of a newspaper article.

While people don't buy sandals and professional services the same way, this much is true in both cases: referrals are the best endorsements anyone can get.

Also true: when a successful PR placement gets you in front of a potential client, you aren't just getting exposure to that one potential client-you are getting exposure to the hundreds of people in that client's social network. Thousands maybe.

Enough, maybe, to make you the next big thing.