

Marshmello, My 13 Year-Old Brother, and Fortnite Teach Brands What's Next

by Allie Feinstein | February 5, 2019



Marshmello made headlines last weekend with a special live performance inside Fortnite that drew 10 million concurrent views plus millions more via streaming on YouTube, Twitch and encore performances. The event showed the potential of tapping into emerging platforms to connect with new consumers and the potential of experiential storytelling to forge new sales channels. I asked my 13-year-old brother to give us the inside scoop on why this was “lit” and outlined 5 take-aways brands can apply to their innovation strategies.

I asked my 13-year-old brother, Leon, what he thought of the experience and his feedback points to Epic Games’ deep understanding of and trust earned from their fans – enviable characteristics for any brand marketer:

- Me: Did you know who Marshmello was before the Fortnite concert?
- Leon: Not really.

- Me: Why were you excited to check out the concert?
- Leon: Because I was curious. It was live so it had to be good.

- Me: Why did it matter that it was live?
- Leon: Because it's like a real concert. It felt like a real concert. It's not the same if you watch a replay.

- Me: What did you think of the experience?
- Leon: It was fun. I liked the music and that he (Marshmello) spoke in the game. It was cool that they turned shooting off so everyone could enjoy the event in the game. The holograms were cool and funny. It was fun that you could share your dance moves since you normally don't get to do that a lot. It was also cool that you could buy the Marshmello skin and pickaxe. And special dance emotes.

- Me: What was your favorite part?
- Leon: My favorite part was dancing on top of the Fortnite sign above the stage with an OG skin like mine (translation: another player with a custom avatar that indicated he had also been playing Fortnite since the early days) and we did the same dance moves. It was a fun way to make new friends. Also, when Marshello's hologram was flying through the air and everyone started flying. That was pretty cool.

- Me: Why was this unique compared to other live events in Fortnite?
- Leon: This was the first to focus on music.

- Me: About how long was the concert experience? Did you stay for the whole thing?
- Leon: It was about 10 minutes and I stayed the whole time because I was curious to see what would happen. Fortnite usually does great live events so I knew it was going to be good and I didn't want to miss out.

- Me: What did your friends think about the experience?
- Leon: They liked the songs, especially the song with Logic. It was lit. I heard my friends listening to it at school on Monday.



Here are a few takeaways any brand can apply to their business to drive growth:

1. Live Is Lit

Despite the undeniable rise of on-demand content, a live event – be it “IRL” or online – still offers a unique human experience: a fleeting sensation that curiosity cannot resist. When yielded effectively (see lessons 2-5 below), it can generate huge impact.

2. Creativity Thinking + New Technology = Magic

Thinking creatively on a new canvas is a combination that gets noticed and applauded. From giant hologram teddy bears (“Cuddle Team Leaders”) to zero-gravity dance moves, this show was a vibrant showcase of creative thinking, embracing and also pushing the technology to great heights to create a memorable fan and brand experience.

3. Attention Spans Are Relative

We’ve all heard the younger generation has the attention span of a goldfish, that is, until they are interested or captivated by something. Epic Games hyped an exciting new live event, then delivered on the experience and kept an often hard-to-impress demographic glued to, and then talking about the experience.

4. New Models Emerge Every Day

Emerging technologies open a world of possibility for consumer interaction and commerce. Marshmello character skins, collectibles like gliders and pickaxes, and special emotes (dance moves) moved this experience from brand awareness to a commercial success. Why does it work? Because these items tap into identity and expression, which are worth paying for. Fortnite isn't right for every brand, but there is a passionate new audience for your products/services that are gathering somewhere new and they want to know who "gets them" and who they should be loyal to.

5. Transcend The Expected

Those who didn't know who Marshmello was will never forget him. Brands who embrace new ways to connect with consumers, who get far enough in front of trends to set them, instantly have a competitive advantage and the ability to turn prospects into super fans in a single move.

Audience fragmentation is a huge challenge but also an unbelievable opportunity for brands to breakthrough in uncluttered and unique ways. There is a massive upside to embracing new platforms and approaching them with authentic consumer-centric value. The creative thinkers can capture new audiences, create new experiences, and launch new business models. At VentureFuel we like to say, "What is next, is now." New platforms, new technologies and emerging opportunities are rocket ships to attach to. You just need to apply strategic, creative thinking and find the right partners to help you [unlock the power of innovation](#).

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[Check out the full concert here](#), courtesy of Polygon.