

# Six things brands can learn from the Marvel Marketing Machine (#Spoilerfree)

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22 Movies spanning 11 years all building to a 3 hour, record breaking epic. We are in the Endgame of a 12 year vision, like it or not marketing is why we are here and want to watch!

Don't worry there are no spoilers ([#dontspoiltheendgame](#)), at the time of writing this I have not yet seen Avengers Endgame. I am holding off until this bank holiday when I will take my 9-year-old son whom I have influenced heavily to love all things Marvel. I have tried to avoid as many spoilers as possible, trust me it is a hard thing to do. I am not ashamed of being a comic book fan and I know these movies aren't for everyone. Whatever your view you cannot argue that Marvel has created something special, a multi-billion-dollar behemoth and the most profitable movie franchise in history. I have watched every film and these are the six things I believe all brands can learn from the marvellous Marvel Marketing machine.

## Think big, go long and take risks

Iron Man (2008) was a risk but it was the blueprint for the entire Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU). The character, at the time, was one of the lesser-known Marvel heroes but had been in development with various studios since 1990 until Marvel Studios bought the rights in 2006. It was their first self-financed film with a budget of \$140m. The film worked and grossed over \$585 million at the box office. The first phase had begun with the end credits scene teasing more to follow, the MCU was born and our desire for the next instalment cemented, Avengers Assemble.

## Control your narrative

Following the success of Iron Man and with access to a slew of superheroes Marvel Studios caught the attention of Disney. In 2009 they were bought for \$4bn along with all the rights and a President, in Kevin Feige, that had a clear view of what he wanted to achieve. His experience and strategic vision have led to the recent merger with Fox Studios which brings the X-Men, Deadpool and Fantastic four franchises under their control again. Whilst their fate is unclear fans are loving the prospect of this extended universe. This control also extends to each campaign, there is a strict embargo on the cast talking about the movies, especially Endgame. To avoid spoilers and mislead audiences editing trailer footage has become the norm for Marvel. With the directors also writing an open letter to fans under the hashtag #dontspoiltheendgame supported by the entire cast.

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Don't do it. [#DontSpoilTheEndgame](https://twitter.com/BoCzPHO4PJ) [pic.twitter.com/BoCzPHO4PJ](https://pic.twitter.com/BoCzPHO4PJ)

— The Avengers (@Avengers) [April 25, 2019](#)

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## Don't be afraid to collaborate

Building partnerships is a key part of building a successful business. Whether it is Iron Man and Audi, Coca-Cola with Ant-Man and the Hulk or the Avengers Endgame and Fortnite. These partnerships create interest in the brands shown and give them access to talent as well as much needed revenue for the production of the movie and additional promotion and hype. Collaboration goes beyond product placement and this was highlighted in 2016 with the release of Captain America: Civil War. Sony own the rights to Spiderman but through a unique collaboration Marvel have been able to integrate him into their universe, and his presence helped that movie exceed \$1bn and kickstart a revived movie franchise for the character.

### **Remember everything is connected**

The first 22 movies across 3 phases are wonderfully woven into one another. Marvel Studios, with Disney's influence, have gone beyond the big summer blockbuster. The connections now extend to TV through Marvel Agents of Shield and the wider opportunities the Disney streaming service will offer in the long term when it launches later this year. These, much like the movies, act as standalone franchises whilst still referencing the wider universe. This maintains interest in the MCU between the big tentpole blockbuster movies as well as a few Easter Eggs along the way. Keeping the core fans happy and reminding us marketing folk why tapping into multiple channels is so important.

### **Be brave**

The Avengers was always going to be the big payoff but as Marvel built the brand the investment in lesser known characters enabled them to understand what works. Once established they were able to introduce new characters to the Universe. Black Panther and more recently Captain Marvel are two prime examples. Both have broken the mould of what people expect from a summer blockbuster with Black Panther being nominated for best picture at the 2019 Oscars.

**Most importantly, trust your fans (know your audience)**

A movie is nothing without an audience and Marvel Studios would be nothing without the core audience of comic book fans. The MCU has something for everyone, bringing them together for the big movie events brings all the fans together. They have nurtured the audience over the past 11 years building trust in the Marvel brand, this trust creates a strong fan base who in turn introduce new fans. Every movie launch or major announcement the fans get to hear first at events like comic con. I for one am looking forward to the easter eggs and the final (who knows what they will do with CGI) Stan Lee cameo. Case in point, I best get on and book those tickets before I have a disappointed 9-year-old on my hands.

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