

Chapter 4



EVERYDAY STARDOM



What's the Trend?

The growth of personalization leads more consumers to expect everyday interactions to be transformed into celebrity experiences with them as the stars of the show.

On the morning of November 15, 2013, most of San Francisco woke up with no idea that their city was about to be saved by a superhero.

The fact that this particular superhero happened to be less than four feet tall and was only five years old were details most of the city would only learn after his heroics would go viral for millions of people to watch unfold online in real time.

Months earlier as a kid being treated for leukemia, Miles Scott told the Bay Area chapter of the Make-A-Wish Foundation the one thing he wanted—to be Batkid.

To make it happen, a team from the nonprofit started preparation on a plan to get about 200–300 people to show up at City Hall to support a staged event where Miles could wear a costume as Batkid and defeat an actor dressed as one of Batman's longtime enemies.

It quickly became clear that they had far more interest than they expected.

A longtime video game designer signed on to help design the experience. A social media agency volunteered to help promote the event. And countless people started following the plan on Twitter and vowing to show up in person.

When November 15 finally came, an estimated crowd of 20,000 people showed up at City Hall to cheer on Batkid.

As watchers shared the day on social media with the hashtag #SFBatkid, a worldwide audience started paying attention. All told, the event generated more than half a million tweets, real time conversations in 117 countries and more than 16,000 photos shared on Instagram.

The day even prompted San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee to declare November 15 as Batkid Day and inspired a feature-length documentary about Miles' story called *Batkid Begins* which was released in January 2015.

Most importantly the day transformed a little boy's life and offered a moment that, as one spectator put it "restored your faith in humanity."

In a time when these types of promises are used as click bait in overly sensationalized media headlines, Batkid day stood out for being, as the documentary film promos put it, "the day the Internet was nice."

It turns out at around the same time Miles was having the best day of his young life, one of the largest entertainment companies in the world was rolling out a technology system designed to create a magical experience to give millions of kids (and the adults that came with them) the feeling of being superstars just like Miles every day.

Disney's Master Plan

The ambitious MagicBand and MyMagic+ initiative from Disney to transform the experience at their flagship theme resort in Orlando, Florida, was estimated to cost over a billion dollars. Affecting everything from how visitors book rides in advance to how resort rooms were accessed, the effort is one of the most ambitious to integrate wearable technology in the travel and hospitality sector.

A MagicBand is a waterproof wristband that can act as a room key, theme park ticket, mobile payment device and more. It also lets Disney

collect a vast amount of data as visitors move around the parks, which helps the company manage crowds. Depending on how guests choose to set up their Disney accounts, the MagicBand also allows characters to recognize and address them by name (if they choose), and for Disney to create photo packages where families can build memories through automated albums of the many pictures taken of them throughout Walt Disney World.

Clearly Disney wants to offer a personalized experience to every guest, and they are not alone. This ambition to completely personalize a customer experience is one that many other brands—from established fashion labels like Burberry to startup custom bike seller Villy Bikes—are trying to integrate into their experiences.

The goal they all are working towards is at the heart of this trend of *Everyday Stardom*—to allow customers to feel like superstars with every branded interaction.

Bollywood Brides

While the idea of stardom may seem like a stretch at a theme park or when ordering a customized bike, it's far more understandable on the one day when most people might *expect* to feel like stars: their wedding day.

In India, weddings have taken such a central role in the culture that many of the best loved films from the country's vast film industry, known as Bollywood, feature weddings in almost every story.

The Bollywood industry collectively releases more than 1000 films every year (about double the output of Hollywood) and a favorite scene in many of them is the over-the-top musical wedding featuring colorful outfits, flash mob-style dances and melodramatic courting rituals filmed in scenic locales ranging from Swiss mountaintops to Brazilian beaches.

The prominence of this fantasized wedding tradition has recently led to a surge in the “matrimonial matinee,” as the *Times of India* called it, where soon-to-be married couples hire a film crew to help them recreate these scenes from films as part of their wedding videos to share with guests.

Of course, part of the appeal of having a beautifully filmed and choreographed wedding video (whether it features a Bollywood dance theme or not!) is the chance to share it with friends and family. Aside from our human desire to be the star of the show, a big motivation for wanting to create these types of stardom experiences is the chance to share it through social media with the people we care about.

Weddings don't happen every day, and for most of us they (hopefully!) only happen once. On your wedding day, you *expect* to be the star of the show. Now, you might come to expect it when you pay for a scripted experience like going to Florida to experience the attractions and magic of Disney.

What about every other day?

Me: The Museum Experience

In 2011 Intel launched one of the year's most successful social media campaigns, focused on a simple idea: to allow people to create and share a museum of their own lives. Luckily, the ideal foundation to build this already existed—on Facebook.

Attending events, sharing photos, posting interesting quotes or observations about daily life are all the types of content most people were already posting to Facebook. The concept of the Museum of Me was to create a tool you could apply to your Facebook profile to search your past posts and photos and arrange them into an interactive experience.

You could literally watch your life unfold over the time that you had been active on Facebook and share that story with your friends and family.

If you think about it, the concept of taking social data and using it to create a celebrity-like experience is one that we see almost every day on social media. Instagram users recreate celebrity poses in their own attempts to take memorable selfies. Twitter users share pithy observations to entice retweets, or simply find stars to follow and share their thoughts directly.

Social media and the rise of the personal brand enables consumers to put themselves at the center of their own life narratives, creating personalized moments and memories as a result.

Why It Matters

The beautiful human story of fulfilling a sick five-year-old boy's wish, the efforts of Disney to personalize your visit to their theme parks, Bollywood wedding videos and the rise of personal branding through social media all share a single underlying theme: the human desire for recognition.

Everyone wants to be noticed, recognized and celebrated.

Dale Carnegie once wrote “a person's name is to that person the sweetest most important sound in any language.” His point, made through years of observation, was that people are hardwired to seek out moments of recognition where they feel singled out, understood and appreciated.

In a world where individualism is rising, the human desire for recognition can become paramount. When people want to feel like stars every day and have the tools and platforms to expect it—the leaders who connect and the brands that inspire loyalty will be the ones who offer personalized treatment, celebrate their consumers, and manage to treat them like the stars they long to be.

Who Should Use This Trend?

The most powerful element of this trend is how it crosses between leadership and business. Retailers and those who offer a physical experience will find this trend particularly valuable, however anyone in a leadership position should also consider the implications when it comes to leading a team and inspiring them to believe in a mission. This trend is equally applicable whether you happen to be trying to integrate more personalization to improve a customer experience, or trying to inspire more loyalty from a group of people you are trying to lead or influence.

How to Use This Trend

- ✓ **Ask personal questions** – Most of us have been taught that it is impolite to ask questions that are too personal. The

problem with censoring ourselves against getting personal is that you may lack the information you need in order to really treat someone else like a star. Disney's MagicBand asks for an extraordinary amount of personal data, but they reflect it back to their customers in an obvious way that makes it useful. When you ask customers to share more, it can lead you to a valuable insight to help personalize an experience in a way they may remember for a lifetime.

- ✓ **Use data you already have** – One of the biggest ironies of many organizations is the store of data that has been collected but never used. Do you have your customers' physical addresses? If so, do you ever send them something proactively that isn't a marketing offer? The point is not to collect data simply to fill a hole in a spreadsheet. If you ask for a piece of information, be sure you're going to use it—or don't ask in the first place.
- ✓ **Focus on memories people can share** – One of the most frequently shared pieces of advice in business today is about creating experiences instead of selling products. It is good advice, most of the time. To effectively use the trend of *Everyday Stardom*, though, may require more effort not only on creating a memorable experience, but also on helping people to actually remember it by helping them share it as it happens.

Chapter 19



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The 2016 Perspective

Fame has always been an elusive ambition, but in the coming year it may become increasingly easy to obtain at least for a fleeting moment – and therefore more of an expectation from consumers used to being pampered through personalization.

One example from early last year was the Nike+ team's creative method for celebrating the cumulated annual fitness achievements of their members. Rather than send an email destined to be deleted, they created something more personal. The team combined location and weather information along with fitness data to create more than 100,000 algorithmically generated animations commissioned from a well known French illustrator. These animations were then stitched together into highly personalized videos for each Nike+ user that challenged them to reach a new milestone in 2015. The consumer, in effect, was the star of her own show ... courtesy of Nike+.

This example was just one of dozens of personalized initiatives from

companies in 2015 that continued to celebrate individual consumers as superstars. Coca-Cola created bottles with individual names on them – and then let consumers buy them playfully for one another. YouTube personalities like video blogger Marques Brownlee (who former Google Exec Vic Gundotra called “the best technology reviewer on the planet”) are having big impacts on how consumers select products.

In the next year, treating individuals like superstars and seeing media personalities emerge through social platforms is likely to grow exponentially – and consumer expectations are likely to do the same, leading to even more pressure on brands of all sizes to create personal experiences and make every customer feel like a VIP no matter how much they spend.

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