

## Selling Space

By Naté Sushereba, Exec VP-Public Relations & Marketing, Kepler Space Institute



As the science fiction of yesterday becomes the science reality of today many questions arise about the practical and moral applications of marketing in the intergalactic frontier. The commercialization of outer space is nothing new; however, the customer is changing and so must our thinking change about how we make money “selling space”

**“You have to know the past to understand the present.” (Dr. Carl Sagan)**

The first commercial use of outer space was in 1962, when the Telstar 1 was launched to transmit television signals over the Atlantic. Today there are thousands of commercial satellites orbiting our earth. Historically, commercial use of outer space has been primarily mass communication based. With the incorporation of companies like Virgin Galactic, XCOR Aerospace, and Space Adventures, space tourism is becoming more accessible. If we then add projects like Mars One, a one-way trip with the purpose of establishing a permanent human colony on Mars, it becomes clear that the customer base for space travel is swiftly expanding.

We all know what history tells us about adventure-based tourism and the colonization of new territories, the “I got here first/expended resources/took all the risk, so what I find should be mine” mentality is as prevalent now as it was during the Colonial era. While the morality of exploiting future cosmic resources might be ambiguous and while all spacefaring governments and private organizations may need to establish regulations for commercial enterprise, the fact remains that in order for private industry to go forward with future investments, they must be incentivized.

We believe pretty strongly that if we want to go to space to stay, space has to pay. That’s the bottom line. We’ve got to find ways of making space happen for all of humanity, other than through government programs, because they’re subject to limited budgets and limited political attention span. The programs stop and start and they change with every political whim. (James Benson, former CEO SpaceDev)

So the questions are ... ***How do we make space pay? How do we sell something we do not own?***

First we must identify what we can sell. Education, entertainment, investment in technologies, future space travel, and colonization would be foremost on the list. Next we must identify our customer base. Unlike in the past, when the majority of space

consumers were large telecommunications corporations, governments, and research facilities, we are seeing a shift in mainstream interest in the world of space exploration: students preparing for jobs in the space technology field who may very well lay the ground work for future space colonization and exploration, GenXer's and Baby Boomers investing in companies promising financial returns in what may possibly be "the final frontier" market, and the entertainment customer who holds a fascination with all things extraterrestrial who will seek out and spend money on experiences such as science centers, anti-gravity and space flight simulators, aerospace technology symposiums, and publications sensationalizing the cutting edge developments in space travel.

Now that we have established our customer base, how do we target market these growing demographics?

The following market strategies can be integrated into any business model:

- Create a cohesive public image.
- Establish a brand that is respected in the scientific community and maintains integrity.
- Personify a corporate culture in which consumers aspire to be members.
- Create advertising with intelligent mass appeal.
- Use social media to cast a wide net with a simple three-step process:
  - Clickbait – an eye-catching link on a website that encourages people to read on.
  - Blogs – intriguing but digestible/entertaining information about your product with links to your company.
  - Corporate publications – in-depth information for the serious consumer.

As popular interest in all things relating to outer space grows along with a more globalized economy, one might say that we are experiencing a Space Renaissance. Space is no longer the exclusive domain of governments, militaries, large corporations, or even scientists. Anyone with an interest can now buy their own piece of "space".

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**About the Author:** Naté Sushereba currently serves as the Executive Vice President of Public Relations and Marketing for Kepler Space Institute. Additionally, her National Space Society responsibilities encompass serving as both VIP Coordinator and the National Marketing Director for the annual International Space Development Conference.



**Editors' Notes:** We have been privileged to have the professional services of Naté Sushereba at Kepler Space Institute. She is our most recently appointed member of the Board of Directors; and we have just completed ISDC 2015 at Toronto, where Naté received a Service Excellence Award. Naté is one of Kepler Space Institute's stars. **Bob Krone**