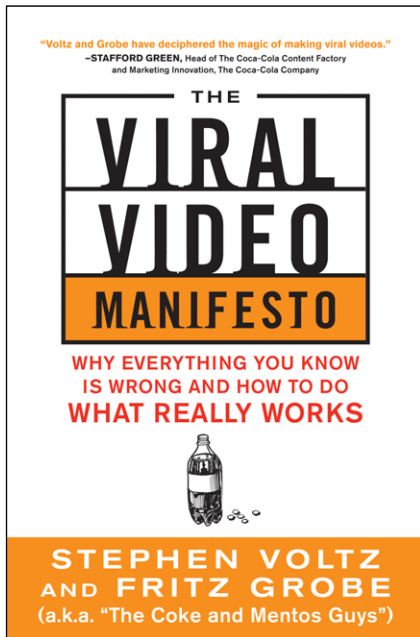


Exerpt From:



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The T-Mobile Welcome Back



What It Is: Following the huge success of *The T-Mobile Dance*, the company's train station flash mob that we discussed in Chapter 9, T-Mobile released *The T-Mobile Welcome Back*. Like the dance video, this video starts with a simple title card showing the location and date of the stunt:



The
T-Mobile
Welcome
Back



The
T-Mobile
Dance

Heathrow Terminal 5

27th October 2010

No instruments were used in this Im.

And like the dance, this is guerrilla theater: an unexpected performance in an unusual location. But this time, the performance is an a cappella medley of songs welcoming people home at the airport.

The video first shows a wide shot of the crowd waiting at international arrivals, and then it cuts to a couple embracing. In a series of quick cuts, we see a woman approach the couple with a flower, starting to sing “At Last,” another woman joins in with a vocal “violin” line, the couple is offered the flower (shown from three different camera angles), a man adds in with a vocal percussion line, and three women add in as well, before the song changes. This takes us to the 36-second mark.

With the change in song comes a change in singers. New performers run in and sing to a group of flight attendants. Yet another group sings to a young man as he walks through the terminal. The energy kicks up at 1:30 with a larger group singing with arms outstretched, and the smiles really start spreading in the crowd watching. More groups of singers run up to people walking into the terminal. At 2:00, a man with a beard stands with a stunned expression on his face as a group of singers surrounds him.

At 2:15, the video hits its stride with “I Knew You Were Waiting (For Me).” The lead singer approaches a man waiting with a sign. When he smiles and laughs, we see and hear her smile and laugh in response. That takes us into a final montage to Peters and Lee’s “Welcome Home,” featuring a series of shots of embraces, high fives, singers with their hands in the air, smiling faces, and a final shot of a girl wiping tears from her face as her friend embraces her and the singers sing behind them.

How The T-Mobile Welcome Back Scores on the Four Rules

This video was not as successful as its predecessor (12 million views versus 35 million views), and while *Welcome Back* has its strengths, there are clear places where it falls down on the four rules.

Be True: Like its predecessor, *Welcome Back* captures an elaborately planned, true event, but *Welcome Back* involves the heavy use of

production techniques that interfere with that truth. In the first 30 seconds of singing, there are 12 different shots. In the same period of time, *The T-Mobile Dance* has only 4. Overall, *Dance* has a total of 32 shots (still a lot for viral video) while *Welcome Back* has a staggering 82. *Welcome Back* comes at you with an edit every 2.25 seconds. That overstimulates our orienting response and cuts down on contagiousness.

There aren't just too many edits; there are also too many camera angles. *Dance* feels like there were just a few hidden cameras, whereas *Welcome Back* feels like a big-budget professional shoot with cameras everywhere. *Welcome Back* is close to the glossy, perfect-audio, lots-of-cameras feel of *Disneyland Musical Marriage Proposal*, which makes it feel less true.

Don't Waste My Time: *Welcome Back* does well on this. One could quibble on whether or not any trimming could be done—perhaps one or two songs could go—but overall, it keeps things moving.

Be Unforgettable: Again, good marks here. These are interesting, creative situations, and they create compelling reactions.

Humanity: The second big problem is here. Just as *Dance* did a better job of staying true with its production techniques, it also showed us more joyful human reactions. Several of the reactions in *Welcome Back* are awkward because the singers are sometimes aggressive and unintentionally put passersby on the spot. Where the performers in *Dance* just started dancing and people nearby could watch or join in, the singers in *Welcome Back* run up to people and demand a reaction. Particularly take a look at the fellow at 2:00 who finds himself surrounded, with a singer right in his face. He's not alone in a less than joyful reaction.

Welcome Back is at its best when the singer at 2:15 breaks and laughs with the man whom she is singing to. That's a human crack in the otherwise-too-glossy veneer. He is affected by her, and vice versa. That's a great moment of humanity. If more of *Welcome Back*

had captured the humanity and joy that it shows in its final minute, it would have been a more contagious video.

Music: The music here is great, providing energy and emotion. Like the camerawork, however, the audio is perfect, with very little sense that it is being performed live.

What We Might Have Done Differently: Most of all, we would use half as many cameras and half as many shots. This video is too glossy and perfect, so we would rough it up with more live audio and less perfect camerawork. And finally, we would bring out more of the joy that we see at the end. We would back off on the aggressive running at people that provokes awkward reactions and instead, focus on the humanity that emerges in the final shots.