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All You Need Is ... Email?

Joe Ferullo | Nov. 17, 2009 NCR Today

I don't know what makes me more upset: my company-supplied Blackberry, or the insane commercials the smart-phone maker is now airing that tie their product to -- get this -- love and a classic Beatles song.

I despise my Blackberry. I hear it all the time: in my sleep, at church, on the beach -- when I am nowhere near it, I still hear it. It haunts me. That incessant buzz of my vibrating Blackberry, filled with email messages about something someone feels demands my immediate attention. Thanks to my Blackberry, I am never out of touch. Thanks to my Blackberry, vacations and weekends are not time off from work, merely a change in location.

Can you feel the unbridled happiness that is my life since Blackberry walked into it? Well, apparently the people who make this little slice of heaven actually do feel it, very very much.

You can imagine my, well, unbridled happiness, when a few days ago -- relaxing on my couch, book on my lap, television on, my Blackberry a good twelve feet away on the other side of the room -- a commercial popped up in the screen. (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mC1j5QHMM8k) It starts out with the joyous strains of the Beatles' "All You Need Is Love" (a cover version with a more contemporary beat), then flashes up scene after scene of confident human beings do all kinds of wonderful things: climbing mountains, hugging their children, playing in a rock band that is doing a cover of a Beatles' classic.

I leaned forward, trying to discern the advertising "message" here as a multi-cultural group of young people danced in a hip-hop circle: some UN agency dedicated to worldwide understanding, perhaps? An eco-friendly automobile powered by water vapors and discarded french-fry oil? How about a pharmaceutical company: maybe all these happy people were taking the same miracle pill? Bright colors and wide smiles flashed by. And then the tag line appeared: "Do What You Love.... Blackberry."

Huh? Blackberry? I glanced over at my infernal pocket-sized dose of disaster, sitting mutely (for the moment) on our kitchen table. THAT? Helping me do what I LOVE? Look again at the commercial: you will notice that no one is doing any of these wonderful things in the commercial with their Blackberry. No one. (This is, perhaps, why they are all so darned happy.)

What was going through the minds of the ad agency behind this campaign? Something, no doubt, out of George Orwell's "1984": identify the problem, then keep denying it until it goes away. People see their Blackberrys as a digital leash -- so tell them they love it! Over and over again. War is peace, freedom is slavery, ignorance is strength.

Then add on a Beatles' anthem from the 1960s, a song that conjures up those precise images of love, independence and freedom.

And it might havef worked, too -- this campaign is an onslaught, with commercials that feature an architect, a fashion designer, a ballet troupe and a couple out on a date. (Seriously. They are all on You Tube - check them out if you have the emotional fortitude.) They might have actually drawn me over to their side.

But then my birthday gift arrived in the mail on Monday.

Now, my birthday was actually in September, but what my wife bought for me was so popular, so in-demand, it was on back-order and just came in. It is not an iPhone, not a Blackberry Storm or a PalmPre or a Google 'Droid gizmo from Verizon.

I got the Beatles. The big digitally remastered box set of every album they ever issued. I opened it up, dug through it like a treasure hunter and found the CD for the movie soundtrack to "Yellow Submarine." There it was, track six: "All You Need Is Love." I put it on and listened: the sound was crystal clear and unmistakable, from French horns at the top to McCartney riffing on "She loves you, yeah-yeah-yeah" near the end.

I turned it up loud. My Blackberry may've been buzzing, but I didn't hear it.

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