

In a recent blog post for my company's blog, [Gamification for your company](#), I made brief mention of evangelists and social reach. The general gist was that in this world of social media, a few enthusiastic supporters or evangelists could be worth more than a mediocre marketing campaign. Social reach can be a much underestimated, but very powerful way to spread brand awareness.

To explain, I will make use of an old legend (deep huh!).

This legend has been given roots in both India and China, but the upshot is the same. A powerful man offers (King or Emperor) offers a wise man a reward of their choosing. In china this is for the invention of chess, in India this id for beating the king at a game of chess. The wise asked for grains of rice as his prize, given in the following manner. Starting with a single grain of rice on the first square of the board, each subsequent square should contain double the amount of the last. Therefore, the second would contain 2 grains, the third 4, the fourth 8 and so on. This seemed simple enough.

The trouble came when he tried to pay. You see by the time he would have filled the twentieth square, he would have needed over one million grains of rice.

Exponential Growth

Let us put that into real context. Start with one evangelist or fan of your product on **twitter** with a few people in their network. They convert two people into evangelists. These two people then convert another two people each and so on; imagine how far your reach could spread. In just twenty generations of this kind of networking, you can touch over a million people. Of course the popular term for this is viral. I prefer just to call it popular.

This cuts the cost of marketing substantially, because once the ball is rolling it is self-sustaining.. This kind of brand loyalty is priceless!

Oh and for those of you interested, the number of grains of rice needed would have been 18,446,744,073,709,551,615 to fill the entire chessboard, 9,223,372,036,854,775,808 on the 64th square!!

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