

## **When Sheen Didn't Shine!**

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Charlie Sheen had the starring role in the television show, "Two and a Half Men," for almost eight complete years. The show ran on CBS, easily beating the competition for the largest share of the market, and in syndication, where the show continually drew large audiences. Charlie Sheen reportedly earned well in excess of \$1,000,000 per episode for the show. Because of many personal problems and a final, public, negative verbal attack by Charlie against to the creator/executive producer of the show, CBS and Warner Bros. TV pulled the plug on the show, just four episodes short of a full season, thereby ending Charlie Sheen's association with the show. The word is, however, that both the CBS® and Fox® television networks might be interested in the services of Charlie Sheen. While that activity was being dealt with on the sidelines, Charlie decided to start up a multi-city personal, one-man tour entitled, "My Violent Torpedo of Truth/Defeat is Not an Option," apparently, more so to publicly present his side of the story and to gain public support, than anything else. The tour scheduled shows (presentations) in major cities in the U.S. and Canada. The first stop on the tour was Detroit, Michigan, on Saturday, April 2, 2011, where a sold-out house of 4,700 was anxiously awaiting the arrival of Charlie Sheen.

While not many would condone Charlie's past behaviour, there has been enough support for him to continually add up to 20 cities to the tour. He did, however, have trouble arranging for hotel accommodation in New York City, probably because of the damage he caused at the Plaza Hotel in NYC in late October, 2010. Scalpers in some cities also have had a difficult time recouping their investment, let alone earn a profit, due to a lack of interest in what Charlie Sheen has to offer during the tour.

The Detroit stop of the tour was covered live online by USA Today® columnist, Ann Oldenburg, using Twitter® and Lifelinelive®. While in the audience at the show, Oldenburg tweeted the live action and later posted her experience online on the USA Today website.

In a nutshell, opening night was a bombshell for Charlie Sheen: That was obvious as one read the online entries made by Oldenburg, as the show progressed. The following chronology, metaphorically, starting at the sound of the bell, reflects most of what Oldenburg reported, excluding the material placed within a set of brackets (i.e., [ ]). In each case, the time stamp shown is the time the tweet was posted by Oldenburg. Material from the Chicago Tribune, has been included, and identified as such, as well.

Let the show begin ....

The planned 90-minute 8:00 p.m. show appeared to be underway around 8:11 p.m. (EDT). At the beginning, the audience greeted Charlie with a standing ovation (Oldenburg, 2011b) and applause (Sheen sputters, 2011). At 8:13, part of the crowd was chanting "Charlie, Charlie" while others were booing the star. At 8:18, while being heckled, the star supposedly had directed the "f-word" toward the audience about 50 times. There was some support for Charlie from the audience. At 8:21, Charlie left the stage, which resulted in the audience booing the star of the show. At 8:47, the audience was being filmed by someone on stage; the audience responded by "flipping him off."

By 8:53, the show was finally underway. Most of what then took place was the showing of videos and the playing of music (e.g., music from the movie *Jaws*, video from the movie *Apocalypse Now*, footage from the Sheen's *Call of Duty*, and television interviews of Charlie). Two of Charlie's goddesses made out with each other (i.e., kissed) on stage. Charlie put on a Detroit Tigers baseball jersey. Charlie then presented his "Warlock States of Sheen," apparently letting it go on to long, which resulted in negative reaction from the audience. Charlie stated that he was there to "enlist and train the Vatican assassin in all of you." Charlie called Thomas Jefferson a sissy. Charlie indicated that a troll is afraid of its own reflection. [When Charlie was first dealing with the cancellation of his television show, he referred to Jon Cryer, one of his co-stars in the show (i.e., his on-air brother), as a troll.] Charlie then asked why it took the audience, referring to them as "gorgeous humans," so long, 18 minutes, to buy up all of the tickets for the show. Charlie then made a derogatory statement about Sarah Palin. [While we won't repeat the statement here, it pertains to a common occupation of many of the female characters appearing on his television show.] Charlie referred to the audience as "good people," and told them to "feel the vibrance of (their) tiger blood." [In his public statements since the cancellation of his television show, Charlie Sheen has made repeated reference to "tiger blood."] At 9:21, in response to being booed, Charlie responded by saying, "too bad, I already got your money."

At 9:33, the audience keeps yelling out to him. At 9:34, Charlie sits on the lap of an audience member. At 9:35, he is playing catch with someone on stage. At 9:35, the audience is booing at one of Charlie's videos that is showing. At 9:37, Charlie was going to tell stories about crack; there is a mixture of cheering, yelling, and booing from the audience. At 9:39, Charlie is taking questions from the audience (e.g., about AA, porn stars), but he doesn't answer the questions, only promising to do so later. Charlie refers to Detroit as an "honest city" and to himself as "the most honest man in the universe." At 9:47, Charlie shows another video and, at 9:52, shows "his version" of his 20-20 television interview. At 9:56, the audience continues to boo the video. At 9:58, Charlie is answering questions from the web. An audience member asks for a hug, Charlie invites her on stage and complies with the request. At 10:01, Charlie indicates that he is "having a great time." At 10:02, Charlie is tweeting on stage. An audience member then yells out that he wants his money back. At 10:04, Charlie tells the audience to tell the person who is booing to shut up so that others "can enjoy the show." By this time, Ann Oldenburg indicates in a tweet that Charlie Sheen has "lost control of the show." Charlie leaves the stage, calling for music to be played. A rapper is now on stage performing. At 10:11, the "Winning" video is being shown; the video features Snoop Dogg, not

Charlie Sheen. [Apparently, Snoop Dogg was scheduled to make a personal appearance, but this did not occur. At 10:12, audience members were leaving. The show is now over; Ann Oldenburg states that Charlie did not say goodbye. Sometime between 10:26 and 10:41, Charlie did re-appear on stage.

In her online article posting, Oldenburg indicates that there was mixed fan response. Some thought the show was good, others thought it “sucked,” and others blamed the audience for booing. When Charlie Sheen re-appeared on stage, after the “upset, angry and disappointed crowd left,” Charlie called the remaining 50 or so audience members as his “true” fans.

The next stop on the tour is Chicago, on Sunday, April 3, 2011. As of Sunday morning, the show was sold out; the \$35 to \$69.50 tickets were sold out (Sheen sputters, 2011), \$80 for main-floor tickets (Johnson, 2011). On the bus trip to Chicago, Charlie revised the format of his show. The new format, and the one used in Chicago was that of an interview style, with Charlie simply sitting on stage being interviewed by his tour producer and friend, Joey Scoleri (Oldenburg, 2011c). Scoleri can be credited with keeping Charlie somewhat focused during the show (Johnson, 2011). The end result of the changes and new format, the booing was absent; there was just cheering (Oldenburg, 2011c). For the most part, use of the “f-word” was also missing (Johnson, 2011). Charlie indicated that the new format will continue to be used, unless he comes up with “something smarter, something more dangerous” (Oldenburg, 2011c). During the Chicago show, Charlie apologized to Jon Cryer for calling him a “troll and indicated that he would be willing to return to “Two and a Half Men,” if asked;.

It appears that the audiences for the tour, so far, did not pay so see a lot of videos; they came to see and hear Charlie; just like the kids who came to see his “Charlie Waffles” concert, the kids came to hear “Charlie Waffles” sing and to sing along with Charlie, not to watch videos.

**Focus:** Marketing as it applies to people (particularly, celebrities), characteristics of service marketing (i.e., the 4 I's), marketing mix, target market, attitude, attitude change, positive/negative communicator, attitude-behavior model, balance theory, involvement (enduring, situational), latitude of acceptance (evoked set), latitude of non-commitment (inert set), latitude of rejection (inept set), no demand, negative demand, full demand, communication process, publicity.

### Questions:

1. Define each of the concepts listed in the focus section.
2. Explain how each of the concepts listed in the focus section applies to this case?
3. Do you think the Detroit patrons should receive some form of compensation for what happened at the show, and if so, of what form and how should it be dispensed? Explain.

4. If you were the marketing manager for Charlie Sheen, how would you react to what took place during the first show? What would you change about the upcoming shows? Why? Describe the nature of the change.
5. If you were to cast Charlie Sheen as a spokesperson in a television commercial, for what product/brand would it be? Explain, using appropriate marketing theories and concepts.
6. Explain how the donning of a Detroit Tigers shirt by Charlie Sheen makes Heider's balance theory a relevant concept in this case? Should Charlie carry out similar behavior for the show in Chicago? Explain.
7. Why do you think the Chicago show went off a lot better? Explain using appropriate marketing theories and concepts (particularly from the point of view of the dimensions of a service).
8. Identify celebrities who were positive communicators who became negative communicators? Why did their status change? Were they able to overcome what caused their status to change and re-establish the appropriate positive image? Explain. How does the market view Charlie Sheen: as a positive and/or a negative communicator? Explain. Do you think the market view of Charlie Sheen changed as a result of the Detroit show? Explain. Do you think the market view of Charlie Sheen changed as a result of the Chicago show? Explain.
9. Carry out secondary research to find out what happened at future tour shows conducted by Charlie Sheen.

**Sources:** See the following original sources for more details about this situation: [1] Oldenburg, Ann (2011a, April 2). Live from Detroit: It's Charlie Sheen. *USA Today*. Retrieved from <http://content.usatoday.com/communities/entertainment/post/2011/04/live-from-detroit-its-charlie-sheen-1> [2] Oldenburg, Ann (2011b, April 3). Sheen bombs on opening night of tour. *USA Today*. Retrieved from [http://usatoday.com/life/people/2011-04-03-sheen-live\\_N.htm](http://usatoday.com/life/people/2011-04-03-sheen-live_N.htm) [3] Sheen sputters in Detroit - - what about Chicago? (2011, April 3). *Chicago Tribune*. Retrieved from <http://www.chicagobreakingnews.com/news/local/chibrknews-sheen-sputters-in-detroit-but-what-about-chicago-20110403,0,279614.story>. [4] Oldenburg, Ann. (2011c, April 3). Sheen tour veers from boos to cheers. *USA Today*. Retrieved from [http://www.usatoday.com/life/people/2011-04-03-sheen-live\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/life/people/2011-04-03-sheen-live_N.htm) [5] Johnson, Steve. (2011, April 3). Sheen's extreme makeover. *Chicago Tribune*. Retrieved from <http://www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/ct-live-0404-charlie-sheen-live-20110403,0,4324207.column>