
Oscar Selfies: Another Side to the Fun



By [Henrich Greve](#) , INSEAD Professor of Entrepreneurship

Both "the selfie that broke Twitter" and the device that captured it are brilliant examples of powerful alliances.

If you read any newspapers or watched any TV this week, there is a good chance you know Ellen DeGeneres took a "selfie" photo with many stars (and one non-star) at the Academy Awards ceremony. You probably also know it hit a record number of views on Twitter, and she used a Samsung phone. In fact, the picture was taken by a Samsung Galaxy Note 3, a so-called phablet because it's a phone so big it's just a little smaller than a Tablet.

As an article in [Wall Street Journal](#) pointed out, this was product placement. Samsung had an ad deal with the ABC for the event which included product placement. So when Ellen planned taking selfies the broadcaster suggested she use the new Galaxy.

Product placements are becoming more acceptable as a way of subtly influencing us. In fact the advertising industry is starting to wonder just how far they can go before it really starts annoying people. But for now it's seen as a useful collaboration.

The Samsung placement is especially interesting because of the number of different collaborations that exist within the phone itself. The phablet is overall a Samsung innovation. The company, which was the first to market such a large phone, now leads the phablet market. Other phone makers thought the size was so impractical it took nearly a year of market success to convince them the product had a viable market.

But capable as Samsung may be, it cannot make a phone like that using solely Samsung parts. Apart from the screen which is a Samsung design, the body of the phone includes parts made by Qualcomm, Wacom, Murata, Maxim, Broadcom, Avago, Silicon Image, Micron, and Audience.

Phone makers typically put together devices from many suppliers, so this is not completely unusual: Apple for example knows less about hardware manufacturing than Samsung does. But the key point is the parts of a pioneering phone cannot be ordered off the shelf. They involve collaboration between the phone manufacturer and the part makers. It is through a large set of alliances and informal collaborations and much practice in making these partnerships work well that Samsung is able to put together the innovative phablets.

For me, part of the humour behind the “Oscar selfies” was that it involved Samsung, a company skilled in using alliances - as highlighted in the book [**Network Advantage**](#). Having Ellen DeGeneres getting her friends to collaborate for some nice selfies is the rest of the fun: The combination of Ellen and fun photography is hard to beat.

[**Greve, Henrich R., Timothy J. Rowley, and Andrew V. Shipilov. 2014. Network Advantage: How to Unlock Value from your Alliances and Partnerships. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.**](#)

[**Vranica, Susan. 2014. Behind the Preplanned Oscar Selfie: Samsung's Ad Strategy. Wall Street Journal, March 3, 2014.**](#)

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