



BRAND EXPERIENCE LAB is humming with the new **MICHAEL K** project, a 22,000 square foot store that will redefine the word "experiential" in the retail sector. Big brands have gotten onboard in a big way. **THE NORTH FACE** product area features a wind-tunnel and an indoor brook to test their Gortex socks and shoes. Then there's the shower: customers can check out the waterproof capabilities of North Face clothing. If they get wet, the item's free. **NIKE'S** area includes a museum of retired and famous shoe styles, including the shoes Michael Jordan wore in his first slam dunk competition. Other brands include **LRG, SEAN JOHN, AKADEMICS, ENYCE, BEN SHERMAN, POLO JEANS CO., LACOSTE,** and **MITCHEL N NESS.**

The store, at 512 Broadway in SoHo, features a DJ booth, performance stages and a laser show with fog capabilities. The 180 plasma and LCD screens will broadcast customized and commercial content. Music will be manned by **DJ CLARK KENT** (producer of hip-hop impresario **JAY-Z**) at special times during the day/week. The store will be available to rent for private parties after store hours.

Brand Experience Lab will be adding the frosting on this project, with services that will include:

- Pricing, selling and programming the advertising on in-store network;
- Contracting with their advertisers and media companies to run the network; and
- Creating value added promotions and programs for the store.

Want to be a First Mover in the world of experience? Contact Mark Romeo, **BRAND EXPERIENCE LAB,** at **212-274-1882 x105.**

Massaging the Message

The Brand Experience Lab Creates New Paths to the Hearts and Minds of Today's Consumers

It has been said that today's consumer is pummeled with over 3,000 marketing messages per day.

3,000. Per day.

And so, here you sit, contemplating how to best tell your brand message, build loyalty, drive revenues, connect with the consumer/customer/guest/visitor. Ready to jump on the brandwagon and do what you do best—but how? How do you cut through that clutter? How do you stake a claim in the mind of your target audience? Better yet, how do you stake that claim in their heart, making the transition from just another product / place to a product or place with real meaning?

Rather than simply filter information regarding all the attributes of a brand, today's prospective purchasers want more. They now want a visceral interaction with your product. They want to connect with it, connect through it. They want to *experience* it.

There are many ways to approach the idea of experiential branding and marketing. Some brands choose to create destinations that lure guests with the promise of entertainment, education and / or historical perspective. Others create road campaigns that allow target audiences around the country—or the globe—to get to know the brand in a new and better light. And of course, the Internet has opened up new opportunities for marketers to experiment with the notion of place and destination.

In any approach that calls for an experiential adventure, there is a potential place for technology. Today's consumers—especially younger



**TODAY'S
PURCHASERS
WANT A
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audiences—expect it, and, in fact, look for it. Marketers have the opportunity to link their products with new approaches that combine the message with new mediums. In short, forty years later, Marshall McLuhan's statement the Medium is the Message has never been clearer or more on point.

So where to find those media? Better yet, how can you actually craft a technology / media approach that is specific to your product or brand, lending not only the act of experience but the side effect of cool to your message?

The Brand Experience Lab (BEL) believes it has the answer to these questions. Founded in 2001 by a group of industry professionals with depth in brand management, technology, marketing and product innovation, BEL has created a nexus of innovation and education that places applied market research in the hands of innovative brand managers. BEL has formed a synergy partnership with two highly esteemed institutions to provide the first applied marketing research consortium. Simply put, BEL allows marketers to create technology and media based approaches that allow their products to better touch the hearts and minds of consumers—and own the intellectual property of the approach.



BY DAVID POLINCHOCK

FORGET THE FLAK

Thousands. We're talking thousands. You read in the lead article of this first issue of Belwether, today's consumers are jammed with thousands of marketing messages per day. It's gotten to the point that the practice of brand marketing has more in common with the hunt than the chase. After all, we speak in terms of capturing eyeballs, capturing audiences...capturing consumers anywhere and everywhere, as if the simple act of smacking them in the face with our message was going to produce the desired reaction—to get them to buy the product. The consumer has become the baby seal of the Twenty-first Century, and we are the mighty hunters.

The problem is, those baby seals have found a way to turn the clubs on us. How? By ignoring us. By turning on the TiVO, ripping the heavy-stock paper ads out of Vanity Fair, tearing the logos off the apparel. And why not? I mean after all, I guess I look at the ads above the urinal, but I can't say they they've ever influenced me to purchase. I mean, just because my eyes needed a place to focus doesn't mean my mind wanted to.

YOU WANT TO CUT THROUGH THE CLUTTER? THEN STOP CREATING IT.

During the last decade, I have read business plans and heard pitches for a variety of new media formats—the aforementioned advertising in bathroom stalls; advertising on postal trucks; advertising on ATM machines and at gas pumps. The ideas range from the ridiculous to the outrageous. What makes this even more bewildering is that in a time of media uncertainty (increased fragmentation, declining viewership) costs are going up while frequency and reach are going down.

The fact is, audiences have changed, and the delivery of the message needs to change with them. During World War II, when bombing raids were run, defenders would shoot loads of flak into the air—not with any specific, focused target; just with the hope that something would run into it and fall from the sky. You want to cut through the clutter? Then stop creating it. No more flak marketing. Focus on what your audience is asking for: a real relationship with your product. Stop the catchy slogans and the clever jingles,

and wrap your arm around the consumer with a real experience of who you are and what you stand for. Let them experience your story.

At Brand Experience Lab, we believe there are three attributes to a great story: people want to hear it; people want to tell it; and people want to participate in it. One of the best presentations I've heard on creating an authentic, compelling experience based on story was done by Larry Keeley of The Dublin Group. He offered the following guidelines:

Is the experience well defined?

Is there a narrative story that the audience understands—or frankly, is there a narrative at all? What is the story you tell to your customers every day? Could you define it? More importantly, can your audience?

Is it fresh?

We live in such a 'me too' world that it is often very easy to just copy what other people are doing, but that certainly doesn't create a sustainable difference for your product or brand. And that leaves you to compete simply on price. Great brands are never built from price alone.

Is it immersive - can you lose yourself in the experience?

Are there things that constantly pull you out of the brand experience? Think of how many times you've seen some piece of technology – even simple things like a 13" combo VCR/TV – not working at an event or retail location. Or employees more interested in what's important for them and not the customer. All of this prevents customers from truly being immersed and engaged in your brand experience.

Is it accessible? Is it easy to follow?

Is it significant? Does the experience offer the opportunity for it to get better the second—and third, fourth and fifth—time around?

Is the experience transformative?

Will the consumer remember, think, grow? Without these attributes, your message is static. And static is death. Forget the flak. Put down the club. Transform your story, transform your customer. Transform your success.

SAVE THE DATE



August

6-8

The Experience Architecture Forum at Harvard Cambridge, MA www.gsd.harvard.edu/execed [866] GSD.EXED

September

24-25

Pine and Gilmore's Annual ThinkAbout Marriott Marquis New York, NY www.strategicichorizons.com

Sept-October

Sept. 29-Oct. 1

The 2003 Pharmaceutical Marketing Congress Philadelphia, PA www.pharmaevent.com

...PUT THIS BRAIN POWER TO WORK, CREATING MESSAGES FOR HEARTS AND MINDS.

That ownership is a key issue. While other institutions have allowed interested parties to utilize new technologies in development (case in point, MIT's Media Lab), those parties have simply ridden the coattails of that which was in development. Not a bad approach at all—but not responsive to those market innovators that are looking for something unique to their own product. BEL has solved this issue through a unique sponsorship program. But first, a word or two about the two initial synergy partners.

The Entertainment Technology Center at Carnegie Mellon University

Carnegie Mellon's Entertainment Technology Center (ETC) offers a two-year Masters of Entertainment Technology (MET) degree, jointly conferred by Carnegie Mellon University's College of Fine Arts and School of Computer Science. This is not a Master of Science nor a Master of Arts or Fine Arts degree, but a unique, specialized degree program in the interdisciplinary field of entertainment technology. Carnegie Mellon University is the only university in the country to offer this degree.

An example of the technologies under development at the ETC is the synthetic interview.

Going beyond "the-making-of. . .", users are able to actually talk to the principals in the production. Imagine a synthetic interview using film archives and Dr. Martin Luther King, allowing a discussion with him about the civil rights movement of the 1960's. The synthetic interview offers unlimited possibilities that allow users to actually author their own experience, rather than merely listening to a pre-recorded interview. Powerful stuff.

The Institute for Simulation & Training

Founded in 1982, the Institute for Simulation & Training (IST) is one of the nation's leading research centers for simulation, training, modeling and virtual reality research for both defense and commercial applications. IST employs 80 full-time researchers and support personnel, 30 part-time faculty researchers and



numerous graduate and undergraduate students who work side by side with research faculty on real-world projects. IST is helping to define the future of simulation and training, while focusing on advancing modeling and simulation technology.

IST's laboratories support research in computer generated forces, virtual reality, computer graphics, entertainment, public safety, advanced distributed learning, computer-controlled robotics, human factors and behavioral science. 25,000 of IST's total 70,000 sq. ft. is principally dedicated to the Army's STRICOM and Army Research Institute.

BEL Sponsorship Program

How to put this brain power to work at creating messages for hearts and minds? BEL sponsorship program. Interested parties can participate in a variety of programs that boil down to one relatively simple approach: A goal is defined (i.e., how can my brand create a one-to-one experience that allows users to not only interact with my message, but indulge in a multi-platformed story / communication that allows the user some personal authorship of the message—locking them into my brand); a time element is determined (ten weeks, twenty weeks); a price is determined for that sponsorship; a team is assigned to the project, utilizing either or both the ETC and IST; a solution is created by the teams; the original party walks away with the majority ownership in the intellectual property *and* the product.

In short, today's marketing professionals have access to applied research for a specific product, project and budget. No need to hire in-house teams for far greater sums; no need to spend the time necessary to comb the pool of potential providers. And, to cap it off, the end product is more than a cool piece of technology or an innovative approach. There are the side by-products of the continuing support of some fine research institutions—and the opportunity to work with some brilliant young students that will be seeking employment in the near future.

McLuhan was right: the Medium truly is the Message, and in the case of BEL, the message as well—a message that is headed straight to the hearts and minds of the consumer / customer / visitor / guest.



OWNERSHIP OF
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY
IS A KEY ISSUE.

Reprinted from EM magazine



WHY EXPERIENCE?

Technology is both a blessing and curse.



While the advent of the internet, email, IMs, WiFi and cellular phones have cut the cable connecting today's consumers to the old anchors of geography—I live here, I work here—these ubiquitous forms of communication have also served as one more stone on the overload of information. No matter where we turn today, someone—a friend, a family member, a business associate—is trying to reach us. Usually with great success.

Into that fray steps the marketing professional. Keen on their mission, focused on telling their story, the marketer piles yet another healthy helping of words and pictures into the mix...and then wonders why so few of the target audience seems to be listening or reading. The simple fact of the matter is it's time to move beyond the auditory and the visual, and reach right down inside the kinesthetic heart of the consumer—to hit that emotional chord, build that bond.

To do so is to create an experience for the consumer—to give them something that they can viscerally react to; to engage their senses; to create a story surrounding the brand or product that they can author for themselves, so that it fits perfectly with who they are—and who they aspire to be.

Belwether recently asked several individuals in the vanguard of experience to comment on how and why the concept of 'experience' has begun to play such an important role in the brand story. Let's start with B. Joseph (Joe) Pine, co-author with James Gilmore of the seminal work "The Experience Economy" (Harvard Business Press, 1999):

"Marketers must understand that in the Experience Economy, the experience IS the marketing. In other words, the best way of generating demand for any product—whether a commodity, good, service, or other experience—is with an experience so

engaging that customers can't help but pay attention, and then pay up as a result by buying that product."

Katherine Stone, Director of Experiential Design & Development for The Coca-Cola Company amplifies Pine's message with her thoughts on the use of experience for the most widely recognized brand in the world:

"Experiences cut through the bombardment of promotions and advertisements. Most of the time, when we marketers think we're giving consumers an 'experience', we're really giving them nothing more than a dressed-up transaction. True experience comes with mutual benefit or enlightened self-interest on the part of the marketer. It means we've taken the time to truly understand someone's wants, needs, lifestage, lifestyle, psyche, etc., and we've fashioned a marketing solution that has impact because it's personally relevant. People are too busy and too smart to allow corporations to succeed through lazy marketing—they expect us to clearly understand their needs and provide them a consumption opportunity wrapped in an experience that also has value. I think people in entertainment and leisure destinations have always understood this—everything from the experience in the parking lot to the experience in the bathroom accretes to the overall perception of the brand. Now marketers are applying this to products—everything from how the consumer interacts with the product itself, to where, how and in what environment you buy the product, to what happens afterwards is important."

Drew Sheinman, formerly president of Simon Brand Ventures, the partnership division of retail real estate giant Simon Property Group, and now president of Drew Sheinman Enterprises weighs in on qualitative aspect of experience:

"In developing and activating a marketing strategy there are many tactical options—most of which deliver quantitative impact—the value of creating and presenting a brand 'experience' is to realize the qualitative value of connecting with consumers. A brand experience is a means to educate the consumer about a particular brand and engage them in a more meaningful and memorable fashion that if successful will lead to a longer term relationship with targeted consumers and increased brand equity."

In short, the use of experience to engage the consumer is a critical component of today's marketing strategy. The Brand Experience Lab looks forward to helping you craft your message for today's consumers.

If you google “The more things change, the more they stay the same”, that increasingly popular website will return over 2,100,000 entries featuring this phrase—which leads one to suspect that a lot of us believe it.

A lot of us may be in trouble, if that’s the case.

Today, the more things change, the more they change. Absolutes we once held as, well, *absolutes* are falling by the wayside with increasing regularity. The adoptions of new forms of media are streaking by at a breakneck pace. The public’s comfort level with alternative forms of communication is through the roof. Cell phones, pagers, PDAs, IMs, chat rooms—you name it, we connect with it, through it, around it. And the more we connect, the more we disconnect with the old forms of media.

Why? Because we can. Because we have a choice. In fact, we have way too many choices, way too much information. And so, we now find ourselves in the hunt for ways to circumvent the old ways of receiving information—most of which focused on serving up that which the source assumed we wanted to hear and see—and you know what they say about assuming.

We’ve grown tired of being force-fed the same old messages. Our communicative lives have moved from passive to interactive, and we’re now ready for the next leap. We’re now ready to take on the technology and use it to author our own information flow. We’re realizing we can craft our own CDs (download from the web), television programming (TiVO), in-car entertainment (satellite radio). We don’t have to have what they want us to have. We can craft our own *anything*.

When it comes to delivering the message, we don’t want voice mail trees and endless recordings, meaningless slogans that are at odds with the actual product or service delivered. Don’t tell me that The Right Relationship is Everything if you’re not willing to post the actual land-line number for my branch bank somewhere I can easily find it, so that I can talk to a living being. And don’t ask me to punch in my account number if you’re only going to ask me to repeat it when I finally do reach a real voice. I am a person, not a number. Our Relationship will be much more successful if you craft your service based on that knowledge.

The one constant we can still count on is that the consumer—the *We*—would like to believe the message. We just want it delivered in a way that cuts through the rest of the clutter that overburdens us. We want a visceral reaction to the things that interest us. We want to be surprised, delighted and transformed by real interaction with the product, service, destination. We want an authentic experience of it.

Belwether hopes to become a guideline toward the creation of those experiences. We intend to delight and surprise you with a new vision of reaching the consumer / guest / customer / visitor. We’d like to transform how you tell your story, helping you to mix the visceral with the auditory and visual. We hope that in delivering this point of view, you’ll consider the services of the Brand Experience Lab and its synergy partners.

Because the more things change, the more you have the opportunity to change—yourselves, and your customers.

We’ve grown tired of being force-fed the same old messages.

IN THE QUEST FOR COMPELLING BRAND EXPERIENCES?*

THOUGHT
LEADERSHIP

brand experience | lab |

IN BRAND
EXPERIENCE

- Provides proprietary technologies developed specifically for your brand
- Facilitates the entire process—*development, introduction, application, assessment and alignment*—of the brand experience throughout all consumer touchpoints.

* EXPERIENCE OPTIMIZATION™

Contact Mark Romeo at 212-274-1882 x105