

Are You Just Hunting?

The marketing chase continues

It's not just a cliché, it *is* a new world. The problem is, if you listen to the language of marketing, it sounds a lot like the language of a hunt. It's about capturing the audience, capturing "eyeballs." Capture audiences everywhere and claim that as success. I know it's not a pretty image, but I keep seeing the pictures that were used years ago to protest seal hunts—except that now the marketing community is holding the clubs and the consumers are the seals.

During the last decade, I have read business plans and heard pitches for new media formats such as advertising on postal trucks, 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.

Here are some surefire rules to help integrate your media mix to increase efficiency and efficacy.

1. Make it compelling. Is there a narrative story that the audience understands? Is there a narrative at all? What is the story that you tell to your customers every day? Could you define it? More importantly, can your audience? Make the product experience as good as the marketing experience. After the consumer leaves your event, will the message be retained during the actual consumer experience? This is probably one of the trickiest things to accomplish for those of us in the event marketing industry. After all, when we're producing events and tours, we sometimes have a better opportunity to control the hiring of the event staff and the script that they will follow. But what happens when the consumer leaves the marketing event and experiences the real product?

2. Deliver on your message. Here's something that I like to do, and I challenge you to see if your brand could stand up to my test. I was on the phone with a bank, trying to resolve a problem

with an account. During the course of my conversation with the customer service person, I asked her to dinner. She got a little nervous, then I explained that since the bank marketing message is, "Where the right relationship is everything," and since I wasn't getting the satisfaction I was looking for, we must not have the right relationship. I was only trying to create a better relationship in order to improve my banking service.

3. Don't use slogans to deliver an empty promise. Do you say that you're committed to total customer satisfaction and then create rules of engagement that are of benefit to you and not your customers? Do you train your customer service staff to only say yes to a request after the customer has asked a certain number of times? Are you prepared to live your slogan in everything you do, and not just the easy things?

4. Make it a movement. Jim Ward, vp-marketing at Lucas Films, said recently that the next generation of brand marketing is creating a movement. Would people camp out in front of anything for up to three weeks for your product? Many companies have created movements—just listen to any Mac user talk about PCs. Is your brand a movement or simply a product? Are people passionate about your brand, your products, and your services? Do they sincerely want to share their stories of your brand with other people? Are you telling the same story with all of your employees? Are they telling the same story to your customers?

5. Be authentic. If you need more answers, talk to consumers. Be who you are and leverage what your company stands for. I recently had the opportu-



nity to work on a product for a Fortune 100 company, helping to position them to a specific target audience. They wanted to talk about speed, but as anyone who has worked with large companies knows, speed is not one of their authentic story lines. They had many other authentic stories to tell, but it took a while for them to understand that and work with different language. Note that stories must be organic and can't be rushed.

Remember, it's a good story when people want to hear it, tell it, and participate in it. You can create a story that people will want to share in—once you do, your brand won't just be a product. **EM**

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