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The Power Behind Brand Relevancy

How brands can forge a connection with consumers, thereby establishing a lasting impression

SUCCESSFULLY MARKETING A BRAND IS MAKING IT RELEVANT TO ITS target consumers. That's the reality today. If you don't create an emotional connection between your company, its products or services and its audience, your marketing or public relations program will inevitably fail to achieve its fullest potential. Relevancy is about identifying and understanding your key consumers and figuring out what's important to them. It's also about establishing a connection with these consumers at a time and place when it is most relevant to them. If you learn to distinguish between selling a product and providing genuine, meaningful value, you will be able to form a lasting and credible relationship with your target audience.

Building Your Strategy

One of the first steps to developing a comprehensive strategy for your brand is establishing your brand's identity. It is essential to root your marketing and PR program in clearly defined messaging and positioning statements. Be sure to promote your company, products and services by using cohesive messages so they resonate with the consumer every time he or she hears about your brand. Experts say a message must be repeated at least seven times before it is remembered. Therefore, when it comes to messaging, repetition is critical, and ultimately results in a more powerful brand identity. Invest on the front end and spend time refining all of your key messages so your marketing and communications are consistent and have a clear direction throughout.

Creating Brand Exposure

While conventional PR tactics such as media relations outreach are still the most tried-and-true methods for educating the public about your company, more and more consumers are turning away from traditional media outlets and seeking out alternative sources for news and information. Explore the less-traveled paths to create exposure for your brand through well-constructed publicity stunts, giveaways and promotions. To maximize brand exposure for your company, consider tapping into nontraditional platforms, including podcasts, blogs, message boards and websites such as MySpace or YouTube.



STREET TEAMS
Last December, Formula PR utilized a holiday "Shopping Shuttle" program designed to generate buzz for its client, Cricket Wireless.

Making Your Brand Relevant

Brand Strategy

- Establish cohesiveness throughout your entire marketing or public relations strategy
- Develop clear strategies anchored in consistent brand messaging and positioning statements

Brand Exposure

- Consider unconventional communication vehicles to ensure that your brand stands apart from the competition

Brand Activation

- Go beyond media relations and advertising and consider a grass-roots approach
- Consider street teams, mobile marketing campaigns, sampling events and other guerrilla marketing tactics

Brand Partnerships

- Team up with brands that share your thinking, and target audiences to gain access to more consumers and additional financial resources

Be sure to promote your company, products and services by using cohesive messages so they resonate with the consumer every time he or she hears about your brand.

Activating Your Brand

When the competition is tough, companies can truly benefit from an integrated marketing approach. In order to fully activate your brand in the marketplace, it is wise to incorporate grass-roots marketing efforts in your overall marketing program. Street teams, mobile marketing campaigns, sampling events and other guerrilla marketing tactics may be costly endeavors, but they can effectively put your brand in front of consumers at a time and place when they're most likely to buy.

For example, Cricket Communications, a subsidiary of San Diego-based Leap Wireless International, recently integrated aggressive grass-roots marketing tactics to launch their flat-rate, unlimited

wireless services in the San Diego market. Among several campaigns designed to reach their target customers and create positive exposure for their brand, Cricket devised a holiday shopping shuttle program in which street teams provided branded golf cart transportation to assist bag-laden mall shoppers back to their cars while educating them about Cricket's wireless service during each complimentary ride. This and other campaign strategies for product or service launches ultimately proved to be very successful in activating the brand in a market with no previous exposure to the company's offerings.

Brand Partnerships

Another creative way to elevate your brand profile and generate additional market share is through co-branding partnerships. The key is to target companies sharing the same demographics, and leverage the consumer loyalty and combined assets of these like-minded brands. These programs provide your brand with additional credibility as well as access to new consumers at a shared cost. When executed well, co-branding is a win-win situation for both parties. ❏

Michael Olguin is president and founder of Formula, a national public relations and marketing agency. Olguin has 20 years public relations and branding experience, and is the driving force behind Formula's integrated, strategic programs for national brands. He can be reached at olguin@formulapr.com.

 Got something to say about marketing and PR? Participate in the discussion board at bizsandiego.com.