

## **TAKING A WIDER PERSPECTIVE ON PROMOTIONAL P.R.**

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At the Industrial Marketing Agency we necessarily focus on those elements of the marketing/promotional mix which are particularly suited to industrial B2B companies – and chiefly SMEs. However, it is worth being aware of the wider possibilities since one may well see opportunities for crossover which others can miss – and such crossover can prove extremely powerful.

For example, one of the most powerful branding exercises I was involved with was the sourcing and gifting of ice scrapers – the company involved had no link to cars, but all of the customers drove – and every morning through the winter they saw our brand – and valued it for many years. The important point was that the item was in itself something worthwhile – it performed well, and was robust enough to keep – 20 years on I still have mine in my car!

### **Branding opportunities**

- Gifts – memory sticks to balloons. There are catalogues of this type of material. You can also create your own – just think of an item and find a screen printer or embroiderer/engraver who can put your logo on it.
- At exhibitions, meetings, presentations, press launches, sales reps on visits, store opening, competitions, parties.

Gifting of branded items often works best with the personal contact approach – however some brands have managed to take this a stage further – making them into a sales line and product centre in their own right.

Briefcases, ice scrapers, hair brushes, sunglasses, t-shirts, umbrellas, baseball hats, woolly jumpers, CDs, Christmas hampers, in fact anything you can think of. On one occasion we created an “Exhibition Survival Pack” for press contacts likely to attend a particular event – a hand carry case with a variety of materials such as aspirin, teabag etc.

### **Creating an event**

Ideally something with interest beyond the business itself, e.g. a charity fund raiser; seasonal dinner/dance; a green/recycling exhibition; an educational event; a celebrity appearance; opening a premises with the announcement of new employment. Sometimes these events can become so popular that it is possible to make them an on-going feature and even take on a life of their own, perhaps attracting co-sponsors to carry the funding.

## **Sponsorship**

Most sponsorship, at least at local/regional level, probably takes place because of the personal interests of those involved in the business – but sponsorship can be a completely viable route in its own right if done well. Let us be clear – the sponsorship itself is only the beginning – what a sponsor is buying is a “hook” on which to hang further promotion and as such it is beneficial if the activity sponsored bears some relation to the product in terms of perceived quality, plus being an attractive interest draw over as big an audience as possible – so long as that audience is relevant to the business, e.g. if one can identify middle age, active, family oriented as a target demographic then by all means sponsor an activity which attracts that profile of people.

This then will enable the client to leverage their sponsorship with extended exposure, e.g. in advertisements, at exhibitions, in press material or launches, online in social media, with activity related features, merchandising etc. In other words by sponsoring, one is creating a whole new way of promoting the business – it is not really enough to just pay the sponsor fee and have your photo taken with the team – there should be much more than that but it will involve more expenditure and a lot of hard work to capitalise on the initial sponsor cost of the investment.

## **Local Press**

Local press are still with us, despite the internet making inroads into their house selling and car sales advertising. They are still a powerful medium for businesses that operate on a local basis and are perhaps belatedly developing their own web presence.

They seem to be mostly interested in local community type stories but it can be worth cultivating a relationship with the editors to ease your way onto their horizon. Typically in my experience they like to offer 50:50 deals with 50% editorial and 50% advertising, but this very much depends on your story – a shop opening or a charity fund raiser is likely to be viewed differently from a story of how a client’s product works – which would be a typical approach in an engineering market.

Whereas in some areas such as national industrial the internet has taken over to the point where one could manage without printed media and local press is irrelevant, the personal touch is very much alive and well in local news or local magazines where one-off articles are still well received. This does however make it a relatively time-consuming and expensive exercise.

## **Social Media – the generations and the niches**

The channels we now refer to as Social Media have been with us for some years in our personal lives (if you are so inclined) but for some areas – especially for example the industrial sphere – they are still developing. This is however a very rapid development as younger people more used to mobile devices and social media as an information channel continue to replace the older workforce.

So it is worth considering the demographic of the market when addressing the use of Social Media.

For example, the value of blogging as a broadcast medium and videos, e.g. on YouTube, is well accepted by older users; whereas there is still reluctance to get involved with the more conversational channels such as Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn. They are however effective with younger people and this effect can be seen in the way that web traffic from mobile devices is growing fast. Here we draw a measure of correspondence between mobile device users and social media users, a correspondence which may or not be correct but is at least a fair working hypothesis.

While the principles of social media remain constant, their application is capable of adoption for each project and account taken of the B2C or B2B nature of the business. Let us take some examples:

1. A local business – a dentist, solicitors, flower shop, restaurant etc. Here we are generally targeting a completely mixed local audience with some variation, e.g. a very young and focused audience for a night club, probably an older one for a dentist, in this case primarily B2C, while a florist or butcher for example may have a mix of B2C and B2B which needs to be addressed.
2. A regional business – a large draw such as a big garden centre or shopping centre, a wholesale or specialist distributor. Perhaps a mix of B2C and B2B.
3. A specialist product or service supplier such as funeral directors, builders, plant hire company etc. where one may focus quite heavily on the aspects of video and content around recent projects or the detail of service on a blog or video channel. This could be B2C or B2B and may well be clearly defined as such.

These varying characters will all affect the channels selected and the style of content involved in posting for the client. One may be a skilled social media manager in one area but this is where it becomes important to adapt one's skill to the specific needs of individual clients.

### **Headline news**

Major breakthroughs or developments likely to be of interest to wider audiences. We are here concerned with everything from regional TV/radio/newspapers, specialist national media to lifestyle magazines, all the way through to National TV, National Press etc.

### **Viral Marketing**

First create your concept, then produce your video. Upload it and promote it like crazy with social media and blanket e-mail blasts.

Alternatively find someone who is already considered "viral" and pay them to do the same for you – basically sponsor them.

Is it likely that your instrument, controller, housing system, adhesive or subcontract service etc. will go viral? Well if you craft the video well and promote it extensively then why not? Whether you want that or not is a different question – for example what would you do with the fall-out from 10 million hits? Would it be a benefit or a burden? What would it cost to achieve? Can you get the budget/corporate on board? Do you want to associate your product with this sort of celebrity? If so then go for it but you will need to take an appropriate approach with a view to attracting viewers – so not your usual product demo – probably a really "out there" sort of demo.

Having said which it is basically the same as a sponsorship – you are buying the attention of a large number of people and the wastage can be huge in terms of project sales but you may just be able to monetise it through rights and merchandising.