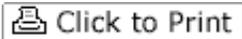


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## The Next Big Idea Targets Branded Entertainment



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Sports Panel (L to R): Meindl, Aresco, Perlman, Price

October 20, 2005

NEW YORK -- For anyone who ever asked, "Where is the next big idea coming from?" there were a lot of answers at "The Next Big Idea: The Future of Branded Entertainment" conference in New York on Oct. 19.

The event at the Grand Hyatt, hosted by several VNU publications (including *Brandweek*, *Adweek*, *Mediaweek*, *The Hollywood Reporter* and *Billboard*) brought together a wide range of analysts and experts regarded as the best and the brightest in marketing, entertainment, sports, product placement and management.

During the session, "From Rabbit Ears to Wireless Mouse: The Evolution of Branded Entertainment," Chris Eames, svp-sports and entertainment sponsorship and marketing for TBS and TNT, and Linda Yaccarino, TBS and TNT's evp/GM of entertainment sales, explained how TV and brands have had a long relationship, but one that has constantly evolved. Marketers called the shots early on, with such shows in the 1950s as the Texaco Star Theater. Networks became more powerful as they took control of the production process, giving rise to the process of selling commercial spots on shows rather than marketers going to networks with shows. Now, they said, consumers are a powerful part of the equation because, with the advent of the Internet, TiVo and other technology, consumers have more control than ever regarding not only what they want to watch, but also when and where. "And the options are growing," said Eames. Regarding branded entertainment, Yaccarino cited *Extreme Makeover* as a great example of "organic integration" between Sears and ABC. "This is the gold standard of what brands can do together," she said.

The lofty question, "Where Do Great Ideas Come From" was addressed by a panel that included Susan Jurevics, vp-corporate marketing at Sony USA; Patrick Doddy, vp-public relations and event marketing at Armani Exchange; Josh Rabinowitz, svp-director of music at Grey Worldwide; and Chris Light, CEO, Violator Records Management. Rabinowitz offered how the power of music often is underplayed or misused when campaign strategy is devised. "But music is becoming more important to advertising, especially when trying to reach a younger or new consumer base." He gave as a prime example Cadillac's use of the Led Zeppelin song, "Rock and Roll," which "helped change the entire concept that consumers had of the car."

Lighty, who joined the session in progress having flown in "from London by way of California," talked about the growing appeal of hip-hop and rap music and musicians among consumers. Among other deals, he has hooked up 50 Cent, Missy Elliott and Busta Rhymes with national marketers. "When I go to a company, I tell them to look beyond the fact that we can appeal to an urban youth market and look at the fact that we can appeal to a 'youth' market. We can reach not only the kids on 125th Street in Harlem but also the kids in Livingston, N.J. . . . We have been successful by taking an aggressive approach in putting artists and brands together." Lighty talked about the union between 50 Cent and Reebok, with the rap artist receiving his own line of shoes, which he has helped promote to the tune of nearly five million pairs sold, as well as a deal they negotiated under which Violator and 50 Cent are now able to reap the rewards of Reebok's recent acquisition by Adidas.

Lighty also gave some interesting backstory into the deal between 50 Cent and Glacéau Vitaminwater, which opened doors for both the rap industry and the vitamin-enhanced liquid category. "50 Cent is an anomaly," said Lighty. "He was sitting in my office one day and asked, 'How come we don't sell water? We should sell water.' So I had to go out and talk to companies that sold water, and eventually talked to the Vitaminwater people. They weren't sure about the connection with 50 Cent, but I said, 'We can get your product into the youth community where you can't get into right now. We can make it cool to drink your product. We can make your product a lot of money so that Pepsi or Coke will want to buy you. But we want to participate in that growth.' So we did the deal [in late 2004] and the product came out. But 50 Cent came to me after that said, 'It's not making the money I thought it would make. What's happening?' I said to him, '50, it's winter. You can't sell ice water in the winter. Wait until summer.' And when the warmer weather came, we went out and 50 was at gyms and on basketball courts drinking Vitaminwater and getting the kids to drink it. Then it became cool and sales took off."

Speaking of an area that is taking off, Dr. Henry Jenkins, director, MIT comparative media studies program, talked about the burgeoning field of product placement in videogames. "Even though it's still a niche segment, in-game advertising is expected to grow 40% this year and placement in videogames generated a 60% lift in consumer awareness," he offered citing Nielsen Media Research (a co-sponsor of the conference and also a division of VNU) and the Entertainment Software Association. "Advertisers spent about \$120 million on product placement in videogames in 2004. That is expected to grow to \$800 million by 2009." Key to potential in-game marketers is that fact that the average age of today's gamers is 30 and that the average time they have played videogames is nine-and-a-half years. "New players are always coming in, but many are staying."

Also, citing such technology as iPods, PDAs and cell phones, Dr. Jenkins offered, "Players are never more than a few inches away from a game. We don't know a lot about what they will put up with [regarding product placement]. But we do know there is a desire for detail and for the games to accurately mirror the real world. If the brand integration is organic and well thought, it will work. If not, it becomes intrusive and breaks the reality of the situation."

He gave Coca-Cola as a good example of a company that has successfully had product placement in videogames, and showed scenes from *London Taxi: Rush Hour* (for PlayStation2) in which players drive past such stores as Starbucks and Blockbuster as part of their journey. "Gamers are very aware of and protective of their medium and marketers should be very aware of that."

"Double Play: The Convergence of Sports and Entertainment" brought together heavy-hitters Jeff Price, vp/CMO of *Sports Illustrated* and its related SI media divisions; Doug Perlman, svp-television and media ventures for the NHL; Michael Aresco, svp-programming for CBS Sports; and John Meindel, president of SportsBrandedMedia. Price spoke about the variety of ways that SI is trying to engage fans, not just through the flagship print magazine but also online and via new media forms of technology. "People watch a game and they get the news immediately. We try to go beyond that, to give the story that they don't see and add to and enhance the story." Having a weekly print magazine puts SI in competition with itself in a way in that SI's Web site constantly updates news and has features and analysis. "But we look at the overall picture and try to direct fans to our Web site and print. It's the entire SI package that should engage consumers."

Perlman was in a unique position in that the NHL did not play last season and thus had not been in the forefront of fans' daily attention. "We are bringing our fans back and reaching out to [casual] fans with our rule changes and a product that we feel is entertaining and compelling."

He talked about the NHL's new marketing campaign, via Conductor, New York and Santa Monica, Calif., which uses a cinematic approach to reach fans, and also how the league is working to establish a long-term relationship with sponsors and fans "in an era in which there are more [marketing] opportunities than ever and the fan base in all sports is becoming more fragmented. Aresco talked about the excitement and intensity that sports offers, especially collegiate football and basketball, where the action is like a true reality show where it's unscripted and the outcome cannot be predicted. "College sports cannot always be defined by a particular fan base," he said, offering advice that marketers should heed. "Even if you didn't go to Notre Dame, you can root for or against them." And when athletes perform last-minute heroics, the "entertainment value and intensity level can't be measured."

Meindel, whose firm handles product placement of sports properties, goods and apparel in mass media outlets, talked about "the efforts needed to target the elusive 18 to 34-year-old consumer as it relates to sports and branded entertainment. Sports, music, TV and film are all part of the American culture. In order for them to work together, the union has to be organic, like music and sports." That led to a discussion of what might be the next big sports of which marketers and fans should be aware. Extreme sports were cited, the pro being that the overall category attracts a big fan base but the con being that each sport (skateboarding, BMX, etc.) attracts a much smaller and fragmented audience. Lacrosse also was given its props as an up-and-coming sport to watch.

Other highlights of the conference included an overview from Robert Passikoff, founder and president of Brand Keys, on the marriage of branded entertainment with sponsors; and Linda McMahon, CEO of World Wrestling Entertainment, sharing the WWE's strategy to become "the global champs of action-adventure."

-- Barry Janoff

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