



**FACT: THE INITIAL EXPLOSION OF EVENT MARKETING** spending can be traced to early 2002. A recession is rocking corporate marketing budgets and chief marketing officers begin looking for alternatives to ineffective above-the-line spends. The marketing industry begins to face the cold reality that while advertising may provide reach and frequency, it's not really reaching anybody with anything substantial *that frequently*.

And so it begins. Event campaigns, labeled for years as either “non-traditional” or “below-the-line” programs, begin to take form. Mobile truck builders start to notice an uptick in orders. Event staffing companies see a substantial increase in requests. And the phones at trade show exhibit houses and b-to-b meetings agencies start ringing like never before. Indeed, change is happening, people.

Early event campaigns are relegated to a few markets or regions. The age of the national program has not yet arrived. But as brands begin to test event marketing, they realize that the connective potential of face-to-face marketing is undeniable—consumers can't change the channel, click to another website or tune it all out. Even b-to-b buyers are tuning in to meetings and trade shows. It's clutter-free access to target audiences and as marketers begin to see the potential, they start to *believe* the potential. The age of event marketing is here... and this is not a trend.





**TREND: DOT COMPLIANCE**

Amid mobile marketing tours becoming the fastest-growing form of b-to-c event marketing, companies begin to educate themselves on the nuances of Department of Transportation compliance and start to demand their agencies are certified with the DOT's guidelines. Agencies quickly upgrade their mobile chops and begin to follow the guidelines, which require logbooks, trip sheets and hourly driving maximums based on route, driver load and other elements. Event agencies increase the point size of the DOT numbers emblazoned on their trucks.

“Sponsorships are as much about fit and common goals and objectives as they are about a good deal.”

BRIAN PHILIPS, VP-MARKETING, FEDEX



**TREND: SPONSORSHIP STRATEGY**

Sponsorship portfolios begin to get strategic, with marketers evaluating the events and properties they sponsor into four pillars: Brand Fit (property fulfills awareness objectives), Direct Revenue (property itself will use the sponsor's products and services), Indirect Revenue (hospitality programs with current and potential customers) and Scalability (ability to leverage the sponsorship in retail activities, direct mail and incentives).

“Experiential marketing is about people interacting longer than a 30-second TV spot.”

GEOFF COTTRILL, GROUP DIRECTOR OF ENTERTAINMENT MARKETING, COCA-COLA CO.



**TREND: BRAND AMBASSADOR TRAINING**

With event staffing orders up thousands of percentage points over 2001, event agencies and brand marketers begin developing dedicated staff training regimens. These include brand immersion training, role play and event tests that staffers must pass in order to be worthy of the brand they are representing. The rules of training differ by program, product, brand and agency. But the trend will be one of the most critical elements of successful event programs for the coming decade.

**TREND: MUNICIPAL LOCALES**

With the clutter-free attributes of event marketing comes the ability to hold events in non-traditional places. Phones at City Halls across the country begin to ring off the hook as brands try to invade parks, town pools, building rooftops and pretty much every off-the-beaten-path venue with events. As a direct result, major cities see the potential revenue opportunity and revamp their event permitting processes (and fees).



“We’re trying to map events to a number of data points, from retail levels and exposure to traffic and media value.”

PAT EDSON, MARKETING DIRECTOR, COORS

**TREND: PROPRIETARY PROPERTIES**

As traditional properties become clogged with sponsors (and prices go up), marketers are starting their own gigs and catching a breath of fresh air. Creating a property, instead of just sponsoring one, heats up as brands quest for total control over an event creatively, strategically and logistically. The costs are higher, but many can substantiate the spend and even cover some of the costs by selling sponsorships to their own events.





→ A decade before the food truck craze takes over lunch hours around the country, event marketers roll out “mobile kitchens” that give a fresh and tasty new spin to mobile tours. We can still remember our first date with the **Red Lobster** tour. Just so fresh.

→ **Vans** officially ushers in the age of the proprietary property with the evolution of its homegrown Warped Tour, which would go on to be “the” model for brands who want to start their own event.

→ **Lego** implements the industry’s first “immersion training” for brand ambassadors. The company’s multi-day training for its summer event staffers would become the de facto syllabus for experiential marketing staffs. “Nobody takes field staff training more seriously,” head of events Vince Rubino tells us. We believe him.

→ Event measurement becomes a conversation that some marketers are having, albeit prematurely. The best event marketers are measuring four things: awareness, traffic to event, media impressions and sales.

→ **Virgin Mobile** shuts down Times Square to announce the launch of its U.S. cell phone service. A billboard draped over the side of the Virgin Megastore building dropped to reveal Sir Richard Branson, lowered to the street in a faux NYPD uniform. And the event industry welcomes the p.r. Super Stunt into its toolbox.



January

February

March

April

May

June



→ **Coors** inks the largest sports sponsorship deal ever signed, an estimated \$300 million deal with the **NFL** that gives the brewer rights to use all the national and team logos—and kick Anheuser-Busch and Miller in the sacks.

→ **LandRover** launches a global G4 Challenge race in 16 countries, showing off one of the first worldwide experiential programs to date. The events are executed via four legs, with a finale held in Las Vegas.



→ **Procter & Gamble** helps redefine what can and cannot be done via nightlife marketing when it launches a summer program that takes Old Spice into (gasp!) bars and nightclubs. Guys brave enough to jump in a portable shower placed in the bar score tickets to local baseball games.

→ **Chrysler** uses one of the first online event management dashboards to manage its 1,500 events. The portal, [dcxevents.com](http://dcxevents.com), allows the auto giant’s event department to standardize event approvals, vendor requests, communications, rollout, recaps and metrics.

→ **Coors** keeps up the momentum of its evolving sponsorship portfolio through expanded music deals with Dr. Dre and Kid Rock and a pact with **Miramax Films** that takes the concept of product placement to new heights.



→ A chubby, Jewish 28-year-old named Dan Hanover reports for his first day of work at the New Canaan, CT, home of Kerry Smith. He’s quickly escorted over to his “office,” a used desk purchased on eBay placed in the basement guest bedroom. Smith’s “office” was a desk 30 feet away tucked against the bathroom door. Event Marketer magazine is born. (Hanover sobs over his career trajectory.)



→ **Lincoln** leverages the power of all five senses in its sponsorship activation of the tennis US Open. The auto brand sets up an elaborate experience featuring scented oxygen bars. (Rentals of oxygen bars skyrocket after EM reports the story.)

→ Random acts of kindness arrive on the scene, with **AT&T** hyping its new local service by sending street teams into markets with free coffee, newspapers and shoe shines. Damn that is so random. And so kind.



→ The first issue of Event Marketer magazine is printed and mailed. Thousands of marketers across the country wet their pants with excitement.

→ Elements from theme parks find their way into branded events. Example: **Chrysler** uses kayak simulators (official name: The Wave Box) at Jeep events.



→ **Nintendo** begins to show off what one day will be considered a pop-up event with its Cube Clubs, pop-up warehouse events mixing music, videogames and fun.

→ Event Marketer begins its "Snap EM If You Got EM" section, in which readers send in photos of themselves loving—and in some cases, making love to—Event Marketer. Jesus weeps.



July

August

September



→ EM drives down to JFK airport to sit with John Travolta, who wraps up a six-week mobile tour in the air for **Qantas Airlines**. The program sent Travolta up in the co-branded Qantas plane for six weeks of airborne branding. How was his first foray in experiential marketing? "It was equal to the two Oscar nominations I've had," he told us.

→ A surprising number of b-to-b brands start to roll out "road shows," mobile programs that take team building and sales meetings on tour, visiting multiple cities and markets. **IBM** rolls out a 27-city tour to 20 countries over 70 days called The Winning with IBM Total Storage Tour. (Catchy name.)



→ Armed with a huge budget issued directly from Congress, the **U.S. Army** goes to market with an experiential marketing-driven call for soldiers.