



IF 2002 WAS THE YEAR OF THE EVENT TEST, then 2003 is quickly becoming the Year of the Event Commitment, as marketers across the industry develop dedicated event budgets and start to get serious about the discipline. They are beginning to adopt the term “experiential marketing.” Event budgets at some companies are doubled... or even tripled.

With the newly increased funds come bigger programs, and national campaigns are developed and deployed. On the consumer side, the mobile marketing sector is the fastest growing spend category, followed by retailtainment, street marketing and sampling. On the b-to-b side of the fence, corporate events, launch events, press events and trade shows all get increased spending.

With all the action comes some attention, as the clear tidal shift across marketing portfolios begins to take form. Not only is event activity growing, but it becomes clear that face-to-face programs are literally being funded by dollars formerly relegated to media budgets. Translation: Advertising cuts are fueling event industry growth.





TREND: AMBUSH EVENTS

Scrappy event marketers take on a “no rules required” mentality as many begin to crash events, venues, properties and of course, the *Today* show. Elsewhere, street graffiti is coming of age with brands chalking and stenciling their messages on walls, sidewalks and buildings (IBM gets fined \$120,000 for tagging in three cities).



PR NEWSFOTO

TREND: BIG NAME EVENT TALENT

As b-to-b events get more play, they get more budgets. And as they get more budgets, they need better talent. Big brands are hiring big bands to play for crowds at their meetings—and with real price tags: The Dixie Chicks charges event marketers \$1.5 million for a private show, Kiss charges \$500,000, Jennifer Lopez \$450,000, Christina Aguilera \$300,000. The Spinners drop their asking price to \$25,000.

“While traditional advertising is still a part of our mix, sponsorships and events take us to where the consumer really is.”

VANCE OVERBEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR-ADVERTISING AND SPONSORSHIPS, CINGULAR WIRELESS

TREND: MOBILE MARKETING IMPROVEMENTS

As the dollars increase for mobile tours, builders “improve” their trucks with hydraulic locks, air conditioning, satellite and internet access, better graphics and more options in terms of the “expandable” side of trailers. Some also offer inflatable domes that rise out of truck rooftops.



TREND: BUSINESS THEATER

The term joins the evolving event marketer’s vocabulary as events fold in elements of Broadway and Disney. Lighting and special effects take corporate events to the next level. Designing the layout of a space around the “experience” becomes big business. And the “wow factor” at events becomes a sough-after objective.

“We’ve been given a mandate from management to explore new ways of doing things, and event marketing is where we are going.”

JON CROPPER, SENIOR MANAGER-YOUTH AND URBAN MARKETING, NISSAN

TREND: EVENT INSURANCE

The nation’s insurance companies see an opportunity and they pounce, with user-friendly event insurance departments and event marketing policies with elements that marry every type of coverage into one—from liquor liability to cancellation to inclement weather and crime, volunteer accidents and so on. The umbrella of protection is now in place.

“The impact of events has been profound, which is why we charge on.”

STEVE WAUGH, DIRECTOR OF GLOBAL EVENTS, IBM



→ In the earliest incarnation of what would later be called a flash mob, **Nissan** launches the new Z sports car with 23 surprise concerts in 18 markets.

→ Non-competitive sponsors hook up and try to increase reach and share costs. First example? **Southwest Airlines** and **Hershey's** co-activate NFL.

→ The next incarnation of school marketing is upon us, with event marketing campaigns targeting schools with edutainment-related messaging (mixed with marketing-driven engagements).

→ "American Idol" breaks new records with sponsorship deals with **Coke** and **Ford** that mix events, product placement and retail activation. Oh, that Simon, he's just so smug.



→ Spring break experiences get big budgets and throw off some big ROI numbers as non-booze brands head to the beach for some brand connections.

→ Event Marketer prints the first Agency IT List, which profiles the 80 event agencies serving the market back then. Yes, we said 80.



→ We're still a few years away from high-tech tablets and citywide wi-fi, so event marketers roll out paper-based on-site surveys to use for data-collection. *What?* It's somethin'. Don't be a hater.

→ Music sponsorships are officially the spend of the year, with brands spending billions all summer long to activate the concert circuit.



→ Blue-collar targets are big business for brands. Marketers route mobile tours and live programs into construction sites, trailer camps and campgrounds.

→ Sales meetings get reinvented as content events, rather than booze fests. Even the locations move from beachy locales to major metros. The goal? Learning, sharing, education.



→ Mall marketing gets a huge bump, with brands setting up event tours all over the food courts, arcades, parking lots and anchor stores.



→ Before we had TomToms and Garmin's, the GPS craze first hits the mainstream with Geocaching, high-tech scavenger hunts that were red-hot across consumer and b-to-b events.

→ Corporate tours of company headquarters turn into the most comprehensive brand experiences around, from **Lego to Ben & Jerry's** to **Boeing to Kohler**, consumers line up to pay big money to get a look around.

→ As marketers realize their trade show exhibits look like shit, they start to focus on a strategic fix: brand consistency and experience design.



→ Airports become the "next big thing" in event marketing. Microsoft sets up for six months inside top airports promoting something called a tablet.

→ Theft at events becomes a growing problem. Marketers create more secure exhibits, more lockable mobile vehicles and more protected assets. Anything that can be bolted down is bolted down.



→ EM names the 25 best sponsors of the year, a power list showing off the best attributes of the modern-day sponsor. The amalgam of the traits becomes an industry benchmark for activation.

→ Kobe Bryant's rape accusation reignites the importance of morality clauses in corporate endorsement deals with celebrities.

October

→ Surprise events that pop-up officially get the label of flash mob. And EM founder Kerry Smith goes to an all-you-can-eat sushi buffet in Toronto and officially gets the label of total slob.

→ Looking to get credit for every single possible eyeball impression, mobile vehicles begin printing messaging and logos on... their roofs.



→ Ad campaigns extend off of TV screens, with events conceived as "live extensions" of media programs.

→ For added impact, sponsors activate multiple properties simultaneously. With this intra-portfolio cross-promotion, a single sponsor incorporates elements of multiple properties into one marketing campaign.



→ In an effort to strike a deeper chord with the communities they want to sell in, brand marketers begin launching their own charity events, such as golf tournaments and concerts.

→ Multicultural marketers dabble with event marketing to connect with a variety of ethnicities.