



## TEN YEARS OF EVENT MARKETER

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**THINGS ARE LOOKING GOOD.** Consumer confidence is on the rebound, and economists are forecasting 3.5 to four percent GDP growth. Marketing budgets are up but event budgets are notably beginning to post substantial spend increases. And so it begins, *the growth years*—when event budgets would grow 20-30 percent annually through 2008. With increased spending, however, comes increased accountability as agencies become strategic resources rather than tactical crutches.

Wireless and other emerging technologies present new opportunities to add dimension to events. Marketers beam messages to cell phones within 50 feet of their trade show exhibits or blast thank yous to people as they exit. Reactive media, which allows people to trigger their own experience by their physical actions in a fusion of video and touchscreen technology, is big at EuroShop this year.

Events are getting an upgrade as live programs create experiences and generate demand. Brands such as Jackson Hewitt Tax Service, *Real Simple* magazine, Nickelodeon's teen channel, The N, and Fisher-Price head to the mall to connect with consumers via special events, music performances, demos and fashion shows. Big players in the beer category likewise are replacing national programs with face-to-face executions and building events around business objectives. The folks at Miller Brewing prove that a high-touch approach is a successful strategy.

And then, in August, Katrina comes, sending the New Orleans' convention business into a scramble and leaving the city a shambles. But with time, effort and investment, like all good things, it will come back.





**TREND: POP-UP STORES**

Temporary spaces are officially en vogue. The ones that work, like Delta Air Lines' Song in the City and Meow Mix's Café for cats are interactive and give consumers a reason to come in such as movie screenings, jazz nights, author readings, kids' activities, even fun and games for felines. (Seriously, people brought their cats.)

REGARDING BRAND AMBASSADORS:

“It’s about more than a pretty face these days. At the end of the day, we want people to walk away not knowing whether they just interacted with a PepsiCo employee or a contract worker.”

TIM RIDGEWAY, DIRECTOR-BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, PEPSICO

**TREND: BLOGS**

Event marketers are starting to realize what the medium can do for their brands. Toyota's Scion group regularly posts comments to enthusiast websites and blogs as a fast way to disseminate information. Audi has filmmakers in the American Film Institute competition, which it sponsored, blog as they travel cross-country. Their near-daily ruminations on the movie-making process and what they were discovering lent credibility to the blog.



**TREND: WIRELESS**

This emerging technology is presenting interesting opportunities for marketers to add dimension to their events—such as beaming a message to all cell phones within 50 feet, blasting thank yous to people as they exit, digital flyers, videos and product information distributed instantly to people who request it. It's not only possible, but happening right now. Even EM founder Kerry “Boom Chicky Boom” Smith, using a Treo 650 with a built-in camcorder, finally figures out how to sync it with his email. You go, Kerry.

“It’s not always about doing more. It’s about understanding the customer. Trying to do more and more ends up hurting efficiencies. We start with the consumer and build the experience from there.”

RICH LEHRFELD, VP-GLOBAL SPONSORSHIP, AMERICAN EXPRESS



**TREND: ONLINE OR “SURVIVAL” MARKETING**

Brands like Toyota's Scion group are planting virtual street teams in chat rooms and on bulletin boards, giving brand managers a way to not only have conversations but to impact them. Scion's brand agents cruise message boards, take notes and turn in weekly summary reports highlighting what people are saying plus any developing trends. This covert type of activity is spreading like wildfire. It builds buzz, influences behavior, seeds content, drives interest and takes a pulse of the action.

“Some decisions that we make will never have a science to them, and in those cases we have to get really good about making a judgment. Real accountability is the sum of science and judgment.”

CATHY BESSANT, CMO, BANK OF AMERICA

**TREND: AUDITS**

Brand marketers are pushing for audits from the trade shows where they exhibit by independent third parties to confirm the accuracy of attendance numbers and demographics. Show organizers respond with the formation of the Event and Exhibition Industry Audit Council, which is creating standardized criteria for what data is contained in an audit and the proper way to conduct it. It also is setting up a process by which a company can become approved as an auditor and creating a logo for use by audited shows, sort of a Good Auditing Seal of Approval. Some of the most prominent U.S. shows and show organizers, including IDG World Media and Reed Exhibitions, announce their intentions to audit.



➔ Remember **Napster**? The peer-to-peer audio file sharing internet service hits the streets to target busy consumers for its Napster To Go portable music subscription service with two-hour events inside coffee houses in five markets. Field crews hand out free MP3 players to the first few hundred consumers. It's all about getting what you want when you want it, whether tunes or tall skinny lattes.

➔ **Pepsi's** Aquafina brand and **HBO** hit the jackpot with street and guerrilla teams activating in-market contests and sweeps. Aquafina awards prizes to consumers spotted with bottles of its water; HBO drops die-cast gold nuggets with codes, driving consumers online to see if they won.

➔ **Pepsi's** massive one-day national sampling effort for Sierra Mist Free almost shuts the company down for the day. The program involves 13,000 employees from sister companies **Quaker** and **Frito-Lay** as well as execs and staffers from HQ, bottling companies and marketing and p.r. agencies in 200 markets who give out more than 3.5 million 12-ounce cans.



➔ **Sharp** commandeers gallery spaces in New York City's trendy SoHo neighborhood, hosting film screenings, art events and music release parties, all in a bid to convince NYC influentials that its Aquos TV is more than another pretty flat-panel screen.



➔ **Office Depot** races into a **NASCAR** sponsorship to reach small business owners. Three stores in California see a 30 percent increase in sales when the retailer partners with **3M** and shows up with both companies' show cars on-site. (That's a lot of Post-it Notes, yo.)



➔ EM editors head to the Super Bowl and Daytona 500, catching the biggest and most important activations first-hand, before getting ejected from the games. Think we're kidding?

➔ EM's Sean Brenner tags along with **vitaminwater's** mobile marketing vehicle, hitting big events and small groups of consumers in and around Chicago. From Columbia College to DePaul University, a running store and Lincoln Park High School, the team hands out liquid refreshment to those in need of a vitamin boost, and some hydration.



➔ Fifty actors in gorilla costumes run in the LA Marathon to promote **Nintendo's** Donkey Kong Jungle Beat video game, giving new meaning to the term "guerrilla marketing."



→ A power outage at E3 doesn't completely stop the action, but alters the event for attendees and exhibitors, proving that it's always necessary to have a Plan B... or bring your light saber from home (we did).

→ EM and the **Technology Event Marketing Strategy Council** (Microsoft, HP, Intel, Xerox and others) issue a clarion call for event marketers to adopt the EQRP, a numerical experience quality rating similar to advertising's GRP. Factors such as net attendance, relevance ratio, event activity ratio, total financial impact, engagement rate variation, gross capture rate and more measure event performance. It would never go anywhere (sigh).

→ After Katrina, marketers scramble to decide whether to proceed with convention plans or rebook elsewhere. Most events are being moved, canceled or postponed.



→ **Toyota and Quicken Loans** hold internal events for a few of their closest friends... and employees. Toyota takes over a large portion of Chicago's Millennium Park for a cocktail party for 6,000. Quicken Loans marks its 20th anniversary in Cleveland with a party for 5,000 staffers.



→ **GM Accessories** launches a Rides, Vibes & Chrome road show that takes product displays to GM dealers who can tweak the exhibit, a significant improvement over past efforts, driving traffic and sales.



→ Buzz Builders: **Walt Disney's** SoapNet enlists 30 soap opera mavens to be "Drama Queen Bees" and generate buzz in their social circles. The network provides "I Want To Be" video clips to email to friends and rewards them with Disney Visa gift cards. **Binney & Smith** (now Crayola) taps pre-teen girls in the suburbs to host House of Girlfitti parties where friends could check out the fashionable activity products.



→ **Heineken** creates a new category—luxury light—in the hypercompetitive beer marketplace via events in trendsetting venues. After kickoff meetings with distributors, consumers and local celebs join the fun. Its proprietary music blowout, AmsterJam, draws a sell-out crowd of 30,000 to NYC's Randall's Island with eight musical acts and a "Green Light District."



→ **Panasonic** engages action sports fans at the inaugural Dew Action Sports Tour with a Hi-Def experience, giving the bikers and boarders a chance to shoot, edit and manipulate action sports footage with the brand's equipment.



→ EM launches Get Connected, a mobile marketing tour that will bring an event marketing classroom on wheels to 12 markets in the fall.