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**AT CES,** exhibitors prove that the digital lifestyle has gone mainstream. The best booths engage first then inform second, using sizzling design to dazzle the senses and brand-driven communications to infect attendees with their message. Canon's working model-train village, Creative Labs' female staffers in futuristic mini-dresses and white wigs and Garmin's 15-foot inflatable hand add flair to the show floor.

EM's IT List shows once and for all that event agencies are becoming integrated solution providers and that procurement is taking greater control over vendor solicitation and selection. Accountability is rising as marketers are forced to produce tangible results. ROI, the industry's eventual long-term life policy, is only now beginning to show its face. Still, event spends are up, and more marketers are executing more campaigns.

The result? Industry clutter is on the rise as traditional marketing agencies and hundreds of start-ups chase the dollars flowing into experiential. So, live campaigns are going to new places to reach new faces. It's less about going off the beaten path and more about finding new channels to connect with consumers. Watch for the trend to explode in 2007.

Speaking of going off the beaten path: Xbox finds an airport hangar in Palmdale, CA, the ideal setting for the 30-hour launch event for its Xbox 360; Toyota goes outdoors to sponsor a Bass Pro fishing tournament to reel in its target audience; and adidas ducks into a Chinatown basement for a temporary showroom for its new apparel collection.





**TREND: VIDEO PHOTO ACTIVATION**

Green screen is going video, giving attendees the opportunity to interact virtually with celebrities and participate in simulated scenarios. During a HP mobile tour, consumers pedal stationary bikes in front of a green screen to "ride" in a virtual Tour de France. At Taste of Chicago, Chevrolet encourages consumers to spread viral buzz by recording and emailing video postcards from on-site kiosks.

"The challenge for a company like Toyota is: How do I prove to a truck owner that the Tundra is as capable as the [Ford] F-150 or the [Chevrolet] Silverado? The most effective way is to do that in person, and to build advocacy groups for all of our key conquest vehicles."

JIM FARLEY, FORMER VP-MARKETING, TOYOTA

"We're putting more into high-touch events, looking at how we can help drive the agenda in the marketplace, and what kinds of events we can put our efforts behind to play that role."

MARY FEHRNSTROM, SENIOR MANAGER-MARKETING EVENTS, CISCO



**TREND: VIRTUAL TRADE SHOWS**

Online trade shows come of age as broadband, VoIP and instant messaging tools make it easier for exhibitors and attendees to connect on a virtual trade show floor. eComXpo targets e-commerce marketers such as Web-masterradio.fm; Ziff Davis Media holds a virtual show for the IT security industry.

**TREND: PODS**

These modular structures are filling the middle ground between mobile marketing and static exhibits. They can be transported and deployed anywhere without using a vehicle to house the interaction, plus the unusual structures help create experiences that enhance the brand. Best Buy's dorm room pod, built with wiring and utilities integrated into the structure, eliminates the need to re-engineer everything at each event site. Plus it looks permanent.



**TREND: LED SCREENS**

Thinner, lighter, smaller and more versatile, LEDs offer new design options that integrate content into trade show environments for an immersive atmosphere. Ford's stand at Detroit's North American International Auto Show blends a 20-foot-tall curved video screen into a custom modular wall system, while Nissan in Detroit erects a pixilated "media cloud" above its stand.



**TREND: GLOBAL PROGRAMS**

As marketing goes global, so do events, with mobile tours being prepped for overseas deployment and guerrilla campaigns in Asia mirroring street efforts in Times Square. It's the next evolution of the event model.

"To sell high-speed internet service, we knew the customer had to be able to touch it, experience it, and feel it in a great, cool environment that they wanted to be a part of."

ELAINA MANGO, DIRECTOR REGIONAL MARKETING, VERIZON



→ **Red Bull** purchases the New York/New Jersey MetroStars from Anschutz Entertainment Group, rebranding the team as the New York Red Bulls and putting a new spin on sports partnerships.



→ **Mountain Dew** ices up a 100-foot long, snow-covered snowboard ramp in Times Square for action-packed demos to promote its slimmed-down diet version. It hands out 200,000 samples at 10 locations around NYC as part of a nationwide initiative to distribute three million cans. Oh, Times Square, we just can't get enough of you.

→ Houston's NBA Jam Session draws more than 100,000 fans over five days to the George R. Brown Convention Center. It requires more than 300 staffers and 1,500 volunteers, and EM is there.



→ EM sales rep Alex Chung announces to the staff that from now on he should be referred to as "The Chung." It sticks.

→ **Adidas** goes underground, literally, previewing its adicolor 2006 collection to sneaker fanatics in a basement on New York City's Canal Street, right in the heart of Chinatown. The aim—to give customers an exclusive sneak peek and create excitement for the new line. The showroom draws 1,200 visitors over two weeks and starts a trend toward activating in less mainstream locales like Manhattan's grittier Lower East Side.



→ **Toshiba** launches a 40-city, 84-stop road show, hosting demos at electronics retailers, to drum up interest in its HD DVD players. The tour drives consumer awareness and teaches store staffers about the new technology.

→ **Esquire** opens a 5,500-square-foot, \$12 million showcase pop-up apartment in New York City's Astor Place to reflect the lifestyle of its modern-male readers and weaves advertisers into the décor. It is its third signature space in three years, following an apartment in Manhattan's Trump World Tower and a house in L.A.



→ **Kraft's** South Beach Diet Foods brings a beach-in-a-box to high-traffic areas in nine major metros. On board each Plexiglas trailer is a sandy beach, palm trees, beach balls and models in swimwear. Heat lamps mounted outside the trucks add a summery feel to the winter experience.



→ **JCPenney** sets up a 15,000-square-foot pop-up at One Times Square wrapped to look like a big, red box. Consumers' purchases at internet terminals throughout the store are shipped to their homes, eliminating the need to lug around bulky shopping bags. Why don't more retailers do this?

→ **Sears** brings its spring-themed print ads and TV spots to life with 100 women dressed in its apparel walking together through the streets of Manhattan distributing style guides, coupons and Gerbera daisies. **Coors Light** brings the Silver Bullet train from its TV spots to life, too, as an 18-wheeler.

2006

➔ **Wells Fargo** launches its Fun of Money Tour at the 2006 Velocity Games in Corpus Christi, Texas. Fun of Money is the prime component of a new financial education program that fuses fun and financial education through interactive activities. From May through November, the program hits the road, visiting major cities in more than 20 states. The experience combines a variety of activities, including a "You're So Money" stage featuring a dj and karaoke, foosball tables, money vaults with prizes and a modern lounge area where attendees can hang out with friends. Little does anyone know how *not fun* money will be in a couple of years.



➔ **IBM** creates a town hall for 19,000 employees in India, the company's largest live event ever, linking five groups of attendees together for the daylong event via satellite.

➔ **Ford** stages three two-day events for 7,000 people in Las Vegas for annual meetings and to introduce its 2007 models. General sessions, talks by Ford's top honchos, slick multimedia presentations, however, are no match for the Elvis impersonator and closing night performances, three of them, by Sheryl Crow. We know, we are there, and at the X Games in L.A.

➔ **Charmin** installs a massive multi-level pop-up store in New York City's Times Square with 20 stalls, complete with sink and bath tissue, for New Yorkers on the go. It's the brand's first experiential push since the original Pottypalozza changed the game years before. It attracts 10,000 families a day for an average engagement of 22 minutes. Area Starbucks stores see foot traffic (to the restroom) drop by half during the activation.



➔ **Motorola** launches in June its StudioMoto campaign, which flips every switch to create the total experience and garner (next year, in 2007) EM's Grand Ex Award. It leverages a mobile tour, using trucks and temporary stages across several acres at 36 events over 12 weeks to collect data, build awareness and create a new generation of buyers. Every demo station, sampling kiosk, touch screen and live interaction ties to a product message, trial or test.

➔ **Motorola** activates its first pop-up store to launch the Q. Reps give demos and take photos that guests print out via Bluetooth, giving them a deep dive into the experience and the brand—and free phone calls to boot!



➔ **Best Buy**, for the launch of Sony's Playstation 3, takes over a city block in Los Angeles for an evening, bringing every game within PS3 to life. Besides Sony, more than 20 partners, including the movie studios, **Activision**, **EA Sports** and **Blue Ray**, along with celebs such as Tony Hawk and **Marvel Entertainment's** Stan Lee, tap into the excitement. The event draws 1,500 people who party until midnight, when Hawk awards the first PS3 to a lucky consumer at the adjacent Best Buy store.

➔ **EM** travels to Texas' biggest party—the State Fair of Texas—and samples its craziest offering: fried Coke. We find it somewhere between a refreshing beverage and an ultra-sweet dessert. The EM rating: A.

➔ A promotion for **Yahoo! Answers** invites consumers to apply online to become "brainiacs," who will live for three days in a two-story terrarium in Times Square and answer questions from consumers online. It involves celebrity seminar leaders like Russell Simmons and Deepak Chopra. The entire event is webcast live.