



**TAKE A BREATH.** The first few months of 2009 are filled with layoffs, budget cuts and cancellations, but the industry keeps on keepin' on. Cisco kills its gigantic sales conference and replaces it with the all-virtual GSX... and shows every wannabe virtual event how it should be done. Social media becomes more and more crucial to every campaign out in the field, thanks partly to its more cost-effective buzz-building potential. Campaigns are more targeted, both in terms of appealing to specific demographics like moms or by getting bloggers and online influencers to do the heavy lifting for the brand, as Ford did with the Fiesta Movement.

The sea change makes everyone a little sea sick, until LEGO shows up with its Experience Tour. And marketers discover that there is a light at the end of the tunnel—because if LEGO can see the benefits of a new campaign launch after being away from the industry for six years, then any brand can and should get back out there.

Even though the higher-ups will forever want more and better results out of every campaign (as well they should), at the end of the year some of the spend starts to come back, as the hyper-focused campaigns deliver in bigger ways than anyone could have imagined.





**TREND: FLASH MOBS**

Guerrilla activations have been around almost since the beginning of experiential marketing but this year, they are getting more focused and strategic than ever. AMC launches the new season of "Mad Men" with a mass freeze frame in Grand Central Terminal, mimicking key scenes and moments from the show. T-Mobile teases its television ad campaign with a flash mob in London that sparks a metric ton of word-of-mouth. Both strategies rely almost exclusively on passersby with smartphones to create the viral effect.



**TREND: VIRTUAL STOPGAPS**

From Cisco's Telepresence product to HP's comprehensive virtual platforms, live internal events and b-to-b programs are moving online, sometimes killing off live components entirely. Navistar (temporarily) moves its annual trade show online and Ariba creates Ariba LIVE, it's all-virtual sales training platform.

"We're looking at everything more closely than ever, not only for return on investment but return on objective. We still see events and experiential marketing as an important piece, and in some ways now more than ever."

LISA HOLLADAY, MANAGER-BRAND EXPERIENCE MARKETING, MERCEDES-BENZ USA

"You hand over control of the relationship because they have the ability to opt in and opt out. We don't want them to opt out, so we're very careful about what we deliver to them in conversation."

RICH KARLIS, DIRECTOR-SPONSORSHIPS AND EVENTS, QWEST COMMUNICATIONS



**TREND: SOCIAL MEASUREMENT**

Social media platforms Twitter and Facebook are really coming into their own in 2009. Events like Frito-Lay's Fiesta Bowl and AARP Vegas@50 are relying heavily on the buzz-building and community reach of the social juggernauts while attracting Facebook fans and Twitter followers is becoming the measure of success and ROI for consumer and b-to-b programs all over the brand spectrum.

"I think it will be the brands that can let go and engage with their customers the way they want to be engaged with, those brands are going to win."

MARY FEHRNSTROM, MANAGER-EVENT STRATEGY, CISCO



**TREND: BABY BOOMER & MOM MARKETING**

The sons and, especially, daughters of the "Greatest Generation" are the greatest targets of the year for event marketers. Moms are finding brands coming for them with open hands like never before, like the Generation Huggies program that asks them what motherhood means to them, and IFC, which sets out to find the rockin'-est mom in the nation.

**TREND: LESS IS MORE**

Toward the end of the year, as the economic ripples are growing into tsunamis of terror, the mantra of efficiency is becoming gospel. Products are coming out of trade show booths (when brands even find the dollars to establish a footprint), in order to put forth only the most pertinent information and offerings. The age of throwing everything at the consumer and seeing what sticks is over. And we are happy.







→ **Sony** taps into the flash mob trend by dressing models up as mannequins and deploying them into Grand Central Terminal, carrying the brand's streamlined, 1.4-pound Sony VAIO P series laptops.



→ **Pfizer** gives doctors at the annual American Heart Association conference a heart attack... experience with its custom-built 3D theater. The interactive infuses some experiential elements into an otherwise dry show and deepens emotional relationships with the health care providers who use its products.

→ **Timberland** creates the Green Apple Festival to celebrate Earth Day in 10 markets across the U.S. The festival features Timberland employees and volunteers cleaning up beaches and parks, planting trees and generally being eco-awesome and impressing consumers.

→ **Ford** launches the Fiesta Movement, an epic cross-platform live-plus-social media campaign designed to reintroduce the compact car to a risky American market by giving away 100 of them to online influencers to test for six months before launch.



→ Connecticut commuters get a surprise gift from local defense giant **United Technologies** when the company gives away free cups of coffee in branded cups and a newspaper (remember those?) at New Haven Line stations.



→ **Canadian Club** whiskey wraps its "Damn Right Your Dad Drank It" campaign designed to get the American market excited about the classic liquor. The brand sets up shop in bars with shoe shiners and lessons on how to tie a Windsor knot.



→ **Sikorsky** blows the rotors off of Heli-Expo, the biggest helicopter trade show in the U.S., with an all-new exhibit designed to present a unified brand and get signed contracts.



→ Drinks brand **Glacéau** creates a Manhattan pop-up with a split personality to promote its new vitaminwater10 product. The pop-up features four different areas, each showcasing a key product attribute.



→ Just for fun, **InterContinental Hotels** in four key markets sets up gigantic 42-by-28-foot beds with 30 double mattresses and a duvet that could drape 65 regular beds for the biggest bed-jumping event in history. It all celebrates five million free nights available through the getafreenight.com brand campaign.



→ **Denny's** gives away more than two million free Grand Slam breakfasts at a cost of more than \$5 million to the brand. The goodwill and media value is estimated at more than \$50 million. Moons over my hammy!



→ **Air New Zealand** and Ubisoft shave the heads of their most passionate fans, leaving only brand messages and creating walking human billboards. What do the consumers get? A free ticket to New Zealand or \$777. We'll take the trip to New Zealand, thankyouverymuch.





➔ **LEGO** comes out of a six-year retirement from event marketing in a big way with the LEGO Experience tour. The brand that helped put the industry on the map creates a hugely successful new property and inadvertently signals to the industry that maybe the economy is starting to turn around.



➔ Spa brand **Bliss** rethinks guerrilla marketing by going "gorilla" to take over New York City streets and remind women that they should stop into a spa if it's a, ahem, "jungle down there."



➔ **The Air Force** takes off with three simultaneous Engage tours featuring custom muscle cars and tons of learning about its high-tech and special ops careers. The tours change perceptions about the Air Force and remind us that "Top Gun" is still badass. We feel the need for speed, too.

➔ **Cisco** takes its global sales meeting out of the real world and into cyberspace with the first-ever Global Sales Experience, or GSX, which goes on to win Ex after Ex award for pure ballsy gumption.

➔ **Kodak** (remember when they actually had a relevant product? LOL) taps into "brightsiding," or the practice of saying nice things to people to make them smile, and sends the "Compliment Guys" on the road with the 10-city BrightSide tour that is all about the good vibes.



➔ **Nerf** creates its own sports property—the Nerf Dart Tag League—in 15 markets to promote the Dart Tag product line and get the equipment in eager kiddos' hands. Kudos to the spongy-ball brand for creating the league and the product you need to play in the league.

