



**JUST BECAUSE BUDGETS ARE MAKING A COMEBACK** doesn't mean budget-busting experiences are, too. Small is the new big as FedEx activates phase two of its first-ever pilot program to reach Gen Y consumers. The grassroots program—a first for the big budget sports sponsorship spender—focuses on community cultivation, face-to-face events and support for small business owners. The killer app? A deep research effort that matched the unique “need states” of small business owners with free expertise, services and networking opportunities both online and through a series of live events. The program is so popular that its members now practically run it themselves... a major trend in 2012 and just what FedEx intended.

Fast-forward to July and the industry convenes in London for one of the world's biggest global experiential platforms, the 2012 Summer Olympics, this time held on some of the smallest square footage of any major sponsorship event. EM is there to capture the highlights (Coca-Cola, Cisco, P&G and Cadbury, to name a few) and the lowlights (why, Panasonic, why?) and preview a few of the trends taking off in late 2012. Our fave? Coke's brand pavilion—a fan experience that transforms the architecture of the structure into a 35-minute interactive music-making journey. Event marketers have made clever use of the exteriors of many a building and mobile vehicle, but few, if any, have made such impactful and interactive use of the architecture itself.





### TREND: TWITTER 2.0

What was once a platform for short brand blurbs becomes more strategic as brands like SoBe, Macy's, Dockers and AMC use Twitter for everything from routing mobile tours and promoting celebrity endorsements to on-site live Twitter feed displays—a.k.a. "Twitter-falls"—and customer reward programs.

"We really protect the ecosystem at TED, and work with partners as curators to create the right kind of experience that makes them a part of the TED community... Brands are not used to doing it, but they find that TED helps them re-think how they are doing events in general."

RONDA CARNEGIE, HEAD OF GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS, TED

### TREND: SINGLE MARKET TOURS

Brands including Claritin, Ford and ION eschew the cross-country tour and instead go big in single markets. The "fewer markets, bigger impact" strategy enables each brand to hyper-target its approach not only to the unique demographic population, but the geographic profiles of each market's inhabitants.



### TREND: THE CLOUD

The cloud becomes *the* hotspot for event practitioners to store, share and track data in real-time before and during events. The ether-based platform also shows promise as a crowdsourcing tool for event marketers willing to venture into the "social cloud" to find influencers and expert voices.

"We can pull [our real-time dashboard] up any time when we're working in the booth, so we can tailor how we are engaging with customers. We also use it as a tool in daily kick-offs and end-of-day wrap-ups to make sure our staff remains engaged and understands the implications of the conversations they are having."

BROOK SALOMON, DIRECTOR-DELL GLOBAL ALLIANCE EVENTS

### ON LAUNCHING A SMALL-SCALE EXPERIENTIAL PROGRAM:

"You have to treat it as a test and go into it with a mindset that you want to learn, you want to understand, you want to refine your planning and make improvements as you move along."

KEVIN DEMSKY, DIRECTOR OF SPONSORSHIP MARKETING, FEDEX

### TREND: REAL-TIME DASHBOARDS

Dell is just one of many brands using proprietary real-time dashboards to track up-to-the-minute activity and performance at its trade show activations. Deep data about attendee demographics, sales rep activity and low performing areas of the booth enable marketers to tweak on the fly for a better experience the next day.



### TREND: FACIAL RECOGNITION + SOCIAL MEDIA

Thanks to a high-tech facial recognition event kiosk dubbed FaceLook (tied into the Face.com platform), everyday people can take a photo of themselves and use the image to log in and post directly to Facebook. How it works: Consumers pre-register before an event via Facebook and then check in and post at the event at facial recognition kiosks. Beam us up, Scottie.





➔ Crowd-sourced content and community-driven events infiltrate the world of big banking when Facebook fans determine which charities will receive millions in grant money from **Chase** as part of the bank's American Giving Awards program.

➔ Trade show programs get an extreme makeover as marketers bounce back from the recession with smaller, but more efficient spends and strategies. **Philips** skips the show floor at CES and relocates to a ballroom at the Venetian where it goes "appointment only." The brand also tightens up its story, leaving its full product line at home and focusing only on its sound products.

➔ **PUMA** proves that the ubiquitous shipping container is still an innovative foundation for a mobile exhibit with its Volvo Ocean Race pavilion called the "quad." Even more impressive, how the thing is shipped by sea, traveling more than 39,000 nautical miles, including stops in Spain, Abu Dhabi, Cape Town and China, in advance of the ocean race competitors. Hey, adidas, suck it.



➔ **Google** takes over four trendy bars and an entire city street at the South by Southwest (SXSW) Interactive, Film and Music Festival to create a killer "Google Village" experience for attendees. EM editor Kenneth Briodagh skips the "Maps," "Developer" and "Discovery" houses and instead spends all day hating on Apple at the "Android" house.



➔ Taking a cue from Burning Man, **Intel** invites attendees at its Intel Developer's Forum (IDF) event to take part in assembling an 18-foot-tall, 700-pound behemoth called SiMan. The strategy helps communicate a complicated topic—embedded technology—in a way that is hands-on and collaborative.



➔ Swiss-based **Leica Geosystems** offers a sweepstakes for a weekend with Ted Nugent as part of its ConExpo-Con/Agg activation. What, you couldn't get Nick Nolte or Dina Lohan?

➔ **History** (formerly known as The History Channel) hauls in 8,000 gallons of water and creates a bonafide swamp—with real alligators, ya'll!—in an indoor shopping mall in New York City to promote the premiere of its series, "Swamp People."

➔ Attendees at the year's biggest auto shows line up for the chance to dance with **Kia Motors'** Augmented Reality "Hamstars"—the animated hamsters that star in the brand's popular "Party Rock Anthem" commercial. Party people in the house tonight!

➔ Ever since it started limiting its keynote speakers to 18 minutes, TED has been turning the traditional "meeting" concept upside down. The format (and the cover story in our April issue) gives event marketers a glimpse into an alternative conference strategy that's fan-driven, highly edited and jam-packed full of carefully curated content you can't find anywhere else. (We dare you to try and get a ticket. Double dog dare you!)



→ **Symantec** leverages the heck out of one of the most universal problems consumers face today—cybercrime—with its Norton Cybercrime Index program. The brand that *could have* gone online-only to promote its software, instead goes all out with a series of large-scale experiential activations and mobile tours. Big brother *is* watching.



→ **Coca-Cola** once again takes the all-around medal for the most impressive Olympics activation at the Summer games in London with a pavilion that was no lame-ass tent, but an interactive, multi-media experiential powerhouse that will forever raise the bar on pavilion activations.



→ Our “best balls” award goes to... Fruit-in-a-pouch snack brand **GoGo Squeeze** which distributes 10,000 numbered green balls to kids across the country and encourages them to pass the balls along after they’ve played with them. Kids can register their “new” ball online and track its journey on a virtual map.

→ The **Levi’s** Mirror Mirror tour entices Millennial women with a personalized “Curve ID” jeans fitting. The strategy inspires attendees to stick around the mobile experience for a whopping 30 minutes per visit.

→ **Panasonic** activates the worst Olympic activation on record with its stale and boring 3D movie (a.k.a. sales pitch) and then adds insult to injury by making fans wait 90 minutes to get inside to see it. Waste of marketing dollars. Waste of valuable Olympics real estate. Zero medals.

