


# CONNECTING TO THE BIG FOUR

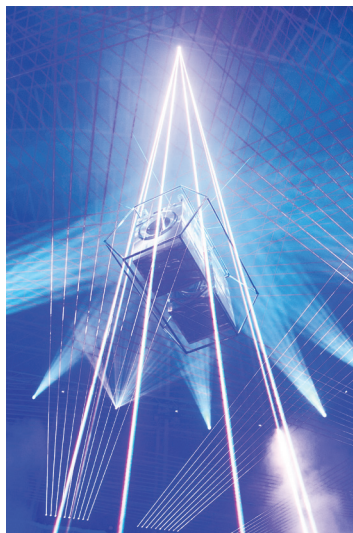
The industry's first-ever tech survival guide on using experiential marketing to launch a new product or service to press, consumers, dealers/franchisees and employees. **Produced by**  **challenge everything®**

## LAUNCH EVENTS THAT CONNECT WITH DEALERS AND FRANCHISEES

Dealers and franchisees are a brand's strategic partner. So launch events for them present a different set of challenges than those for employees, the press or consumers. Most dealers and franchisees are very successful entrepreneurs, and they are their own bosses. Most are even millionaires. How do you entice them to show up in a ballroom for a 9 a.m. meeting? It is important for them to attend, primarily to understand how the products and services being introduced will affect their businesses. They'll come if they feel the meeting is relevant to their needs. Here's how to convince them.

**Audience Goals:** Dealers and franchisees attend launch events for one reason—to learn what they need to know to grow their businesses. They come to experience firsthand what you are introducing and learn how it will boost their bottom line. They want to feel confident replacing an old product with a newer version is right for their showroom or franchise store. After all, there is a cost to them. They want to feel like it's worth it.

**What Doesn't:** As with any other launch event, a straightforward, didactic presentation isn't going to work with this crowd, just as it won't for the press, internal employees and consumers. People want to engage in the conversation, not sit there and listen to a lecture. Make them part of the experience. Involve them in the dialogue, in question and answer sessions, and ask for their feedback. Two-way communication will pay off in spades.



**New Trends to Embrace:** Miele incorporated noise-canceling headphones into a recent dealer and franchisee event that gave each attendee a personalized experience, even though each person was hearing the same thing. The attendees received the headphones as they entered the event, which immediately created a separation from what they were doing previously, a physical division between what was and what is about to occur. The headphones set the tone, and the attendees knew right off the bat that something wonderful was about to happen, and it did, as you will see in the case study that follows.

**Tips and Best Practices:** Peoples' attention spans are short and their time is precious, so don't inundate them with unnecessary facts and information. After all, there is a reason why TED talks are so successful—its speakers, no matter how rich or famous or influential they may be, adhere to an 18-minute rule. The same practice should apply to your dealer and franchisee events. Don't go overboard with presentations. The top-line will do. Then, if attendees need a deeper dive, you can come back for that later. This is also a practical way to keep the conversation going. And that's a good thing.

**Your Goals:** To create an experience that rises above the noise in the market place. Dealers and franchisees typically carry competitive products and are being courted by every other brand out there. They're not necessarily pledging allegiance to you. They're going to events by other brands as well. To make sure they are comfortable selling your product as opposed to another one, cut through the clutter and make sure they hear your message. Loud and clear.

**What Works:** An experience that is on brand, on point, on message and yet disruptive is your key to success. Your attendees spend a great deal of time thinking about their product line-up, what sells, how they are going to sell it, how to attract customers into their stores, the best product to display in their windows. Offer them an escape from their daily existence. Create an event so memorable they will share it with friends, family members and colleagues.

**Case Study:** A Miele dealer event in February 2014 heightened awareness and excitement surrounding the launch of its new washers and dryers, the W1 and T1, and imbued the machines with drama, warmth, humanity and a sense of limitless possibilities. Guests at Canary Wharf's Winter Garden in London encountered a unique theatrical experience inspired by the design of a washing machine drum. The live experience, enhanced by light, laser and 360-degree projections, built to a flying reveal by aerialists, dancers, contortionists and fragrance machines, all alluding to the attributes of the washer and dryer. Noise cancelling headphones guided guests through the spectacle. After the live show, the audience proceeded through experiential science labs and interactive exhibits that showcased the brand's high-tech capabilities. Dealers claimed it was the best launch event ever—and by the second evening had ordered 600 display units, which more than paid for the event itself.

# LAUNCH EVENTS THAT CONNECT WITH CONSUMERS

Most consumer launch events are open to the public and attract consumers of all shapes and sizes—from the most avid brand loyalists to those who are there to entertain their kids for the next 45 minutes. As a result, it is important to define your target audience since you aren't going to be able to connect with everyone. You just have to take that as a given. Once they're there, don't hit them over the head with the message. Keep that under the surface. Let them come, experience the event and get the story on their own. Here are some ways to do that.

**Audience Goals:** Consumers attend launch events for a few obvious reasons—to have fun and snag some free samples. They also are seeking some information about the new product or service, but that's not always the first thing they want. They're also seeking social currency, so they can feel cool telling their friends or share photos on their social networks about the new thing they saw or got to try out—and make them green with envy.

**Your Goals:** Consumer launch events have at least three main objectives: to build the business, build the brand (sometimes both), then amplify the experience. Take the Equinox activation at SXSW earlier this year. That event generated 3,000 leads over five days, which helped build the business. The firsthand experience with the "ride" and "tour" components of the activation helped build the brand. Those 3,000 people tweeted and uploaded photos to Instagram, amplifying the event far beyond Austin. Mission accomplished!

**What Works:** Keep the message simple. Don't ruin it with words. Unlike press launches, where the journalists prefer a roadmap so they know exactly what they will be doing from moment to moment, consumer events work best when they are free-form and more organic. With less structure, consumers can discover and create their own experience with the brand or product. Have brand ambassadors on hand to guide them when necessary, but otherwise, let them have at it.

**What Doesn't:** Too much information. Take a cue from Pepsi, where marketers say, "Don't junk up the can." The same principle holds with consumer events.



If you're engaging dealers or franchisees, you can fill the space with infographics, talking points and other information they need to build their businesses, but a consumer event needs to be a purer experience. A simple, pristine expression of the brand of the brand will go a lot farther in the end.

## New Trends to Embrace:

RFID and geo-fencing, both of which have similar outcomes or outputs. RFID allows event organizers to track attendee movements and how much time they spend where, providing robust insights at the end



of the experience. Geo-fencing technology taps into users' smartphones, often without their knowledge, as long as their location services are turned on. By using GPS or RFID, geo-fencing identifies when they enter or exit a space, then triggers a notification via text or email when they leave it. For marketers, geofencing is a valuable tool for tracking attendees' pathways through an experience and following up with promotional messaging.

**Tips and Best Practices:** Brands often find it more effective to piggyback off an established event such as SXSW and sometimes even collaborate with another sponsor. "If you've already got 100,000 to 200,000 people descending on Austin for SXSW, why not cherry pick off that, rather than create your own activation," says Scott Cullather, Global Managing Partner at inVNT. "There is something to be said for going to a pre-existing event that is representative of your products or services." Another pointer: make sure your technology is up to par. Today's consumers are accustomed to simple apps that work. Don't deliver a B-level interactive experience.

**Case Study:** Equinox, the high-end fitness club whose motto is "It's not fitness, it's life," launched its data-driven cycling class, Pursuit by Equinox (#EQXPursuit) at SXSW 2015. The challenge: to bring to life the intersection between technology, innovation and motivation to empower a high-performance lifestyle in a cycling class that used in-studio gaming and data visualization to drive competition and performance. The letter "O," which is featured in the Equinox logo, became the center of the futuristic experience. An in-the-round environment supported the "ride" component of the activation, where participants faced a large LCD screen that relayed real-time data as they rode, and the "tour component," where observers engaged with the demo via an interactive presentation. "There was no formal stage with power-point graphics and things like that," Cullather says. "We built the experience so people inherently understood that coaching and motivation translates to results." And pedaled a collective 355 miles.

# LAUNCH EVENTS FOR THE PRESS

Journalists are a busy lot. When they're not writing articles for print, the web or social media, they're researching, interviewing sources, fielding phone calls and wading through mountains of email and press releases. And no matter which industry they cover, they can be pretty jaded at times. So it's often a huge challenge to pry these hardworking wordsmiths away from their desks and keep their attention—even for the best, most innovative product or service. And even if you do get them to the event, there's the issue of getting them to write the story you, not they, want to write. Sound impossible? It's not. Here's how to create launch events that can entice even the busiest member of the media.



**Audience Goals:** Journalists are on the hunt for scoops. They attend events not for the press kit or information they could easily find on the web, but to get the inside track or a one-on-one with a top exec. The press launch for the Corvette C7 in fall 2013 offered exclusive interviews with the lead designer and engineer for select journalists. And the hot laps around the track in the C7 with professional drivers really revved them up.

**Your Goals:** First and foremost, you need to invite the right journalists, then get them to cover your three key takeaways, which vary depending on the product or service being introduced. You also need to create an incredible experience because a bad one can completely obscure the message you are trying to convey. Surprise and delight them, but remember, journalists are a little like analysts. They don't appreciate surprises that feel out of place.

**What Works:** Focus on the product or service and don't dilute your key messages with distractions. The experience should have the appropriate level of taste and tone and excitement, but avoid peripheral elements that could steal the scene. Ditch the cheerleaders and marching bands, which may generate buzz during events for employees or consumers, but for press launches, the product or service should be king. And every element of the event should map back to it.

**What Doesn't:** Want those journalists checking their smartphones and watching your presentation with one eye? Then present one-way lectures that don't allow for multi-way conversation. The most effective presentations are short, followed by hands-on demonstrations or interactive dialogues between company executives and the journalists. Steve Jobs for years got away with hijacking the stage and holding

court with the audience, a presentation style that became a model for many press experiences that followed. The unfortunate truth: there was only one Steve Jobs.

**New Trends to Embrace:** Live streaming, and a new app called Periscope that Twitter bought for a reported \$100 million earlier this year. Run for your smartphone and download it now, it is that cool. Everyone from teens to tourists, celebrities to citizen journalists have discovered this app, and now brands are getting in on the action, too. So, even though press launches are private, by-invitation-only events, by being streamed out and blogged about, in a sense they become public, often with non-invited voices weighing in. Periscope can be a useful tool for the journalists you invited to amplify your message.

**Tips and Best Practices:** Be authentic. More than any other audience, journalists expect and demand it. If they sniff something out that doesn't appear correct or authentic, they will call you out on it. Secondly, amplification is key. One way to achieve that is to invite a range of journalists. Coverage for the Corvette C7 launch extended well beyond the typical car enthusiast titles and reached a broader audience of potential car buyers thanks to the bloggers and lifestyle journalists in attendance. Finally, ensure you have enough Wi-Fi connectivity to accommodate smartphones, tablets and laptops. How else are they going to get the story out?

**Case Study:** The Corvette C7 press launch, held in Monterey, CA, over five days in August 2013, celebrated the Corvette brand and the new seventh generation Stingray. Messaging centered on the car's design and performance, but also showcased the brand's history and heritage in an immersive environment within an airplane hangar. Six white Stingrays from previous generations surrounded by 20 tightly wrapped new C7s greeted the arriving journalists. The hangar provided an empty canvas to tell the story with the main stage presentation in the center and parts of the C7 deconstructed and placed around the room in areas representing performance, design, engineering, technology and other features. Brief presentations followed by hands-on engagements with designers and engineers, test-drives, hot laps with professional drivers and a catered lunch engaged the press. The experience set a new benchmark for GM media drives—and one heck of a lot of excitement for the C7.



# LAUNCH EVENTS THAT CONNECT WITH INTERNAL EMPLOYEES

Internal launch events are typically focused on sales and marketing employees since they are on the front lines of selling and marketing new products and services. And that makes sense. But there is a subset of employees that should be included as well. After all, the operations team, human resources and other internal groups are all important contributors to the company's success. At the end of the day, everyone in the organization, even if there are 300,000 employees, is a potential sales person for that new product or service. So, having some representation of a cross-section of the employee base is important.



**Audience Goals:** Employee goals differ from those of the press, who attend product launches because they are interested, or consumers, who come out of curiosity. These attendees show up because it's their job, and they're paid to be there. But they are also seeking a level of comfort and confidence in the product or service and the executives that are launching it. They don't want to have to go out and sell something they don't believe in.

**Your Goals:** The internal launch event is a transactional experience until you make it otherwise. You may have a captive audience, but the event needs to generate excitement around the new product or service, educate employees about its features and benefits and help them understand the financial opportunity it represents for them. Demonstrate how the new product is superior to an older one or one offered by the competition. Inspire them, get them psyched, fire them up.

**What Works:** Storytelling. Consider the two to three days of an internal launch event as a story and each segment of time as a chapter that moves people along an emotional continuum from skeptical on the one hand to inspired and passionate on the other. "Appeal to the head and the heart," says Paul Blurton, chief creative officer at inVNT. "Give people information, education and training, but also form an emotional connection with them."

**What Doesn't:** Talking to yourself. You know the old adage about the radio station WIIFM (What's In It For Me)? It applies here, too. "Millions of conferences don't work because the leadership or people on-stage are essentially talking to the mirror, just saying what they want to say and not recognizing they have 100 or 1,000 or 5,000 people out there who want to participate and engage in a deeper way," Blurton says. 'Nuff said.

**New Trends to Embrace:** The old days of brick and mortar, hard scenic-built environments that set the scene for corporate theater are over. The sets have all been torn down. Today, it's all about media-rich, immersive environments that incorporate projection, LED screens, visual and digital media. With the flick of a switch you can transport the audience to the Sahara, or Paris or wherever. Also on trend: multi-platform communication that includes handheld devices as well as printed materials to reach all comfort levels with technology.

**Tips and Best Practices:** To inspire the necessary comfort and confidence in your employees, bring the highest level of executive team you can wrangle to the internal launch event. If you can't get the CEO, get the next in line. Also, evaluate how well employees understand your messaging, so you can course correct if necessary. Be consistent. If you have 25 workshop facilitators all speaking on the same subject, train them so their content aligns with the overall theme of the meeting. Finally, content curation is as important as content creation to ensure that business units tell a cohesive, unified story. Avoid mixed messages.

## About inVNT®

inVNT is a global brand communications agency that collaborates with brands and organizations to launch products, build brand allegiance, strengthen relations, create demand and align organizations with target audiences worldwide.

inVNT is recognized as one of the leading brand communications agencies in the world, partnering with clients that include: PepsiCo, Merck, Grant Thornton, General Motors, Subway, ESPN, the Outdoor Advertising Association of America (OAAA) and the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). inVNT's offices are strategically located in New York, London, Washington, D.C., Detroit, San Francisco and Laguna Beach.

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