

ADVANCE BACKWARD

Work backwards to get ahead.

By: Marsha Londe

“ADVANCE BACKWARD” is a perfect description for executing successful marketing campaigns. To achieve results, know first what your outcome must be. Then, to advance to that result, plan backwards with established goals, and define the path to take you there. Otherwise, you may end up with a completed marketing initiative that fails to achieve your objectives.

A GOOD MARKETING PLAN WORKS BACKWARDS.

A national grocery chain with a regional presence in an Olympic city advanced backwards with a guerrilla marketing campaign. Their objective: create a connection between the chain and the Olympic Games to build affinity with the host city and extend their brand recognition.

The plan? Donate the use of a blimp to fly over the games for security, observation, and reporting. This would deliver value to the

Olympic Games and demonstrate honorary involvement in this international event. However, because the grocery was not an official sponsor, the blimp could not be branded.

With this challenging goal in mind, it was time to pull together the “marketing dream team” to develop the plan and strategy. Members included marketing, public relations, and the promotional product agency.

A PRODUCT AGENCY?

Yes, these hard-working marketing tools are “promotional” products. When marketing develops a relationship with a promotional product consultant that thinks and acts like an agency, the end result is logo product that creates brand awareness and branded merchandise that supports marketing efforts.

The grocery’s blimp program was a huge success. Painted with the chain’s logo and corporate





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colors of red, white, and blue, the blimp flew over high-profile local events before the Olympic Games. When it was time to donate the blimp to the games, the logo was removed. To more closely create the connection in public's mind, all store employees and management dressed in high quality shirts with a flag design and an embroidered image of the blimp. The shirts proved to be so patriotic and popular that customers asked to purchase them. The chain brought in shirts and hats to sell to their customers and in the process created a bonus revenue stream.

A talented public relations team made certain pictures and stories received local and national coverage. Even "People" magazine did an article featuring employees wearing their Olympic blimp shirts.

As the Olympics approached, media received blimp-imprinted umbrellas for protection from afternoon showers and heat. The division president personally handed out thousands of blimp shaped key tags.

Knowledgeable and savvy marketing, P.R, and promotional product teams worked together on a highly successful campaign. Even with the corporate logo removed from the blimp, the Olympic audience knew who sponsored it. The grocery chain successfully extended their brand recognition through a powerful marketing tool...promotional products.

AN EFFECTIVE MARKETING MEDIUM

Why, exactly, do promotional products work? At a time when the agency world is bemoaning the demise of the 30-second commercial and businesses scramble for innovative means to

capture attention, what makes this \$18 billion dollar, 100-year-old marketing medium so effective? It's because a high-performing promotional product, integrated into a campaign from the beginning, completes the marketing effort by providing value to the end-user. Valuable products are kept and used, delivering branding and an impression long after the campaign is completed.

This is a drastic shift in mind-set for those who treat product as a last-minute addition. When that happens, product is chosen by price alone and cannot seamlessly fit into the marketing plan or resonate with the target audience. Forget the negative descriptions that belittle logo product. Used correctly and creatively, this advertising venue is highly effective in reaching and staying with an audience. Whether developing a product based campaign or integrating it with print and media, corporate merchandise contributes to return on investment.

Avoid the "stuff" and "trinkets" mentality. Take the time to find a partner who brings value to the relationship. Make those advertising dollars count while communicating your brand consistently across all marketing efforts. Professionals create ads, and professionals manage branded product campaigns. Pick partners that make a difference and an impact.

Find the right match with a promotional product company that thinks like an agency. When you searched and reviewed for an ad agency or PR firm, how did you go about the process? You considered what is important to your company and invested time and dollars to seek out and meet with appropriate candidates. Apply the same approach to find your best product partner.

The good news is that there are many fine companies from which to choose, across the county and in your own backyard. As you interview, confirm their approach to marketing. Do they comprehend your needs, business, and most importantly, how to influence your audience? Every agency should focus on the "who/what/when/where/how much and, most importantly, WHY of any campaign or program.

WORK WITH A PRO.

"Passion" is a value-added quality. Work with a pro, one who is knowledgeable,

detailed, and energetic and believes that branded product enhances marketing performance. Expertise, experience, and a creative mindset translate into successful programs that influence and affect the recipient.

Sergio Zyman, the branding guru, says marketing is an investment, not an expense. Too often promotional product is an afterthought when designing a marketing campaign. For more effective return on investment, budget for branding from the get-go. The grocery chain built product in when planning the marketing approach. Their logo product took on a life of its own, strengthening the overall results. Would their guerrilla marketing have been as compelling had product been an afterthought, relegated to what remained of budget dollars?

Work with the marketing experts – all of them. An integrated team representing all the marketing disciplines creates unified, solid marketing execution. Magic can happen. The ad agency or public relations firm may throw out an idea and the promotional product partner knows the compelling tie-in for lasting impact. Or your product agency may have the winning idea!

MEDIA, PRINT, P.R., AND PROMOTIONAL PRODUCT.

The grocery chain determined the desired result and then brought together category specialists, each a professional agency, to brainstorm and make it happen. Now that's Olympic quality "advance backward" thinking! •

Tango Partners manages the RFP process and cost reduction for companies that purchase significant quantities of logo merchandise. Headquartered in Atlanta, GA, Tango was formed by pioneers in the promotional product industry and is led by innovators in the use of branded product. More information is available at the company website, www.tangopartners.net, e-mail solutions@tangopartners.net or at 404-846-1900

In Marsha Londe's 25-year industry career, she has earned 23 Pyramid awards for the creative use of product to drive results and was twice named salesperson of the year. Three of her clients were recognized by the industry as "Buyer of the Year", a reflection of how the effective use of promotional product helped them achieve program goals.