



Get noticed

Insider tips on how to navigate the new wave of marketing tools By Ian Lloyd Neubauer

The core aim of marketing—creating and communicating a brand identity—hasn't changed. But in the brave new world of digital overlay, the number of marketing tools to choose from is stupefying. Here we share eight tried, trusted and trending ways to market your events:

Tell a story

In the 2009 marketing experiment *Significant Objects*, controllers attempted to test the suggestion that people value stories and, if such value exists, to measure it. They began by buying 100 garage-sale items like piggy banks and novelty coffee mugs at a total cost of US\$128.74. Then they asked 100 prominent writers to write short stories to describe those items. Finally, they auctioned those items on eBay using those stories as product descriptions.

The combined sales came to US\$3,612.51—an ROI of 2,800 per cent. “It turns out that once you start increasing the emotional energy of inanimate objects, an unpredictable chain reaction is set off,” says Jason Grote, a screenwriter for the cult TV series *Mad Men* and author of *Significant Objects* the book.

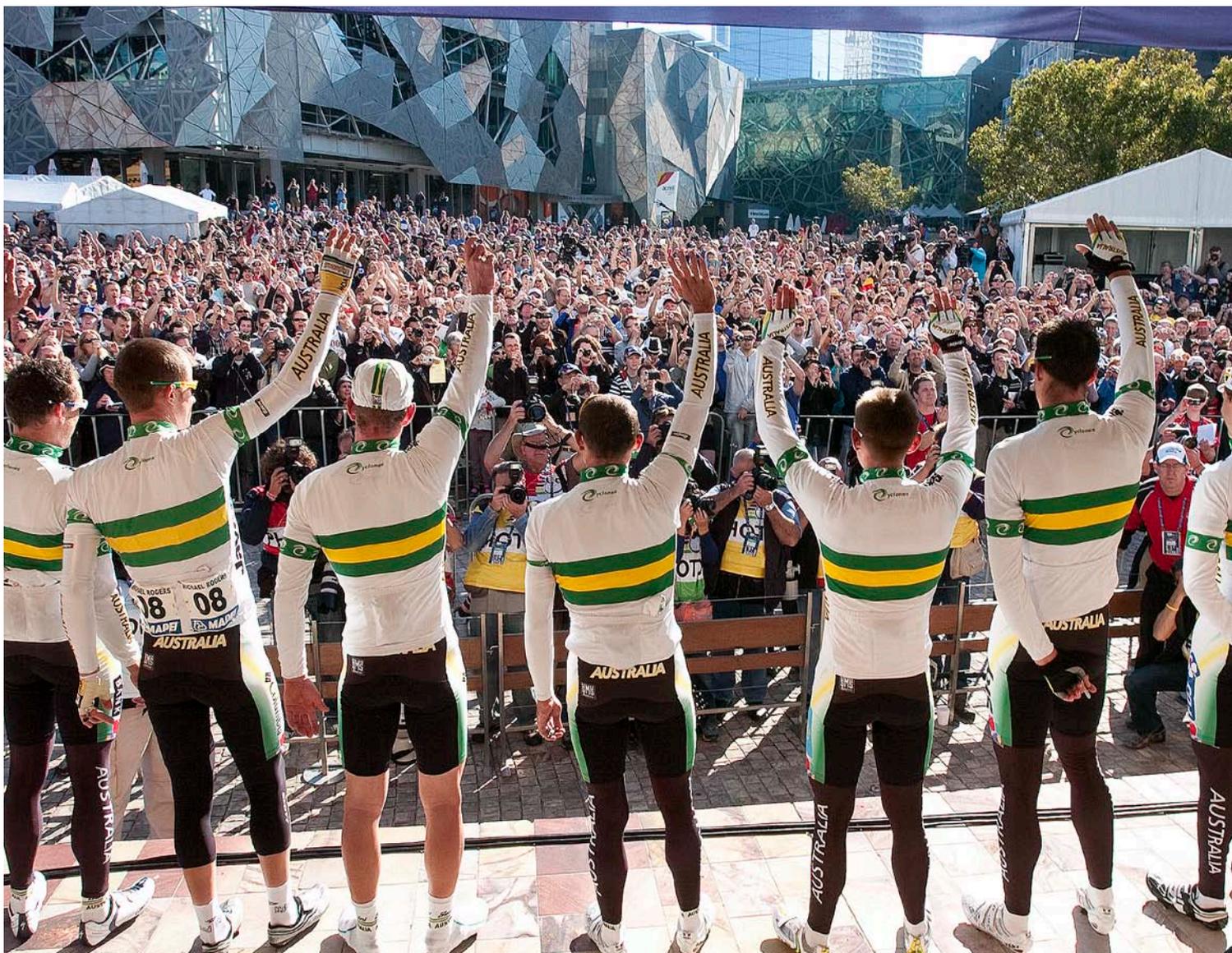
Tell it to the converted

“For every event there is a core group of potential participants you need to attack vigorously—your existing customer base—because engaging and retaining your core group is much easier than finding new customers,” says David Culbert, director of Jump Media, a sports marketing specialist who's worked with the Tour of Beijing and Australian Olympic Committee. “It's pretty straightforward and saves a lot of time and energy. Of course, attracting new customers is important too, but not at the expense of existing ones—as is so often the case.”

Among the many marketing tools Jump Media uses to talk to the converted are old-school mail outs. “We've been using this technique for decades and it still works,” Culbert says. “For the World Gymnastics Championships in Melbourne in 2005, it was at the big Rod Laver Arena and we had a lot of seats to sell. We didn't have a big advertising budget, so we wrote to every kid in the state who was registered with a gymnastics group. It worked incredibly well.”

Get personal

Electronic direct mail (EDM) is the monarch of the marketing kingdom, delivering an ROI of 3,800 per cent, according to Campaign Monitor, a leading DIY email marketing platform with offices in Sydney and San Francisco. Among the platform's 1,500 customers is South by Southwest (SXSW), a two-week long event for film, music and interactive industries in the U.S. attended by 100,000 people annually. “Email marketing is the only way to talk to people personally. Like, ‘Hey—this is really cool for you and you should pay attention’,” says SXSW marketing and analysis coordinator Kori Mirsberger.



However sending an email blast is one thing; convincing your subscribers to open them is another. “A straightforward way to increase open rates is a stand-out subject line,” says EDM specialist Kellee Howard of Newsletter Queen. “Engage them with a compelling statement or ask a question. Be daring and stand out from the dozens of emails landing in your customers’ inboxes every morning. And avoid obvious spam trigger words like ‘sale’, ‘free’ and ‘buy now’.”

Blogging

“Every year I’m invited to more than 100 events. I can’t attend all of them so I have to decide which to put on my shortlist,” says Mellissah Smith, founder of consultancy firm Marketing Eye. “One of the first things I look at,” she says, “is the quality of the content—if the speakers interest me. I read up on speakers I haven’t heard of through blogs and online profiles.”

“Sophisticated event planners drip feed content through blogs and social media to pique interest in their speakers, creating shareable content that attracts new attendees. This is particularly important with the emergence of newer forms of social media like Snapchat, where teasing the audience leads to more traction in engagement from potential attendees.”

But Culbert of Jump Media says the most effective bloggers for events are the attendees themselves. “Having someone who has already bought a ticket posting on Facebook that they are going—they’re the people who create hype around your event. They generate more sales than anyone else.”

Film everything

From using footage to create a highlights reel, to testimonials of happy delegates, to pay-per-view recordings of speakers, video content is a sure-fire way to generate enthusiasm and sales before, during and after an event. “Whenever we stage an event, we

Choose your weapon

(Clockwise from above) Jump Media draws a crowd with letters; Snapchat is a good teaser; Hed Kandi caught on camera; direct footfall using gamification



an exhibition hall on a slow day. Using the new gamification function embedded into Eventmobi—one of the world's best-selling event apps—they create a challenge that awards delegates points for visiting exhibitor booths. A live leaderboard ranks the delegates with the highest points and transmits the results to smartphones and screens around the showroom, creating a competitive buzz.

Sponsors can join in by donating prizes—a bottle of Champagne or a room upgrade—and publicise the give-away on social media. “Twelve months ago gamification wasn't prominent at events,” says Marketing Eye's Smith, “but now there's a real buzz about it.”

SEO 2.0

Search engine optimisation (SEO) is the process of enhancing your website's visibility on search engines like Google and Yahoo. Event planners can leverage SEO tactics like adding links to other websites (known as back-linking) and inserting popular keywords that consumers in the market you are trying to crack are likely to type into search engines (known as META tagging).

But these tactics are hit and miss. Enter Artios, a new SEO solution using artificial intelligence to provide specific data on how to modify your website to ensure maximum visibility online. “Eventbrite recently asked us to analyse its 10,000 top events to see why some were shared more on social media than others,” says Andreas Voniatis, data science director at Artios. “By applying artificial intelligence or machine learning to the patterns, we found that charitable events performed far better within their data set. The take-away from that is if you're running an event with a charitable element or partner, you should position the charitable element more prominently on your website.”

Deliver on promises

Business events are by definition marketing tools. So if you talk the talk, you better walk the walk, says Marketing Eye's Smith, pointing to the SXSW conferences as the global benchmark. “All its branding, teaser campaigns, electronic direct marketing, marketing automation, website and promotional products are phenomenal—the best in the world,” she says.

“But it's not just a tease. The organisers sustain the hype year after year by creating amazing talk-able experiences. They attract global business leaders and rockstars on the same stage, ensuring that everyone who works in the creative field or business wants to be there. They've created a cult-like following due to the fact that they deliver on their brand promise.” ■



make sure a photographer and videographer are there to capture everything because it provides marketing content for our next event,” says Nick Willsher, managing director of Entertaining Asia, the Hong Kong-based events company behind Asia's Ministry of Sound and Hed Kandi music events.

“Right now I'm working on a new event and the first thing potential sponsors ask for are video clips of last year's event. It's gotten to the stage for planners in Asia where if you don't have professional video content or an established relationship with sponsors, they're very unlikely to give you the time of day.”

Gamification

Gamification is an exciting marketing tool that uses gaming elements such as challenges, competitions and rewards to engage attendees and encourage participation. Or in simpler terms, gamification makes business interaction fun. Say, for example, a planner wants to drive traffic to the floor of

