



Train of events

Guest editor **Nick Adams**, managing director of experiential agency Sense, on the need for more training in experiential marketing



Last month, in my piece on self-regulation, I touched briefly on the thorny issue of promotional staffing in the experiential industry, and this is one of the primary challenges facing our sector. As experiential marketing becomes more sophisticated and companies plough more of their budgets into the discipline, so the promotional staffing pool has to evolve with it.

In some ways, we have probably made a rod for our own backs, raising the bar in terms of client expectations in this area, if nothing else by simply referring to these people as brand ambassadors and not promotional staff. We are the ones telling clients these people are responsible for communicating their values and that they will embody their brand. We now need to rise to that challenge and deliver against what we say and look at how we can push the quality

of the people we deliver.

However, the rather bleak reality is that promotional staff are a much maligned aspect of live event marketing, with many marketers – and indeed agencies – viewing them as an after-thought. Rarely are they considered a vital aspect of any campaign. The very people representing the industry at its most crucial consumer touch points are, sadly, often its most neglected. Some agencies are even still providing the same staff with the same briefing process as they did five to 10 years ago. Unless this changes, the experiential industry will be seriously hampered in its ability to deliver ever more thoughtful and complicated campaigns.



Guest Editor's note

For some time, experiential marketing has been fighting to be considered as a serious marketing technique, but there are two factors that indicate the tide may be turning.

Firstly, the discipline is becoming more widely recognised by the various trade bodies: the ISP is adding an experiential diploma to its educational courses; the MCCA is working to nurture its relationship with the experiential agencies; and at a recent meeting of the IPA that I attended they were discussing how to strengthen their associations with experiential.

Secondly, while it was once seen as a standalone discipline – a quick tactical win, often to shift surplus product samples – marketing departments are now taking a much more serious and holistic view by looking at how the impact of an experiential activity can be leveraged by the other marketing disciplines. In turn, experiential itself is becoming more promotionally focused, as agencies and clients look at developing the customer contacts they make.

Hopefully, this is a trend that will continue in 2008, and we will see experiential pushed up the marketing food chain and that companies will start to view its use much more strategically and think about how it can work alongside all the other marketing disciplines.

Nick Adams
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