

Cows-Related Marketing Draws Tourists Like Flies

BY BERNIE TRUEBLOOD



Creativity got upstaged in Chicago last month. Not that it wasn't in the spotlight. Speakers held forth on the use of creative as an enhancement

to brand image, and World PRO finalists demonstrated that there are no limits to stimulating customer appeal through sight, sound, motion, and emotion.

But however poignant the Powerpoints, however dazzling the Awards Ceremony, by far the best creativity was happening outside the walls of the Navy Pier, out on the streets where the now-famous Cows on Parade promotion gave new dimension to the notion of cattle call! There were life-sized statues of cows everywhere, hundreds of them, every one more unique and eye-catching than the next. Airbrushed, decoupage, mirrored, or otherwise adorned, each one reflected the unique creativity of a local artisan. As they say in the promotion business, it was udderly traffic-stopping.

It was all part of a campaign designed to increase summer tourism. Sophisticated promotion practitioners might assume that the Bureau of Tourism had carefully crafted an assignment document, and had approached several agencies looking for creative ideas to reinforce the city's heritage. (Remember the devastating fire of 1871, rumored to have been caused by an errant cow kick?)

But that's not what happened. Bloody truth is, a travelling Chicagoan fortuitously encountered the promotion already running in Zurich, reported it to town dignitaries, and the Windy City made a bid to import the idea. This was a bit of a bold maneuver, since it had no

budget. Needing to pony up, they turned to local businesses, entreating them to underwrite the project in return for the privilege of featuring cow P-O-P in front of their establishments. It could have been a tough sale, until someone came



More than 300 painted hoofers on hand for PROMO Expo.

up with the notion of auctioning off the bovines, with proceeds to be donated to children's charities. That appealed to proprietors and put the idea over the top.

Bottom line? Officials project that the cows drew \$100 million to \$200 million in incremental tourist dollars to Chicago over the summer season. Cowbunga!

There is perhaps no better proof that successful creativity doesn't always emerge from a tightly written client brief or from mystical agency insight. It isn't necessarily a product of inspiration or of perspiration. Sometimes, brilliant creative is just pure serendipity.

CALLER BEWARE: This month's caveat emptor award goes to AT&T, whose TV ads tout phone calls for eight cents a minute. But wait a minute, that's only for calls over 10 minutes. Fine-print readers discover that, for shorter calls, it's 16 cents a minute!

Here's the math: an 11-minute call costs 88 cents, a shorter 10-minute one costs \$1.60. Go figure. Maybe a stop-

Creative Promotion, But No Legs

McDonald's apparently wanted repeat business, so they made customers a deal: visit eight times in four weeks and collect all the parts needed to assemble a complete "Gadget Man" toy.

Eight trips? Were they kidding? It's the concept of continuity run amuck! Miss the first trip, and customers had no torso on which to hang the arms and legs. They ran out of leg on the second trip anyway — and no amount of coercing the manager could assuage the pain. By the fifth trip, all P-O-P had been taken down by the manager, and the special parts bags were tucked well out of sight — leaving kids to deal with an assortment of disjointed body parts.

As if in consolation, McDonald's invited upset parents to play the Q-P-C game, offering three-letter prizes like an S-U-V, or an I-B-M, or an A-T-M, or a J-V-C, or an F-T-C. Get it? Wonder if anyone got that Q-P-C stands for "Quarter Pounder with Cheese?" Or is someone at McDonald's convinced that their consumers are fluent in insider acronymism?



Matthew Trueblood ponders the joys of a toy leg.

watch as premium incentive offer would be a good idea?

And that's the truth.

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