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Creative promotions are consistently run by some of the most well-known brands. Here, we look at six client promotions that used ad specialties in creative ways.



By Kenneth Hein

*b*ig brands from many economic sectors often have stark differences in their marketing efforts. Some choose the big-splash Super Bowl-type ad campaign. Others choose the direct route, heading into a market with a one-to-one strategy that allows consumers to touch and feel their products. ○ One thing they all have in common, though:

the use of promotional products to enhance their marketing efforts. Brands as diverse as EA Sports, The Weather Channel, Dunkin Donuts and Heinz have all recently incorporated ad specialty items into their promotional campaigns. Why? Let's have Kieran Laughlin, senior marketing associate for Gorton's Seafood, and Sara Braca, associate brand manager for Heinz Ketchup, explain the thought behind the strategy used when these brands recently hooked up for a joint promotion.

"A personalized bottle of ketchup and other giveaways, including Heinz and Gorton's magnets and stickers, provide an added value for prospective winners and allow us to reinforce brand loyalty across both brands," they say in a joint statement.

Even further, other brands use promotional items as a way to get their best customers constantly promoting their brand names. Call it true grass-roots marketing. "It is a badge of identity for people who wear and use gear branded with the Jones Soda logo,"

says Josh Groff, brand manager for Jones Soda Co. (*asi/63541*). “By making these personal connections with our fans, they each become brand ambassadors.”

Pretty powerful statements for the use of promo items by some large consumer packaged-goods brands. The key for these and other large and popular brands is to find ways to creatively inject promotional products into their marketing strategies. For these companies, it’s not as simple as just handing out a pen or mug during random events. Items often have to be co-branded to incorporate multi-sponsored events. And they need to fit into an overall strategy.

Here, we present six case studies of how various large brand-name companies have used ad specialties in recent marketing and promotional efforts. Read on to find some large-scale creative inspiration.

Promo Items Enhance Online Marketing Effort

Last summer, Jones Soda proudly proclaimed that it was “the official soda of the road trip.” To prove it, the premium soda brand teamed with Griffin Technology to reward people for sharing their most creative photos taken while traveling across North America.

Using Twitter, travelers were asked to make a post with the hashtag *#roadtrip-jones* and include their destination or itinerary. Photos and videos could then be uploaded at *www.jonessoda.com/gallery* and hashtagged through Twitter, Facebook, Flickr and YouTube.

Ten winners received one of 10 Griffin iTrip AutoPilots, and 10 photos from their journeys were selected to appear on Jones Soda bottles internationally. The grand prize winner also received a \$500 shopping spree at *www.griffintechology.com*.

While the main marketing strategy for Jones Soda was conceived through online channels, the whole effort was enhanced by the use of a live road-show tour that



included representatives handing out ad specialties to people they encountered. During the summer, the Jones Soda RV hit various locations during a 10,000-mile journey throughout the country, tweeting all the way (*@Jones_Soda_RV*). Consumers who caught up with the RV or stopped by the soda company’s national headquarters received bumper stickers and coupons.

Jones Soda has a long history of giving out branded items and will continue to do so, says Groff. The key to the strategy behind the use of ad specialty items – even within a marketing campaign conducted mostly online – is for the Jones Soda brand to consistently connect with its customers. “It is a badge of identity for people who wear and use gear branded with the Jones Soda logo,” says Groff. “It’s how they distinguish themselves from the crowd.”

The brand, which has a partnership with the Seattle Seahawks, also gave away T-shirts before the NFL team’s home opener last year. This season it gave out schedule posters. “By making these personal connections with our fans, they each become brand ambassadors,” says Groff. “It is an efficient way for Jones Soda to expand awareness, and it is extremely

effective because it is done in a viral and genuine way.”

Winners Reel In Tackle Box Full Of Promos

Many people can’t enjoy their fish sticks without a dab of ketchup. That’s why H.J. Heinz Company and Gorton’s formed a cross-promotional partnership last year.



The two have been working in tandem to promote their products as healthy food options.

In October, they borrowed a little fishing lingo to further drive home the point with the “Gone Dipping with Gorton’s and Heinz” sweepstakes. Playing off the Heinz 57 heritage, consumers were invited to visit www.gonedipping.com to win a prize every single day for 57 days.

Winners who hooked a prize received a “Gone Dipping” tackle box containing a personalized bottle of Heinz ketchup, a Gorton’s Sudoku game and branded stickers and magnets. They also received a 57-day supply of fish sticks and ketchup. The grand prize winner, lucky enough to reel in the big one, also got \$1,000.

The key for both brands: providing a lasting impression of the two product lines through ad specialty items meant to match the theme of the promotion. “The goal of the ‘Gone Dipping with Gorton’s and Heinz’ sweepstakes is to increase consumer engagement with the two brands and drive consumption of fish sticks and ketchup,” say Laughlin and Braca in a joint statement.

The contest was promoted on the packaging of both products, along with the various health benefits of the products. Gorton’s has been touting the natural omega-3 fatty acids found in its products, while Heinz is promoting its tomatoes grown from Heinz seeds.

Multi-Brand Gift Card Wakes Up Morning Promo

There are two things most people do when they get up in the morning. One is grab a hot cup of coffee. The other is to turn on The Weather Channel to see what the local weather has in store for them. Playing off of these two rituals, The Weather Channel, Dunkin’ Donuts and Al Roker all teamed up for the recent “Wake Up With Al” promotion.

Consumers who visited www.weather.com/wakeup

over a two-month time period last fall could enter to win a \$100 Dunkin’ Donuts gift card. The co-branded sweepstakes entry page also reminded people to tune in weekdays at 6 a.m. to watch Al Roker and co-host Stephanie Abrams tell them whether it was going to be a raincoat or sunglasses kind of day.

“Waking up with Al Roker and Dunkin Donuts are both popular morning rituals. This is a great way to reach consumers who need to be alert and ready to go in the mornings and let them know about ‘Wake Up With Al,’” says Cynthia Ashworth, vice president of consumer engagement at Dunkin’ Donuts. “It’s a natural fit – watch America’s favorite weatherman while sipping America’s favorite coffee, then visit www.weather.com for a chance to win.”

The sweepstakes was advertised via a 15-second TV spot on The Weather Channel. In-store displays including a life-size stand-up featuring Roker popped up at many of the nearly 6,000 Dunkin’ Donuts locations. Online, banner ads appeared at www.weather.com. Also, some direct marketing efforts included a targeted e-mail blast to people who opted in to Dunkin’ and Weather Channel databases which touted the limited-time gift-card offer.

T-Shirts Help Brand Revival

Was that Kim Kardashian in a Boone’s Farm T-shirt? Yes, it was. The socialite and reality show star is just one of many trendsetters to sport a T-shirt touting the quirky brand. Boone’s Farm, the fruit-flavored, inexpensive wine launched in the 1960s, is in the midst of a revival.

Three years ago it launched its “Bring Boone’s Back” marketing effort. The goal was to make the brand relevant among influencers. Its marketing tool of choice:



T-shirts. Style-conscious celebrities, deejays and members of the press were seeded with a high-end logoed shirt, which is also available at upscale retailers like Saks Fifth Avenue.

“The branded Boone’s Farm T-shirts are an effective marketing tool because they serve as walking billboards for our brand,” says Kammy Dosanjh Chahal, assistant marketing manager of E&J Gallo Winery, which owns Boone’s. “Simply using posters and serving product is great, but that’s easily ignored by consumers.”

Looking to broaden its tongue-in-cheek outreach, the brand partnered with the ’80s-inspired Tony-award-winning Broadway musical *Rock of Ages*. As a sponsor, Boone’s was integrated into pre- and post-show activities.

Boone’s Farm also struck a sponsorship deal with the 2009 Air Guitar Championship. The tour traveled throughout U.S. cities in search of the person who can “rock out the hardest on an invisible guitar.” Samplers clad in hot-pink Boone’s



Farm shirts handed out drink cards promoting Boone’s Farm and its newest flavor, Sunshine Pink. The “Boone’s Farm Girls” also swept balloons, confetti and other debris from the stage in-between acts. Contestants received the shirts as well as samples of the product, which they were seen chugging on stage, backstage and on the tour bus.

“The presence of the samplers moving through the crowd in bright pink T-shirts

was impossible to ignore, and it helped to have the hosts, a focal point of every show, wear the shirts as well,” says Chahal. “Air guitar talent wore the T-shirts on TV appearances, which extended the Boone’s Farm presence. It created a common theme and made our presence and co-branding undeniable.”

Video-Game Maker Goes On Tour

Last October was a good month for video-game maker EA Sports. In Europe, it sold 1.7 million copies of *FIFA Soccer 10* in one week, making it one of the fastest-selling sports titles ever. To rally U.S. fans, EA Sports hit the road armed with gaming kiosks and some cool prizes for players who sampled the soccer game.

Beginning in Chicago, *FIFA Soccer 10* was brought to 15 cities during a five-week tour last fall. Two vehicles hit hot spots on both coasts. The custom-wrapped trucks held 13 TVs and featured the new, slimmer 120GB PlayStation 3. A full-time crew showed players how to use the 360-degree dribbling systems and all-new Virtual Pro that allows the player the chance to live out the fantasy of being a professional soccer player.

Major League Soccer star Cuauhtemoc Blanco of the Chicago Fire, one of three athletes featured on the cover of the game, was also on hand to celebrate the game’s kickoff at a launch party. He held an autograph session and participated in an in-store tournament. The tournament winner received a 42-inch Panasonic HDTV.

Of course, the promotional tour wasn’t complete without the creative use of ad specialty items. While the main attractions were the soccer stars and the chance for fans to actually try out the new game for themselves, the lasting memories and continuous advertising impressions were made through promotional products handed out during the events. The tour, which included free handouts like posters and T-shirts for game players, concluded November 22 in Las Vegas.



“The EA Sports *FIFA Soccer 10* tour is an integral part of the overall marketing campaign, as it provides consumers with the opportunity to experience the game in a fun and engaging environment,” says Darren Lachtmen, director of business development for rEvolution, the tour’s creator. “EA Sports *FIFA Soccer 10* has the potential to be the highest-rated sports game of all time, and we are confident that providing a unique and memorable opportunity to play the game will drive consumers to purchase.”

Green Item Promotes Eco-Friendly Vodka

When you have a name like the Earth Friendly Distilling Company (EFDC), you’d better back it up. To promote its 360 Vodka, the distiller believes it has done just that. Not only does EFDC donate \$1 to environmental charities when a 360 Vodka swing-top closure is returned for recycling, but each of its 1.75 liter bottles comes with a reusable metal handle.

The handle helps create a steady pour that reduces spillage and breakage. What’s more, the vodka is produced using machines that run on biodiesel fuel, and recycled materials are used for its glass bottle and paper label.

To hammer its sustainability message home, EFDC shipped 10,000 cases of 360 Vodka with logoed, reusable recycling bins sized to hold 12 bottles each. The company hopes that the blue bins will be used again and again for recycling efforts. It views them as a superior alternative to the boxes

that wholesalers often provide to their customers for carrying home their bottles.

“As the world’s only eco-friendly, luxury vodka, it’s essential that our marketing efforts promote sustainability and, whenever possible, give consumers reusable and recyclable solutions that encourage positive environmental changes, such as our recycling bin shipping containers,” says Vic Morrison, vice president at McCormick Distilling, parent company of EFDC. “We are also proud that 360 Vodka listens to the feedback of our mixologists, consumers and accounts, and provides them with eco-friendly solutions such as the reusable bottle handle.”

Earth Friendly believes it has not only lived up to its name, but it has also set a higher standard for sustainability in the spirits industry. ○

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