

## **CAN BELOW THE LINE BE SEXY?**

For those that work in the agency industry, there are only two types of people – those who produce advertising – and the rest. Quite often ‘the rest’ have tried to ‘dabble’ in advertising, rather than just specialise on what they are good at. One 4A’s media agency opened a creative department in Asia five years ago – until its creative sisters complained hard enough to HQ.

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Yet, this ‘line’ that the industry has created is going the other way with clients. The so-called people ‘below’ it often hold more esteem than those above it – because they are either creating CRM or interactive ideas that are measurable, or they are developing strong field marketing programs with a direct sales impact. For clients – below the line is now sexy.

So what are the best marketers in Asia doing in this rather massive area? Well, here are a few of the things we have seen we would call best practice.

- 1. It’s all about ideas** – the days are over for purely relying on ‘execution’ agencies to roll out an ad campaign. The best marketers are investing in promotion specialists to develop breakthrough thinking. The recent South East Asian Nokia “Defend your turf” campaign that won big at recent shows is a great example – truly linking the thrill of neighbourhood soccer with a competitive spirit
- 2. Online is all over the line** – no successful campaign today can win without a smart online strategy. 18 months ago, Coke started putting ID codes under their bottle tops in China in the hope of driving some traffic online to win prizes and build a database. They now have 20 million registered users – more than the total urban population of Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia combined. While great web ideas can come from anywhere, they will not come from turning your print ad into a banner. It requires focus and commitment
- 3. It doesn’t happen unless it happens at retail** – all the statistics about decisions made at point of sale continue to be true. Whether it is as

simple as a 'beer girl', an interactive piece of point of sale, right down to the physical retail space, the best companies are hiring retail specialists to make it happen right. This year, adidas will open two stores a day in China – every one of them is a brand message that must be managed.

#### **4. You must measure if you mean business**

Five years ago, award entries for Effies and Promotion Awards, when asked for 'results', usually put 'the client was very happy'. Today, that just doesn't cut it. Sophisticated metrics are in place now using WAP, SMS and other technologies to more accurately measure each campaign element and impact. The best companies are using pre-and-post research studies to benchmark promotional cut-through.

We can't seem to meet any agency anymore that doesn't claim to be 360 degree, media neutral, holistic and through the line. Eskimos have twenty three different words for snow – agencies have even more for integrated marketing. Let's hope in the process, marketers will get better ideas, with better results

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