

HOW TO DRIVE BETTER ACTIVATION

With the economy in hibernation, more and more marketers are moving away from mass media to more targeted and experiential activities – shoring up current clients, and using new approaches to win new ones. The challenge for any marketer is twofold – “what is the right balance and mix?” and “How do I measure success in a world where there are no ratings or audited circulation?”

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 even 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 – activation is now sexy.

What are some practical approaches to driving successful activation events?

- 1. Test and Learn** – we’ve been benchmarking marketing spend in ATL and BTL across Asia over the past seven years. The leaders in this science set up different marketing mixes and track results. You can’t rely on just ‘gutfeel’, you need to invest in research and learning to build a more efficient model
- 2. It’s all about ideas** – the days are over for purely relying on ‘execution’ agencies to rollout an ad campaign. The best marketers are investing in true promotion agencies to develop breakthrough thinking. We’ve just run a major pitch in China for an alcohol company looking for a specialist discipline. You need to find the best possible agency partners to drive your activation work
- 3. Online is all over the line** – no successful campaign today can win without a smart online strategy. And since the best online work combines paid media as well as content creation, the lines become blurred. Right now, the

Singapore Tourism Board has sent out a global call to find the world's best digital specialist to drive their business. Smart marketers are seeking proven talent from online experts

4. 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, this is a powerful marketing medium. This year, adidas will open two stores a day in China – every one of them is a brand message that must be managed.

5. 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. Pre-and-post campaign research is incredibly low cost to help benchmark activation cut-through.

Eskimos have twenty three different words for snow – agencies have even more for integrated, 360 degrees, holistic, demand creation marketing. The onus ultimately is still on the marketer to make sure the overall objectives are met. Let's hope in the process, marketers will get better ideas, with better results.

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