

Brown & Martin's

newsletter

Chip Martin Says Marketing Icons Can Become Profit Centers



Chip Martin

Puppets (specifically those of the ventriloquist-type) are making a big come back.

David Letterman's full week of "ventriloquists" featuring a different ventriloquist each night, turned

out to be one of the show's highest rated weeks, ever.

In 2006 Jay Johnson (the ventriloquist from Soap) had a successful Broadway show about "Ventriloquism."

Ventriloquist Jeff Dunham's Comedy Central DVD just went triple platinum and he's playing to sold out shows across the country. He's also making an appearance in an upcoming Blue Collar movie and will be taping a second DVD in Washington D.C. this spring.

Sales of ventriloquist puppets (or as I call it, "puppet slavery") are on a major up swing.

Meanwhile, I'm stuck here in the frozen tundra writing a marketing-related column for this pathetic newsletter. Believe me when I say that it's been a long, tough struggle to the middle.

But the rising popularity of "puppets" being recognized as entities in their own right is not surprising.

We're "icons." And icons are "in."

If you don't believe me, take a look at Staples' "Easy Button." The novelty item born out of the company's ad campaign and available at its



stores for \$5, is popping up like mushrooms in a forest ... 1.5 million of them. That's right. Staples has earned an additional \$7.5 million in revenue from sales of its "Easy Button."

The icon has become an effective means of customer interaction with the company ... plus an additional profit center.

At the same time Travelocity has sold more than 20,000 of its 8-inch gnome statues at \$19.99 each. In addition the gnome has become a cultural icon. People have sent Travelocity photos of him in airplanes, scuba diving, sky diving, at sporting events and at famous landmarks around the world.

It was the same for Taco Bell's Chihuahua, (killed by political correctness), Pets.com's sock puppet (killed by mismanagement) and more recently, Burger King's creepy King ... yet to be killed.

Icons, especially "puppet" icons can be effective marketing tools, effective communications tools and effective entertainers. So give a puppet a home. It may give you the ultimate ROI.



PEANUT
Peanut the Woozle, a close personal friend of the editor, is one of the most popular characters in Jeff Dunham's shows.

YouTube is Worth What???

Google, as you have read in every freaking publication in the world, paid \$1.65 billion in stock to purchase YouTube.

To put that in perspective, that is what Target paid for 257 Mervyns department stores and four distribution centers in 13 states, and just a bit more than WPP Group paid for the Grey Global Group advertising network with 10,500 employees in 83 countries generating \$1.3 billion in revenue. Those were both profitable enterprises with vast fixed assets.

YouTube's assets pretty much consist of a video interface and a cool logo.

But YouTube generates more than 100 million video streams a day. Sixty five thousand videos are added each day. In other words, viewer ship for potential advertisers is off the charts.

Lots of people are watching. But who are they and will they buy what someone else wants to sell? Only time will tell. In the meantime, watch your back and your front, or they may end up on YouTube.

Signed, Sealed, But Not Delivered

While email marketing certainly has its advantages, it can't compete with print for sheer deliverability.

One-fifth of email marketing messages aren't reaching people who have requested them. This isn't unsolicited junk email or spam; these are opt-in messages that users have subscribed to. Apparently internet service providers' anti-spam filters intercept 20% of these messages before they are sent on to end users.

Marketers are finding that email alone is not as effective as email combined with print.

Print may be more expensive than email, but it seems you get what you pay for.

How to Create a Niche

The best way to create a niche is to coin a word or phrase that belongs to you and you alone. When you produce a "trademarkable" term, you don't just have a clever title or phrase, you have the potential to truly set yourself apart from the herd. Think of "Can you hear me now?" which has made its way into our vernacular. "Where's the beef," had a distinctive cadence that helped make it extremely popular and memorable. Once you have your term or phrase, use it ... a lot.

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r e t t e l s w e n

Dear Santa...

Dear Santa: According to my notes from last year I specifically asked you for a ski cap, a Lamborghini and a new plush suitcase with WI-FI. All I got was the cap and it was too small. You can make up for this oversight this year by simply allowing me to work without having to actually interact with clients. Thanks.



Chip: Sorry sport, no deal. You got the cap because those other things aren't exactly within the spirit of the season. Your head must be bigger than I thought.

As for your latest request, the well-being of any business depends on the way it interacts with customers. Technology makes these interactions even more critical because someone who has a bad experience can now email others, post comments on blogs or even create an "I hate company X" web site. So you're going to have to make customer interactions a priority. Communicate early and often. Use customer surveys. Review your websites, email templates and voice mail messages from the point of view of customers. Offer opportunities for customer feedback. Listen to them and acknowledge their input.

Customers have long memories. Your mission is to implement programs to improve customer loyalty which will increase business and profitability in the long run. B&M does these things for clients. So your co-workers are your allies in this situation.

Dear Santa: Crap.

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Issue: Go Gnome or Go Home!

*I'm not lazy.
I just work so fast
that I'm always done!*

Editor: Chip Martin

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Junk-Food Ad Ban

In an unprecedented effort to protect citizens from themselves, United Kingdom regulators have put a ban on Junk-food advertising to all children under 16. The ruling includes a total ban on advertising foods high in fat, salt and sugar during children's programming and youth-oriented and adult programs which attract viewers under 16. Ads for low-fat cheese, butter and dark chocolate are also prohibited.

Prior to the ban, KFC and Burger King both voluntarily ended all toy promotions in the U.K. and Coca-Cola, Cadbury, Kraft, and McDonalds all promised not to advertise to children. A previous rule prohibited the use of cartoon characters, licensed characters and celebrities who appeal to children. Channels dedicated to children's programming are expected to lose more than 15% of ad revenue.

And the Award Goes To....

Staging award ceremonies is a great way to have fun, recognize accomplishment and revel in a shared work experience. Whether the categories mimic those found at the Oscars, Emmys or Tonys, or are unique to your workplace, esprit de corps rises when the team is able to laugh at itself and each other. Some award ideas from our office include, Best Impersonation of an Inanimate Object, Most Likely to Secede and Best Use of Crayons as a Communication Tool. B&M can help put humor to work for you to help employees feel special, facilitate team building and reduce stress.

Chip Shot

Life is a roller coaster. Be careful not to spill your drink.

Hair Color For "Nether Regions" Scores Publicity Coo

Billed as "color for hair down there" Betty Beauty's pubic-hair-dyeing kits received mention on The Tonight Show and in Vogue, W, People Style Watch and other publications. The publicity push netted 2 million visits to Bettybeauty.com, and put sales well ahead of projections. In fact, in December its web site indicated that the company was temporarily out of "Pink." The site also sells T-shirts that ask: "Is your Betty Ready?"