

# The Experiential Bond

Three months before the highly anticipated "Rock Band" video game hit store shelves, publisher MTV launched a larger-than-life promotion. The aim? Get the new release into hard-core gamers' hands. People who, if they enjoyed the game, would spread the word among friends, family, and online communities.

Euro RSCG 4D Impact, a strategic, ROI-oriented provider of consumer-targeted marketing services, took "Rock Band" on a national tour. Two tractor-trailers hauling demo stages stopped at college campuses in 24 cities. Gamers played instruments and sang to their hearts' content. Their performances were videotaped and entered into an online contest. Anyone who was filmed could download their performance and send it to friends and family. When all was said and done, 48,000 game aficionados had played "Rock Band." Their enthusiasm spread and helped drive demand for the new release.

## The Go-To Strategy

For a growing number of brands, experiential marketing is the go-to strategy for creating emotional bonds with consumers and instilling loyalty. It's more than simply handing out samples and information. It's about letting consumers interact with your brand, products, or services in meaningful ways at events and other venues that are relevant to their lifestyle.



"What experiential marketing brings to the table that no other type of marketing program can touch is that hand-to-hand, face-to-face interaction," says Brad Wirz, Impact's senior vice president for experiential marketing. "Ten years ago, sending people to events to hand out samples was a breakthrough idea. Now, you've got to involve consumers in something richer than that. Something more memorable, more unique. Something that really helps communicate what the brand is all about."

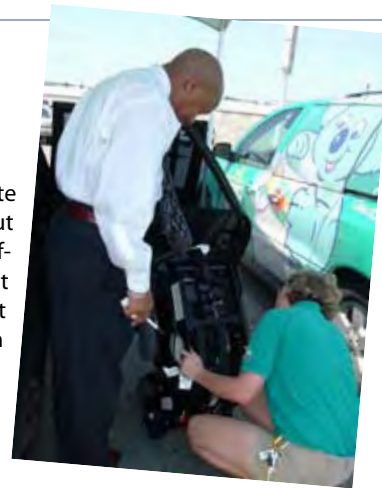
## Breaking Through the Clutter

Advertising is everywhere. TV, cable stations, radio, print, internet, mass transit, cars. You name it, it's there. Additionally, the continuing emergence of new advertising channels has made audiences increasingly fragmented and fractured. It's increasingly difficult to find critical mass. Experiential marketing provides a bold, highly effective strategy for breaking through the clutter and zeroing in on target audiences.

"Experiential marketing is much more targeted than many other types of programs," notes Amy Linde, Impact's vice president of business development. "If you go to the grocery store with activities that are targeting families, for example, you'll draw them over before you draw someone who isn't shopping for a family."



Want young moms to associate your brand with caring about the safety of their children? Offer free car seat inspections that give them peace of mind. Impact designed this type of promotion for Pampers. The way the "Koala Fit Tour" works, moms pull into the parking lot of designated grocery stores, and an inspector certified by the Department of Transportation checks the child's car seat to make sure it's properly installed and not on a recall list.



"About 74% of the car seats we inspect are improperly installed," says Wirz. "When mom finds out her child has not been safe in the car seat, she has an emotional reaction – 'Oh my gosh, I've been driving around all this time with my child's car seat unsafe.'"

"That emotional reaction is something you can only get from an experience," adds Wirz. "Because this experience was brought to her by Pampers she's likely to think of this brand as caring about the safety of her child. Koala Fit diapers fit snugly on the child. The Koala Fit Tour makes sure kids fit snugly in their car seats. By doing something that's truly special for people, you can turn them into brand loyalists for the rest of their lives."

## Longer-Lasting Impact

Impact custom designs experiential programs to support each client's objectives. The firm's research department measures results using criteria that are set in accordance with the client's standards.

"Dollar for dollar, you'll reach fewer people with experiential marketing than with traditional media, but you'll have a bolder impact on those people," says Wirz. "Our experiential programs have converted a much higher percentage of people into the franchise for the brands we represent, and those people are staying in the franchise longer."

Want proof? A study of scanner data obtained from a retail chain following an experiential program for a cereal brand revealed significant residual sales. Consumers purchased the product on a trial basis and then bought it again three weeks later. Other programs have resulted in 20-21% lift.

And there's the ripple effect. Consider those 48,000 hard-core gamers who were first on the block to play "Rock Band" and got the hot keepsake. As Wirz says, "If you create a really great experience for people, they're going to be jazzed about it and tell everybody they know."


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