

spotlight on

>broadcast pr

Are you experienced? The experience factor of broadcast public relations

By Kelli B. Newman, APR

"Don't just give them words, give them an experience."

That's the motto we founded our broadcast PR company on 12 years ago, and it's more relevant today than ever before. In fact, today's technology not only makes that principle possible, but it's also something audiences have come to expect.

As a strategic subspecialty of the PR profession, broadcast public relations incorporates the sensory advantages of hearing, seeing and even interacting with message content. Through the years, we've all come to appreciate the practical advantages of how video makes an organization's most effective speakers available whenever needed, the guarantee of consistently delivered messages and the convenient mobility it offers. What has become increasingly appreciated is the experience factor broadcast public relations brings to an organization's communications.

In their book, "The Experience Economy," Joseph Pine and James Gilmore describe the competitive advantage of providing customers with a compelling experience. Starbucks personifies this concept with what they call the "Starbucks Experience." Customers are as attracted to the environmental culture we experience at its stores as much as, if not more, than to the coffee it sells. What company culture defines your brand? Each broadcast PR production presents the opportunity for conveying your company's distinct personality, articulating the ideals that drive it and, especially, allowing audiences to experience its unique culture.

Pine and Gilmore stress that creating experiences is not so much about enter-

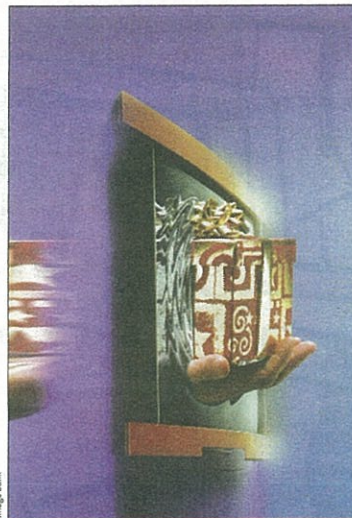


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taining customers as it is engaging them. Video offers the unique advantage of engaging audiences in a three-dimensional experience of information and emotion. Since scientific research has determined that emotions are biologically indispensable to our ability to make decisions, it is perhaps one of the greatest benefits broadcast public relations has to offer.

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vide a genuine experience of emotion. Anything less will not only fail, it will backfire. Enthusiastic customers, model employees, passionate donors and grateful beneficiaries of your organization's services are all excellent sources of genuine emotion for your broadcast PR strategies.

Videonet, a term for Web site video that you are likely to see more of, is a powerful instrument of experience. Just look at its prevalence in the social media. When *Adweek* ranked the top-10 Web site performers of 2006, each listing had a prominent videonet feature. No longer reserved for highly sophisticated sites, Web site video has become an expected standard.

Ironically, traditional print media are among those leading the way. Newspapers regularly run sidebar references to their Web site for video that augments a printed story. Even book publishers are posting movie trailer-like videos to promote new releases and provide readers with an opportunity to experience a book's subject before making a purchase.

If video, and the experience benefit it offers, has become a standard Internet expectation, what strategic role does it have on your organization's Web site? Just as Web users want dialogue versus monologue, they want to experience information rather than simply read an online brochure. It's part of our inherently interactive relationship with the Internet.

Using a multitude of distribution options, broadcast PR strategies give messages a competitive advantage. For instance, a bank's wealth management division attracts new customers with programming that lets them experience the enthusiastic endorsement of existing clients for the tailored services they've received, and the trust clients have for their financial adviser. Meanwhile, donors

to an emergency helicopter service, and county officials deciding on authorization of a new base, could be moved to action through the video experience of flying alongside the trauma team to a rolled-over SUV as they hear a young man's mother passionately say, "I wouldn't have my son if it wasn't for them."

To fully realize the experience factor of broadcast PR programming, keep the following tips in mind:

- Think three-dimensionally when you develop strategies and expand your impact through messages captured in visuals as well as words. Incorporate opportunities for viewer interaction.
- Engage your audiences through genuine emotion expressed by compelling sources, such as enthusiastic and thankful customers, model employees, and passionate donors.
- Define and reinforce your company brand in each production with content that projects its ideals and unique culture.
- If you produce it, post it. Leverage the distribution and exposure benefits of your Web site to realize the growing expectation for videonet programming.

The impact of these strategies can be dramatic. To distinguish a company from its competition, build brand loyalty, project a company's culture and motivate audiences, is to benefit from the experience factor of broadcast public relations. **T**



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