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March 2016
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A photograph of a social event, likely a conference, with people in a room lit by large chandeliers. The text is overlaid on the top left of the photo.

AN EXCLUSIVE SPONSORSHIP CONFERENCE

***A LOOK BACK ON THE
2015 SPONSORSHIP
CONFERENCE***

In words and pictures





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Many thanks to

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ABOUT ELEVENT



We are an agency specialized in sponsorship marketing strategies and evaluation.

Our mission is to offer accessible, cutting-edge sponsorship evaluation tools.

Our team has decades of experience in evaluating sponsorships for major advertising agencies and national brands.

We have provided the brands that have put their trust in us with innovative solutions to complex communications challenges—because that’s what makes us tick.

WHAT WE DO:

- ▶ Create sponsorship strategies
- ▶ Audit target achievement and activations plans
- ▶ Negotiate partnerships
- ▶ Assess performance
- ▶ Analyze and optimize partnerships
- ▶ Undertake custom valuations and measurements
- ▶ Offer online tools

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***The first online
sponsorship evaluation
tool for marketing
professionals***



INTRODUCTION



We built the Relevant Conference around sponsorship challenges we face every day. And there are definitely plenty of them! Let's face it, how many other marketing jobs require you to know how to handle so many communication tools: digital, experiential, advertising, PR, corporate events and so on. Not to mention the need to have a strategic eye for the perfect fit and best activation and a keen analytical spirit to find the right property and measure success. On top of all that, there's the negotiation phase and business relationship to manage afterwards, while keeping a close watch on fans, event-goers, target markets and, of course, the competition. It's challenging, for sure. But that's what I like about sponsorship.

So it's important to be able to take a step back from all the emails and office hustle and bustle at the end of the season to spend some time thinking about what we can do to make sponsorship better.

The Relevant Conference is fresh in so many ways. Instead of just having sponsorship experts talking to sponsorship experts, we also brought in people with expertise in the fields we need to know more about to be better at what we do: a digital agency founder to talk about digital activation, a lawyer to talk about sponsorship agreements, a content expert to talk about... well, content. Each 90-minute session on a different topic that zeroed in on a challenge we face in sponsorship.

Every session was broken down into a keynote presentation, a workshop and an in-depth interview. Attendance was limited to small groups, creating a unique environment conducive to learning and exchange. We wanted to shift things 180 degrees from the "conventional" conference, and I think it's fair to say we made that happen.

While this magazine can't possibly do justice to all of the insight and effervescence that speakers and participants alike brought to the three-day event, we hope it will give you a little taste of the amazing discoveries we shared during this first edition. Hopefully it will also whet your appetite to join us next year for the opportunity to get even better at what you already do so well.

*Francis Dumais, Conference chair
Relevant, an exclusive sponsorship conference*

***"It's challenging, for sure.
But that's what I like
about sponsorship."***

BRINGING SCIENCE TO SPONSORSHIP MARKETING



By Loretta Di Vita

Within the world of sponsorship marketing, Dr. T. Bettina Cornwell, professor of Marketing at the University of Oregon's Lundquist School of Business, is a force of good. A self-professed number cruncher, she applies science and empiricism to keep things real, ensuring objectivity, transparency, and ethics in corporate sponsorship analysis in the areas of sports, arts and charity.

It's only fitting then that someone so principled speak of the ideal of "greatness," as she did in her presentation.

Cornwell believes that many marketers are shooting themselves in the foot—sacrificing greatness—by amassing too many messages and losing focus. "Often times brands have several ideas and audiences and attempt to accomplish too much at the same time. In sponsorship, this can lead to a thin treatment of each component message or worse, confusion," she explains.

According to Cornwell, successful sponsorships that build brand equity require focus—from inception, through implementation and beyond to measurement. She points to Nike as an example: "They could have spread themselves thin, but they chose to focus on one brand story. As a result, their 'Find your greatness' message easily played out across sponsorship, social media, earned media and traditional advertising."

The sponsorship expert attributes equal importance to the notion of relationship longevity. She envisions the relationship between sponsor and property as a union between equally committed parties, where either side walks away only if it's "poison."

She considers a relationship toxic when "the leadership in the organization sees a problem, but doesn't want to address that problem." According to her, the same would hold for a brand dabbling in any unethical practice, or tolerating socially reprehensible behaviour—in short, any irreversible negative PR scenario.

Cornwell recommends walking away only in extreme cases, and typically looks for less drastic ways to protect and develop sponsorship image. What tests her patience, though, is "petty politics": finger-pointing, blame-shifting, and power-tripping. Her antidote to all of this is sensibly restrained: "Stand back a minute and understand why perhaps a volunteer, intern, manager or athlete isn't representing the brand as they should, and then offer training—support them, lend expertise." This, in her view, constitutes "not just sponsorship, but partnership."

Making a distinction between sponsorship and partnership, she defines partnerships as symmetrical power relationships. In the Venn diagram of things, some sponsorships can be

BRINGING SCIENCE TO SPONSORSHIP MARKETING (CONTINUED)

partnerships, but only when decision-making power and voice are balanced. She believes that sponsorships characterized by an asymmetrical power dynamic are perfectly valid, but only if the party with more resources (funds, visibility, influence) nurtures the other party and treats it with due respect.

Cornwell knows that creativity keeps the sponsorship wheel spinning. When asked if she's a creative person, she chuckles: "I have my moments!" She then continues more seriously, "Many brands are not conversing with the people. Ask them—the customers, fans, arts patrons—what they want." She recommends not only asking questions, but asking the right ones, and targeting the right people—ideally mixing patrons and visitors or season ticket holders and one-time attendees, in order to harvest actual, actionable information that can stoke creative activation.

"I'm all for new ventures! It is a pleasure to be involved with a quality-minded entrepreneurial group like Elevant."

A dedicated academic and guru in the field, Cornwell is generous with her bountiful knowledge and has written a book on sponsorship marketing. In keeping with her characteristic no-nonsense personal brand, it is simply titled, "Sponsorship in Marketing: Effective Communication through Sports, Arts and Events." Thanks to a varied academic background—(BA dual major in Social Science and Fine Arts, MBA, and PhD in Cognitive Psychology and Marketing)—and extensive global experience, she brings a wide-angle lens to the subject.

The comprehensive publication is a sort of primer on sponsorship marketing research and is Cornwell's attempt at "translating academic-speak into something people can read." In the same unpretentious, clear-minded manner of its author, the book demystifies the interconnectedness of sponsorship marketing players and processes, and anticipates questions on practical application of theory.

Inarguably, sponsorship marketing in the social-media age demands transparency and authenticity. "Sponsorship is a very public sphere," she says. "In fact, we're in the process of validating an authenticity measure that marketers might use to gauge their genuineness in communication."

Does she find this mounting surveillance intrusive? Not at all. In fact, she welcomes it and says her research is accessible to a wide audience through her website, ResearchGate and Google Scholar.

When asked why it was important for her to participate in the Relevant Conference, she replies that the sponsorship marketing industry—despite the "enormous amount of money in it"—is still in a "fledgling phase and requires organic support."

"I'm all for new ventures! It is a pleasure to be involved with a quality-minded entrepreneurial group like Elevant," she enthuses. And Cornwell isn't just giving lip service; she actually means it.



TOM MOSER: DEFYING CONVENTION



By Joey Franco

The terms “pioneer” and “trailblazer” come to mind when describing Tom Moser’s career in the entertainment/sports sponsorship marketing field. Moser, a mastermind marketer for British American Tobacco, including its Canadian subsidiary Imperial Tobacco Company Canada, has run the gamut in high profile tobacco sponsorships, from IndyCar racing to jazz festivals and of course, Formula One.

Moser was raised in an Amish community and his father had 15 siblings. He started working as a salesman at Imperial Tobacco in Kitchener, Ontario, in 1980. He is married to Nathaly Thibault and they have two adopted children from Russia: Sacha and Louba.

Due to tobacco legislation restricting more traditional forms of advertising and promotion, sponsorships became one of the only communications vehicles for marketers at tobacco companies. “It was actually a benefit in some ways,” says Moser as he describes those transformative years. “When you have a lot of alternatives, you spend a lot of time choosing between alternatives, also in terms of measurement, you’re not really deep in anything.”

According to Moser, it was important to be narrow and deep in sponsorships. When legislation started to change the way tobacco companies marketed, it forced them to be more intelligent and precise. This focus resulted in Moser having to understand how

sponsorships could be deployed to impact consumer behaviour resulting in market share and revenue.

Moser and the brands he represented were very visible in sports and entertainment circles. “PGA, LPGA, ATP, Show jumping, Jazz Festivals in Montréal, Vancouver, and Toronto, you name it; we were big in sponsorship,” Moser says.

“At that time, if you defined the objective of sponsorship you would still hear that the objective was to return something to the community in which we live and work. It was weak in understanding the true impact,” recalls Moser of those early years in the 80s.

During that period sponsors used “outputs” data where brands would look at measured media and presence, however there was not an absolute link or measure on how sponsorship changed consumer behaviour. “At that period of time there was a lot of softness,” says Moser.

The 90s brought about the most dramatic changes for tobacco sponsorships. It was during this period of time that Moser was transferred to Montréal. The market had undergone a complete transformation and government legislation banned tobacco companies from direct sponsorship. The tobacco industry reinvented itself, and the way they had to market their business and brands. Moser’s mandate included creating third party brands

TOM MOSER: DEFYING CONVENTION (CONTINUED)

which would be geared towards sponsorship initiatives. Companies like Players Ltd. and DuMaurier Ltd. were born with the mission of entering the sponsorship arena. Imperial also created or bought activation agencies.

The company also acquired events such as the Grand Prix of Trois-Rivières, an event which was previously sponsored by the Players brand.

It is during this period of rebirth where the term trailblazer is most appropriate for someone like Moser. Acquiring properties and branding them as their own was a revolutionary concept in the world of entertainment/sports marketing. This was the Red Bull model before Red Bull was doing it.



The costs decreased dramatically because they were running these events as businesses and also activating for their respective brands, and for the broader spectrum of sponsors involved in the property they now owned.

This concept paved the way towards the global stage in sports marketing: Formula One.

Tom Moser was the architect behind one of the most ambitious projects in modern-day Formula One, the creation of the British American Racing F1 Team. The concept was revolutionary and in line with what the tobacco industry were creating in a hybrid concept where the property and sponsor was one. “We didn’t win any popularity contest with the property, that’s for sure!” exclaims Moser as he looks back at the trials and tribulations behind the BAR team.

“Do something a little bit differently, try to break the mold, take a risk somewhere.”

British American Tobacco purchased the Tyrrell Team, dismantled the outfit and revamped its operations under the BAR moniker. At the same time BAT also acquired 50% of the global television rights to Formula One, including emerging markets such as India, China, Indonesia and Malaysia.

Another ground-breaking effort by BAT in Formula One was the dual branding of both Lucky Strike cigarettes and 555 cigarettes. The plan was to have two different car liveries, but a lost court battle killed the idea of having two different vehicles competing for the same team. The end result was another ground-breaking effort by Moser: a split livery with a zipper running along the center of the car, separating both branded sides — half Lucky Strike, half 555! This was hailed as a genius attempt by Moser to feature both brands in motorsport’s top division.

“Do something a little bit differently, try to break the mold, take a risk somewhere.” These are the words Tom Moser left behind at the 2015 Relevent Conference in Montréal last fall.

It is interesting to look at Moser’s career and life and wonder how brilliant minds work within their spheres, and in many cases transform the very environments they are in. It is safe to say that Moser is one of the most unconventional sponsorship marketers in the world. All this from a farm boy, from the most conventional of places.



SELLING REPUTATION



By Loretta Di Vita

He may exhibit a direct manner and the super-charged energy of the Tasmanian Devil on a sugar rush, but Pierre Ladouceur also has a sensitive side that doesn't take long to surface. Beneath the callous of drive and experience, he is somewhat of a—softie.

Hearing him speak easily of “emotional resonance,” “a better world for all,” and “developing sustainable environments,” it quickly becomes apparent that he truly cares about everything that is worth caring about these days. So it's no surprise that even his marketing company has—as he puts it—“heart.”

Indeed it was this social conscience, coupled with entrepreneurial flair, that led him ten years ago to set up Turbo Marketing to “help companies define and communicate their social and environmental commitments.”

Long before Ladouceur landed at the doorstep of the advertising world, it seemed a given that he would follow in his family's footsteps and become a medical doctor just like his parents and both grandfathers. However, medical school turned out to be only a stopover as he realized his future was in sales and marketing.

Like many life changes, the detour has served him well and, in the process, he's accumulated roughly three decades of industry savvy, heralding back to what he describes as the

“Mad Men” days of advertising, with Young & Rubicam, the Toronto ad agency.

“Yes, it was very much like what the TV series portrayed,” he reminisces, hinting at an industry zeitgeist which would now be considered indiscreet at best.

“Fun and games...and great learnings in the basics of advertising,” is the banner he ascribes to the bygone phase of his career.

Does he ever miss the frisky era of in-office dalliances, crystal liquor decanters, and tobacco-stained fingertips?

The seasoned pro speaks fondly of his heyday—having also worked with agencies in Montréal, followed by 19 years with McDonald's in Canada, the U.S. and Europe, and later as a VP of Marketing, Communications and Sales with the Canadiens de Montréal hockey enterprise—but embraces the here-and-now of his career.

In more recent years, he has witnessed firsthand some seismic shifts in the advertising and marketing landscape. Not only have the norms of office behaviour changed in the wake of political correctness, but industry attitudes have evolved, too. And this is a refreshing development in his opinion.

“I love the fact that companies are now strongly encouraged to concretely act in the social arena and communicate their actions.

SELLING REPUTATION (CONTINUED)

Times have changed because marketing has evolved and created new powerful tools for consumers. And citizens have their own social media now and can react if companies are not authentic and transparent and actively helping to create a better world,” he says.

At the Relevent Conference, Ladouceur’s presentation focused squarely on the topic of reputation within the context of sponsorship marketing, and echoed the leitmotif of social connectivity also examined by other speakers.

“I wanted to communicate clearly that a company’s reputation is of the utmost importance. There was a time when you did not communicate your social actions. Now, you must. Citizens require it,” he says.

According to Ladouceur, reputation is so important that it can actually precede the inherent value of a product or service, and even supersede it as a determinant of consumer buy-in. Of course, consumers will always seek the ideal of product and service integrity plus social integrity, but as they become more engaged, corporate reputation will become a weightier behaviour- and choice-driver.

“Consumers want to know about your reputation and message before even looking at product or service offers,” he says bluntly.

But defining the message is only half the battle, Ladouceur warns. For it to have social significance and resonate on a broad level, it has to be delivered and disseminated in the appropriate ways.

As he explains, “You do not communicate a social engagement in the same fashion or tone and manner as a commercial commitment. That’s why Turbo has progressed in helping companies not only to decide on their social commitments, but how to communicate them in the social arena.”

Solid corporate reputations don’t just blossom naturally. They require in-house cultivation in the form of top-to-bottom adherence to a clearly defined set of values. Moreover, an organization needs to develop not only character, but also strategy. And this is where social sponsorship fits into the grand strategic scheme.

“Consumers want to know about your reputation and message before even looking at product or service offers.”



SELLING REPUTATION (CONTINUED)

“It’s a well-known fact that traditional ‘commercial’ sponsorships and partnerships can provide visibility and promotional benefits to a company. But ‘social’ sponsorships, involving causes and non-profit organizations, can provide rich transfers of social values—which, in turn, can enhance corporate reputations,” explains Ladouceur.

While smart companies aim to influence consumers, brilliant ones consider all stakeholders—including employees. Ladouceur suggests that effective social sponsorships can be a great bonding agent—the glue in the family—keeping all stakeholders equally engaged and on the same page.

“A logo on a rink-side banner is cool, but a partnership with a cause with strong human and social values will benefit a company’s image and reputation among important stakeholders... not least, its own employees,” he says.

Furthermore, Ladouceur posits that a company that aligns itself with a sound cause is not only promoting social advancement, but is insulating itself against adversity and any ensuing fallout. The assumption is that on good days, consumers will be supportive of a company with a good reputation, and on bad days, they’ll be more inclined to overlook or forgive the missteps of an organization associated with redeeming social initiatives over an insular one without such ties.

Inarguably it’s an unpredictable, whacky world where things can go haywire in the blink of an eye. So the question is posed to Ladouceur: What then if circumstance or bad decision-making manifests itself in the form of a crisis—one which shakes the foundation of a brand or (shudder) topples it to the ground?

“Every company faces tough times at one point or another and a strong corporate reputation becomes very important in these times,” he affirms. “Mistakes happen, but you can salvage a reputation that has suffered.” His reassurance is based on the belief that just like good intention is a consumer-valued proactive measure, it’s also appreciated after the fact.

But player beware. Ladouceur underlines that any recoup strategy must be not only honesty-based but also case-specific because insincere off-the-shelf PR spins can be just as damaging as the crisis itself—or worse. Social-minded consumers are becoming increasingly adept at sniffing out corporate posers and, consequently, are more inclined to shame them through social media. Conversely, an appeased consumer can be a brand’s best publicist.

“People are not fools. They will react positively to a company that acknowledges mistakes and has the will to correct them in an honest, transparent, authentic fashion,” he says.

Ladouceur points to Southwest Airlines as an example: “In July of 2013, Southwest Flight 345 landed nose first at LaGuardia airport. Southwest Airlines demonstrated how a quick response

and constant, open communication can aid in the recovery from a PR crisis. Southwest released on their social media accounts shortly after the incident and Southwest’s quick response, honesty, and frequent updates resulted in most responses being thankful and positive, keeping the brand’s reputation intact.”

Granted, all this talk of goodness induces the same warm and fuzzy feeling as YouTube videos of kittens playing with yarn, but can an organization ever go overboard with good deed? Could noble corporate effort, in some ironic twist of stakeholder wariness or skepticism, end up being perceived as the cover-up of a dirty conscience?

After a thoughtful pause, Ladouceur replies categorically, “No, I do not believe so.” In his view, there’s no such thing as too much of a good thing. “The key is doing it right,” he affirms.

And doing it right is self-admittedly the way he tackles all things—both “commercially and personally.”

From Ladouceur’s lips to the corporate world’s ears: “I hope that companies would create a new job title. In addition to CEO, COO, CFO and CMO, companies should create a CRO—‘Chief Reputation Officer.’ That’s a job I would love for myself!”



ÉRIC NOËL ON THE NEW QUANTIFIED ONLINE LANDSCAPE



By Joey Franco

Eric Noël is the president of French.Ad, a creative ad agency dedicated to working with brands on several marketing and communications facets. He is also a lecturer in HEC Montréal's marketing department. This interesting blend of academic and real-world experience makes Noël a heavyweight in the marketing communications field. The French.Ad chief spoke at the 2015 Relevent Conference and shared some insight on the semi-dysfunctional wired ecosystem we live in.

In a world where the dissemination of brand communications is dictated by a mysterious and constantly-evolving media landscape, companies like French need to be at the top of their game and on top of the many mechanisms that make up today's connected world.

Noël makes it clear that the ever-changing media space has made sponsorships more challenging. Brands are looking for more return on their investment, and every dollar counts.

According to Noël, the first step in putting together a sponsorship package starts in-house with the attempt to become a useful brand for your audience. "You absolutely need to have a reflection on your end, and your team," he states with a constructive sense of urgency.

Once this internal reflection is out of the way, it is safe to move on to other topics like budget and strategy. "If you're not ready to give the best experience in the world to your clients, please stop

right away and put your money elsewhere." Noël has a clear go-big-or-go-home mentality when it comes to activation and is always looking to keep the viewer in mind when putting together a package. "Give them what they want and channel all your energy on what they expect from you (your brand)."

The second step is to define your digital client. Today, consumers have absolute power over their brand consumption and their media consumption. Everybody is one click away from engaging or ignoring a brand. That thin line is the mitigating factor which can make or break your efforts. "If you try to push the information or a connection with your brand or sponsorship, it won't work, because the consumer is one step away from saying bye bye!"

Achieving higher brand authority in this day and age has become somewhat of a problem. Organic reach from high quality content was very obtainable a couple of years ago. Today, organic has become nearly impossible, to the point where there is virtually no more space for it. Social media has become so overly saturated that buying media is the new reality that brands are faced with.

The third element of Eric's formula for success is to invest. The beauty of targeted media buying is that we have the ability to segment our audience and really add context to the sponsorship package by delivering the content to the appropriate audience.

ÉRIC NOËL ON THE NEW QUANTIFIED ONLINE LANDSCAPE (CONTINUED)

Context trumps content. “These days, it’s not what is relatively important for your brand versus your customers, it’s how your brand delivers the values in the right context to the customers,” says Noel. If your content is amazing but out of context, you lose. On the other hand, if your context is good but your content is undervalued, you take a hit but the message gets through.

“Respect the movement of consumers on interactive media,” says Noel in closing. “Trying to control or induce a behaviour is nearly impossible; instead, use their behaviour and leverage it!” Being genuine is the only way to guarantee cultivating real followers who feel a connection to the brand. Be bold, go big, and stay real. That is Eric Noel’s simple formula in a world overrun by complex algorithms that try to make sense of the virtual world that surrounds us.

“Respect the movement of consumers on interactive media.”



TAMING THE MONSTER



By Loretta Di Vita

With spunk to spare, Jeff Lee delivered an informative presentation peppered with tongue-in-cheek humour, called “Feeding the Content Monster.”

The presentation centred around the misguided practice of organizations spending “big money” to establish platforms such as magazines, blogs and video channels and then obsessively force-feeding them content, simply because the platforms exist.

Lee described how some businesses are the masters of their own misery, creating content-guzzling monsters that—in a vicious circle—“keep growing and thereby require more and more input.” Ironically, efforts to beef up platforms leave in their wake ever-expanding monsters bloated full of token content. And if “monster” were not enough of a disparaging term, Lee warned how these platforms become more burden than asset—or as he calls them, “money holes.”

Okay, so what does he suggest an organization do to tame the vacuous, high-maintenance, money-wasting beast? Rather than throwing out the monster with the bath water, Lee suggests a no-nonsense approach toward optimizing platforms and keeping their content lean and mean (or rather meaningful).

To help his clients avoid the monster trap, he consults with them, using a nine-step exploratory tool (why go for the arbitrary

ten-rule, when you can stop at nine?) which covers all the key bases—from “determining an organization’s uniqueness, to practical content-strategy considerations such as budget and resource allocation.”

Lee has lots of smart field-tested advice to offer. Foremost, he recommends that an organization look inside its own walls to “identify and dedicate development resources and then create links with relevant external platforms for maximum, cost-effective visibility.”

If it were ever more fitting to use the quality-over-quantity rule, now’s the time, according to Lee. In his view, it’s important to limit output and be more thoughtful and discriminating when determining if-and-what-and-when content merits dissemination. His personal ethos for content development is that it must be “premium or nothing,” maintaining that brands should concentrate on premium content and not just click bait. “People neglect premium content in this era, but all the stuff we actually like is premium—from House of Cards to Red Bull.”

And, yes, premium material can be created on a shoe-string budget. Speaking from his right brain, he says: “It takes creativity. Content is everywhere. It’s just about how you leverage it to maximize business.”

TAMING THE MONSTER (CONTINUED)

Lee's own preferred formula for content development is grassroots oriented. "I believe that content should occur and be created organically by the people. That's why it's important to install and display triggers and incentives on site, in order to facilitate a content-creation reflex. Instagram pictures, tweets and Facebook posts can be invited if you give the people a fun and clever opportunity."

Looking at his personal creative output, Lee's latest brainchild is Tower Trip—a digital niche magazine showcasing the crème de la crème of real estate in Montréal, Toronto and Vancouver. In characteristic functional agility, Lee occupies both a creative position plus a business one, as contributor and editor-in-chief.

The idea to develop the magazine struck when he embarked on creative work for real-estate developers and met a new breed of rising brokers representing ultra-exclusive properties. Lee—who could find a needle of opportunity in a haystack of possibilities—quickly realized that he had privileged access to places that most ordinary mortals never get to visit (never mind live in) and immediately knew he had stumbled on a golden idea.

"Most of us can't afford such upscale places, but we can definitely appreciate their beauty and dream of a bigger life. I wanted to document and share this access with my friends and network. That's how Tower Trip was born," he explains.

Bubbling over with ambition, he admits that he's reaching for a slice of the very same pie in the sky that he captures in the magazine. Evidently, the enterprising Lee is on an express elevator to the penthouse and won't let anything get in his way. Not even monsters.



"I believe that content should occur and be created organically by the people."

THE CAPTAIN AND HIS GUMBO



By Joey Franco

Rick Jones, the Atlanta native and head of FishBait Marketing, loves to fish—hence the name of his company. And he loves to cook.

One of his favourite dishes is gumbo, a seafood stew that originated in southern Louisiana during the 18th century. Jones takes his gumbo seriously, and according to the 61-year-old, the most important ingredient in his favoured recipe isn't edible, or even tangible for that matter. The most crucial element in Jones's beloved gumbo is time.

"The longer it sits, the better it gets," he explains.

Jones extends the same thinking to his sponsorship tactic. "We need to have respect towards history. Human beings haven't changed in 5,000 years; we still have the same needs."

He believes that many challenges can be overcome by looking back. "In the business of marketing, and in the business of sponsorship, new and improved is not necessarily always appropriate," he says.

It's no wonder that the sponsorship veteran refers to himself as "The Captain" at FishBait Marketing. Over the course of his outstanding three-decade career, he has sold sponsorship packages for some of the top sports and entertainment properties in the world: Wimbledon, the PGA Tour, the Goodwill

Games and the Cricket World Cup—to name a few.

Given his stellar track record, the question begs to be asked: What is his magic formula?

The Captain believes it's all about wisdom.

"We live in a world where we've got more information that we've ever had in the history of mankind and it can be accessed from anywhere," he says. "But we have a shortage of wisdom!"

Granted, wisdom comes from trial and error, but it's only when experience is reflected upon—analyzed in terms of its effects—that it becomes actionable information. But what about more junior sponsorship professionals who haven't yet accumulated years of life experience? Jones responds in four words: "Read. Ask. Listen. Apply."

If there's something Rick Jones loves more than fishing and cooking, it's telling stories laced with Southern-twanged down-home analogies. In fact, he's published an anthology of his favorite quotes: "Analog Advice in a Digital World."

"Read. Ask. Listen. Apply."

THE CAPTAIN AND HIS GUMBO (CONTINUED)

The idea for the book was spurred by his children, who suggested he capture the many pearls of wisdom (“Dad-isms”—is the affectionate term they’ve coined) that he’s passed on to them throughout the years. The book is a life manual, of sorts, geared to millennials. “They need to read only one quote a week, since they have short attention spans,” he winks.

One of the many stories Jones likes to recount is about the age-old custom where an outgoing president of the United States writes a personal letter to his successor and leaves it in the top drawer of the presidential desk. “It’s a passing on of wisdom,” he says. A mere heartbeat after Jones tells this story, he drops another Dad-ism for emphasis: “No matter how smart you think you are, till you’ve actually sat in that chair, you don’t know that.”

And speaking of smart—you better be just that to make it in the sponsorship industry. Jones believes that sponsorship is the most complicated form of marketing because it utilizes all forms of marketing communication: advertising, promotion, public relations, and social media. It is, it would seem, the gumbo of the marketing world.

He cautions that sponsorships live within their own ecosystems and, like any ecosystem, once off balance they simply die. One nugget of advice to take away from Captain Jones is to sustain sponsorship ecosystems in a balanced way.

How to achieve that? “Invest time in them,” he says, without turning to any highfalutin method.

Jones offers: “Plan your work, and work your plan. Have daily action items to sell more sponsorships. And just show up, because 80% of success is a result of showing up.”

The formidable marketer also stresses the importance of customization. Yessiree, no cookie-cutter solutions—no matter how good—for Jones. “No one wants to buy pre-fix anything. Ascertain that you’re selling exactly what a company, brand, or product wants.”

And knowing when to sell is critical according to Jones. “I like to pitch at the end of the week when people tend to be in a better mood and they have the weekend ahead to noodle my ideas to make them their own.”

There you have it. Build on the Captain’s sound advice and the rest should be smooth sailing.

“They need to read only one quote a week, since they have short attention spans.”



THE VENUE



By Loretta Di Vita

When it came time for the Relevant organizers to choose a venue, their vision of an ideal setting didn't include a staid hotel conference room with floral motif broadloom. Instead, they sought a more unique space—one with a hip vibe to reflect the conference's contemporary finesse.

Enter L'Auberge St-Gabriel. With its intriguing contrast of old and new, masterfully reconciled into rustic-luxe chicness by designer Bruno Braën, the venue fit the bill perfectly.

Considering the Auberge's pedigree, a short history lesson is in order: Built in 1688 by a French soldier, the Auberge—or inn—is situated in Montréal's historic district, aptly called Old Montréal. Since its construction, it's gone through several metamorphoses as an inn, a townhouse in the 19th century, a newspaper press in the early 1900s, and it was once even a fur-trading post!

Tucked in a cobblestone side street, the Auberge is now an event venue owned by a trio of movers and shakers: Marc Bolay, Pierre Garand (aka Garou, a well-known Québécois singer), and Guy Laliberté (of Cirque du Soleil and space tourism fame). The establishment also houses a highly acclaimed French-Québec restaurant with culinary wizard Chef Émilie Rizzetto at the kitchen's helm.

With vertebrae like this—(yes, an intentional nod to the giant whalebone installation in the foyer)—it's not surprising that the venue has become a hotspot for locals and discriminating visitors. Formula One followers will recognize it as the locus for veep Grand Prix parties (and that's not by coincidence, given the owners' passion for the sport).

A black iron gate at the heritage building's entrance creates an air of mystery, as if a password or secret handshake would be required to gain access. Once inside, it's just as intimate and warm as you'd expect an inn to be; though the eclectic interior is anything but predictably quaint. Modern additions have been artfully juxtaposed against rustic elements bearing either the genuine patina of age or that of deliberate design. And for humour's sake, the decor includes a smattering of kitsch trappings—like a moose sculpture in the bar area that lights up, and hoof hangers on the walls.

The Relevant Conference unfolded in a large upstairs space with original wood-beamed ceilings and thickly mortared stone walls. Underfoot, amber-varnished plank floors added old-world character, creaking just enough to remind anyone of the building's long history. It was incongruous—if not amusing—to see participants tapping at tablets and smart phones in a setting harking back to the days of early settlers.

THE VENUE (CONTINUED)

To toast the conference and celebrate a successful first day, Relevant organizers treated their guests to a champagne reception held in a cocktail area illuminated by a row of sparkly overhead chandeliers. Juggling flutes and business cards, attendees worked the room, mixing and mingling with new and known contacts. Guests perched at marble-topped cocktail tables to enjoy buffet selections; slurped back raw mollusk after mollusk at the oyster bar; and sat back on vintage tufted sofas (one upholstered in a groovy Union Jack-patterned velvet) to converse or take it all in.

The next morning, participants needing a kick-start to the day's schedule followed the aromatic java trail to a professional barista turning out freshly brewed coffees—the perfect accompaniment to buttery croissants and other baked goods.

Thanks to the on-site kitchen's premium cuisine, conference-goers' appetites were well satisfied throughout. Breakfast and lunch fare were provided, as well as break-time snacks, canapés and miniature pastries (well, hello there, little praline eclairs topped with edible gold flakes!).

Indeed the venue was just one more thing that made the Relevant Conference a uniquely memorable experience.



Q & A WITH IAN MALCOLM, DESPERADO PRESIDENT



Interview by Joey Franco

? **JF:** You specialize in sponsorship marketing. ■ There are many marketing areas that you could have chosen; why this one?

IM: I was an athlete, skiing at a pretty competitive level, and I also mountain biked at a not-so-competitive level beyond just an amateur interest. So, I was always interested in the connection between sports and fan passion and how brands could leverage that connection and be part of it. In my very late twenties, I determined that after working for a period of time in radio and having some exposure in the news department at a couple of stations I worked with in sports, I wanted to activate that passion.

I went back and did a post-grad in sports marketing, and initially thought that I wanted to work for a team. I then realized pretty quickly that it was not where I wanted to land.

That was in the early 90s, and at the time we called it 'sports marketing' and then we all quickly realized towards the end of that decade that it was really 'sponsorship marketing.'

? **JF:** How do you measure audience engagement in terms of loyalty, passion, and other intangibles?

IM: When I first got into the business, the way we measured was sort of, well, the president likes baseball, so we're sponsoring baseball, and he's happy. The sales guys brought some guys to the game and they were happy and it was a success.

Moving into the most recent recession, that wasn't enough anymore. CFOs were requiring marketers to prove our investments, so the measurement of sponsorship became more important.

When we measure a sponsorship for a sports team, for example, we'll go in and do research from consumers and fans and measure not only their connection to the sport or the team, but how strong is their fandom. Are they casual fans? Are they passionate fans? And what mix does each property bring to us? Certain properties have higher mixes of passionate fans versus casual fans and some are the opposite way around.

Then we can measure the connection and the awareness of our client's sponsorship and what it means to the fans in terms of enhancing their experience.

Q & A WITH IAN MALCOLM, DESPERADO PRESIDENT (CONTINUED)

? JF: If you could see into the future of sponsorship marketing, 10-20 years from now, how would you describe it?

IM: As consumers become harder to reach through what would be more traditional means, like advertising, we'll engage with the world through digital platforms or social platforms and those live interactions will become even more important.

? JF: Are you saying that traditional forms of advertising, as we know them, might become obsolete?

IM: I wouldn't go that far, but certainly if you go back 18 or 20 years, the primary way to reach consumers was through broadcast, or through print media.

Now there are more consumer touch points, and therefore brands need to be more comfortable with reaching consumers through different channels.

? JF: You've been in the business since the 90s, so it's fair to say that you know the ins and outs of sponsorship marketing. What advice would you give to someone entering the field?

IM: It's a pretty attractive industry and therefore there are a lot of smart people with lots of talent that want to get in. Certainly education is helpful...passion and smarts too.

I think it's like anything, if you surround yourself with great people and you work hard, great things will happen.

? JF: To what do you attribute the enduring success that Desperado has had both in Canada and globally?

IM: I think it's hard work, and recognizing that credibility is our greatest asset. We pride ourselves on strong client service and really understanding our client's business.

Also, attracting and retaining great people is an important part of our success.

"I think it's like anything, if you surround yourself with great people and you work hard, great things will happen."



AN ELECTRIC SOIRÉE



By Loretta Di Vita

Day two of the Relevent Conference maxed out on the fun meter when the day's activities ended with a special restaurant dinner and an exclusive concert by home-grown electronic Pop duo, Milk & Bone.

Post-conference partying unfolded at Pastaga, in the Mile End district of Montréal—a neighbourhood where culture and creativity converge in a melting pot of hipdom. The location was symbolic, in a sense, since it was in this creative hub that conference attendees, speakers, and organizers gathered to decompress after a stimulating day of diverse, innovative idea sharing.

Milk & Bone is comprised of Laurence Lafond-Beaulne (Milk) and Camille Poliquin (Bone), whose debut album, “Little Mourning”—a mercurial collection of haunting electronic compositions—was long-listed for the 2015 Polaris Music Prize. Conference-goers found take-away copies of the album in canvas stash bags provided by Relevent organizers.

On an impromptu stage in the restaurant's window front, the performers turned the heads of curious passersby and drew the audience into their dreamy soundscape. Both in their early twenties and of the same petite frame, the pair performed comfortably in a symbiotic BFF sort of way. They gazed with equal earnestness at their audience—Poliquin through middle-

parted straight hair and her musical cohort from under a thick swag of rippled bangs. The musical besties brought animated table chatter to a standstill with their lustful synthesized piano and drum-pad compositions—melding pop, R&B, and house music influences.

If angels are a tad subversive and prefer black tights to gossamer robes, these celestially voiced artists surely qualify. Their lyrics—like their stage personae—are an enticing contradiction of cotton candy fluff and streetwise raw edge. Contrast the wistful coos of “Coconut Water”—“A million flowers in my hair” to the guilt-studded lament of infidelity repeated in “New York”—“I made love to another one.”

Abundant wine refills and delectable delicacies were instrumental in helping all wind down, but thanks to the duo's mesmerizing set, the room was transported to a collective chill factor of the nth degree. Harmonious rifts and goose bump-inducing vocals infused the space like heady incense, moving all in attendance to a state of serious serenity.

All in all, the evening was a magical nightcap, adding an unforgettable vibe to the conference.

AN ELECTRIC SOIRÉE (CONTINUED)



A ROUSING PRESENTATION



By Loretta Di Vita

Louis-Félix Binette, president and co-founder of f. & co, a Montréal-based creative agency, is a diplomat—not only of the capital “D” variety, having had a career in politics and the Canadian foreign service, but also a self-described natural-born diplomat.

Binette is what we call by popular vernacular, a “people person.” “I have a strong innate political sense, allowing me to bring people together and manage expectations and sensibilities,” he reveals.

So how then does a guy who’s careful not to ruffle anyone’s feathers—both by diplomatic protocol as well as by genetic blueprint—get away with delivering a presentation filled with soft-porn GIFs and sexual innuendo?

“It’s all about making a point and having some fun,” Binette says.

But what exactly is the point?

Binette, who is a trained linguist and enjoys plays on words, explains that he chose the soft-porn pretext as a “metaphor for the sexiness of sponsorship activation.”

In his view, activation should be fun, appealing, and sexy, er, but not too sexy. He likens the boundaries to those surrounding pornography. Just as hardcore pornography is socially agreed

upon as taboo, when the genre is qualified as “soft,” it becomes more permissible—“kind of like a French movie that went a little further.”

Binette stretched the porn metaphor to illustrate how sponsorship activation, when linked to community, becomes a soft version of itself and thereby gains more far-reaching appeal—and more feeling, dare we say.

According to Binette, greater human perspective and emotion are needed in a ROI-oriented business that tends to obsess over the spreadsheet.

“We need to shed our accountant skin and delve into the human side—feelings, fears, hopes—of corporate citizenship. That—strategically and marketing wise—is friggin’ sexy. We must envision the sponsor-sponsee union as an actual relationship, rather than merely a vulgar contract where money is exchanged for X, Y, Z—that instead is prostitution!”

Any way you cut it, he laid bare a bold premise; unsurprising, though, coming from a speaker who prefaced his presentation with a half-joking warning: “If there are any prudes in the room, maybe you should leave now.”

A ROUSING PRESENTATION (CONTINUED)

Shock-value aside—or because of it—Binette pulled off his presentation like a boss.

“I tried to bring an outsider perspective and some irreverence to the conference theme,” he says. “I wanted to add some show biz.”

And indeed he did. The audience was certainly stirred to attention, and just like his presentation’s oozy visuals stick to memory, conference-goers will surely remember the quirky hand-knit monkey tuque he wore (a fun nod to MailChimp—a sponsor of CreativeMornings/Montréal, hosted by Binette).

Theatrics may have added style, but the presentation delivered on substance, too. Binette gave participants the chance to put theory into action, when he facilitated a hands-on (forgive the pun) workshop segment, asking groups to generate their own plans for community-linked activations.

The exercise illustrated how activation can be a vehicle for achieving sponsorship goals. It also reflected the conference’s prime objective of bringing representatives from the various disciplines that fall under the sponsorship marketing umbrella together to engage in creative dialogue.

How does Binette describe the meeting of creative minds at the Relevant Conference? “It was like when waves meet at different angles and beautiful things happen.”



“It was like when waves meet at different angles and beautiful things happen.”



CLOSING REMARKS



Those three days were definitely humbling. There are still so many things we don't know, but the drive to learn will always keep pushing us to do better.

We want to thank all of the wonderful speakers, participants and collaborators who gave us a helping hand in making this first edition such a resounding success.

We look forward to seeing you next year in our beautiful city of Montréal.

Best regards,

The Relevent Team



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