A CASE IN POINT

Coca-Cola Connects With Consumers Through Radio

When Coca-Cola needed to build a strong association with consumers that linked the beverage-maker with the fun and excitement of the Olympics, it turned to Radio as the medium most efficient at delivering a national message on a local level and at creating a personal connection with consumers.

"Advertising is moving from media planning and buying to integrated communications," says Chris Gagen, Director of Strategic Media Initiatives at Coca-Cola, who defines this move as "...the realigning of communications to look at it the way consumers see it, as a flow of information from indistinguishable sources. Communication is about who listens, understands and, most importantly, retains the message and then acts on it."

Objective:
Create a connection with consumers at the local level that associates the Coca-Cola brand with the excitement and passion of the Olympics.

Media Strategy:
Use Radio's personal relationship with its listeners and its foundation in the local marketplace to establish a link with consumers for Coca-Cola.

Radio Plan:
Stations deliver the fun and excitement of the Olympic Games to their local communities via live broadcast from the hottest Olympic gathering sites.

Results:
Coca-Cola experienced a significant return in public relations and goodwill that lasts beyond the Olympics.

According to Gagen, Coca-Cola had three objectives: provide a locally relevant way for the Olympics to connect with consumers; increase the value of the Coca-Cola Company's investment in the Olympics by providing a cost-effective way to bond with consumers on a market by market basis; and develop volume-building, localized programs that partnered with local retailers.

This led to the development of the Coca-Cola Radio program, a bi-annual Radio-only campaign that brings the passion and flavor of the Olympics into the local marketplace and capitalizes on Radio's unequaled relationship with its listeners. Since 1992, the Coca-Cola Radio program has provided Radio listeners and consumers with live broadcasts by their favorite local air personalities from the most popular Olympic gathering sites.

"Consumers connect strongly with the local DJ's that they listen to each and every day, who talk in the language that makes sense to them and that they have a passion about," observes Gagen.

"Radio allows you to be so local," adds Kelly Brooks, Manager, Global Sports Communications. "It's about relationships."

The details of the program call for a top air personality from one station in each of the top 45 markets to broadcast live from the Olympics for five days, reporting on behind-the-scenes activities: who's there, who are they with, what are they saying and doing, etc. A larger number of stations also participate in consumer on-air ticket giveaways to Olympic events.

All participating stations are already heavily partnered with Coca-Cola as key stations on the soft drink company's significant annual buys, and are required to contribute a promotional spot package to support Coca-Cola's overall campaign.

Coca-Cola provides a complete turnkey opportunity including transportation, accommodations, studios, access to events, high-profile celebrity and sports figure interviews and the Olympic tickets for on-air giveaways.

"It's not sports coverage," explains Brooks. "It's about the interviews, who came in, what's happening at the gathering sites, what's going on in between the events. The Radio campaign worked so well, it allowed the Coca-Cola message to live longer than the Olympics. We got great value from the Radio package."

RADIO ADVERTISING BUREAU

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