



Robert Ciccone

Tie-in marketing offers glow of greater sales

Olympics not only game in town

The Olympics coming to Vancouver is an exciting, once-in-a-lifetime event. Businesses are salivating at the potential of what this will do for our local economy and how they can take advantage of it.

Besides the obvious bidding on contracts, securing sub-contracts and so on, I would like to think of the Olympics coming to town as the ultimate "tie-in marketing opportunity." A tie-in is when you creatively and purposefully create an association (a tie-in) between your company, its products and services, and whatever is top-of-mind in the collective consciousness. It's tying into whatever is stealing the headlines or dominating the water-cooler talk.

Tie-in marketing creates instant differentiation, attracts media attention, creates awareness, generates referrals and word-of-mouth, and builds

community and market relationships. It keeps your company "hot" and relevant. Whether you're tying into a TV show, sporting event, or a national news story, tie-ins are your excuse to connect with your market and join the conversation they're already having.

Let's use the Olympic buzz as our catalyst to help open our minds to the many *other* tie-in opportunities available to all of us every day, with or without the Olympics. After all, 2010 is still three years away!

Tie-ins are everywhere, and locating them is a simple matter of being aware of what's going on, and finding creative ways to make and leverage the connection.

Tie into current trends and news events.

Pay attention to what people are talking about. For example, global warming is a hot-button issue. Some businesses could create campaigns

around "go green" initiatives. Others might sponsor an Earth Day promotion. What about offering a free bus pass with certain qualifying purchases? It doesn't matter what your business is; you can probably find a way to create some type of tie-in to environmental concerns.

Tap into the seasons and holidays.

I'm not just talking about the big holidays like Valentine's Day and Christmas. There's hardly a week that goes by where you can't be in the midst of a seasonal or holiday promotion of some sort. For instance, when Canada Day rolls around, could you create a special Canada Day package of products or services? Could there be an "I am Canadian"-type promotion in your future?

Link up with movies, sports and other entertainment events.

During the Canucks playoff run, hockey fever was at an all-time high – it was the talk of the town. Everywhere I went, people were talking about the Canucks, but were they also talking about your product or service? For many, this could have been a great leveraging opportunity. What could have been *your* new product, incredible offer, new game, new free gift or charity tie-in? Capitalizing on this type of opportunity is not exclusively for restaurants and radio stations; *any* busi-

ness can successfully tie into this kind of hype.

Piggyback on latest fads, even if unrelated to your business.

Remember when the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (TMNT) were a huge hit with kids? Pizza Hut was running a typical tie-in promotion based on TMNT product licensing. A smart, creative dentist noticed this and found his own way to capitalize on the craze. He went out and bought some stuffed turtle toys, and created this offer: "Bring your child in for a cleaning and take home a stuffed turtle as our gift." Turtles have nothing to do with dentistry, but this guy found a way to work the fad to his advantage.

Headline news, sporting events, blockbuster movies, celebrity gossip, the latest fads – all of these are ripe opportunities to make some noise, have fun, build your brand and make more sales.

And the best part is knowing that these opportunities will always exist... even when the Olympics have come and gone.

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