

marketing matters

BLENDING NEW MEDIA WITH OLD

By Deb Mitchell



Marketing: (n.) The strategic functions involved in identifying and appealing to particular groups of consumers, often including activities such as advertising, branding, pricing, and sales.

The basic definition has remained relatively the same over the years, but the rapidly changing marketing landscape influenced by new technologies and the dominance of digital/social media has created new methods to engage consumers.

In the past, marketing's goal was to secure more customers, clients, volunteers, sponsorship, and concessions; more being the key word.

The most recent IEG Spending Report said, "The marketers' focus is on digital marketing activity, an emphasis that won't wane this year. Thus the goal for rightsholders remains positioning their commercial partnership opportunities within the new digital ecosystem."

Fifteen years ago, a website was cutting edge, but rarely used to market a business or a product. The pendulum has swung so far to

the other side that some businesses believe a Facebook page is no longer enough. "You have to have a website because it's basically your business card," says Karen McCann Strong, Public Relations Director for the California Capital Airshow and Los Angeles County Air Show. "The website is the corner of a marketing plan, a digital plan with an integrated campaign that incorporates a component in each medium: television, print, radio, digital. I don't think it's a very strategic approach and you're not maximizing your ticket base with a limited audience by focusing on just Facebook, Twitter, or social media."

While social media may dominate the digital marketing ecosystem, it certainly hasn't supplanted traditional marketing campaigns for air shows or any industry. In fact, according to the just completed 2014 ICAS Spectator Survey, spectators say that 31.4 percent of those attending the air show did so because of websites or social media. However, radio ads, television ads or newspaper ads prompted 57.5 percent to attend...nearly double the reach of digital media.

Surprised? Even more surprising is the fact

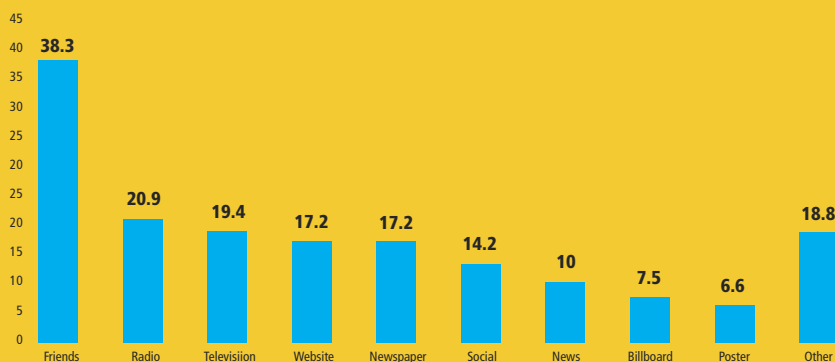
that radio ads were a slightly stronger draw than television ads, at a time when most marketing professionals see radio's effectiveness declining due to consumers' reliance on their own personal media or Pandora and Spotify.

"There are many concerns about radio and print having a reduced audience, but – for entertainment venues like air shows – they can still be viable if used in the correct ways," explains Pam Doucet, O'Carroll Group, a Louisiana-based marketing and communications agency. "The biggest mistake is to spread your dollars too thinly. If you have limited dollars, you should pick one or two media and do it very well with lots of frequency. Be sure to ask for 'added value' i.e., online banners, bonus spot, ID mentions."

Sponsorship experts say the first two partnerships you should negotiate are media and retail. Both categories can extend your marketing dollars through creative cross promotions for sweepstakes, ticket sales, VIP access and more. Many air shows use radio stations for live remotes at grocery stores, car dealers and other retail outlets during show week, as a way to energize the community and drive traffic into the businesses of the other partners where they might be able to purchase a discounted ticket or register to win a flight in an aircraft.

In light of modern marketing, the continued use of "legacy" marketing seems almost retro, but the results are difficult to argue with. The New Smyrna Beach Balloon and Sky Fest discovered that the largest regional newspaper, the *Daytona Beach News Journal*, was essential in driving attendance and promotion for the show. Based on a survey by the Volusia Advertising Authority, 32.3 percent of people who attended the three-day event said that they learned about it through

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the newspaper.

For the last three years, the Journal has given the show a discount on advertising, as well as free exhibit space at the home and garden show, which takes place three weeks prior to the air show. The show takes advantage of the promotion by running a looped video of their event and passing out save-the-date cards to visitors attending the home and garden show.

The newspaper also publishes a 28-page promotional insert, which reaches two major counties at zero cost to the show. "They write and publish the [insert] on the Thursday before the show," says Balloon and Sky Fest Chairman Dr. Arlen Stauffer. "In the week leading up to our event,



they'll run a front page news story with a photograph every day. It's huge promotion, human-interest stories about our performers or volunteers, but it's also a lot of free advertising that we couldn't [afford to] buy."

In comparison, their research

indicates that 45.1 percent of the show's spectators were referred by a friend. Their website was responsible for 21 percent of the attendance. And Facebook drove 9.3 percent of the attendance. Stauffer says, "Everything we do, including Facebook and Twitter,

drives traffic to our website where they can buy tickets. I've never been convinced Facebook brings us a lot of people who wouldn't have come anyway, but we're still trying to grow our social media."

Social media isn't as critical to Stallion 51, either, according to Promotions Coordinator, KT Budde-Jones. "It's like being an ambassador," she says. "You're always making connections with people for what you believe in through advertising, blogs, Trip Advisor, Tweets, Facebook, and YouTube. And that takes a lot of time. You use every opportunity and every method to engage someone."

Budde-Jones says she sees more value in editorial or news



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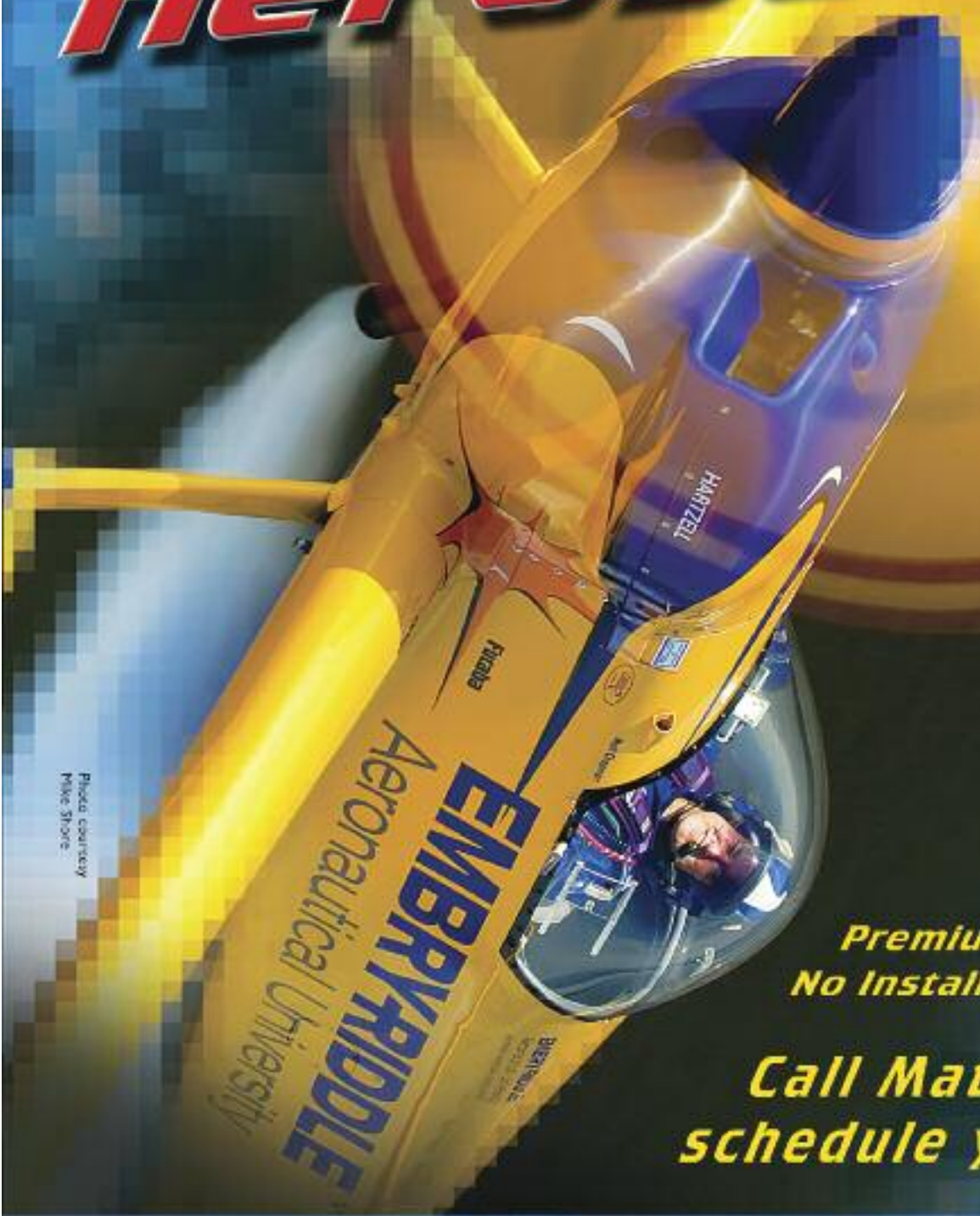


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stories rather than straight advertising. “They [the media] are always looking for a turn-key story, so I give them a mission statement, 100 words or our ‘elevator speech,’ quotes, a photo with photo credit. They can go back to their hotel room, cut and paste, boom-boom and easily craft their story,” explains Budd-Jones. “You always have to have the basics ready. If you make it easy to write about your event or performer, they will come in droves.” McCann Strong agrees, “I prefer the editorial coverage because it gives your event or act third party credibility.”

Sponsorship deals with charities have also been effective when a partner like Angel Flight has a large footprint and actively pro-

motes the relationship through its own media channels. “You’re there in a good light for a good cause,” says Budd-Jones. “Everyone wins because you might be viewed by a different audience in a unique way.”

In major markets like Los Angeles and Sacramento, television is the favored medium. “If I had to pick one, I would say broadcast television,” says McCann Strong. “Air shows are so visual and it’s hard to get that across in print and radio.”

Television stations are vital to an event’s success and offer endless promotion and trade opportunities reducing out-of-pocket expenses. “We have such a huge media support because they know that – for this to continue –

we have to have community support. We can trade tickets, a chalet for employees, and offer them another way to connect with their audience.”

In Sacramento, the show markets year round, but – two to three weeks before the show – they bring a performer in early and offer unique story angles while encouraging ticket sales. “We work with all four main network stations, but Fox40 actually brings out a mobile set and we stage the Patriots [Jet Team] with the runway behind them. On Friday, before the show, they’ll broadcast live from 5 a.m. until 10 a.m., so we get two hits per hour and re-cuts throughout the day,” explains McCann Strong.

For the Lockheed Los Angeles

County Air Show, McCann Strong says it’s much more difficult to get Los Angeles television stations to drive out to Lancaster, so the show relies on a partnership with Time Warner Cable which creates a commercial and runs it on key channels like ESPN during key times. “They blanket the market in southern California, driving people to the website to buy tickets.”

Whether it’s the number one media market or the smallest market, blending the traditional with the new creates more powerful engagements with the marketing goals remaining the same: increased branding, attendance, sponsorship, and ticket sales. It seems the definition of marketing hasn’t changed. ➔

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