

Mission Sponsorship

Funding Missions by Offering
Different Marketing Opportunities to Companies

September 5th, 2008

Purpose

Demonstrate how traditional marketing techniques can be used to provide a new funding source for space missions while maintaining a mission's integrity.

Agenda

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Why Companies Are Interested

What You Might Sell

Non-Monetary Benefits

Challenges

Mars Rovers Case Study

Pitfalls to Avoid

About *imbibo*

imbibo

imbibo is a creative marketing firm that identifies and generates opportunities for companies to promote their brands and products in new ways.

We do this by working with organizations in need of funding to identify, bundle, and sell non-traditional marketing opportunities to companies.

Founders

Bret O'Connor and Will Lindstrom have extensive experience identifying, creating, evaluating, and selling marketing and advertising initiatives for large consumer product and entertainment companies.

They are also space enthusiasts who enjoy applying their creative marketing experience to help benefit the space industry.

Why Companies Are Interested

Missions typically generate a lot of press and public interest. As a result, companies will value this awareness for the following reasons:

Sell Products

Companies seek marketing opportunities to gain access to specific customers with the express purpose to sell their products and generate profit.

Promote Brands

Companies will seek to associate brands with specific initiatives, events, and partners to promote their brand's core values and keep their brands fresh in their consumers' minds.

Change the Perception of a Brand

For stagnant brands or brands seeking to change their image, companies will invest in new and different marketing platforms.

Prevent Competitive Threats

Companies will often invest in a new and different marketing initiative in fear of losing a competitive edge to a competitor.

Generate Incremental Revenue

A more recent and growing reason companies invest in marketing initiatives is to stimulate or create new revenue opportunities.

What You Might Sell

A high-level list of the types of marketing opportunities a mission might sell to companies includes:

Naming Rights

Similar to any stadium deal, companies will pay for the right to have their company or brand associated with a mission and included in all press and marketing materials. Naming rights may also be considered a very large sponsorship.

Sponsorships

Similar to NASCAR, companies will pay for the right to have their name associated with a mission as one of many sponsors, e.g., logos on rockets, landers, equipment, etc.

Channel Access

Space missions attract specific demographic groups (customer groups) that companies want to reach. Companies will pay for “commercial time” that they can use to market their products and brands. For example, attaching a logo on a live video feed from the surface of the moon.

Engagement Rights

In a manner similar to American Idol, companies will look for opportunities to engage their customers by allowing their customers to “participate” in the execution of a mission. For example, voting on which area of space to take photo images of first.

Non-Monetary Benefits

There are significant non-monetary benefits associated with mission sponsorship:

Unparalleled Mission Exposure

Large corporate sponsors will promote your mission and all its scientific benefits to the world at large. This will generate an awareness for the mission, its research, and its leaders in a way that traditional fundraising can not replicate. These companies help make the “heroes” of today bigger (e.g. Nike sponsoring Tiger Woods).

Mass Perception of Legitimacy

When an international marketing powerhouse sponsors a mission, the backing of such a company delivers an immediate sense of legitimacy among the mass population which will generate increased awareness, acceptance, and fundraising opportunities (e.g. Google sponsoring the X-Prize and Donald Trump backing the Apprentice).

Challenges

The most significant challenges are less technical and more mental. These challenges are as follows:

Overcoming the Psychological Hurdle

Committing to the fact that scientific, exploration, and philanthropic missions are marketing opportunities companies will pay for to promote their products and brands.

Recognizing Monetization vs. Manipulation

Recognizing and accepting the fact that monetizing missions by selling marketing opportunities to companies and engaging individuals with marketing messages is not manipulative as long as it is done with respect and provides mutual benefit to all.

Identifying & Categorizing Media Inventory

Identifying and categorizing all the possible ways a mission can be used as a media channel by companies to promote their products and brands in a manner that companies understand.

Talking the Talk & Walking the Walk

Knowing how to approach companies and present a mission's marketing opportunities in a manner that gets companies and their agencies excited and reaching for their wallets.

Mars Rovers Case Study

The following outlines an example of how NASA's Spirit and Opportunity mission might have been commercially funded without impacting the mission's integrity:

	Marketing Opportunity	Impact
Naming Rights	Selling the naming rights for the overall mission to FedEx and each individual rover to General Motors.	NASA gets funding without impacting their mission objects and FedEx and General Motors get worldwide exposure.
Images	Partner with Kodak to create the onboard camera and allow Kodak to include their logo on each photograph.	Kodak underwrites a portion of the development costs and pays a periodic fee for retaining the rights to display their brand.
Participation	Partner with the Discovery Channel to allow "the audience" to vote on the next destination for the rovers to scientific points of equal value to NASA.	NASA can charge a dollar to vote in an "American Idol" format hosted on the Discovery Channel website providing significant website traffic.
Premium Content	Partner with the Discovery Channel to create a "premium members only" online mission control area with sneak peak access to the latest images before they are released to the public at large.	NASA leverages public interest to promote the public good by providing space fans special access that will drive revenue for NASA and traffic to the Discovery Channel website without taking anything away from the general public.

NET RESULT: More funding for NASA without impacting mission objectives.

Pitfalls to Avoid

Although selling marketing opportunities can provide significant funding for a mission, there are a few pitfalls to avoid. They are as follows:

Don't Wait Until It's Too Late

Companies typically need nine months to over a year of advance preparation to maximize most marketing opportunities. Make certain to account for the lead-time. If you wait until the very end, you will leave a lot of money on the table or perhaps not secure a deal at all.

Establish Clear Boundaries

Companies and, in particular, their creative agencies will ask for the moon and more. Be clear, be open, and be firm. Make certain the “what is” and “what is not” allowed is clearly stated at the outset of the agreement.

Look to Create Options

Missions are unpredictable and uncertain affairs. Avoid all or nothing agreements. Create options whereby a company owes money upon the mission reaching specific milestones. This will allow you to charge more for the marketing opportunity because you are providing the companies some insurance.

If You Are Uncertain, Find a Partner

It's easy to make a mistake and leave a lot of money on the table. Don't be shy to look for guidance. Even the most experienced companies leverage media and advertising partners to buy and sell opportunities.

Contact Us

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