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SalesGenie aims to be the worst

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Last year, SalesGenie.com's single ad during the Super Bowl, featuring various Web site users boasting about earning millions through the site, was universally savaged as the absolute worst of 2007, not because of its lack of production, but because of its "cheesy" factors.

Although fans voting and media outlets tracking ad reaction anointed the site's 2007 spot as the worst of the worst, the publicity surrounding the distinction spiked sales.

Determined to reclaim its Super Bowl crown, the Web site redoubled its efforts and retained DKC to mount a PR campaign to draw even more attention to its impending failure.

Strategy

"We figured people only talk if you're the best or worst," says Mark Israelsen, president of SalesGenie.com. "Our overall objective was to increase traffic to the Web site and generate sales. PR really allowed us to maximize our investment because of the additional exposure."

For this year's three spots, Vin Gupta, founder and chairman of the site, conceptualized and wrote the copy,

while Creative Mint, a San Francisco ad agency, handled animation production.

DKC was brought in to gain additional media attention of the company's effort to reclaim its title, with an emphasis on positioning SalesGenie as the anti-establishment alternative in the Super Bowl ad universe dominated by giants, says Dayna Diamond, VP of DKC.

Tactics

DKC's media outreach extended to print, broadcast, and online channels, with focus on national business media and regional markets, including New York, LA, Chicago, and San Francisco.

To capitalize on the momentum before the Super Bowl, DKC arranged a media day before the event, in which Israelsen was interviewed by various national business outlets.

As a bonus, FOX awarded SalesGenie executives four tickets to the game. Gupta gave the tickets away in a drawing to customers and registrants of the site.

In addition, following the Super Bowl, DKC set up an interview with advertising reporter Stuart Elliott of *The New York Times*.

Results

The media blitz around the ads resulted in more than 22 million media impressions. However, some called the ads socially insensitive - and much of the coverage focused on that.

The outlets that covered Sales-Genie's ad campaign in-depth included *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, Associated Press, CNBC's *Power Lunch*, and NBC's *Today* show.

Regardless, media coverage from the ads generated an increase in sales, Diamond says. "People couldn't understand why we were gunning to be the worst again," Israelsen says. "In reality, that was not exactly the case. We just wanted to do what we did last year, generate results."

Future

Because of this project, InfoUSA (which operates SalesGenie) retained DKC for its overall corporate branding for a full year.

"We absolutely plan to do it next year," Diamond says.

PR team: SalesGenie.com (Omaha, NE); DKC (New York)

Campaign: The 'Worst Super Bowl Ad' Campaign

Duration: December 2007-February 2008

Budget: \$35,000

PRWeek View:

This campaign without PR would be like a joke without a punch line. SalesGenie.com's relevance is in its novelty, and that can't be advertised or marketed. It has to be pitched to media, extending the message in a way that only PR can do.

SalesGenie was able to achieve its goal of increasing sales through the ad. Even though reports focused on the controversy, DKC was able to promote a commercial that would not be considered the best.

Attention surrounding Super Bowl ads is typically dominated by large, high-selling companies, including Anheuser-Busch and Pepsi. SalesGenie's efforts show that no matter how small the company or how bad the ad is, with intense PR work, it's possible to break the mold.