



## **MEDIA PROFILE: The Daily Show's news coverage always gets the joke - The Daily Show with Jon Stewart's loyal viewers make it a serious player in the PR game...**

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If you plan to pitch Comedy Central's The Daily Show with Jon Stewart, your client had better have a sense of humor. Just ask the folks at the Kimberly-Clark Corporation.

Earlier this year, the makers of Cottonelle brand bathroom tissue were in the midst of a campaign promoting a revolutionary breakthrough - Cotton-elle Fresh Rollwipes, pre-moistened toilet paper. Cottonelle's PR machine forwarded prototypes to media outlets across the country, including The Daily Show. After all, the show is a legitimate Peabody Award-winning news outlet. Well, actually, it's a Peabody Award-winning news "parody" show, which Cottonelle apparently wasn't aware of.

In typical Daily Show fashion, producers sent a correspondent to the steps of Cottonelle's headquarters to report the gripping story as it unfolded.

"The joke was that this new invention was more important than President Bush's speech," says Stewart Bailey, supervising producer at The Daily Show. "So, we kept interrupting the show with the personal testimony of the correspondent."

If Cottonelle execs felt like the butt of the joke, they weren't complaining.

After all, for the nominal price of a media kit, they'd tapped into a large, and incredibly loyal audience.

"They sent this to us as a straight news story and got an enormous amount of coverage," says Bailey. "But, we had to do it on our terms."

Six producers and four researchers huddle at lively pitch meetings held weekly. Due to the sharply irreverent nature of the segments, The Daily Show is not exactly the easiest show to pitch, so you've got to think outside the PR box. Though they don't solicit pitches, they do accept them, preferably in tape format.

Product placement is often the best way to garner coverage - as long as your client's product is absurd, or at the very least, highly

unusual.

It also doesn't hurt to have a timely news hook to hang your pitch on.

Recently, the Family & Culture Institute took issue with a Minute Maid commercial depicting cartoon characters Popeye and Pluto reconciling their differences because of orange juice.

"Basically, they felt there was some kind of latent homosexual conspiracy embedded in the commercial, so we just took that and ran with it," says Bailey. "We traced the history of orange juice and its use as a tool to recruit into the ranks of homosexuals."

Despite what appears at times to be inherently risqué and irreverent material, Daily Show producers don't take their First Amendment rights too seriously. "Minute Maid was complicit, but if they had not been, we might have treated the segment differently," says Bailey. "We make sure we are not too offensive. We don't make false claims and we don't use material that would cost us our jobs."

There's no question, you've got to be creative when pitching the show.

And as it's a news parody show, you should be aware of current events, especially politics, to be able to recognize a potential plug for your client.

Obviously, A-list celebrities making the rounds are a big part of the show. However, one of The Daily Show's charms is its every-man segments.

At press time producers for the show were working on a segment focusing on President Bush's energy plan.

"The whole sentiment of Bush's policy is that America is blessed with ample resources, and it is not only our right, but our duty as Americans to use up as much energy as we can," says Bailey.

So, they found a woman who lives out on a highway, and in order for her to get to the grocery store, which is located directly across the highway, she must take an hour-long car drive every day. "We plan to portray her as an unwitting national hero," says Bailey.

Like most news-related shows, there's always a need for expert testimony.

"We recently had a guy in Las Vegas who does a mouth douche with grape juice to rid his body of saliva," says Bailey. "So, we asked ear, nose and throat doctor Harold Bloom, who really is an authority. What was great about this interview was that both sides took themselves so seriously."

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