

April 6, 2009

Ad Shops Launching Campaigns for Social Web Sites

By Michael Volpe

Orange County marketers are grappling with how to use social networking for the benefit of their clients.

“The challenge with social networking now is the fact that (marketers) have to think completely differently about how to speak to consumers,” said Armando Carrillo, Internet marketing specialist at Costa Mesa-based Idea Hall. “The big questions at the moment are ‘How do you align your business to take advantage of the phenomena online?’ and ‘How do you get users to pay attention to your brand?’”

Many users of Facebook.com, MySpace.com and Twitter.com utilize the social networking sites for catching up with friends, not explicitly for receiving news or advertisements.

“Marketers have to understand that users go there to communicate with each other and they don’t necessarily go to be force fed advertising,” Carrillo said.

Idea Hall is working with one of its nonprofit clients on a social networking campaign that consists of Facebook and MySpace pages along with an editorial calendar for a Twitter feed.

“It’s like the old school grassroots approach in how you hold events and utilize community outreach with a public relations approach to build momentum,” Carrillo said. “Not every campaign is going to be a hit, but the campaign is more about the long-term relationships than the near-term boost in attention.”

That seems to be the philosophy most agencies are taking.

Irvine-based Morgan Marketing and Public Relations LLC recently launched a social media campaign for its client Torrance-based King’s Hawaiian Bakery West Inc. that includes Facebook and MySpace pages offering recipes to users.

The agency is targeting women ages 35 to 59—who are typically users of the Web to find recipes, according to Melinda Morgan Kartsonis, president at Morgan Marketing.

“We’ve been tracking the most popular sites like Foodnetwork.com and others that offer recipes and tips for women without beating them over the head with their message,” Morgan Kartsonis said.

Morgan Marketing has created a Facebook page where the agency has posted several in-house recipes and allows users to add their own recipes using King’s products as the main ingredient.

Voice of Lexus

Cypress-based Mitsubishi Motors North America Inc. has hired the voice of Lexus to narrate its radio commercials.

The Japanese automaker, part of Japan's Mitsubishi Motors Corp., picked up actor James Sloyan, the ad narrator for Lexus since the brand launched in 1989.

Lexus, part of Japan's Toyota Motor Corp., and its ad shop, Los Angeles-based Team One, decided to drop Sloyan for actor James Remar, who played Richard Wright on "Sex and the City," to take over voiceover duties for the luxury car brand.

Toyota had been looking for a new voice that would appeal to a younger generation, despite many questioning dropping "the voice of luxury."

Mitsubishi and its ad shop, Hollywood-based Traffic, picked up Sloyan last month and have begun testing him in radio ads in top markets.

The Sloyan hire seems to be part of a larger campaign in the works for the automaker, whose last ad campaign fizzled due to the economy and poor timing.

Automaker's Web Site

Fountain Valley-based Hyundai Motor America's Web site—Hyundaiusa.com—has dropped the USA in favor of the easier Web site name, Hyundai.com.

The change is part of a larger unification by the automaker's parent company, South Korea-based Hyundai Motor Co., which is consolidating its Internet operations and global ad campaigns.

The new, centralized Web site will be the landing page for all of Hyundai's global operations by the end of the year. The idea is to make the Web sites more efficient by creating a pool of resources for all of Hyundai's subsidiaries.

Before the change, each arm of Hyundai was expected to create and maintain separate Web sites for their respective operations.

The automaker's U.S. operations was the first to make the transition to the new companywide Web site, with plans for Canada and Australia to follow in the next couple months, according to the company.

A side benefit for its U.S. operations will be higher consumer traffic from buyers who have visited Hyundai.com instead of searching for the U.S. division.

Hyundai has been busy since last year bringing most of its advertising and marketing in-house.

In October, Hyundai Motor America shifted its advertising account to Irvine-based World Marketing Group, run by Jim Sanfilippo, executive vice president, who took control of the account last quarter.

The ad shop, part of South Korea's Innocean Worldwide Inc., is owned by Seoul-based Hyundai.

Sanfilippo is looking to staff up the shop after transitioning all of the creative and planning from San Francisco-based Goodby, Silverstein & Partners.