

AdvertisingAge

Why You're Squandering Movie Integration Opportunities

Brett Renwick Goes Full Howard Beale to Explain Why Brands, Filmmakers and Agencies Are Getting It Wrong

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Published: April 27, 2010



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Brands, this is your come-to-Jesus talk.

I'm going to go Howard Beale on you right here: "I do branded entertainment for feature films, and all I see is wasted opportunity, and I'm mad as hell, and I'm not going to take it any more!"

Branded-entertainment integration opportunities abound each year, but:

- a) Your agencies don't move quickly enough and don't have the expertise to evaluate the long-form narrative (I'm talking beyond the 30-second spot);
- b) You are not willing to step outside of your comfort zone even though every year McDonald's, auto manufacturers and a handful of brands break through the clutter and speak directly to your customer;
- c) You actually get more value for your "buy" because the integration is evergreen, which means it lives through the theatrical release, DVD, streaming and broadcast ad infinitum.

Let me break this down for you: Brand integrations are not just for the bonanza tentpole and huge sequels; they can also be for small-to-medium releases. Consider a very basic piece of math: Good movie plus good promotions equals good box office. There are critically acclaimed films that did not reach their domestic box-office potential but might have if they had promotional partners. "Burn After Reading" did not engage promotional support (shame on you SanDisk), only doing \$60 million, despite having Brad Pitt and George Cloney! "Cloverfield" was shot by mister

secretive micro-manager J.J. Abrams and only did \$80 million. "The Wrestler" did \$26 million -- can you say Icy Hot, Advil, Ace Bandages, Tiger Balm, Bed Head. "Vicky Christina Barcelona" won an Oscar for Penelope Cruz but only did \$23 million. Anyone call Iberia Airlines to do a sweepstakes? Psst, Penelope Cruz is a L'Oreal spokeswoman, and the marketer did nothing to support the film but run free-standing inserts to promote a product with her likeness during the theatrical release.

Feel my rage? Don't get me wrong, there are some films that are difficult if not impossible to find promotional tie-ins for, such as "No Country for Old Men" and "There Will Be Blood," but for every tie-in I've ever done, I've increased the attendance for a movie.

But brands have a herd mentality when it comes to tentpoles and big sequels, so the problem becomes, how can filmmakers get their support to "trickle down" to small- and medium-sized films?

Increased ticket sales and brand recognition can happen with the aid of brand integrations and promotions if the following criteria are met:

Filmmakers:

1. More of you need to prove you have an appetite for all types of integrations, especially when brands want to blow out their exposure. Case in point: "[Up in the Air](#)," which featured Hilton and American Airlines prominently. Slam-dunk.
2. You are not skilled in creating, pitching and signing these deals. So hire a professional.
3. Don't wait until the production start date is six weeks away to do these deals. Like your production, big brands don't turn on a dime, either.

Brands:

1. You need to set aside a bucket of discretionary funding for the right small- to medium-size film venture that suddenly pops up instead of waiting years for a huge tentpole. Be more opportunistic; as 2009 showed us, if you stay on the sidelines along with your competitors, no one gets noticed, and private-label brands will increase their market share.
2. Brands that have not done integrations need to view them as a marketing vehicle that extends their messaging in a fresh, relevant way to consumers.
3. Brands will actually get more bang for their buck if they spread their promotions around several small-to-medium pictures that will avoid being lost in the noise and clutter of the tentpoles, with their multiple big-spending brands.
4. Creative ideas are the engine of the best brand integrations. It's not as easy as taking [Old Spice guy Isaiah Mustafa](#) and writing him into a romantic comedy as the "Old Spice" guy (but I could make it work).

5. Ask the distributor what its release strategy is. If it's a small film that is a good fit for your brand but its only being released in the top 25 designated market areas, then maybe you should do a regional radio promotion with movie-pass giveaways that need to be retrieved from the retailer of your choice -- think outside of the national spot buy.

Agencies (especially AORs):

1. No one who works for you knows how to break down a screenplay or evaluate what the finished property will look like, so engage someone who does.

2. Pick up the phone and call your clients. See if they want to pursue a movie opportunity instead of having meeting after meeting after meeting internally, leading to months of inertia.

3. Understand that theatrical opportunities have expiration dates.

4. In the first conversation, be upfront and tell people like me who do placement deals that you don't have the budget.

Wake up and smell the film stock! There is a ton of opportunity being produced by the dream factory that 99% of you are not taking advantage of.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brett Renwick is the founder of Renwick & Co., a branded entertainment company. Mr. Renwick has done brand integrations, promotions and sponsorships for "1408," "Rob Zombie's Halloween," "The Great Debaters" and "The Nanny Diaries" among other films, and he has done deals with major brands including McDonald's, P&G, Yahoo, Nascar, American Express, Budweiser, and Best Buy.