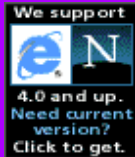


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Talk Amongst Yourselves

By Gail Stephen

Sometimes all your marketing team needs is a little fun and games.

Ever wonder how other brandconsultants, advertising gurus and creative directors get their creative juices flowing just before a client meeting?

Michael Coleman, senior vice-president of Source/Inc. a Chicago, Ill.-based brand design consultancy says during some of their creative meetings the facilitator instructs the participants to say something nice about their colleague immediately to their right. "With some of our clients, this forces creativity of the highest caliber," he notes.

Food In Canada uncovers some bright ideas to kick start your in-house marketing team with brainstorming session advice from the pros. We polled a number of creative types across North America and discovered a few ideas to ignite your next marketing meeting or at the very least--rekindle the flames.

TASK NAME: Whoops!

BRIGHT IDEA: Participants assume the role of brand manager on an existing and recognizable brand, i.e. Starbucks. They've just learned that, amazingly, their company's attorneys failed to register the company moniker as a trade name, and another Starbucks (a lesser known whale bait shop up north) is filing an opposition action against the company. Knowing what they know about the brand, its positioning, personality, values, etc., the brand managers must quickly conceive a new name for the company.

THE RESULT: This task forces managers to think about existing brands, what they're promising, what they stand for, and what elements have helped to make them successful.

SUBMITTED BY: Mark Skoultchi, managing director of Catchword, New York, N.Y. location.

TASK NAME: Beloved Brands/Devil Brands

BRIGHT IDEA: This exercise is particularly good to use with teams that are not comprised specifically of marketing/ branding specialists. It helps focus the discussion on enduring brand attributes, brand promise, and the need for brand integrity. Begin by asking each person to think of two brands in any category that they really love, and two brands they don't like. Then, go around the room and ask first for the beloved brands. Write on a flip chart the reasons why that team member likes it. Do the same with the devil brands. Review the lists.

THE RESULT: Beloved brands are those that have kept their promise to us, and respected their relationship with us. Devil brands are those that have lied to us by promising us one experience and delivering another.

SUBMITTED BY: Nan Budinger, creative director for Metaphor Name Consultants, San Francisco, Calif.

TASK NAME: Cocktail Party

BRIGHT IDEA: Pretend you're at a party and your host introduces you to Brand. Tell me about Brand. Is Brand a woman or a man? What does he/she do for a living? What's Brand wearing? What kind of car do they drive? Is he/she a parent? What kind of music does Brand listen to? What sorts of things does Brand talk to you about? Is Brand interested in listening to you? What kinds of questions does Brand ask you?

THE RESULT: This exercise asks people to personify their brand. It puts personality characteristics and emotional traits to the brand in an effort to create depth and dimension.

SUBMITTED BY: Gina Seamans, PR counsel for the Sterling-Rice Group, Boulder, Colo. location.

TASK NAME: Free Your Mind

BRIGHT IDEA: The moderator hands out index cards and asks everyone to write down all of their pressing problems--one per card, including personal ones (moderator must promise to not read them aloud). Then the moderator walks around the room with an open garbage bag. Everyone tosses his or her problems (the cards) into the bag.

THE RESULT: I have even see moderators tie off the bag and toss it outside the meeting room door! While it's symbolic, it gets a bit of a laugh and loosens everyone up. It also shows that we are all in this together and that we've all put our pressing needs aside for the meeting.

SUBMITTED BY: Robert Kincaide, managing director at The Hazelton Group, Toronto, Ont.

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