

# Activating Creativity

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ARC WORLDWIDE

When the legendary New Zealand All Blacks rugby team lost unexpectedly at the 2007 Rugby World Cup, its sponsor, Adidas, realized it had an opportunity to restore the team's close ties with its disenchanted fans and, in the process, make real its own brand purpose.

To do this, Adidas employed a “new world” manifestation of creativity to bring the brand to life for its fans. Specifically, the sports footwear and apparel maker drew from the fans' deep connection with the ultimate symbol of the All Blacks, their jersey. Adidas made it both the message and medium.

## Bringing brands to life across channels and disciplines moves people to action.

In what's considered a first, it employed nano-technology, also known as “molecular manufacturing,” to “sign” the names of nearly 10,000 fans who submitted their signatures via a website onto a real, nano-imprinted thread sewn into the captain's jersey.

The result: Ten thousands fans symbolically accompanied the All Blacks onto the field for the Tri Nations rugby championship (which the All Blacks won for a fourth consecutive year). Intense interest in the All Blacks returned, with 18 percent more fans

voicing interest in the team. Adidas was at the center of it all, demonstrating its mantra, “Impossible is Nothing,” along with fans around the world.

### INSPIRING PEOPLE TO ACT

Fueled by new technologies that give people more options, more control and higher expectations, the marketing landscape is changing dramatically. No longer can marketers rely on the brand or “the deal” alone to inspire action or make the sale at retail.

In this new world, getting people to change their minds and, ultimately, their behavior requires a new type of creativity. It is creativity that moves people—to experience, to purchase, to recommend, and to return. It puts an activating idea at the center of marketing efforts—an idea that triggers *involvement*—and unites all of the marketing disciplines and media channels around it to connect more effectively with people and inspire them to *act*.

Whether the concept plays out in-store, online, over the phone or via underground events, the result is creative work that resonates with people to such a degree that they actually want to participate, engage and become part of something.

These are ideas that stimulate *action*—from trying a new product or visiting a store to subscribing to a Twitter feed or joining a global movement. Sometimes they inspire individually and directly, sometimes *en masse*. Often they drive an immediate purchase, but they always elicit an observable response.

This kind of creativity is channeled against a specific behavioral opportunity and linked to a specific business opportunity. It's about using all of the marketing disciplines to connect with people and change what they do. Of course, it must start with people and what has value to them. Just as products and brands need to have value in people's lives, so do our actions. And people's expectations of value have changed.



Everyone loves bribes and entertainment, but there is a new, broader, more technologically enabled face to value: Simple, straightforward *utility*, which is behind the booming iPhone App store; *experience and access*, that offer the things money can't buy; *personalization*, embodied in the numerous design-your-own sneaker websites; and *social good* are just a few examples of what people value today. Brilliant examples of new, creative, approaches that leverage these many dimensions of value radiate around us.

#### RETAILING HOPE

Consider what the Red Cross in Lisbon did to raise funds for its main causes during the Christmas season. The non-profit agency decided to promote the sale of an unusual product as the perfect holiday gift alternative. It is a product you can't see, touch, wear or hear—but you can feel. That product is *hope*.

The Red Cross built a pop-up retail store inside a popular Lisbon shopping mall. Alongside the usual holiday gift options, the concept enabled people to *feel* the experience of purchasing *hope*. The store, promoted through traditional advertising media, featured the expected fixtures and displays, but each sold photographic cards valued at 10 euros as

donations to the Red Cross. It offered different sizes, values and kinds as they related to different causes.

People might have left the store with their hands empty, but they left with their hearts full. The results: Hundreds of people lined up to buy *hope* on opening night, and on the first day, the store reached the mall's top 10 in sales. The Red Cross itself found its own awareness climbing among the public. Why? *Hope* changed the way people see the act of giving.

Then there's the bankrupt Japanese city of Yubari, population 13,800. Once a thriving coal-mining town, it found itself \$353 million in debt when the coal mines shut. Yubari officials decided they needed a marketing miracle and in their research, they discovered Yubari had the lowest divorce rate in Japan.

This laid the groundwork for a unique "No money but love" tourism campaign. The city opened a Department of Happily Married Couples and designed a lovable character, Yubari Fusai.

More than 3,000 couples have flocked to Yubari to obtain official "Happily Married" certificates issued by the department. The couples also could purchase "love"-related CDs, plush toys and even special-edition beer. The efforts have generated more than

\$30 million to help Yubari whittle down its debt and tourism has grown by double digits.

Like Yubari, companies and organizations are finding that people will engage—or act—when they connect around shared values. New technologies are helping them do that.

When Hallmark Cards began exploring ways to be more relevant to socially conscious millennials—primarily the offspring of Baby Boomers—it joined in the fight to eliminate AIDS in Africa through Project (RED). Employing social media, the company launched a campaign on Facebook to raise awareness of AIDS among its more than 200 million members.

The “Card for Africa” Facebook application lets people sign and send a virtual card for Africa. It calculates the real-world distance the card travels and draws people’s attention to the impact Hallmark Product (RED) cards and gifts can have in the fight to end AIDS in Africa. The results: More than 40,000 people have signed the card and it has traveled more than 50 million miles.

#### PROMOTING A COOL CULTURE

Other companies also are promoting and marketing their products by embracing advanced technology that engages consumers. UNIQLO, the Japanese apparel maker that combines high tech and cool culture in its casual clothes, did that last year by combining video and interactivity. The marketing campaign featured a downloadable application, UNIQLOCK, a blog widget that told time through an ongoing fashion show.

As young Japanese women wearing UNIQLO apparel danced to catchy music, the screen changed in time with the clock. The music-dance-clock application could be used as a computer screensaver, a mobile screen, or embedded in a Facebook page.

A World UNIQLOCK page on the company’s website showed how successful the campaign was. A world map there displayed the number and location of users who incorporated UNIQLOCK parts into their own blogs. More than 41,600 blog parts established in 83 countries have recorded more than 120 million page accesses.

IKEA also employed technology to transform its famous two-dimensional IKEA catalogue cover into a three-dimensional replica living room people could enter in-store. The living room toured 24 German cities and people could have their pictures taken in it. They then visited their IKEA store, thus driving return traffic, and picked up a custom edition of the

catalogue featuring them as the cover model.

This personal marketing campaign boosted the IKEA brand appeal. More than 7,100 people had their pictures taken, and the promotion increased traffic and sales in IKEA furniture stores. You can also imagine how much longer the catalogue was proudly displayed on coffee tables around the country.

#### INSPIRATION TO ACTION

These examples just scratch the surface. More and more of the world’s leading marketers are realizing that activation is not a channel. It is a discipline that unites all channels—to spark life into brands and inspire people to act.

So why, in these challenging economic times when building both brand and sales would seem a mandatory, are so many marketers missing the opportunity to apply this new kind of creativity?

Clearly, developing deep, activating insights into people and their behavior across marketing channels requires sophisticated techniques, experience and expertise that not all partners can bring to bear.

Also, a new form of creativity requires a new form of creative thinkers—capable of developing ideas against behavioral opportunities that cross retail channels, customer databases, mobile applications and social networking platforms.

It requires a commitment to focusing on *actions*—namely, what one is going to *do* to bring the brand to life and connect with people. Not what are we going to *say*, or what are we going to *promise*. What are we going to *do*?

So what are you going to do?

Try asking yourself what behavioral opportunity lies at the core of your most important business opportunity. Then consider the people at the center of it and what they value. Where can they connect with your brand’s purpose? How can you bring your brand to life in a way that engages them around shared values?

That’s the brief you’ll need to create the activating idea that will bring your brand to life so powerfully that people will participate. I’d love to hear what you come up with—and where you go from here. ■



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