

News & Views

Back to Future Sponsorship

There were few headline grabbers at Future Sponsorship in November with the emphasis very much on themes that are well established in theory, if not yet fully implemented in practice, such as:

- Thinking of sponsorship as a **business solution** - using it to cross barriers internally and externally, communicate messages and engage audiences across channels, going beyond the sponsored activity or event itself.
- **Scale** – the web can take even the most local activity to a global marketplace at a fraction of the cost and with far greater control than broadcast.
- Enhancing **the audience experience** – looking at how a sponsor can contribute and how to gain recognition for their efforts (i.e. focus on developing brand affinity, not merely brand awareness).
- **Reframing** – moving from controlling rights to leveraging assets as opensource kills off exclusivity, using bespoke rights, imagination and creativity. More sponsors will become property owners so that they can shape the agenda and declutter.
- Social media groups people by networks and interests, crossing geographic boundaries, connecting people through shared emotions. Sponsors need to harness these **emotions** as it is emotion that drives action.
- **Evaluation** is all about sales, loyalty, brand equity and CSR, not awareness and image.

For further debate, attend **Think! Sponsorship** on 15 April at Sadler's Wells Theatre, London.

Middle Eastern update

Last month Sponsorship Consulting's Pippa Collett was invited to speak at the inaugural Arabian Sponsorship Forum and judge their Awards. The conference was well supported, with contributions from many sponsorship luminaries including Sepp Blatter (FIFA), Giles Morgan (HSBC), Sundar Raman (IPL) and Sir Keith Mills (London 2012).

However, it was the Awards that provided more insight into the state of sponsorship in the region. The awards entries suggested that the majority of activity is focussed on gaining or maintaining a license to operate. Emirati companies, largely state-owned, have a vested interest in supporting their governments' development plans for the region and are therefore prepared to pump money into establishing flagship events like the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, the Dubai World Cup (the world's richest horse race) and the Commercialbank Qatar Masters. This raises the stakes for any foreign company wishing to compete in these markets, forcing them to be equally generous in their sponsorship investments.



Henrik Stenson on Day 3 of the Commercialbank Qatar Masters, Arabian Sponsorship Awards B2B winner.

This is no accident but a cleverly conceived strategy – not only are the Emiratis getting others to invest in regional development but they are also harnessing the international nature of those sponsors to amplify the importance of those events on the global stage. After all, if a brand is a globally recognised player, it cannot afford to risk damaging brand equity by being seen to partner with anything but the best.

The consequence of this approach is that there is far more money being spent on sponsorship than the current market size would normally support. The inflation in rights fees leads to a squeeze on investment in leveraging the full potential of the sponsorship assets acquired, resulting on an over-reliance on brand exposure to generate returns.

This picture represents strategic sponsorship in its infancy. However, the drive to exceed and indeed excel in the Gulf States should not be underestimated. As in other fields, they will not be slow to catch up and, in future, the West may find itself looking east for innovative sponsorship approaches and concepts.

Dubai's Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building at over 800m, was inaugurated on 4.01.10.



ESA Elections

At the recent European Sponsorship Association elections, Sponsorship Consulting's Pippa Collett was re-elected to the Board and re-confirmed as the Association's Vice-Chair. "I am delighted that my peers value my commitment and contribution to developing professional sponsorship practice across the region," said Pippa.

Sponsorship Consulting Brussels

Hot on the heels of establishing a presence in Scotland, Sponsorship Consulting is delighted to announce it has also opened an office in mainland Europe. The Brussels-based team is headed up by William Fenton, the highly respected sponsorship expert and editor of The World Sponsorship Monitor.



"I have collaborated with Sponsorship Consulting on a number of projects in the past and was delighted to be invited to lead their European expansion," commented Fenton.

Webcasts return

Such was the interest shown in the *Introduction to Sponsorship* webcast programme launched last year, the Sponsorship Consulting team will be running the series again starting at 11.00UK/12.00 CET on Friday 26 February 2010. For more information or to register, visit

www.sponsorshipconsulting.co.uk/webcasts or call +44(0)20 7147 9957. European Sponsorship members qualify for special rates and hours towards Continuing Professional Development accreditation. "I would just like to feed back on how interesting and useful I have found [the] brand webinars. They have been very well structured and I have thoroughly enjoyed them," said E.ON Energy's Sarah Charig.

 **Sponsorship**
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