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## A multimedia ad strategy demands smart execution

Posted on March 19th, 2010 Written by [Wanda Kenton Smith](#)



I've faithfully attended the Miami International Boat Show 28 out of the last 30 years. The only show I missed was in 1990 when I was nine months pregnant and due to deliver any day. I wanted to go – even debated it with my husband – but as it turned out, my now-20-year-old daughter, Chelsea, was born on the Friday of the show, so it's probably good I didn't push too hard, so to speak.

I love Miami for lots of reasons. It's a world-class show and a whirl of excitement. It's grown like urban sprawl, expanding from the convention center, to the Marriott's Sea Isle to Strictly Sail at Bayside, along with Show Management's glitzy waterfront yacht collection on Collins Avenue. What's more, it's the place to showcase new products, take part in interesting and fun events and meetings, and rub shoulders with colleagues.

I wondered this year if Miami might feel significantly smaller, or if our traditional crowds would stay away because of the economic challenges of the last 18 months. Admittedly, the floorplan footprint was smaller, and attendance figures were down – the latter impacted by a nor'easter that crippled plane, train and auto traffic from East Coast points. Despite the chill that traveled south, booths were alive, and the buying climate reflected a warming trend, with bona fide shoppers in the aisles and on the docks.

And there were other bright spots. For one, I met with a small group brainstorming about how to develop a broad-based boating promotion in conjunction with the already established National Marina Day, which has been moved up to June. NMMA vice president Carl Blackwell, Bonnier Marine Group publisher Glenn Hughes, MRAA's Phil Keeter and others from the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation, Association of Marina Industries and individual businesses were trying to develop synergy around the concept.

I was impressed by the enthusiastic attitude and the way people volunteered their resources and strengths, and I'm pleased to report a lot of progress has since been made. The promotion may be off to a regrettably late start, but the concept has merit and real industry-wide marketing potential.

Marine Marketers of America also held its annual general members meeting, which featured a professional development presentation titled, "The Great Media Debate: Where to Put Your Ad Dollars Now." The panel included Dominion Media vice president James Causey, who oversees multiple titles, including Soundings Trade Only, that deliver a combined 3-million-copy circulation; veteran journalist

Peter Janssen, editorial director of Bonnier's MotorBoating magazine; and MMA board member and moderator Van Perry of TUI Marine/The Moorings.

The truth is, many marine marketers are befuddled about the value of and return on print advertising these days, particularly when measured against the plethora of real-time online media platforms. Janssen and Causey, both of whom oversee a mix of print and Web-based media, provided compelling arguments and facts worth serious study by anyone with responsibility for marine media buying.

Causey pointed out that Forrester Research on Funding of Interactive Marketing reports 60 percent of the dollars invested in online media has come from traditional media budgets. Direct mail has been hit hardest at 40 percent, newspapers at 35 percent, magazines at 28 percent, television at 12 percent, and Yellow Pages at 11 percent.

These figures represent overall media spending and are not marine-specific. I'd speculate that our findings might differ, and I'd bet that most major media shifts to online have likely come from print advertising.

A surprise to me was that Yellow Pages even made the list. I'm stumped as to why advertisers funnel any money into these mammoth paper dinosaurs. I haven't opened one in three years, and I don't like it when they land, uninvited, on my doorstep and I'm forced to lug them to the recycle bin. On the other hand, I wasn't surprised a bit by Causey's intriguing smartphone research that reveals how digital mobile is now utilized to look up everything from shipping information to addresses, product descriptions, consumer reviews, and more.

"We're not in the magazine business," says Causey, a comment Janssen agreed with. In today's myriad consumer messaging strategies and tactics, Causey argued that no single medium is better than another; rather, they are "mutually dependent." He advocates "dressing for the occasion" – in other words, choose the right media for your "granular audience" and communicate to that audience in the most appropriate and efficient manner possible. He recommends systematically scoring leads to measure media returns and objectively analyze advertising effectiveness. I couldn't agree more.

Like Dominion, Bonnier no longer positions itself solely as a print publisher. Janssen explained Bonnier's 360-degree multimedia marketing hub, which represents the company's integrated marketing platform. That platform includes everything from a stable of special-interest magazines to the Web, research analytics, database marketing, custom publishing, live events, social networking, custom e-newsletters, mobile Web, podcasts, video production and television.

While each of these marketing spokes represents an available service, Janssen recommends that specialty magazines be firmly positioned as the cornerstone to any marine marketing campaign. His rationale? Research claims magazines are the "most consistent medium" in driving purchase intent and are the No. 1 driver of Web traffic, beating television, radio, one-on-one communication and Internet advertising. His data confirms that magazines deliver consumer credibility, while advertisements build brand awareness, are relevant and targeted by readers, plus are top-rated in driving word-of-mouth customer recommendations.

Janssen's most compelling argument about the power of magazines, however, came when he showed a series of stunning editorial spreads from multiple magazine titles. The editorial packaging unique to magazines, he submits, engages the customer and creates that critical, all-important emotional impact like no other.

One thing is for certain: Media opportunities are plentiful, while ad budgets are grossly diminished. We must do our research, laser-target our audience, consider the multimedia platforms available, and then strategically execute buys that can be tracked and measured.

Two other Miami highlights for me included the Boating Writers International meeting and the YachtWorld.com, Boats.com and BoaterMouth bash. BWI's annual awards program recognizes marine journalists for editorial excellence. I've judged several categories over the years, and I'm always impressed by the quality of work produced within our own group. With 17 categories, 352 entries and \$17,000 in prizes, there was much to write home about this year. My hat is off to every BWI winner and to the scores of working full-time and freelance journalists whose contributions inspire and motivate boaters to use their products and enjoy the lifestyle.

BWI also hosted a "Boating at a Crossroads" panel presentation featuring Soundings Trade Only editor Bill Sisson, Boating Industry editor Matt Gruhn and Marine Business Journal editor Marilyn Mower. Their perspectives and articulate commentary about the strategic changes needed by the industry bear repeating and should be trumpeted to the industry at large. The topic was highly relevant and timely, but while stimulating to those attending, the presentation, unfortunately, lacked the targeted audience who really needed to hear it and who has the power to effectuate change.

Lastly, I attended the champagne toast of a new win-win partnership launched between Dominion Enterprises' YachtWorld.com, Boats.com and the newly organized BoaterMouth.com, the latter a group of 12 award-winning marine journalists who are now providing expert editorial content for consumption by the Web sites' 3.5 million monthly visitors. BoaterMouth founder and longtime marine journalist Kim Kavin is one smart cookie. Her visionary concept and ability to repackage her skill set and those of her colleagues to meet the demands of the new digital and social media age deserves recognition. Kim's fast-forward business re-engineering is a model for all corners of the industry.

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