

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Promotional Polemics

By Les Landes

"My dad's bigger than your dad."
"Oh yeah? Well, your mother wears combat boots."

A schoolyard squabble? Could be. But you're just as likely to hear that kind of prattle in the halls of corporate America from public relations and advertising people asserting the superiority of their respective professions.

"You can't control what you get from public relations. It's always a crap shoot," say the advertising people. "With advertising, you know what you're getting, and you get what you pay for."

"Wake up, folks. People just don't trust short-burst, advertising hype anymore," say the public relations people. "With public relations, you get more in-depth coverage, and you get it from sources that people consider credible."

That's just a sample of the peevish battles that take place between a lot of people in these two professions.

So who's right? Well, the answer isn't one or the other . . . or both . . . or neither. Fact is, it's just a bad question. It's also a senseless argument — one that occurs all too frequently.

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to understand why the timeless debate rages on. At the business level, our corporate structures tend to divide public relations and advertising organizationally. At the educational level, our business schools separate them academically and intellectually. And not enough is done by the respective professional associations of either faction to promote a deeper understanding of one another's disciplines . . . or the relationship between the two.

But hope springs eternal. Not all advertising and public relations people spend their days doing battle on the field of futile distinctions.

A Case For Integration

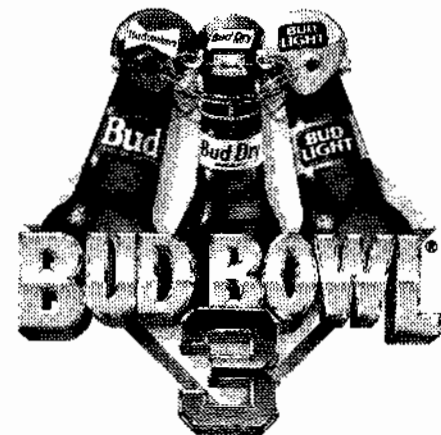
Take the Anheuser-Busch "Bud

Bowl," for instance — certainly the most ambitious promotion in the history of the beer industry, and by most accounts, the most successful one as well.

Over the years, Super Bowl audiences have become accustomed to breakthrough advertising. Unfortunately, they've also seen a lot of "game-of-the-century" match-ups that have failed to live up to people's expectations. In fact, some Super Bowl games have been so boring and lop-sided that the advertising often has been the highlight of the broadcast.

Bud Bowl planners saw an opportunity in a dramatic "commercial game" of their own — one that might conceivably keep viewers glued to the tube right up to the very end. Long-neck bottles of Budweiser and Bud Light would compete in a "Gumby-style" stop-action animated football game to determine which was the best beer in the business.

"We wanted our Super Bowl advertising and sales promotion campaign to breakthrough," said Budweiser Vice President Thomas R. Sharbaugh. "To cut through the Super Bowl clutter we had to be unique, and we needed to create a sense of anticipation about Bud Bowl."



From the outset, it was planned as an integrated campaign, combining all the best elements of what are commonly viewed as three distinct types of promotional activity: advertising, sales promotion, and public relations. There was never any debate over which was more important . . . or how each was different. The question didn't even come up. The team simply wove everything together — like different threads in a multi-colored tapestry.

"We wanted the campaign to be so tightly integrated that you couldn't tell where one aspect of the promotion left off and the other began," says Jack Taylor of DMB&B, the advertising agency that worked on Bud Bowl. "We even planned it so some of our paid advertising efforts actually appeared to be unsolicited publicity. That meant we had to understand what had intrinsic public relations value — typically not a major consideration in advertising."

An extensive advertising campaign consisted of timely, strategically-placed commercials and print ads before, during, and after the Super Bowl.

A sales promotion at point-of-purchase — The Bud Bowl \$100,000 Challenge — enticed consumers to join in the excitement through "sweepstakes scorecards." It also got the trade involved.

And an extensive public relations effort was targeted at business, marketing, and sports media throughout the country.

An extensive public relations effort was targeted at business, marketing and sports media throughout the country. The public relations program, which was timed to synchronize precisely with the advertising campaign, consisted of four main parts:

- Long-lead "exclusives" were placed with national marketing reporters two weeks prior to Christmas.
- A Bud Bowl I media kit patterned after the ad campaign was mailed

to 1,000 business, marketing, radio-tv and sports reporters one week before Christmas.

- A Bud Bowl "news conference" was held on game day in host-city Miami, featuring NBC, Bob Costas and Paul McGuire, who also served as the "voices" of Bud Bowl I.
- Mass distribution of a video news release featuring post-game "highlights."

The overall public relations effort was handled by Fleischman-Hillard, who worked hand-in-hand with DMB&B in bringing all the pieces together in one integrated campaign.

"Typically, public relations comes in on the tail end of an ad campaign after the creative work is done; then we try to make hay with it," says Tom Lange of Fleishman-Hillard.

"Bud Bowl was different. We were involved from the beginning, coordinating with the advertising team so everything worked together.

The Bottom Line

Just how successful has this integrated promotional strategy been? Take a look at the results from Bud Bowl I:

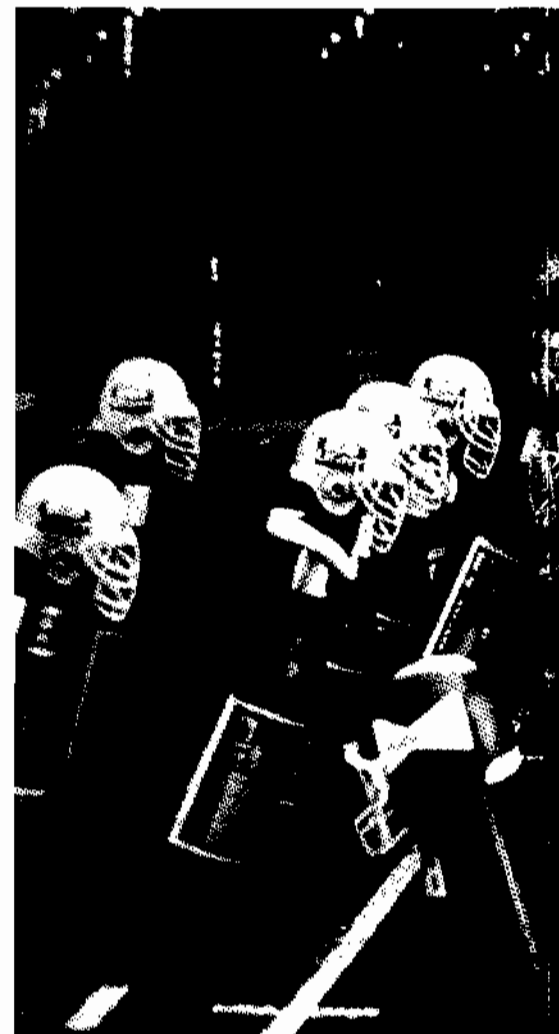
- By Super Bowl Sunday, more than **1.2 billion consumer impressions** were generated by Bud Bowl publicity, including coverage by *USA Today*, *Wall Street Journal*, the Associated Press, United Press International, Reuters, NBC Nightly News, CNN Moneyline, CNN Showbiz Tonight, ESPN's NFL Game Day, and nearly every major daily newspaper in

the top 50 markets.

- By game day more than half of America knew about Bud Bowl, according to NBC research.
- Advance awareness was even higher among men (57%) and men ages 21-29 (61%), the targeted beer drinking audience.
- Bud Bowl commercials were recalled the next day by over 80% of those who watched the Super Bowl, by far the most recalled advertising of the telecast — in fact, of the entire month of January for all programming according to an ad watch survey conducted by *Advertising Age*.
- Nearly two-thirds of the retailers across the country featured

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Anheuser-Busch, Inc. scored big with the original... success and popularity as evidenced by day-after...

Budweiser and Bud Light displays the week before the Super Bowl.

- More than 170,000 consumers participated in the Bud Bowl \$100,000 Challenge, the most successful promotion in Anheuser-Busch history.
- And the bottom-line pay-off: a January sales increase equivalent to **200 million bottles** of Budweiser and Bud Light.

Not surprisingly the success of Bud Bowl I, of course, has led to repeat match-ups in Bud Bowls II and III. Some of the initial novelty and subsequent publicity have worn off a little, but the past two years still have been big boosters for Bud and Bud Light.

Not everyone, of course, can launch a campaign of Bud Bowl's magnitude. But the basic principle behind its success can be applied to any promotional effort . . . anywhere . . . any time. It's called total teamwork. Not just tolerance and grudging acknowledgement, but deliberate, fully-integrated, strategically-linked cooperation from initial planning to execution and follow-up.

Just like a winning football team. So listen up, kids. Stop arguing and play nice together. You'll have a lot more fun . . . a lot more success . . . and you'll make Mom and Dad both real proud.
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Original Bud Bowl in 1989. Subsequent Bud Bowls have continued the annual contest's success recall figures which continue to rank Bud Bowl at the top of Super Bowl advertising.



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