



PERSONALITY MARKETING

American Express Artists

American Express “Artists in Residence” represent and build the brand. Thought and trend leaders in popular culture are chosen to express the essence of the brand. “We looked at the very people who are representative of our brand, our ideals, our relevance in today’s society and asked them to work with us on a long term basis to create consumer dialogue,” said John Hayes, senior vice president and Chief Marketing Officer at American Express.

The “artists” are people like Robert DeNiro, Ellen DeGeneres, Beyonce Knowles, Annie Leibovitz, John McEnroe, M Night Shamalon, Martin Scorsese, Jerry Seinfeld, Shawn White in the U.S. and Ken Watanabe in Japan, Anthony LaPaglia in Australia, and Diego Luna in Mexico.

What is unique is how American Express releases control for the “artist” to express his or her own point of view. According to Hayes, “while letting

these people loose to create their own messages about our brand and our products was a very daunting shift in the traditional brand-spokesperson model, we felt it necessary to create an authentic dialogue with consumers.”

The strategy is to showcase people who are the best at what they do, passionate about what they do and have an interesting story to tell. Then for maximum affect, American Express seeks opportunities to leverage the personality and their passions through a combination of advertising, sponsorships or online initiatives that either promote the brand and/or showcase a card member benefit. See the box below for an example.

Many of these artist campaigns go beyond brand recognition to provide a unique benefit for cardholders, like logging on to a website to receive extra content about something you may be passionate about or access to an event.

Dianne Von Furstenberg’s “artist” campaign was a multi-faceted success. Von Furstenberg expressed her commitment to the card saying that “American Express represents a sign of independence and freedom and if you have your card, you can do anything.” The television spot debuted during the 2008 Academy Awards with a theme of advocating for women to achieve their best. Other elements of this campaign included:

- Von Furstenberg’s national campaign included a print advertisement shot by legendary photographer Annie Leibovitz
- Special fashion access and experiences for card members and fashion fans around the world through a variety of activities rolled out at Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week
- Launch of the “American Express Fashion Network” at www.americanexpress.com/style, giving people access to live, exclusive, never-before-seen views of Fashion Week
- Access for Gold Card members, Platinum Card® members and Centurion® Card members to view the shows from the American Express Skybox
- Support for the Council of of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA) with a donation of \$500,000 to the CFDA/Vogue Fashion Fund (CVFF)

“Idol” Marketing

Ford has created intensive marketing programs with visible television properties that enable them to integrate throughout the program, including *American Idol*, *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*, and *Oprah’s Big Give*. These programs link powerful brands that involve traditional and new celebrities.

Since American Idol’s first season in 2002, Ford has been a major sponsor. According to Connie Fontaine, Ford’s Experiential Communications Manager, “the American Idol brand caché enables Ford brand consideration we may not have gotten otherwise.” “People are intrigued by celebrities and what they do outside of their everyday lives,” said Fontaine. “With Idol, millions of viewers flock to associate with the American Dream philosophy: working hard and having your dreams come true. That is very in line with the Ford story.”

Key to Ford’s ability to make this sponsorship effective is to be a credible integrated part of the entertainment. Each week, Ford vehicles and the Top 12 American Idol contestants have been featured in exclusive Ford music videos. This exclusive content was featured on-air and on www.americanidol.com. Fontaine explained that “played in conjunction with traditional advertising, the music videos are lifting ad memorablity, and helping the campaign to work harder to get Ford consideration on your shopping list.”

In addition, through a weekly sweepstakes at americanidol.com, consumers won trips to attend an American Idol show, and dealer events were tied to the audition shows to leverage the relationship. Lastly, Ford, in partnership with FOX’s energy initiative, is also giving the American Idol winner and the runner-up a new Escape Hybrid, “the most fuel efficient SUV on the planet.”

This has been a valuable strategic partnership for Ford as the Idol audience has gotten younger and its appeal as a family program has attracted millions of vehicle buying adults to watch along with their kids.