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Full Frame Documentary Film Festival: Realitywood

Brand Name: Full Frame Documentary Film Festival

Product Type or Description: Film Festival

Category for this Entry: Anything Goes

Campaign Title: Realitywood

Agency: McKinney

Client: Full Frame Documentary Film Festival

Marketing Challenge

If you're a documentary film aficionado, chances are you've heard of the Full Frame Documentary Film Festival. Since its founding in Durham, NC in 1998, Full Frame had grown by attracting die-hard documentary fans, mostly from the Southeast. From 2002 to 2004, ticket sales had grown an average of 6% every year.

As the festival grew, it became a victim of its own success. What had started out as a fairly simple local event at the Carolina Theater had grown into a highly complex, five-venue festival featuring the film competition, panels for documentary filmmakers on topics such as "Intellectual Property" and "The Reality of Theatrical Success," an evening with Full Frame board member Martin Scorsese (yes, that Scorsese) and special awards ceremonies for documentary luminaries such as Ken Burns.

With this complexity came exponentially higher operating costs that had finally overwhelmed Full Frame's fundraising capabilities. The organization was literally on the verge of financial collapse. To survive 2005 and return in 2006, they had to increase ticket sales 15%, 2.5 times the average annual growth rate of the prior three years.

Challenge: How do you more than double the growth rate of a brand that's already attracted most of the "best customers" in the category? And do all of that with no money?

Campaign Objectives

For the festival to return in 2006, we needed to increase 2005 attendance by at least 15%.

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Target Audience

Full Frame had no choice but to reach beyond loyal documentary film lovers to engage a culturally savvy, but more mainstream group of people open to new entertainment options.

The good news: Hollywood doesn't expose mainstream audiences to many new experiences. As an article in *USA Today* (2/23/05) said, people are "used to seeing stories retread in mainstream films. So much of what they see they can reference to 10 or 15 other films." Proof: eight of the top 10 films of 2004 were sequels or remakes of already-known movies, television programs or books.

The bad news: Mainstream audiences expect documentaries to be dull and boring compared even to what you can find at the local 20-screen Cineplex. And to the people we hoped to attract, the explosion of reality TV created further skepticism about whether documentaries could be any more interesting than what they can find on their 140+ cable channels.

Creative Strategy

"There is a truth in documentaries that is so engaging and interesting that I try to capture some of that magic in the other films I make."
- Martin Scorsese, PBS interview with Charlie Rose, May 2005.

These words came from the director of some of the most iconic films of our time: *Taxi Driver*, *Raging Bull*, *Cape Fear*, *The Aviator*. And they mirrored our strategy: To attract a mainstream audience, we had to contrast Full Frame with ordinary entertainment fare, convincing them that documentary reality is more compelling than anything being brainstormed in Hollywood.

So we created "Realitywood." Playing off Hollywood's penchant for melodramatic cliché, the "Realitywood" campaign underscored the honesty, importance and pure entertainment value of documentaries. We actually established a place called Realitywood, home of the Full Frame Documentary Film Festival, the town where real-life stories are celebrated and the rules of Hollywood simply don't apply.

Media Strategy

Full Frame had big goals, but no money. So we took an "anything goes" approach to get the exposure we needed.

We bartered our hearts out to get donated TV time prior to the festival on MTV, E! and Comedy Central. We talked regional newspapers into donating space, and bartered for space in similarly cash-strapped local alternative newsweeklies. Cinema teasers, playing off the clichéd Hollywood quizzes that run before the lights go down, ran in local theaters prior to the festival. And our TV commercials ran as trailers in those same movie theaters, as well as at the festival itself. We also reached the local target with three-dimensional posters displayed in coffee houses, restaurants, film houses and bookstores throughout the area.

Media

- Television
- Newspaper
- Point of Purchase
- Out-of-Home
- Public Relations
- Interactive/On-Line
- Other

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Other Supporting Communications Programs

To generate national awareness, and particularly to target fans of the Tribeca Film Festival, Realitywood street signs, playing off Hollywood clichés, went up in select New York and Los Angeles neighborhoods. To heighten local awareness, we convinced the Mayor to rename Durham “Realitywood” on the first day of the festival. Finally, to convert prospects interested enough to check out the festival online, we rebuilt the Full Frame Web site to give it the experiential interest we were promising that people would find by attending the festival.

Total Media Expenditure

- Under \$500 Thousand

Compared to the competition, this budget is *less*.

Compared to the prior year budget, this budget is *about the same*.

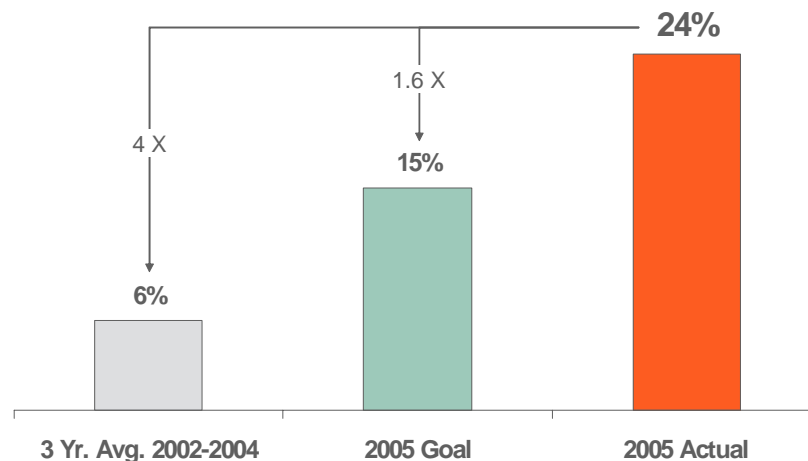
Evidence of Results

Objective: For the festival to return in 2006, we needed to increase 2005 attendance by at least 15%.

Results: 2005 ticket sales actually grew 24%, or 1.6 times our goal, and 4 times the growth rate of the prior three years. And it wasn't just the quantity, but also the quality of sales that made this a particularly successful result: Advance ticket sales doubled, and sales of top-of-the-line Festival Passes, good for all events, grew 29%.

So, the Full Frame Documentary Film Festival will be around to stage its own “sequel” again next year. And, perhaps most importantly, this year's success raised the organization's visibility to new sources of sponsorship and charitable revenues that should ensure that the festival will continue to thrive for years to come (source: Full Frame Documentary Film Festival).

Full Frame Ticket Sales Growth



(Source: Full Frame Documentary Film Festival)

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