

Taking a 360° View of Collaboration Marketing

If Thomas Friedman is right, and the world today is flat and all PR is local, then engaging in collaboration marketing amongst fellow local businesses is the key to success.

What is Collaboration Marketing?

Think of collaboration marketing as one-well recognized brand leveraging or benefitting from a related brand's special appeal.

Whether Roger Federer, Tiger Woods and Thierry Henry are promoting Gillette razors by extending their "brand" to another well recognized brand, or Coca Cola is paying millions of dollars every other year to sponsor the Summer and Winter Olympic Games, corporations like Gillette and Coca Cola are engaging in collaboration marketing.

A New Spin: Regional Marketing

While the concept may not be new, one of the more interesting developments in collaboration marketing is happening amongst economic development professionals. These professionals are discovering that the same principles that apply to corporations can be applied to entire regions.

Economic development organizations seek to influence businesses to relocate. The goal: increased tax revenue.

Convention Visitor Bureaus (CVBs) seek to influence conventions, meetings and visitors to come to their town. The goal: to get them to spend money in the local economy.

Center city marketing organizations seek to increase urban core living and visitation. The goal: to increase vitality on the streets and spending at retailers.

If community-based organizations can figure out the value they bring to each other and try to leverage that collaboratively, they'll all be ahead of the game.

An Example of Regional Branding

If this sounds easier than it seems, you're right. It takes leadership, vision and communication. Cincinnati offers at least one very strong example that seems to be working well.

Several years ago, under the leadership of its Chamber, the region embarked on the development of a community brand equity. A common set of words, "All Together Surprising," seemed to express the region's brand equity. This phrase was how Cincinnatians felt about themselves; when folks in Cincinnati worked together, surprising results happened.

A common name emerged: Cincinnati USA. Cincinnatians felt that its "bigger than just a Midwest city" feel distinguished their home. More than a

dozen organizations adopted "Cincinnati USA" into their corporate names. In other words, they practiced collaborative marketing.

The result? Cincinnati is quickly becoming one of America's "hot" second-tier cities.

These things didn't happen by accident. All the best regions in the world leverage and collaborate internally, but they didn't achieve success without a lot of hard work and sweat.

So whether you're corporate, nonprofit, government or otherwise, if you're willing to put in the time, collaborative marketing can be an effective tool that leverages the brand recognition of other companies for your benefit.

If you're unsure where to begin, consider hiring a local PR firm to initiate your collaborative marketing. Relationships are key with community leaders, and a PR agency with a respected is a great way to develop local interest in your objectives.

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