

BELLY BAROMETER: THE WAY TO AMERICA'S HEART IS THROUGH ITS BELLY

Big Yellow with Jericho Communications

Category 97: Use of Research for Publicity

OVERVIEW:

"The way to a man's heart is through his stomach." Believe it or not, this old wives tale applies not only to love, but to modern-day branding as well. Big Yellow (the nation's premiere online directory and shopping service) charged Jericho with a two-fold mission to: raise visibility for its food and restaurant directory feature, and introduce its cutting-edge "Next Generation" technology (which would allow advertisers to alter their ad copy with just 24-hours' notice). The PR firm took the advice espoused by so many grandmothers over the years and cooked-up an irresistible dish. The "Belly Barometer" -- a tongue-in-cheek survey of daily specials and eating trends around the country -- was borne. News of Big Yellow's quirky survey was hotter than a tamale with the consumer media; and 3,000 restaurateurs learned about the company's sizzling, new on-line advertising option.

PLANNING:

The objectives of the program were to:

- * Raise awareness of the Big Yellow brand, particularly its food directory/shopping feature
- * Introduce restaurateurs to Big Yellow's state-of-the-art, online advertising capability

To do this, the following strategies were employed:

- * Create a compelling, food-related news story that ties into topical issues
- * Sponsor and conduct original research of America's restaurateurs, positioning Big Yellow as an authority on food topics

Big Yellow's target audiences were:

- * American consumers, especially potential users of on-line directories
- * Restaurant owners
- * Consumer-oriented print and broadcast media, as conduits to above audiences

JERICO'S CREATIVE PHILOSOPHY:

At Jericho, our publicity programs use the audience's viewpoint. We focus not only on what the client does, but on what the client does for the audience. For example, the Belly Barometer was devised to boost visibility for Big Yellow's online product. But, most of the company's potential customers care little about Web site technology itself. They do care, however, about how Big Yellow's food

directory can help them make intelligent dining decisions. We targeted the fringe users (those who have the capability to log on to get this type of information, but have not yet made it a common practice), rather than the small amount of consumers who regularly surf the Internet. The Belly Barometer campaign used the language, motivations and media outlets that would touch people on a personal level. We gave consumers information about what our client could do for them, on their terms.

EXECUTION:

* "Belly Barometer" Survey – Jericho developed an informal survey designed to uncover eating trends throughout the country and identify the impact of outside influences (e.g., political affiliation, regional differences and celebrity status) on the daily specials that were offered. The "Belly Barometer" polled restaurant owners online and over the telephone in the seven major metropolitan areas of New York, Los Angeles, Boston, Atlanta, Miami, Chicago and Dallas.

* "Daily Specials" News Bureau – A simple, but craftily written, press release announced the survey results. It focused on the most humorous findings -- like Rosie O'Donnell is the celebrity most often named among the daily specials...cities with Republican mayors have 15 percent more red meat specials...and a "Bill Clinton" special is five times more likely to have gravy than the typical specials fare. The release also conveyed a most heart-felt finding: that "mother/mom" is the number one word used in the naming of daily specials. The campaign, and the resulting publicity, mirrored Big Yellow's brand attributes of being a fun and engaging directory alternative.

EVALUATION:

1. Media Laps it Up. The consumer media was hungry for the daily special trivia. The promotion generated 63.6 million media impressions, including placements in: PARADE MAGAZINE, SELF MAGAZINE, FORBES, WALL STREET JOURNAL, LOS ANGELES TIMES, NEW YORK DAILY NEWS, SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE, KANSAS CITY STAR, WNYW-TV (FOX)"GOOD DAY NEW YORK," THE FOOD NETWORK'S "DINING AROUND," WFSB-TV (CBS) "EYEWITNESS NEWS," and CBS NEWS RADIO. Budgeted at under \$25,000, the campaign garnered publicity worth \$670,000 in advertising equivalencies -- almost thirty times the actual cost of the program.

2. Appetizing Advertising for Restaurateurs. The "Belly Barometer" polled 3,000 restaurant owners, who also heard about the appetizing new advertising dish being served up by Big Yellow.

3. Just Desserts for an Industry Breakthrough. A representative of the Kelsey Group (the leading analyst firm tracking the e-commerce industry), noted during the keynote speech at the 1998 Online Directory Conference that: "The 'Belly Barometer' is one of the most significant events that occurred in the online directory industry during 1997".