

MARKETING

MARKETER NEWS

ROI MEASUREMENT THE HOT TOPIC AT EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING SYMPOSIUM

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Curious marketers, media buyers and agency professionals gathered yesterday in Toronto for the first annual **Experiential Marketing Symposium**, where a series of speakers and panelists weighed in on the rapidly emerging discipline.

The event, presented by *Marketing* in association with Toronto experiential marketing agency **Mosaic**, took place at the downtown nightclub Circa. Keynote speakers included **Chella Levesque**, event marketing manager for **BMW Group Canada**; **Judith Hoffman**, director of corporate marketing for **Procter & Gamble**; **Lisa Hurst**, vice president, account management for **Upshot Chicago**; **Mike Dombrow**, director of marketing for **Wal-Mart Canada**; **Genevieve Bastien**, director of new business development for **Cirque du Soleil** and **Aimee Young**, brand and advertising executive for **Virgin Airlines** in North America.

Speakers such as Levesque, Hoffman and Hurst discussed the successful experiential campaigns run by their companies. Levesque stressed the importance of allowing prospective BMW customers to get acquainted with the vehicles through test-drive events, while Hoffman and Hurst led attendees through a presentation about “pop-up” stores, specifically LookFab Studio, a limited-time retail location showcasing P&G’s beauty brands.

The speakers were frequently asked to talk about the return on investment for their programs, questions that indicated the relevance of the morning panel discussion. In a session moderated by *Marketing* publisher and editor-in-chief **Christopher Loudon**, panelists **Dan Hunter**, partner at consulting and research firm **IMI International**; **James Fraser**, partner and managing director of retail at **Capital C**; **Aimee Beeston**, a brand marketing executive at **Nike Canada**; **Mary Beth Denomy**, president of **Free for All Marketing**; and **Kevin Durkee**, vice-president, client services for **The JetStar Group**, discussed the difficulty in applying traditional ROI metrics to experiential marketing programs.

“You have to consider the quality of the impression,” said Hunter. “If you’re looking at cost-per-impression in an apples to apples comparison with a traditional marketing campaign, you’re going to be disappointed.”

For the most part, the panelists agreed that clients should measure ROI based on the specific marketing objectives of a project, from generation of awareness to sales. “It’s up to us to show clients the different ways to measure a program,” said Denomy.

While he suggested that the development of a single industry standard for evaluating experiential marketing ROI was not imminent, Mosaic president **Aidan Tracey** acknowledged the importance of measurement.

“When you’re talking about overcoming entrenched attitudes, the only way you’re going to do that is with data.”