

MULTICHANNEL

Effective branded partnerships call for narrative context

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Lalique 100 Points by James Suckling leather briefcase by Ferragamo

By JEN KING

NEW YORK – Appropriate and effective branded partnerships must reflect the collaborators' mutual understanding of the target consumer, according to a WealthEngine executive at Luxury Interactive 2014 on Oct. 14.

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Luxury Daily

Partnerships often develop between like-minded brands who share similar consumers, but occasionally a collaboration can seem disjointed if not properly executed. With partnerships ranging from joint products to digital content, marketers must ensure that the results are relevant and on-brand to resonate with consumers.

“I’ve seen some and experienced some recent partnerships from a sales perspective that were incredibly unexpected,” said Susan Kilkenny, sales director of luxury at [WealthEngine](#), Bethesda, MD.

“[When] you have the intelligence behind the decision making about who you are partnering with, you will see greater results in terms of making it work for everybody,” she said.

Lets work together

During Luxury Interactive's "Creating Partnerships with Likeminded Brands" session, panelists discussed best practices and the important role content plays in establishing a mutually beneficial collaboration.

Brands exploring potential partnerships should first take into account their core consumers' lifestyle interests and behavioral patterns. This understanding is key and will allow the brand to begin relevant partnerships that resonate with consumers.

Wendy Purvey, senior vice president of marketing at **Sotheby's Real Estate**, for example, discussed the realtor's partnerships with media and news outlets such as Architectural Digest and The New York Times. The relationship with print has been long established, but it has been difficult to measure the return as digital became more prominent.

Digital touchpoints have allowed this partnership to mature and have provided creative opportunities for Sotheby's to interact with potential property buyers. Ms. Purvey explained that on The New York Times Web site, the realtor has exclusive control over the newspaper's real estate video channel.

Ms. Purvey also noted that in the past the ratio between print and digital advertising was 80 to 20, but now that the latter has advanced the numbers have swapped. She went on to say that media partnerships are only effective if properly timed.

"We are definitely making sure that we are doing it at times and to the client we need to hit," Ms. Purvey said. "We're not trying to be everything to everyone.

"Those partners, and others, in the media space have been an opportunity for us to be able to reach outside of the world, because The New York Times is the largest global real estate publication in the world," she said. "We're there in a big way and a way that represents the brand, and people can respond to it."



Panelists on the Creating Partnerships with Likeminded Brands panel

French lifestyle brand Lalique has ongoing partnerships with a variety of brands that may not immediately make sense if the consumer is not familiar with its heritage. Maggie Wei,

director of marketing at [Lalique](#), stressed that this is where content is the most important. Currently, Lalique has active partnerships with The Macallan, Bentley Motors and Salvatore Ferragamo, but to an unfamiliar consumer these collaborations may not properly align. This is where content plays an important role, as Ms. Wei explained that these collaborations allow Lalique to communicate why these partnerships are a natural fit.

"For Lalique, some of the partnerships we do have people wonder why Lalique is partnering with someone like Zaha Hadid, who is a huge contemporary architect, when Lalique is this 125-year old classic brand," Ms. Wei said.

"It's about communicating to the client that there are so many parallels between Rene Lalique and Zaha Hadid," she said. "While Zaha Hadid is designing over a century later, similar to Rene Lalique, she also draws inspiration from the natural world.

"Partnering with her brings a new and exciting facet to the brand. It's about linking back the contemporary world to the roots of the brand."

Social partners

Both Sotheby's Real Estate and Lalique use social media to propel their brands to potential clients. Sotheby's uses its 15,000 realtors as social media ambassadors to enhance shared content, whereas Lalique has found that sharing product imagery helps to convey the narrative around partnership products.

Other brands, in various sectors, allow outside partners, such as consumers or well-known influencers, to tap into their established social media accounts to grow an audience and share content.

For example, British department store Harrods brought together eight fashion tastemakers for a photo shoot in London as part of its first Digital Fashion Summit.

In addition to acting as models, the bloggers created content for the retailer in the form of top five lists of their must-have spring items. Having these bloggers participate created a form of brand endorsement, both for Harrods and the labels featured in the digital content created ([see story](#)).

Similarly, German automaker BMW celebrated the achievements of Bulgarian brand advocate Todor Todorov with a social video.

While many brands view unofficial fan social pages as a threat to a consistent image, BMW realized that celebrating an ultra-passionate fan is an effective way to show appreciation for all consumers. As part of the [#BMWStories](#) campaign, the latest social video acted as a testament to BMW's ground-up approach to community appreciation ([see story](#)).

This sort of social turnover partnership can be very beneficial for brands looking to interact with consumers in a new way.

“Most of the brand we work with have a true thorough understanding of their own DNA and their own values, so they are usually partnering with likeminded brands where there is an aligned value system,” WealthEngine’s Ms. Kilkenny said.

“But, turning over your Twitter or Instagram handle is a really interesting way to create some sort of partnership or collaboration from a data perspective to grow your audience base,” she said.

“Data is a big part of the conversation and there’s a lot of different ways to address it.”

Final Take

Jen King, lead reporter on Luxury Daily, New York

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