

Lionsgate IMC Plan

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Executive Summary

Lionsgate is an independent film and television production company. Lionsgate produces 12-13 feature films a year and has an extensive library of 13,000 films. Lionsgate is emerging into a new era of digital media, and challenged with targeting consumers and companies to build their brand equity, image and position. Lionsgate has struggled with several recent let-downs in the market. The most current is losing out in a bidding war for the rights of The Terminator franchise. Lionsgate must create a stronger brand and take a strategic look at their segmenting and targeting. The IMC plan will cover key points in segmenting, targeting, challenges, strengths, weaknesses, and new media to help boost Lionsgate's positioning, in both the consumers and internal employee's eye. Lionsgate's IMC plan will provide a detailed outline for message strategy, media strategy, media plan rationale, measurements, and effectiveness of execution through a new IMC campaign. The campaign will consist of a potential new logo, slogan, media mix, and an interactive short film competition that will be aired over the course of one year.

IMC Strategy Overview

Lionsgate is global entertainment company specializing in movies, television, and entertainment. They have several companies under their umbrella including Artisan Entertainment, Trimark, and RedBus that changed to Lionsgate (UK). Co-Chairman and CEO Jon Feltheimer created the "blueprint for Lionsgate's growth, combining the flexibility and entrepreneurial culture of an independent with the financial and strategic relationships of a major studio and the structure and consumer focus of a top digital age," (Lionsgate, 2011). Lionsgate is once again at the fore-front of using integrated marketing communication (IMC) to become more effective in building substantial customer relationships, and a profitable brand. Duncan (2005) defines a message strategy as "an idea about how to creatively and persuasively communicate a brand message to a target audience," (Duncan, Ch. 9, p. 278). Lionsgate will need to incorporate a new IMC Plan to gain positioning, brand equity, and build brand awareness.

Message Strategy

Lionsgate presently delivers a message that conveys their brand, though the message does not relate to movie making, television, or entertainment. Their logo represents a heavenly appeal and their motion graphic of gears moving delivers a message that the gears of creativity promise a heavenly golden gate. Lionsgate's corporate site explains their model of growth by combining the flexibility of and entrepreneurial culture of an independent with the financial and strategic relationships of a major studio and the structure of and consumer focus of a top digital age company, (Lionsgate corporate, 2011). Lionsgate needs to deliver a creative and persuasive message that communicates their model of growth in their brand.

Message Execution

Lionsgate will engage in a collection of short films segmented into six-to-nine-minute television spots that will span the course of one year. The episodes will be available once a week during primetime before the eight O'clock hour. Webisodes have been on the rise lately. This move by Lionsgate will bring this medium to television. This approach is to engage the consumer before consumers focus on evening shows to gain maximum audience viewing. At the end of each short viewers will vote on three options to keep the film progressing. The Internet will also play an important role in the execution as consumers can either log onto the Lionsgate-branded YouTube channel to view and vote or via mobile applications. In addition, different genres will show the diversity of the Lionsgate brand. Comedy, action, drama, animated, and horror films created will engage a wide-range of viewers. The topic of each film focuses on, making an independent movie or television show that Lionsgate is to option into a full-length film. This approach will gain the attention of aspiring movie makers and those curious how to create films and television shows. The appeal is too touch consumers in personal ways and pull them into the mix.

Consumers will have the option to discuss the films and possible direction of each film on the Lionsgate-branded YouTube channel. The print ads will be small comic versions of the movie mimicking adventure novels, or the pick the path books. The comics will be sent out after the film has completed its running. Flip books of a scene from each of the films mailed out will gain viewers awareness and interest of each film. These adverts will help communicate the IMC message balancing the big idea and the selling strategy so they work together, (Duncan, 2004, p. 298).

The Purpose of the IMC Message

The films will focus on creating a movie for Lionsgate creating a unified message for consumers. Presently, Lionsgate may be thought of as just another name branded to entertainment. The campaign will gain insight into customers' needs, emotions, and activities while building a more substantial message. Lionsgate has the opportunity to spread its brand across several platforms and deliver on their promise that they create quality entertainment. The purpose of the IMC message is to show that Lionsgate is more than just a brand. Lionsgate is growing into a household name that cares about consumers desires.

The flip books will introduce the up-and-coming films, and offer an incentive to log on and join the Lionsgate community on YouTube and start the purchasing process. Once the episodes air there will be an ad directing consumers to the site. The online and mobile app voting will keep the process moving and the social community will keep the attention of the consumers. A promotion code will be advertised to create an incentive to log on and possibly win a free DVD of the film once the film has completed. The movie will also be interactive and add more value to the Lionsgate brand as a top digital company. The comic will help build more consistency, and will also come with a digital trailer and promotion code for a discount on the DVD. The films, flip book, and comic will include the Lionsgate logo in several key places to gain brand awareness, position, and brand equity. A key element to the campaign is the use of up-and-comers to help develop an ongoing relationship with Hollywood hopefuls in hopes of reaching out to a broader target audience.

Message Personality and Tone

The unified message personality will create intrigue and set a standard of credibility. The personality created must fit the brand's competitive positioning, (Shultz, p. 190).

All of the films will carry a fun and exciting positive message and tone. The five genres will send a message of familiarity and create a positive perception of the Lionsgate brand. Setting a tone of anthology TV shows much like *Amazing Stories*, *Masters of Horror*, *Tales From the Crypt*, and *Ray Bradbury Theatre* among others is the approach Lionsgate will take to keep it family friendly. The print and online banners will be new-age and edgy yet fun, engaging, friendly, and push the creative process.

Target Audience

The films will span across the five most popular genres of film comedy, action, drama, animation, and horror. Each of these films will be PG and PG-13 to target a broader audience. Lionsgate has a chance to enter the T.V. medium to create a collaboration of their online presence with the televised movies. The content will consist of making a film for Lionsgate that promotes values, morals, and most of all entrepreneurship. The main target audience is people who love entertainment and movies as well as future film makers, writers, directors, actors, and anyone who want to enter the entertainment industry. Targeting up-and-comers to help develop an ongoing relationship with Hollywood hopefuls is a major strength of the campaign.

Creative Process

The creative process consists of four main steps to develop an idea. This process creates ads, packages, sales promotions, websites, and news releases, (Duncan, 2005, p. 294). The main steps are exploration, insight, execution, and evaluation, (Duncan, 2005, p. 294). The first step is brainstorming, where the creative group generates ideas. These ideas are usually off-the-cuff and spontaneous. The Lionsgate creative team will need to brainstorm and develop a solid idea for each genre to be filmed. The next step is insight. Ideas formed in the brainstorming session are analyzed to identify patterns, key verbal and visual concepts, and communicate the big idea.

Execution of the idea is the third step in the creative process. This step is to determine the delivery strategy and how the idea will be sold and presented for approval. Once evaluated the idea is copytested in the fourth step of the creative process. The creative director is usually the one who evaluates the idea and has the insight to look at the idea in the eyes of the client. This can be a daunting task and can take several attempts before approval of the creative director. The effectiveness of a brand message, a creative concept, or elements such as a headline, slogan, or visual for creative impact and understandability, (Duncan, 2005, p. 297) is analyzed to ensure that the idea is sound and ensure sustainability for a ROI.

Rationale

Lionsgate is the top brand in all of their entertainment commodities, though the large amount of acquired brands still have independent branding. Lionsgate has become the forerunner in the digital age and is making large moves that other companies refuse or cannot make. Lionsgate is the top brand and needs to make the move to be the leading innovator of new entertainment. By combining their strengths with their forward thinking entrepreneurial business strategy, Lionsgate is in a prime position to create the films in media plan to gain greater consumer awareness of the Lionsgate brand.

IMC Objectives

After brainstorming several ideas such as changing their logo, creating a slogan, creating Lionsgate's own YouTube/Facebook community is still on the drawing board. The solution best fit for Lionsgate is to take what they are best at, creating movies, television shows, and entertainment. Developing a system to reach out to the community and make consumers aware of Lionsgate as the top brand and an emerging mogul in the entertainment industry. "Prepare to laugh (roar) like a lion, Lionsgate Comedy" is one slogan spawned by lateral thinking for the

comedy film. In retrospect, each genre would have a unique slogan that plays with the Lionsgate brand name and deliver an effective message to the consumers and competition.

Message Effectiveness

The key reason this message is more effective than others is no one is doing it. Marvel is gaining an increasingly larger amount of brand equity by Lionsgate producing Marvel's webisodes. Lionsgate can use this strategy to gain brand equity and create awareness while building a loyal customer base and differentiate from the corporate umbrella companies. Taking advantage of the digital age will create a community of entertainment lovers from diverse backgrounds. The community will have full control over the outcome of each film, therefore, bring them into the mix and make a direct connection with consumers.

Media Strategy

A media plan is a process for determining the most cost-effective mix of media for achieving a set of media objectives, (Duncan, 2005, p. 422). A media mix of television, online ads, print ads, social media, and mobile applications will creatively execute a new message for Lionsgate as an independent entrepreneurial movie studio. The media strategy for Lionsgate's short film launch will run for one year. The following will outline the media deployment and the attached document will showcase the delivery schedule and budget requirements.

January

Public relations; schools, radio, and online movie sites.

Film one flip books delivery.

Online and movie trailer launch.

February

Film one launch and episodes.

Online advertising and T.V. spots.

Social media community promotion and joining.

March

Film one episodes.

Online voting and social media apps.

April

Final voting on film one.

Comic book one delivery.

DVD sales and distribution.

Flip book two delivery.

Online advertising and T.V. spots.

Film two (Drama film) launch.

May

Film two (Drama film) episodes.

Online voting social media apps.

June

Film two (Drama film) final voting.

Comic book two delivery.

DVD sales and distribution.

Flip book three delivery.

Online advertising and T.V. spots.

July

Film three (Action film) launch.

Film three (Action film) episodes

Online voting and social media apps.

August

Film three (Action film) episodes.

Online voting social media apps.

September

Film three final voting.

Comic book three delivery.

DVD sales and distribution.

Flip book four delivery.

Online advertising and T.V. spots.

Film four (Horror film) launch.

October

Film four (Horror film) episodes

Online voting and social media apps.

Film four (Horror film) final voting.

Comic book four delivery.

DVD sales and distribution.

Flip book five delivery.

November

Film five (Animation film) launch.

Online advertising and T.V. spots.

Film five (Animation film) episodes

December

Film five (Animation film) episodes

Online voting and social media apps.

Film five (Animation film) final voting.

Comic book five delivery.

DVD sales and distribution.

Media Plan Rationale

Direct Mail

Direct mail will gain brand awareness, interest, and distinction of the Lionsgate brand and the movie campaign. Andrew Michaels (2011) states that, "A recent study by Vertis Communications in Baltimore found that 46% of adults responded to direct mail in 2007. This remains steady from 47% in 2003, (Michaels, 2011, para. 1). By sending out the Flip Book before the movie airs will create awareness, interest and draw consumers to the website for polls, voting, survey's, and socializing with fans. The comic book will be sent out after each movie to keep interest in the series and give a personalized relationship with Lionsgate.

Online Marketing

Online marketing will keep costs down and create a viral ad campaign where YouTube could also be integrated. Online marketing is also a wide-spread medium that can reach out to several target audiences combined. This approach also speeds up response time and helps measure the campaign in more than one area. According to grabstats.com online ad spending has

increased from \$525 million in 2006 to \$2,700 million in 2011 this statistic shows a dramatic climb in companies use of online marketing in the United States only. Though spending has increased, the cost has decreased, where a banner campaign used to cost \$50,000 in 2006 and presently costs \$12,000. Ads also include new media such as direct response, video banners, and take over ads, where in 2006 these were not industry standard.

Public Relations

Lionsgate can employ public relations through reaching outside sources in the entertainment industry and leak press releases to large-scale entertainment-based websites. By spreading the word beyond the Flip Book and online marketing draws a larger audience. In March 1999 the movies Affliction and Gods and Monsters received academy awards and " Lions Gate had reportedly spent \$500,000 in a public relations campaign to promote the two films, which were nominated for a total of five awards" (fundinguniverse, para. 10). Lionsgate would have to spend nowhere near this amount to use public relations for these five films partially because of the use of other vehicles promoting the campaign.

Trade Show

Lionsgate has the option for including a trade show hosted in L.A. The event would be hosted halfway through the one year campaign to help boost publicity, awareness, and gain more brand equity. The two day event would generate sales per ticket(s), sell DVDs and other memorabilia, and the stars from the movies signing autographs. Select showings of the short films and other films from Lionsgate would be shown. A contest would be held to win free tickets for the two day event with special seating for the winners.

Personal Selling

In the event of personal selling Lionsgate would be wise to send reps to colleges to speak to up-and-coming entertainment industry students. By talking one-on-one with these students via an entertainment representative students would feel more of a relationship with Lionsgate, and the campaign explained more thoroughly. The campaign is centered on making a movie for Lionsgate and must include Lionsgate branding throughout the film. This may be confusing for some, and a representative could answer questions on the spot.

Event Marketing and Sponsorships

Lionsgate uses event marketing and sponsorships, such as red carpet events and film festivals, to boost their brand awareness. Lionsgate also sponsors marketing campaigns with MySpace with skinned MySpace layouts of the most current new releases. Lionsgate also sponsors charitable campaigns, "employing social media to encourage donations," (Mahmud, 2011, para. 1). Lionsgate's most prominent sponsorship in recent years is joining forces with After Dark Films to produce and distribute the 8 FILMS TO DIE FOR. This film festival has risen in popularity over the past three years and Lionsgate is in direct assistance in the writing, development, and distribution, leaving the marketing for HORRORFEST.

According to Horrorfestonline (2011) "The two companies partner on various films, with After Dark Films releasing several large Lionsgate Entertainment releases theatrically, on behalf of Lionsgate. Under the pact, both companies have the ability to "put" films theatrically to each other," (Haire, From Barbie to Baby, para. 3). Lionsgate released seven of the eight films in the latest event that gained a large response with the Lionsgate brand generating 1,100,000 units.

Strengths

A major strength in event marketing and sponsorships for Lionsgate is their ability to brand the Lionsgate name on major events and sponsorships. Lionsgate's diverse portfolio allows them to gain brand equity by sponsoring all the companies under their umbrella.

Weaknesses

One main weakness in event marketing and sponsorships by Lionsgate is their target audience. Lionsgate has a large target audience and in the past Lionsgate had troubles reaching this diverse audience as Anne Parducci (2006) addresses, "As long as someone went to the Western or the horror movie, the industry really didn't care to keep track of who that person was," (Haire, From Barbie to Baby, para. 6).

Lionsgate has been very profitable in their efforts of effective IMC planning. Lionsgate has grown their business 10 fold in the past three years by their acquisitions of competitors, their forward thinking approach to teaming up with social media giants, the use of the Internet, sponsoring several movie companies with proven success rates, and their latest move into direct marketing. By putting all of the necessary vehicles into motion like takeovers on YouTube, direct marketing, advertising, packaging design, and event and sponsorships of well formed brands Lionsgate is well on the way to becoming the largest entertainment company in the world.

Media Plan Measurements

"Evaluation is generally undertaken for critical decisions that involve a lot of money, resources, or staff time, such as changing a logo or launching a year-long campaign,"(Duncan, 2005, p. 702). Lionsgate will be launching a year-long campaign that consists of five milestones. Determining the success rate up front is vital to Lionsgate success with this new campaign, weighing cost versus ROI. Joe Drake (2011) speaks with FILMSLATE explains Lionsgate's push

“Micro-budget films involve minimal overhead and very little risk, but a potentially high reward. This initiative allows us to add another layer to our slate of movies that work both financially and creatively,” (Drake, 2011, para. 6).

The campaign begins with research employed in the public eye to gauge the expected content of each short film. The contest will begin at this stage, and the submissions are measured via a focus group that reads the scripts of each short film. The films are rated according to a numerical scale of one to five. The films are concept tested and a screen testing for each movie are employed. The resulting scores are compared to the scores of the internal focus group. Final results are evaluated with trailers of each film, much like the 8 FILMS TO DIE FOR campaign and comments and poll voting via website and social media platforms are measured. The success of the campaign will measure brand awareness and market share from each of the following categories.

Flip Book

Each flip book will have a mail in questionnaire or an opt in code for registering on the Lionsgate-branded channel to take a short survey through an online focus group. Brand metrics measure the effectiveness and brand awareness in the flip book.

Online Banner Ads

Banner ads employ direct marketing, clicks per view, and direct response linked directly to the campaigns website, where each visitor is tracked per click and motivated to take a quick survey and join the community to discuss their expectations and experiences.

Movie Trailers

The movie trailers are shown on television as well as online, and use of relationship

metrics are employed. Direct response methods will also be employed to measure the response time between air dates and unique visitors compared to current users.

Comic Books

The comic books will use the same approach as the flip book except they will measure the longevity of the campaign. The flip books delivered a teaser before each movie is aired, where the comic book is sent or ordered after each movie has concluded.

DVD Sales

Measuring the DVD sales will use tracking studies to gauge customer satisfaction with the Lionsgate brand. Order tracking will also be implemented and stored in a database.

Conclusion

Launching the episodes about making a movie for Lionsgate on television, online, mobile devices, and combining the flip book and comic book with a trailer for each film will create a unified branding message. The use of the Lionsgate brand name in each film will also create brand awareness. By including the consumers in the mix, they will feel more connected to the Lionsgate brand and community. This is a bold and possibly costly move for Lionsgate that will create another new market for entertainment companies to follow and learn from.

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