



LifeLock Takes a Marketing Leap on `Celebrity Apprentice`

While many companies are busy assembling their best marketing talent in today's "survive to stay alive" economy, few can count among their marketing dream team a comedian, Playboy playmate, reality TV star, country singer and basketball star.

But LifeLock, a company that provides identity theft protection, is one such company. This year, it took the leap and bought into a brand entertainment deal with Mark Burnett's `Celebrity Apprentice` reality show program. The new season, which debuted March 1st, includes a storyline which pits two groups of celebrities that may include Joan Rivers, Brande Roderick, Khloe Kardashian, Clint Black and Dennis Rodman, against each other to develop a "physical" product for the LifeLock service.

The LifeLock episode which airs April 12 asks the remaining celebrity entrepreneurs to design a retail package and POP display promoting the company's identity theft protection services. LifeLock CEO Todd Davis will judge the teams' presentations.

Andrew Wyant, vice president of marketing for the Tempe, AZ-based LifeLock, declined to comment on details relating to the price the company paid for the deal, but brand entertainment deals for the show are priced among some of the highest for any network show, somewhere in the range of \$2-\$3 million per sponsor. Companies, such as LifeLock are generally allotted about 45 minutes for the promotion of their product. Although it wasn't mandatory, LifeLock also made a significant media buy on NBC in conjunction with the April 12 branded entertainment deal.

For past `Celebrity Apprentice` sponsors, the investment is worth it. For example, following its deal with the show, Dial Yogurt Body Wash was one of the top 10 product introductions in 2008.

LifeLock, the first small business to be featured on the network show, gained some notoriety in recent years when the company rolled out commercials featuring Davis announcing his personal social security number as a testament to his faith and confidence in his company's product to protect his identity.



Wyant explained that LifeLock acts like a traditional direct-to-consumer company in which 85% of its volume goes directly to its [website](#). He said a key challenge for the company is in explaining how the product really works and convincing customers that their identity will be protected. "Our goal was to take this service and package it as if it were a retail product, like a piece of software," Wyant said.

He explained that he and Davis discussed the idea of introducing a task into the Celebrity Apprentice show in which celebrities take on a traditional marketing task—designing packaging and promotion around the LifeLock service.

“Todd Davis and I sat down with the celebrities and provided them background on LifeLock,” Wyant added. “The two groups went off to their meeting rooms and hammered out their ideas for packaging and promotion.”

A Risky but Worthwhile Strategy

Wyant acknowledged that engaging in such alternative marketing strategies poses a risk. “It’s always a challenge when you don’t have control of the situation,” he said. “The celebrities could say whatever they wanted about our service. But we had a lot of confidence in Mark Burnett productions and, at the end of the day their goals were aligned with ours. In the process of making good television, they could provide an authentic assessment of our product. It’s okay if some of that assessment is negative because this is reality television. Obtaining people’s sincere point of view works to our advantage.”

Just how did the celebrities do with their marketing task? While Wyant can’t reveal any specifics until after the show airs, he indicated they were “thrilled with the celebrities’ ideas.” He noted that the company plans to implement some of the ideas into actual LifeLock packaging which it will introduce in retail stores.

Wyant explained LifeLock is partnering with retailers Office Depot and Target to provide displays, shipper units and other materials to promote its service. “We don’t have a large retail presence today and hope to measure ROI by evaluating new unique visitors to our website, the percentage of customers who buy directly from us and the sort of sell-through that will occur at our partner’s stores.”

The company’s new marketing campaign will also educate consumers about a new pricing element of its service--\$10 a month with no annual contract.

Wyant explained that LifeLock used the ‘Celebrity Apprentice’ opportunity as a key element of a 360-degree promotion. The company is building a contest around the show sponsorship with two contest winners earning a trip to the finale this season’s show to meet Donald Trump. The contest will also be supported with an integrated online, TV and print ad program.

“Partnering with companies that have a strong trust with their customer base helps us to grow our business directly,” Wyant said.

Adopt Alternative Marketing Approaches

Wyant stressed that in today’s challenging economy, it’s imperative that marketers investigate alternative methods for growing their customers and communicating information on their products and services.

“We looked at this opportunity as if we were buying another source of media,” Wyant said. “From what we’ve seen from other CPG companies, this is a terrific thing.”

However, Wyatt offered an important caveat to companies intrigued by this kind of brand entertainment opportunity. “If you have a product and it’s not new or interesting in some way,” Wyant suggested, “this kind of branded entertainment or sponsorship would be disastrous. It would highlight the fact that your product is boring or not interesting.”

“We never worried that LifeLock wouldn’t make for good television,” Wyant added. “The service was new and interesting for celebrities to talk about and this kind of opportunity is perfect for a new product introduction.”

While Wyant acknowledged that he has no idea what the show’s final outcome will be, “any marketer would be pleased with the work the celebrities did. It was like watching someone in business school working on their first case. They only had 24 hours to complete the task. We presented them the business case but they went off and did all the work.”

“Marketers have to look for unique opportunities,” Wyant stressed. “We need to be disruptive in the marketplace, to be a challenger in this environment. The evolution of our company means we have to challenge ourselves and consider opportunities like this as part of the overall purchase decision.”

Wyant added this kind of branded sponsorship allows LifeLock to tell its story in a different way and engage customers on a deeper level. “The idea of brand integration is becoming so much more important for marketers today,” he acknowledged. “We’re not looking at sponsorship in the traditional sense. We’re no longer going to put our name on the side of a racecar just so our name is in front of people.”

And which celebrity gets his vote to be this season’s Celebrity Apprentice? Wyant won’t say but he did admit that the process was “thrilling”. “I loved every second of it,” he said. “It was really fun to see the process unfold and witness the celebrities working outside of their element.”

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