

Marketing lessons from the Red Bull Flugtag



By [Estelle Nagel](#)

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Seeing as how the PR industry is partially fuelled by caffeine and sugar (at least at my office) I was extremely pleased at being offered a behind the scenes look at the Red Bull Flugtag held in Cape Town this past weekend. It was an object lesson in how to leverage your event to the max.



Estelle Nagel watching intrepid flyers getting wet.

What I found most interesting, however, was how the actual teams used their 15 minutes of fame to promote their individual brands.

For those of you who don't know, the Flugtag is a full-day event that encourages teams to build their own aircraft (with extra points given for creativity, to encourage wacky designs and costumes) and then "fly" off a 6m ramp in front of a cheering crowd. Whoever flies the furthest, wins, but that is really beside the point. It's about having as much fun as possible - and about getting noticed.

Some made the most of it

Some used the opportunity to the fullest, making sure that their craft (and logo) drew the maximum attention and remained memorable. Others chose to take a nosedive in the name of fun, and didn't gain much more from the event than a quick splash in the V&A's murky waters.

First of all, I have to admit that Red Bull itself did a fantastic job of leveraging the event, particularly through social media. Their use of images was particularly powerful: the crowd at the V&A were encouraged to tweet photographs specifically, or to upload them to the Red Bull site. Pictures are not only more powerful than simple tweets in building brand association, they are also a great engagement tool and paint - literally - a pretty picture of the event for those who weren't able to attend. Harvard Business School published a study that showed that only 12% of photographs on social media actually directly promote the business involved - and Red Bull attempted to change that. They also encouraged offline interaction, with promoters interacting with the crowd and plenty of Red Bull drinks floating around.

Vida... Veni, vidi, vici

But there were a few other stars. Vida e cafe stands out for me as a team that really optimised their (brief) turn in the air. Their aircraft was branded perfectly, and they delivered a rousing performance of "We will froth you" before they took to the sky (sort of). They flung some Vida signs into the water, which I noticed got picked up and toted around the Waterfront far and wide.

The tips I got from the event, when it comes to optimised marketing at events, would be:

- *Generate a buzz with a gimmick*

I remember reading about an American sneaker brand that hoped to encourage children to use their sports shoes over the summer holiday. They ran a campaign whereby moms could mail their TV remotes to them in exchange for free sneakers and generated a lot of buzz surrounding their campaign to get children more active. Another company gave free pizza to individuals standing in line to file tax returns and gave their brand national coverage.

Think out of the box. And don't be scared to be a little tongue-in-cheek. Even if you consider



This picture of the 'Flying Rub' was

your product to be dull, you can still think out of the box. (A roof sheeting company I worked for dreamt up a great competition searching for the World's Ugliest Carport. Whichever photograph won, would win new roof sheets to redo their less-than-attractive carport.)

taken at the Red Bull Flugtag 2003, Hyde Park, London, but you get the idea, right? (Image: Oliver Kreitman, via Wikimedia Commons)

- *Use photographs*



The Red Baron about to get very wet at the Red Bull Flugtag Stockholm Sweden July 2010. (Image: Bengt Nyman, via Wikimedia Commons)

Photographs are great. They create atmosphere. They say a thousand words. But don't just use a staff photographer, use the crowd. Everyone has got a camera phone these days - link photo sharing to a competition or a reward. Sites such as locally-created Teedu.co.za will even enable users to upload a photograph and will administrate the prize-giving after the fact. They are also launching a feature that will automatically adding your company logo to uploaded photographs.

- *Tie your publicity stunt to a brand message*

I particularly liked the way the Fire and Ice hotel linked their craft to their message. They designed a giant hamburger craft and in interviews and their display kept reinforcing their message: The Fire and Ice Hotel has the best burgers in Cape Town. Their plane didn't get far, but their message did.

- *Make it actionable*

Red Bull was great at pulling the offline interaction online through social media-based competitions. They were constantly sending the audience to their web site and Twitter feed. Not only did that promote the event, but it exposed the audience to more information about parties, photo galleries and their Red Bull mobile offering. You don't want your event or publicity stunt to generate a lot of buzz and then fizzle out - you want sustainable, long-term business benefits.

Events aren't often seen as being a very strategic tool in the marketing toolbox, but if you run it properly, they can bring in a lot of business. Make sure that your brand is one of the few that soars after take-off, rather than fall flat in the water.

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