



SCORE column: Tie-ins can help small businesses find success

Within minutes after the Green Bay Packers won the Super Bowl, marketers sprung into action. Merchandise was quickly printed and loaded on trucks, which left to deliver the goods immediately. The stores were waiting and briskly unloaded the trucks and got the merchandise on the floor. It worked well, because it was carefully conceived.

The smart small businesses and brands had planned in advance. Downtown Green Bay was ready with a green and gold fireworks show and strengthened its brand as thousands filled the streets. Others featured free drinks and other specials.

"There are lots of opportunities throughout the year for a business to respond to a certain event or pop culture wave, especially for small local businesses," said Laura Ritchie, founder and vice president of The Wisconsin Sports Network. "Sometimes they can ride the wave of community excitement if they do so in a timely fashion and before it's been beaten to death."

Unlike the last Super Bowl win, Ritchie thinks that the little guy now has a better chance of capturing a share of the market.

"A savvy apparel company could have flooded local media with banners in the hours and days following the Packers' win, combined with a little search-engine optimization, and assuming they had the rights to the inventory they were selling, could have competed with their larger adversaries," she said.

Her company specializes in covering high school sports and delivers over 50 million web pages a year on WisSports.net. Ritchie understands the effectiveness of sports marketing and has numerous ideas for small business tie-ins.

She said a sports bar or restaurant might want to extend the celebration with a post-game party that features the season highlights, including the showing of whatever Super Bowl DVD the NFL comes out with. A family-friendly eatery could host a youth contest allowing kids to run through obstacles and throw passes to win prizes. A car dealership could get signed footballs or tickets to give away in a contest.

ABC Painting of Appleton will be promoting doing theme Packers rooms painted with a tasteful edge. As a client of hers, Ritchie said to do ad placement now.

"ABC Painting would be best served by hitting fast and hard while the momentum is high as opposed to spreading their dollars over a longer period of time," she said.

While people can't seem to get enough of the green and gold now, Ritchie cautions against it becoming the green and old.

"The Packers definitely have the state in a happy place, and sometimes business owners can get carried away finding their personal tie in, and it can become overkill to the consumer," she said. "I guess the thing to keep in mind is to be aware of relevant opportunities events can create in your business while understanding you're not the only one skipping along that line of thought."

Tina Dettman-Bielefeldt is co-owner of DB Commercial Real Estate in Green Bay and assistant district director for SCORE, Wisconsin.