

LOST IN TRANSLATION?

INTERNATIONAL CUSTOM PUBLISHING: THE SAME, ONLY DIFFERENT

BY ERIC BUTTERMAN

THE SAYING GOES THAT PEOPLE are generally the same everywhere. But a people can be quite different from another in the way they digest media. Michael Hoeflich, managing director for Munich, Germany-based Forum Corporate Publishing, sees several differences between the overseas and American markets. Many would not observe such differences unless they traded the New York Subway for the London Tube. If they did, they'd find a much higher per-

centage of faceless train riders—because a newspaper would likely be covering it. “Many people don’t realize that Germany and England, the top two consumer countries in Europe, only have 20% of their media exposure coming from e-media,” Hoeflich said. “While Americans are spending a great deal of time with their e-mail and computers, we like to have print in our hands.” As a speaker at the CPC’s Custom Content Conference in New Orleans in March, Hoeflich

offered a unique international perspective from his position in the European equivalent to the Custom Publishing Council.

The Role of Travel: One common area is the role of travel in custom media, with airline magazines being among the most familiar examples of what U.S. custom publishing offers. What many forget is that travel is even more a factor globally, especially in Europe. “The average European has 28 days’ vacation,” Hoeflich noted. “Much more than the United States.” Compounding this difference: workaholic Americans sometimes forego vacations completely, and the strength of the euro in comparison to a weakening dollar has made overseas travel

expensive for Americans. One way to combine partnerships and a European audience is to target travel organizations that encourage Europeans to vacation in the U.S., a less expensive alternative.

Government and Educational Initiatives: Another opportunity exists with government publishing. Because some governments in Europe have more of a socialist bent, European governments have much more impact on areas such as health care and can utilize custom publishing to relay positive messages about their protocols. “Political groups are also getting into custom publishing because laws have been lifted in the last few years allowing them to more openly spread their message through print,” Hoeflich noted. “A video blog the Chancellor wrote was just the start of governmental activity going online. It’s provides a much better chance to convince the public than does a two-minute interview on TV. You also see universities expanding into custom publishing through their educational initiatives.”

Listen for the “Voice”: Hoeflich believes it’s important to focus not only on the kind of content that’s provided but also on its voice. “Our journalism tends to mostly be serious, while America allows for a lot more fun,” he said. “That’s also true for our custom publishing. For Europeans to trust you, they need to know you speak their language in terms of how you’re marketing to them.” It’s not that the European custom model never branches out—such was the case with one magazine called *Impact*. “Even though the magazine was targeted to CIOs,” explained Hoeflich, “it didn’t just stick to technology.”

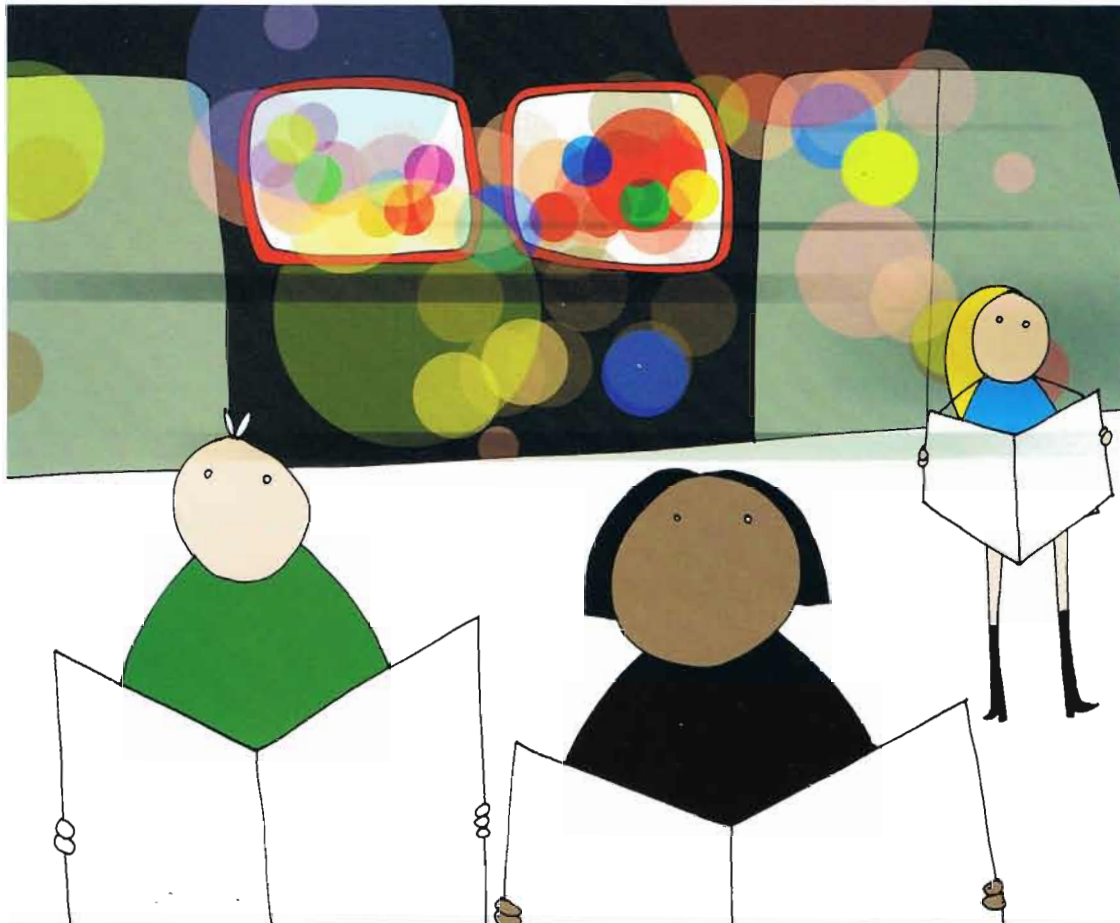


Illustration by Craig Shuttlewood

Instead, it featured travel and lifestyle coverage for the technology audience. "The success of this magazine," said Hoeflich, "may encourage others to go further."

The Emotional Connection: One mistake Hoeflich said he sees too often on both sides of the pond is the corporate message prepared for a one-size-fits-all audience. "It's almost like a uniform information cocktail," he observed. "Instead of target groups, we're seeing custom success from identifying media communities...that's groups of people who identify with certain brands, not because of income or where they live, but because of a strong emotional connection." Hoeflich illustrated this point by describing one consumer as "a near-60-year-old father and husband from England making many millions a year"—then he flashed two images on a screen: Prince Charles and a man some have called the prince of darkness, Ozzy Osbourne. Same profile, very different emotional connections.

Building the Social Network:

Echoing, perhaps, their preference for print over online custom publications, Hoeflich says that Europeans have not yet found a way to break through with the types of online social networks—think of MySpace or Facebook—that have recently been proliferating in America. "This may be an area where we'd welcome American input to improve our reach," he told Custom Content Conference participants. There's a lot we can learn from each other."

CAN'T BUY ME LOVE

WHEN YOUR CUSTOMERS ARE YOUR BEST SALESPEOPLE

BY MARK J. MILLER

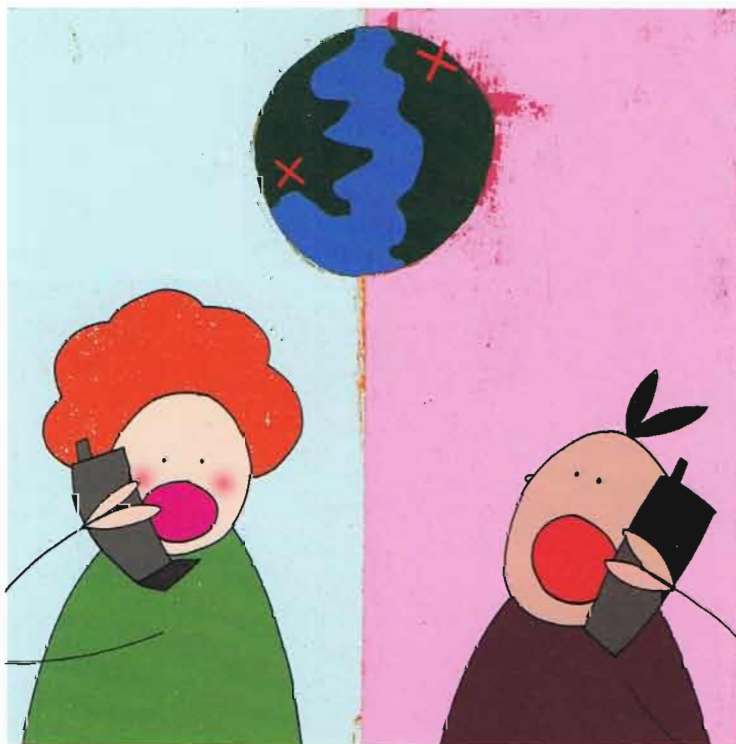
THERE MAY BE SOME TRUTH TO the power of marketing your product the way a '70s shampoo commercial did: "They'll tell two friends...and so on...and so on...and so on." However, according to Kenneth Neher, director of relationship marketing at GlaxoSmithKline, success may depend on which friend is doing the talking.

According to GSK research, "brand advocates" are people who tell 12 other people, on average, about a product they use and then those people each tell four more people about the product. "When one person teaches another about something, there is no stronger bond," Neher told a group of marketers and custom publishers at the CPC's Custom Content Conference in New

Orleans in March. Other definitions Neher uses for advocates are people who buy the product often and people who buy a lot of it at once. "Consumers will say, 'This is my brand; this brand works for me,'" Neher noted. "Once you get to that point, you've struck home."

But how do you find these advocates? You either buy them through companies like BzzAgent, a word-of-mouth marketing firm that pays a large community of consumers to test and share information about products, or you grow your own. You can find them online when they sign up on your website or respond to an offline offer you've made. A key way to identify advocates is to ask critical questions as part of the registration process or as part of a survey. "The critical questions help identify who is most likely to be the best candidate," Neher said. This may help determine if someone is extroverted enough to be a brand advocate or has a wide enough network of people to be an important brand advocate.

Neher pointed out that online communities, e-newsletters and custom magazines are excellent tools to use in growing brand ambassadors. GSK has worked with custom publisher McMurry since 2002 to publish *Wellness Matters* in order to create loyalty for two of its products. Today, 79% of those who receive the publication buy those products. "People call it 'My Wellness Matters,'" Neher said. "That's a pretty good sign of loyalty."



CPC ANNOUNCES SECOND ANNUAL CONTENT CONFERENCE

As the media landscape evolves at lightning speed, where will branded content fit in? The Custom Publishing Council's second annual conference—"The Future of [Branded] Content"—will address trends, successes and strategies for branded content in every platform. "We hope participants will walk away with the tools and knowledge they need to provide a wider-than-ever array of effective marketing solutions," says CPC Executive Director Lori Rosen. The conference will be held in South Beach, Florida, next March 8-10. For information: www.custompublishingcouncil.com/industry-conference/2009