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Creative Showcase

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eBay Campaign Mixes Mystery & Comedy
 Tuesday, December 13, 2005
 BBDO and Agency.com's eBay campaign sparked curiosity and awareness before launching into the branding phase.

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Campaign Details

Client: eBay
Creative Agency: Agency.com and BBDO

Campaign Insight

In eBay's latest multi-channel branding campaign, the all-encompassing word "it" refers to and powerfully communicates the idea that whatever it is -- old or new, hot or not, rare or spare -- you can get it on eBay.

The campaign was broken into two phases. The first phase was a teaser

The Panel

Feel the excitement. "It" is sweeping the world. This hilarious eBay campaign relives the true joy of discovery and innovation. While the intro video was good, the true beauty of this microsite is the "behind the scenes" in-depth footage of what "it" means to each target audience around the world. Each clip builds the overall story behind "it". I loved the not-so-subtle references to two young male founders of "it" similar to Google's Larry and Sergey and the comparison of "it" to the prevalent iPod. In short, "it" is genius.

The viral nature of the microsite ranks nine out of 10. The six different video clips are the stickiest elements of whatisit.com. I played around with the size and style of the "it" brand identity for a minute, but then moved on. The "it" toolbar takes you right to where you want to go on eBay's site. However, there are a few tactical elements of whatisit.com that could have done a bit better. The

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campaign that included unbranded TV spots created by BBDO, and online banners and a website developed by Agency.com to create a sense of mystery and excitement around what 'it' might be. Online ad units featured a series of testimonials such as "'it' matches every outfit I own," and "I even trained my dog to fetch 'it.'" The click through brought users to an extremely interactive unbranded experience that featured a series of original and high-quality videos which further document the story of 'it' and its travels on the world media circuit from Mexico to Tokyo. The site also featured an "it" configurator that let users customize their own "it" by texture and size and then print out a poster, as well as a countdown clock that lead to the launch of "it." Once the teaser phase of the campaign ended the website was updated to incorporate eBay branding as well as a search bar to bring users to eBay.com.

The second, or reveal, phase of the campaign broke four days later with online, television and print ads aimed at increasing awareness that eBay is not just a great site for used and collectible items, but also for brand new items. A series of API-enabled Flash ads were developed to illustrate that "it" could be any one of the millions of products in over 50,000 categories -- from cars to clothing to collectibles -- that are available on eBay. Upon rolling over the units, users can see how many of a specific product are currently available on eBay, and the starting price.

Additionally, an overlay ad unit captures consumers' attention with a unique video execution. Viewers see a father contained within an ad unit, playing catch with his son who is standing atop page content. Instead of a ball, they are tossing an "it" to each other over the page content -- an executional element that was also utilized in the TV and print advertising. The unit resolves to a variety of products, with which users can interact to find how many are currently available on eBay and the

that could have done a bit better. The Send to a Friend would be more functional and trackable as a web form rather than popping up an email browser that works for a limited number of email browsers. I also might suggest a "voting" element on the microsite to empower the audience to co-create and co-own the brand. Vote on your favorite "it" video and vote on which video campaign they should do next. Overall, I love the campaign. It was unique, authentic and had me laughing all the way to purchase some random item on eBay.

-- **Ryan Buchanan, president, eROI, Inc.**

Agency.com's "it" campaign for eBay provides the online yin to the broadcast campaign's yang. Those yearning for extended video of the wacky Japanese host's introduction of "it" can find "it" on the site, robustly filled with even more video. Kudos to the TV and online production teams for making these videos entertaining and quirky enough to get a chuckle or two out of audiences.

Currently, there's not much to do at the site but view extended video clips that are featured in the TV spots, but that's enough for now to whet audiences' appetites for more. While this may not be the best "viral" campaign (would I really want to send these videos to friends?), it certainly reinforces eBay's brand personality that has been established in campaigns past.

While the option to download an "it" poster is cute, I thought it would have been cooler to actually have an "it" available for purchase on eBay.com. After all, the site says to search for "it" on eBay. I did, and nothing relevant to the campaign showed up. Something like the CP+B campaign for Burger King should have proven that customer demand for an advertising prop can at least be faked -- if not created.

As more TV spots continue to be produced, I imagine extended clips of them will continue to be showcased on the site, which should evolve along with the "it" campaign and "product". I'd like to revisit this campaign at it's full fruition, and see if they've lived up to the potential

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starting prices.

-- **Agency.com Staff**

Editor's Note ▾


Creative Showcase is meant to be a teaching tool and an inspiration for our readers. We comment only on creative that we really love. Our panelists discuss what makes it great, but if they feel there were missed opportunities that would have made it better, we invite them to mention those. And finally, we seek out a wide range of opinions that reflect the marketplace for the panel, in order to provide constructive, useable feedback for agencies, clients and others involved in these creative pieces.

Footnote: Submissions are judged by a panel of industry experts from and based on the following criteria: how the creative captures the specific customer; how it meets the brand's business needs; impact of execution; and creativity. If you would like your creative considered for Creative Showcase, send an email to creative@imediaconnection.com.

-- as well as look at some of the statistical successes of the program.

I give the "it" campaign four out of five "its" for keeping "it" real, and for continuing to justify that using online video to extend the brand can truly be effective -- and not just an "it"-flavor of the month.

-- **Ian Schafer, president, Deep Focus**

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