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Introduction to Public Relations  
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Thursday, February 2, 2006

## **Good Domestic Public Relations Campaign**

The first successful public relations campaign that comes to mind is “The New AT&T” campaign. The public relations campaign, which came to most people’s attention via a TV advertisement blitz during ABC’s *New Year’s Rockin’ Eve 2006*, is a broad based push to re-brand the company after SBC acquired the 124-year old brand.<sup>1</sup> I believe the campaign has been successful for a few reasons.

First, the campaign is very “sticky,” yet seemingly credible. Its flagship spot – called “Eclipse” – is a catchy, upbeat advertisement that makes the merger seem globally profound, yet personally significant. The use of a globally themed pop song by a popular band energizes the audience. The advertisement, while not particularly substantive, is “grabby” and most likely designed to make the general public more receptive to further information (in the form of future product advertisements, no doubt) by the new AT&T. Unlike its Verizon/MCI counterpart -- where people are doing cartwheels because of their recently announced merger – the people in the “Eclipse” spots are reserved, which makes AT&T’s efforts appear more genuine.

Second, the public relations campaign is clearly focused on the customer, suggesting that the merger is in the public’s best interest. The tag line is “Your World. Delivered.” which, despite the now trite over use of punctuation speak, conveys the message that AT&T focuses not only on we the people, but on bringing us what we want faster and easier than ever before. The “Eclipse” advertisement previously mentioned also alludes to this, using a simple analogy (two suns in the sky combine and the world becomes better and brighter).<sup>2</sup> The print advertising further reinforces this idea, saying “Most mergers benefit somebody. Introducing the first to benefit everybody.”<sup>3</sup>

Finally, the campaign appears to be well segmented. According to AT&T, different marketing materials have been developed for different audiences, with rollouts prepared for African-American, Hispanic and Asian communities in the United States.<sup>4</sup> SBC, whose name is being retired as part of the branding effort, is also doing specialized ads in the 13 states which it operated previously emphasizing continuity of service.<sup>5</sup>

## **Bad/No Public Relations Campaign (International)**

The first organization that comes to mind in need of a good public relations campaign is the Recording Industry Association of America and it’s international sister organization, the International Intellectual Property Alliance.

Over the last eight years, the RIAA (and the IIPA) have waged a very ugly war against piracy, focusing on the ends (ending illegal piracy) seemingly at the complete expense of the means. They have sued parents for the actions of their children and sued colleges for the actions of their children, filing over 14,000 lawsuits in the last two years.<sup>6</sup> While all of this is perfectly legal, from a public relations standpoint, the RIAA’s actions are suspect on a number of fronts.

First, neither RIAA or IIPA does an effective job of creating a positive relationship with its core consumers. The tenor of the RIAA/IIPA’s argument seems to be designed to intimidate and threaten, as opposed to foster a positive relationship with its core consumers. The first two

words of the main body of RIAA.com are “Anti-Piracy” and “Penalties,” which misses a great opportunity to turn the conversation towards the people being hurt by the piracy (whomever they may be).<sup>7</sup> The IIPA’s web site doesn’t provide information to the public at all, focusing instead on information that would only be interesting to its members groups.<sup>8</sup>

Second, the RIAA is experiencing a credibility gap because their goals appear to be blatantly financial, as opposed to noble (protecting artists or labels) or legal (protecting the notion of intellectual property). People sued by the RIAA are being asked to settle for several thousand dollars, which seems outrageous when a \$60 subscription to an online music service would have made their actions legal.<sup>9</sup> Likewise, people who choose to fight the lawsuits face tens of thousands of dollars in legal bills because of the extensive legal fees involved in defending oneself in court.<sup>10</sup>

It should be noted that the RIAA/IIPA is in a difficult public relations position, trying to stay afloat in an ever-changing landscape. That being said, with out any discernable public relations strategy, it is not hard to see why only 37% of American’s support their recent court actions.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Launching the new AT&T.” *San Antonio Express-News*. 29 December 2005. <<http://www.tmcnet.com/usubmit/-launching-new-att-/2005/dec/1247168.htm>>

<sup>2</sup> Richard Williamson. “The New AT&T Delivers Image Overhaul.” *Adweek*. 29 December 2005. <[http://www.adweek.com/aw/search/article\\_display.jsp?schema=&vnu\\_content\\_id=1001771822](http://www.adweek.com/aw/search/article_display.jsp?schema=&vnu_content_id=1001771822)>

<sup>3</sup> AT&T. *Most Mergers Benefit Somebody*. <[http://www.sbc.com/Common/files/pdf/07\\_mergers.pdf](http://www.sbc.com/Common/files/pdf/07_mergers.pdf)>

<sup>4</sup> AT&T. *Featured Ads*. <<http://www.sbc.com/gen/press-room?pid=7573>>

<sup>5</sup> AT&T. “New Year, New Era, New Passion to Deliver: the New AT&T Launches Unprecedented Brand Campaign.” Press Release. 29 December 2005. <<http://www.sbc.com/gen/press-room?pid=4800&cdvn=news&newsarticleid=22014>>

<sup>6</sup> Tresa Baldas. “Music piracy defendants fighting back.” *National Law Journal Online*. 10 October 2005. <<http://www.law.com/jsp/nlj/PubArticleNLJ.jsp?id=1128675912177>>

<sup>7</sup> RIAA.com. *Recording Industry Association of America*. <<http://www.riaa.com/>>

<sup>8</sup> IIPA.com. *International Intellectual Property Alliance*. <<http://www.iipa.com/>>

<sup>9</sup> Eliot Van Buskirk. “Consumers frustrated by online catalogs.” *CNET News*. 6 June 2006. <[http://reviews.cnet.com/4520-6450\\_7-6241912-1.html](http://reviews.cnet.com/4520-6450_7-6241912-1.html)>

<sup>10</sup> Jim Fitzgerald. “Activists Aid Woman in Music Piracy.” *Forbes Online*. 26 January 2006. <<http://www.forbes.com/business/energy/feeds/ap/2006/01/26/ap2481064.html>>

<sup>11</sup> FindLaw. “FindLaw Survey Reveals RIAA Lawsuits Unpopular with Americans.” Press Release. 29 June 2004. <<http://company.findlaw.com/pr/2004/062904.musicpiracy.html>>