

## The Return of True Sponsorship

One of the things I clearly remember from my 1950s childhood was the unmistakable presence of sponsors as part of television and radio programs. Texaco brought us Texaco Star Theater with Milton Berle and Stopette Deodorant was the supporting sponsor of “What’s My Line” for over eight years. Of course I wanted those Buster Brown shoes because the “Buster Brown Gang” TV shows created a relationship between me and Buster! Decades later many of us remember the programs and their sponsors as an interwoven and indelible package which really was the goal of a sponsorship. Can you name the 1950s dancing cigarette package? Those sponsorships disappeared as buying advertising time became more expensive thanks to the increasing audience size for television. The 30-second commercial became the affordable carrier of blandishments to buy but they never had the same impact as a sponsorship. The game centered on frequency and reach rather than relationship with the customer.

Today as the number of media outlets grows like mushrooms after the rain, true sponsorship is a concept whose time is coming again. In the quest by major marketers to differentiate themselves from competitors and to stand out in this noisy media environment an old tool is becoming the new thing. Red Bull is a modern brand that has used sponsorships including TV, online and live events to dominate its category. The media agency for oil giant Chevron, MEC Global seems to take pride in positioning themselves as a “sponsorship” agency. It is all about carefully matching your target audience with your message and an appropriate media vehicle. A strong message coupled with compelling content equals memorable! The bad news is that there is no longer a lazy method to marketing success such as just buying spots on a hot show and thinking that the job is done. The good news is that pricing across all media has become more reasonably priced. Not only that, the sales people will work with you---gladly.

The Making It TV show began airing special segments and episodes on behalf of our sponsors more than 18 years ago! We had to offer something beyond just 30-second spots to get their attention and I chose the old “true” sponsorship model. Those Making It TV sponsors have included Honda, Hilton Hotels, Bank of America, along with Toyota, Boeing, Verizon and others.

Though not politically correct today, I must confess that one of my favorite sponsor images in the 1950s was the dancing cigarette package from Old Gold! You can see that dance at this link. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ZRzBGpLsB8>

By the way, I’d be delighted to talk “true” sponsorship with you.