

Winston 500 race in Talladega, Ala.

But Dan Troop doesn't need to see a table of facts and figures to understand the benefits of sponsoring NASCAR racing. Troop is vice president of sales and marketing for National Fruit Product Co., the small maker of the White House Apple Juice brand in Winchester, Va. Two-and-a-half years ago, race driver Johnny Smith asked White House to sponsor his fast car. "We had never done any sports marketing before," says Jay White, National Fruit

Product's director of marketing. But the idea seemed like a good fit. "Johnny Smith is young and represents the All American Image we want," says White. "NASCAR

Tying a sports marketing campaign to a collectible giveaway can pack a powerful punch.

became the creative platform for a lot of the things we did."

White House commissioned Matchbox to produce a special edition replica

of Smith's car. Fans could redeem the Matchbox model for a proof of purchase and \$5.99. "People sent in tens of thousands," says White. White House tied its

Do sports promotions measure up?

In sporting events, determining the winners on the field is simple. Figuring out the winners among the event sponsors, however, is quite a different matter.

Often marketers measure the benefits of sponsoring a sporting event by tallying up how many inches of newsprint or seconds of TV air-time their logo or products receive. Then the sponsors determine how much an equal amount of ad space would have cost.

It's a fairly simple procedure, but in Jim Crimmins' view this gauge is too simplistic. "We say a company has to look at the consumer impact it receives from an event, not just the visibility," says Crimmins, executive vice president-director of strategic planning and research at DDB Needham Worldwide, an advertising firm in Chicago. "Calculating the worth of the media time you get is interesting, but it's not necessarily related to impact."

This quandary caused DDB Needham to start looking closely at sports marketing with the 1984 Olympics. The results were disturbing: Of the 37 Olympic sponsors that DDB Needham tracked, 22 sponsors created no connection between themselves and the Olympics. DDB Needham's sports evaluation program has continued through the past three Olympics. In the past year, the program was broadened to judge the impact sponsors enjoy from their involvement with the National Basketball Association, Major League Baseball, NASCAR racing and other major athletic events.

By "impact," Crimmins means the link between a product and the event in the eyes of the sponsor's target audience. The link is determined in three ways. First, do consumers even realize the connection exists between the event and the product? Second, how long does the link last in consumers' minds? And third, has the sponsorship caused consumers to look at the sponsor's product differently?

In many cases, the answer to all three questions is no. Reason: Companies, says Crimmins, invest in sports marketing without a clear idea of what they want to achieve. "Often companies don't begin with a basic strategy," says Crimmins. "They decide to sponsor an event without deciding their objectives and seeing if the event can fit the goals and the qualities of the products they want to communicate."

A good example, Crimmins says, is Kellogg's sponsorship of the Olympics. "They made people knowledgeable about the connection between Kellogg's and the Olympics, but created very little connection between their brands of cereals and the

Olympics," says Crimmins. "People didn't realize that Kellogg's Frosted Flakes or Corn Flakes were sponsors of the Olympics. Kellogg's probably didn't get everything they could have hoped for from the Olympics."

Crimmins says simply having a sponsor's logo flash on a TV screen isn't enough to justify the expense of sports marketing. "Having a sign at the last Olympics was fine if you only wanted to appeal to the people who went to see the games in Spain," says Crimmins. "However, it doesn't do much if you want to be seen by the 250 million people who stayed home and watched the Olympics on TV. Even if your logo floats on screen, the viewers will be focusing on the athletes, not on the background."

For this reason, Crimmins says food companies that sponsor athletic events must have an aggressive program using advertising, in-store merchandising, promotions and public relations to establish a firm tie with the event. "When you calculate what an event costs to sponsor, you should consider not only the sponsorship costs themselves, but the additional promotional costs," says Crimmins. "If you can't afford to do both, you shouldn't do either."

Crimmins also points out that the marketing program can start far in advance of the event. For instance, a sponsor of the Final Four, the college basketball championship, can highlight its involvement in ads for a month or two prior to the first tip-off.

Another key is using the event to make the point you want to make. "Snickers did a great job as the official snack food of the Olympics," says Crimmins. "In their advertising, they told stories about athletes who are tired and then became energized by eating a Snickers bar."

Candy bars and athletics might not seem to have an immediate link. But Crimmins notes that companies can "manufacture" a connection to sporting events. "There isn't a logical connection between the Olympics and a credit card," says Crimmins. "But Visa manufactured a connection by pointing out 'We're everywhere you want to be' at the Olympics and by stressing that the Olympics didn't take American Express."

These less-obvious links reinforce the importance of creating a strong marketing program. "It's always important to tell the public what the sponsorship of a sporting event means," says Crimmins. "What do you want the consumer to think about your product because of the connection between the team or the event? Why leave it up to the people to decide what it means? You have to spell it out."

advertising theme—"Pull on the Juice"—to the NASCAR circuit. The juice maker also sponsored a radio show, called the "White House Dash Update," to coincide with the race series. That's not all: Driver Johnny Smith showed up at trade shows and consumer events for the company, even traveling to food broker meetings. "A lot of buyers for major food chains around here are NASCAR fans, so this gave us another thing to talk about," says White. "For a company like ours that makes commodity products—apple sauce, apple juice and vinegar—having a show car to take around to supermarkets became an important point of differentiation."

All that effort is essential for any company going into sports marketing. "It's vital that you have an integrated marketing campaign," says Murphy. "You can't put a logo on a car and expect people to pour into McDonald's."

That's one reason many companies are tying their sports marketing to collectible giveaway promotions. Yoo-Hoo, for example, is running a sweepstakes in which winners can go to any national baseball card company in the country. "Everybody knows that a lot of food product decisions are made by kids," says Brandon Steiner, president of Steiner Sports Marketing in New York. "A lot of these food company promotions have fantasy prizes in which kids get to hook up with famous athletes."

Kool-Aid, trying to market a new ready-to-drink version of its fruit punch to inner city kids, conducted basketball clinics with Hall of Famer Earl "the Pearl" Monroe for youngsters who brought along proof of purchases. "We got thank-you letters from people saying they hung the picture of Earl Monroe in their kitchen," says Michael Ritz, vice president of sports marketing for PSP Sports Marketing in New York. "The picture has a Kool-Aid logo on it, so now we have built-in commercials in their homes."

The Carvel Corp., the ice cream company in Farmington, Conn., has run a number of promotions in which fans of the New York Knicks and the New Jersey Devils who shop in Carvel retail stores can guess the total number of points their team will score in a month. Among the prizes were season tickets. "It was driving people into the store to enter the contest," says Gene Richardson, marketing manager for Carvel. And that, as any marketing manager will tell you, is the score board that really counts.