

Rivalfish uses contest to boost audience, offerings

Campaign

Danielle Lipp PR Week USA Oct 18 2006 10:32

To establish itself as "more than just a provider of a good," sports retailer Rivalfish.com in late January launched an online sports satire magazine, The Rival Room.

Get weekly news alerts on the consumer, healthcare, or technology industry. Newsletters include news round-ups, features, and jobs tailored to the particular sector.

However, it faced the challenge of promoting the magazine and drawing daily visitors to the site.

March Madness was approaching, so Rivalfish decided to capitalize on the country's interest in the college basketball tournament.

"We tried to come up with the craziest idea that could help reinforce our brand and help us connect with our audience," says Jonah Ansell, Rivalfish founder.

Strategy

Rivalfish devised a tongue-in-cheek contest, A Babe, A Dog, and A Dick, which pitted a bombshell and a dog against expert basketball analyst Dick Vitale to see who could pick more winners in their NCAA Tournament bracket. "We were hoping to drive people over to read our magazine [and] turn some of those visits into sales of our product," Ansell says.

Tactics

In-house grassroots outreach targeted the top sports newspapers and online sporting sites. "From blast e-mails to follow-up phone calls, it was a very simple execution," explains Ansell. Every day, the site featured an article about the contest. "We were getting hundreds and thousands of readers following this contest, and things kept taking off because Vitale was in last place going into the Sweet Sixteen," he notes.

Results

"We reached TV, we reached print, and we reached online, which was our primary target," Ansell says. Daily visits increased from 1,000 in February to just shy of 60,000 per month currently. Web sales jumped 400%. Based on the contest, Rivalfish also was offered its own Internet sports radio show. "We've definitely defined ourselves as one of the top sports humor magazines on the Web," Ansell adds.

Future

Rivalfish's latest venture is a monthly sports satire show on the site, which it aims to turn into a late night TV show. "We're realizing how we can utilize these creative projects to leverage our brand," Ansell says.

PR team: Rivalfish (Chicago)

Campaign: A Babe, A Dog, and, A Dick

Duration: March to April 2006

Budget: \$500