



Stadium branding

Creative branding can help exploit revenue opportunities, such as venue tours and merchandising, says **Mark Schmitz** at ZD studios.

Anyone who experiences an event in a famous stadium knows that there is something special and memorable about the place, not just the team, athletes or event. The sporting drama couldn't take place without the stage. The setting is important. Witness the number of guide books and web sites created by and for sports fans.

There are opportunities for every well-known, and not so well-known, venue to generate non game day visits and merchandise sales. Branding can play an important part in converting these revenue opportunities.

Mark Schmitz, principal and creative director of ZD studios, based in Madison, Wisconsin, says: "You have life experiences in stadiums. Parents take their sons and daughters to share important occasions."

ZD studios is the company behind the visual plan that adorns the new-look Lambeau Field, home of the NFL's Green Bay Packers.

Schmitz explains that he began his work by educating the Packers on what they could do to build on the equity and lore associated with the stadium's human principles.

"It is vital that visitors on both game day and non game day, fulfill themselves emotionally," he asserts.

Expansions

Bowl Structure

1961: Added 6,519 seats to 38,669.

1963: Added 3,658 seats to 42,327.

1965: Added 8,525 seats to 50,852.

1970: Added 5,411 seats to 56,263 (fully enclosing stadium bowl).

Private Boxes/Club Seats

1985: Original 72 boxes added 663 seats, increased capacity to 56,926.

1990: 36 new boxes and 1,920 club seats in south end zone; construction added 2,617 total seats and capacity increased to 59,543 at a cost of \$8.263 million.

1995: North end zone enclosed with 90 more private boxes, adding 1,347 to increase capacity to 60,890 at a cost of \$4.7 million.

Made to upgrade

Lambeau Field completed the latest in a series of upgrades in time for the 2003 NFL season. The increase in stadium capacity from 60,890 in 2001 to 72,515 in 2003 means that the queue to see a football game at Lambeau has got just a little shorter.

The main features of the upgrade are a new upper concourse and the widening of existing concourses, new suite, press and club levels. Plus of course the Titledown fan attraction, which includes Hall of Fame, restaurants and team store.

The club level contains 166 private boxes with increased square footage and high-end custom finishes. The club seating has increased from 1,920 indoor seats to 3,000 indoor and 3,000 outdoor seats. An exclusive club level can be accessed by private box and club seat holders on game day. The number of concession points of sale has doubled to almost 300. Women's restroom facilities are up from 180 to 556 and men's restrooms from 436 to 708. Disabled seating has increased from 56 to 733.

The original architect Somerville established a classic seating bowl with some of the best sightlines in NFL and a building capable of expansion. The Packers have regularly upgraded ever since. This last project was designed by architects Ellerbe Becket with Somerville Inc. as associate.

History lesson

Lambeau also provides much to build on for the graphic designer. ZD studios' Mark Schmitz points out that the field has been famous for so many years. Books and plays have been written about it. Marriages and baptisms take place on it. The people of Green

Bay, through the city, own the field so the local connection and football history is paramount.

Schmitz has been responsible for the entire graphical experience, from the parking lots to the middle of the field. This 'vision' is an important element in branding a stadium.

The graphical look created by ZD studios' design team takes in the whole building, including the concessions and themed areas in the Hall of Fame. ZD created content and colour palette guidelines for the sponsors to follow. These sponsors happily signed up in the belief that their brand would be more pow-



erful within the Lambeau Field brand, says Schmitz.

ZD studios has created a visual brand plan positioned to effect different cultures and age groups. The plan encompasses all the destinations in the venue. Mark Schmitz quotes the example of the restrooms that contain photo exhibits. This is because beer-drinking spectators spend a lot of time here, during which they now absorb some of the Packers' history. The graphical work extends to the retail, eating and drinking areas and to the wayfinding and environmental graphics. External graphics are also important and



Mark Schmitz says "can have as much majesty and add to the brand promise of the stadium".

The template for the use of photography is very specific and takes into account possible maintenance issues. A sepia and crumpled paper look is both appropriate to the historical documents but also practical. It can sustain a certain amount of damage without anyone noticing! Public exhibits need to be public resistant and ZD studios uses 3M technologies to protect the artwork. In more vulnerable areas the photographs are installed out of reach. Keeping the exhibits clean is a matter of spraying them down with water.

Revved up revenue

Following relaunch, Lambeau Field's recent marketing effort has built strongly on its popularity as a midwest tourist destination. National and regional marketing has pushed the day-long experience for non game day visitors. Mark Schmitz provides a graphics kit for use by the marketing team in print and broadcast media.

Jack Rouse Associates (JRA) has created interactive attractions that keep visitors busy even on non game days. ZD studios worked with JRA and designed the logo for the Hall of Fame and the brand architecture for areas such as the interactives and restaurant.



The Legends club and the club areas are let out by Lambeau Field on non game days for private family and corporate events.

Mark Schmitz was commissioned by the Hammes Company but worked closely with Green Bay Packers president Bob Harlan and John Jones. When stadiums have such huge recognition factors, successful branding can result in successful merchandising. This aspect of the project at Lambeau Field had already generated millions of dollars in the first half of the year since relaunch. Schmitz says that the Green Bay Packers are the number one NFL team for merchandising and that Lambeau Field will probably match that amongst stadia. Trade mark and licensing opportunities are generated from a visual brand plan and a parallel merchandising plan was created at Lambeau to take full advantage of possible revenue streams.

Brand creation

Lambeau Field provides great material to work with but what about stadiums and arenas in the minor leagues or feeling their age? Could these venues successfully create a brand? Mark Schmitz believes so because in all sporting events there is a "shared victory we all participate in". Schmitz aims to capture the magic in every sport. It is possible to spice up merchandising sales by creating or recreating a mascot as Schmitz has done at Florida International University. There the Golden Panther (pictured) is a favourite at retail outlets serving the student population.

Wisconsin Badgers have played football at



Top: Coca Cola takes part in the branding exercise. Below: The ZD studios team. Left: Zone and concession logo designs.

their stadium since the 1860s. Camp Randall was previously a civil war prison camp and now features Badger Alley, which is a walk through history and shows what can be achieved for a non game day audience. The key is to work with the culture of where the stadium is located.

Selling the name of your stadium can change everything depending on the deal you do with the naming sponsor. The sponsor may want to take over or, perhaps more creatively, become part of, the stadium image. Although it's unlikely that venue branding could rival a naming rights deal as a revenue earner for the big stadiums, branding might prove more profitable than a naming rights deal in a less well-known venue. A combination in the form 'sponsor name at field name' e.g. 'Gillette at Anfield Stadium' may deliver on both fronts.

Field power

Visitors, including on non game day, get a fulfilling experience. Sponsors add to their brand power by embracing the concept. Coca Cola used Mark Schmitz to create Lambeau-specific material for their brand.

The trade mark and merchandising opportunities for stadiums with a cult following are enormous. Final figures for the revenue streams in year one at Lambeau Field will make interesting reading for stadium managers everywhere. ■

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Left: Mark Schmitz with environmental art in Lambeau Field. ZD studios provided graphics standards (materials 'toolkit' inset) so that everyone concerned with Lambeau Field could sing from the same visual hymn sheet. Top: Drawing on team history results in strong storylines and fascinating archive photography. The history chimes in with themed entertainment – Curly's pub. Middle: Artwork in the club areas and the epic proportions of the Legends club. Bottom: The opening day merited its own look and logo, also worn on the uniforms of the team. Miller gets in on the act.

