Redefining “The D”
Detroit’s Marketing Success Story

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Creating a New Brand Position for Detroit

- Detroit started a year long project to develop a new brand position in early 2006.
- The Detroit Metro Convention & Visitors Bureau brought together our executive staff, brand consultants, marketing partners, politicians, business leaders, customers and prospects – all our interested shareholders – as part of the process.
- Research revealed that our best prospective leisure market is 21-34 year olds within a five hour drive radius: They think Detroit is cool and authentic and don’t carry the negative baggage of many Baby Boomers.
- The Brand Positioning that resonated with this audience is that “Detroit is Where Cool Comes From.” This is not a slogan or tagline. It’s our “Brand DNA.”
- Decided not to create a slogan: lightning rod for criticism. Five brand attributes we do as well or better than other Midwest destinations: Cars, Culture, Gaming, Music and Sports.
- Since we represent a large geographic area (Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties, in addition to the city of Detroit), we designed a proprietary “D” as our new symbol.
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- Our ad agency, Berline of Bloomfield Hills, was challenged to submit work they didn’t think we would approve. This led to our highly successful regional TV campaign (Cleveland, Columbus, Pittsburgh) that generated $68 million+ in incremental leisure business, in the first year.
Escaping the “Rut” of Traditional Advertising

• When our Meeting & Convention Sales Department booked the Mensa Annual Meeting, we knew we had our new ad campaign for the meeting segment. (And leads increased 40%, with 50% more definite citywide conventions during the first year it ran.)
AA Is Bringing 50,000 Members to Detroit?

I Need A Double...
Escaping the “Rut” of Traditional Advertising

- When Michigan launched the most aggressive film and TV production incentive in the country, we knew we needed to speak in a direct, creative way to Hollywood and New York.
Escaping the “Rut” of Traditional Advertising

- We received the U.S. Travel Association/National Geographic Traveler Odyssey Award for “Best Domestic Advertising Campaign” in 2008.
Proactive PR . . . And Placements That Matter

• We realized the reason so many people had a negative perception about Detroit was that we weren’t effectively counterbalancing the media’s tendency to promote negative stories with an effective barrage about the positive realities of 21st century Detroit.

• We stopped counting column inches and focused instead on “Big Hits”. Articles and broadcast segments in key national, regional and international markets that reached the “right” audience to change long held negative perceptions.

• We were true to our brand and focused on story angles built upon the most unique attributes of The D: Cars, Culture, Gaming, Music, Sports.

• We did less fam trips and more individual media tours to forge a more personal relationship with writers, editors and video crews.

• We believe that people do believe what they are told . . . with enough repetition, compelling facts and visual support.
Major PR “Big Hits” in 2008

Wall Street Journal, USA Today, The Sporting News, Car & Driver, Newsweek,
Country Living, W, Traditional Home, The Washington Post,
Travel Weekly, Midwest Living, Travel & Leisure, New York Post,
ESPN . . . And every major newspaper in the Midwest.
Five Lessons Learned

1. Be sure to gather input from your stakeholders.
2. Take chances . . . and listen to your instincts.
3. Limit decision-making to One or Two people.
4. Do fewer, more important things, better.
5. People believe what they are (repeatedly) told.