

Inside the 'Inside Intel' Campaign

Image-Changing Campaign Turns Engineers Into 'Rock Stars'; 'Open Source' Agency Relationships Drives Effort

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YORK, Pa. (AdAge.com) -- "Intel Inside" was the first, and arguably the best, "ingredient" branding to come out of Madison Avenue. And thanks to that campaign everyone knows that Intel chips are inside computers.

But the success of that ad push, which made its debut in 1991, created an image of Intel as a staid chipmaker.

Defined by a logo

"People think of [Intel] as a microprocessor company and that's a shame," said Paul Venables, founder and creative director of Intel's creative agency, Venables Bell & Partners, San Francisco. "Marketing in the past was always tied to the next chip or product and then co-branded with HP or Dell or other partners. ... 'Intel Inside' did a great job of making a brand out of something like chips at a time when ingredient branding was unheard of. But 10 or 20 years later, their whole identity was wrapped up in that little 'Intel Inside' logo."

If "Intel Inside" created the perception of a factory stamping out mini hits of silicon, then what's inside Intel? For starters, the company's inventors, who hold scores of patents for things such as universal serial buses (those connecting ports known as USBs), the DVD and airbag-safety technology and are working on futuristic projects including wireless power, neural sensors and personal robotics.

So the tech titan turned to a [new marketing strategy this spring](#), called "Sponsors of Tomorrow," to change those perceptions, and now a second iteration, which launched Sunday night on the Emmy Awards, is beginning.

Ads star brainiac engineers

The campaign highlights those brainiac engineers in TV spots such as "Rock Star," where the inventor of the USB (played by an actor) strolls through a lab to cheers, cameras flashing and autograph hounds under the tagline "Our rock stars aren't like your rock stars."

"'Sponsors of Tomorrow' is more than a tagline; it is clearly the DNA of Intel," said Johan Jervoe, who joined Intel in June as VP-director of creative services and digital marketing from McDonald's, where he was corporate VP-global marketing. Mr. Jervoe says the spots highlight Intel's "amazing" talent and their "future-looking" abilities, while showing consumers what Intel can do for them.

So far, those consumers seem motivated to learn more about Intel as hits to its website have jumped significantly in early testing, Mr. Jervoe said, as has brand awareness and positive brand attribute associations. Whether the work will translate to sales is too early to tell, but Intel did recently raise its revenue forecast for the third quarter. It will report on Oct. 13.

But while the work has gotten both critical acclaim and thumb's up from consumers, the biggest fans are inside Intel. Mr. Venables said his agency receives a steady stream of e-mails from Intel employees who write things like, "Finally someone has captured Intel and the spirit of who we are." He has even received ideas for other "rock stars" inside the company, as well as a handful of homemade videos cooked up by various departments that spoof on the original ads. Volleying back, Mr. Venables and his team created their own internal-only spoof dubbed "Our Paul isn't like your Paul," featuring himself and Intel President-CEO Paul Otellini.

Mr. Jervoe added, "I've worked on many campaigns over many years being in marketing, but I've never seen any campaign inspire such a passion and pride internally than this campaign."

Spurred by creative pitch

The idea for "Sponsors of Tomorrow" came out of a creative agency pitch. Intel was in the process of moving from a network holding company model (McCann WorldGroup) to a multiple agency concept (or "open source" model, as they call it), and had most of the other agencies in place when it finally opened up the search for a new creative agency last fall.

Venables Bell pitched against incumbent McCann Erickson as well as a handful of others, but it was the West Coast indie hotshop's different outlook that captured Intel's attention -- [and its \\$150 million account](#).

"Their take was different than anyone else," said Nancy Bhagat, Intel's VP-director of marketing strategies and campaigns, as well as the architect of Intel's open-source agency model. "They said you need to stop talking about the everyday, where we're in competition with other tech companies for share of mind, and leapfrog into what makes you different and why does that matter to the future."

Venables began working with the multitude of other agencies Intel had assembled, including OMD for media; Tag for production and global transcreation; MRM and Razorfish for interactive; MiresBall for marketing communication; Jack Morton for retail; Catapult for events; and Interbrand for brand strategy.

The three agencies core to the plan are Venables, OMD and Tag, Ms. Bhagat said, and they work together daily to run the account. Ideas and concepts flow back and forth easily, Mr. Venables said. "We work with a ton of vendors and partners all the time, and we're just happy to be in the fray. We like it this way because it assures you've got the best possible team and we all have at it," he said. "Our teams are very much in sync. ... If it's a good idea, we don't care where it comes from."

All about transparency

Ms. Bhagat said one of the keys for managing all the relationships is transparency.

"We are very open, we are very communicative with everyone we partner with. We don't hide things, we don't try to pit agencies against each other, and we don't try to go around being secretive. We respect them," Ms. Bhagat said.

Mr. Jervoe added, "The way we work the open-source model works is pretty much the way Intel works internally, too. It doesn't really matter who had a great idea, right? It's called 'assumed responsibility,' you grab what you think is right and if that is right for the brand, that is where we go."

He also acknowledged that Intel won't be the last to shift models.

"The marketing model has changed for all of us -- not only for Intel, but I'm talking about the whole marketing industry. It used to be the 360-degree 'surround sound' ... [it] was about as many possible angles to bombard the consumer from," Mr. Jervoe said. "I think none of us can afford to be everything to everybody. We need to have fewer big ideas and develop them deeper to connect, but also to enable all the viral work and social interaction and social media to all be on the same conceptual idea."