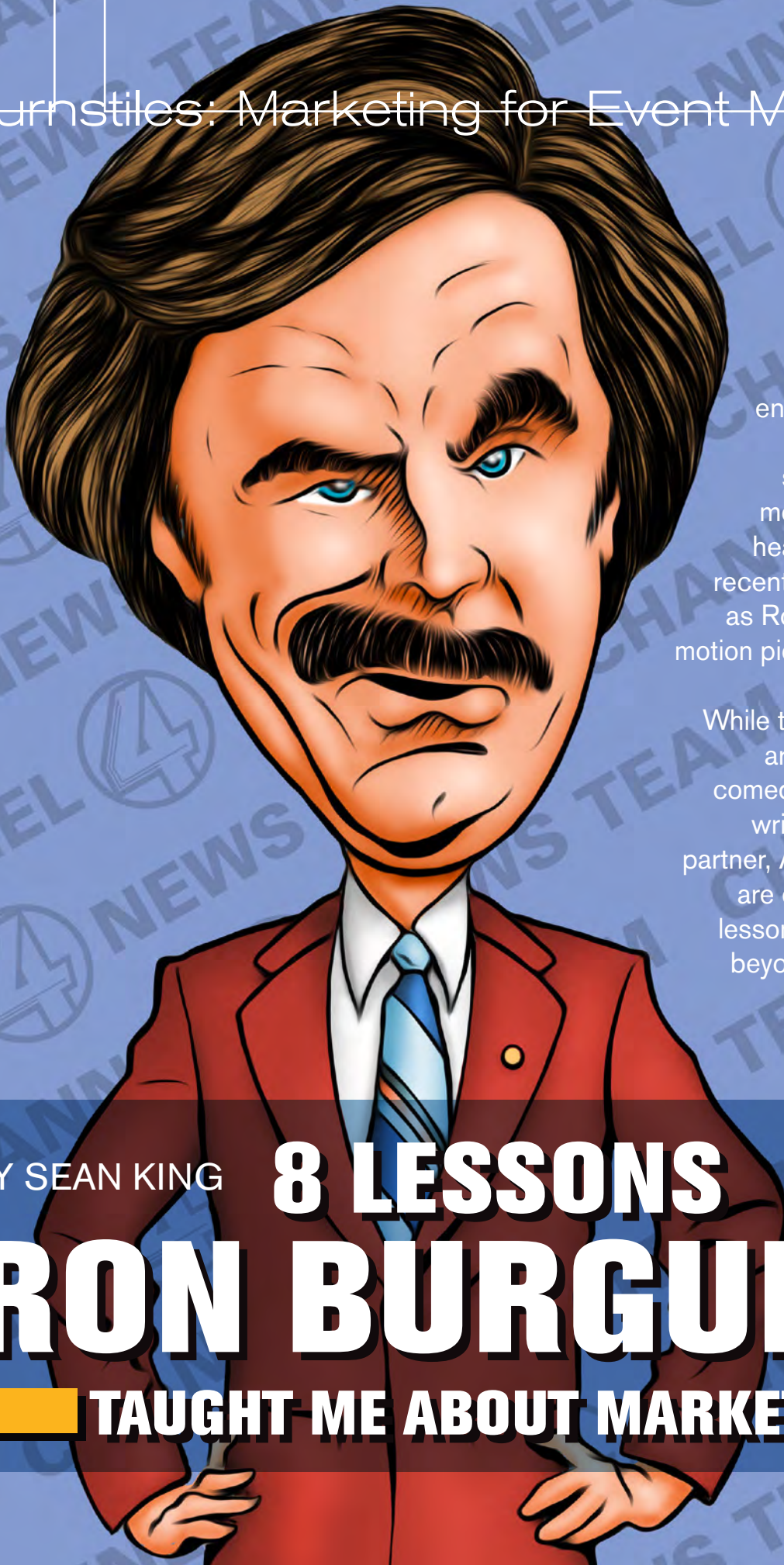


# Turnstiles: Marketing for Event Managers



Unless you hibernated through the entire holiday season with no access to social or traditional media, you may have heard that Will Ferrell recently reprised his role as Ron Burgundy in the motion picture Anchorman 2.

While the roots of the role are embedded in the comedy of Ferrell and his writing and producing partner, Adam McKay, there are definitely marketing lessons to be learned far beyond the belly laughs of the smart-alecky slapstick comedy.

BY SEAN KING

**8 LESSONS**

**RON BURGUNDY**

**TAUGHT ME ABOUT MARKETING**

One understands that the Anchorman/Ferrell/McKay brand of humor is an acquired taste and not for everyone, but that in its own right tells us what we need to learn from this comedy team. The main lesson we can take away is to use marketing to entertain, influence and sell our product – in this case tickets to the movie theater, eventually video downloads and finally even crossover into sales of mainstream products like the Dodge Durango.

But there are many more lessons to be learned by those of us in the event marketing industry on how to expand upon a concept, leverage every opportunity, but never lose sight of our ultimate goal. Sure, there are marketing professionals at work that guide the different moves of Burgundy Nation, but just as the recent stories of a worldwide shortage of Velveeta proved, even the contrived and most calculated news story can create awareness and drive business, but in a funny and entertaining way.

Here are the eight lessons Ron Burgundy taught me about marketing. Of course, there may be more, but I'm speaking from personal experience.

## # 1 Do Not Take Yourself Too Seriously

The beauty of Ron is that he takes himself so seriously, that the viewer can't. That sort of ability and talent is rare, but a lesson should be learned from what he is teaching us about doing anything for the character. Have fun, make people smile and laugh and they'll help you grow in more ways than you'll ever know.

## # 2 Too Much is Never Enough

There's an old advertising adage, 'just when you start getting sick of your message is exactly when it starts to work.' Pushing the limits and the boundaries will get you noticed. *Note: This is not an endorsement to be vulgar or cross the lines of good taste, but rather to embrace who and what it is you are and become known for it.*

## # 3 Don't Worry About Who You're Not Reaching, Worry About Who You Are.

Not everyone is always into you – but those who are would be the ones that make the best customers, the best attendees and would be along with you for the long haul. Ron's fans are Ron's fans and not only will they buy the movie, watch it on Netflix and probably download it at some point, but they'll be more likely to visit websites, watch other movies and follow the Ron Burgundy/Will Ferrell brand.

But you might ask "what about the others who don't get the joke?" Well, they'll never see the movie, download a video or

buy and endorsed product. I doubt Ron minds very much, do you?

## # 4 Make the Strange and the Odd Stand Out

Broadcasting the news from South Dakota doesn't seem like a traditional marketing vehicle for a major Hollywood studio release, but that's precisely why Ron Burgundy did it. Not only did he feel comfortable in the role as newscaster, but the sheer ridiculousness made it newsworthy. I'm not certain of the box office return in South Dakota, but the number of impressions gained from mentions across America on other newscasts and entertainment programs definitely added to the success of the film.

This is another case where investing in the character, at all costs, certainly pays dividends not only in the short term, but also as the brand is being built. We can learn from this extraordinary idea to not be ordinary.

## # 5 Explore Every Avenue

This lesson could also be titled "Live the Brand." Everything that even remotely has to do with the evening news, Ron Burgundy has put his imprint on. For heaven's sake, even the guy's choice in suit color is his name and vice versa. You need to own every aspect of your festival, fair or event. Ron Burgundy owns the anchor desk. Can you say the same about what you're doing? *(By the way, this is the definition of brand.)*

## # 6 It's All About the Impression

The number of gross impressions that is. There's a fine line that we all have to walk when engaging in promotion of an event, movie, product or service.

My belief is that you can never have too much publicity. Not only do we live in a short attention span world filled with social media and multiple screens, but as event promoters we only have small windows of opportunity when our audiences are paying attention. The time it takes for someone to decide if they are attending our offering or not is tiny. Our job as marketers is for potential audience members to receive our promotional messaging through the most engaging channel possible and believe there is no alternative but than to attend. Simple, right?

If the ultimate goal is to create so much internal demand with audience members that their lives would not be complete without attending, it likely takes a great deal of effective promotion to make that happen. By any means necessary make the impressions any way you can, with as many partners as you can and watch the results pour in through the Turnstile.

## # 7 Build the Hype but Manage the Expectations

The key to success is always about being genuine and authentic to the character – that's what makes Ron Burgundy's character and in turn what makes Will Ferrell, Will Ferrell. He's never willing to go short for the gag. There's something to be learned that whether in trying to get the laugh or get the sale of tickets or funding or whatever it is that you sell. Don't ever overpromise and underdeliver, but don't sell yourself short either. Both can impact your name, your event, your brand in negative ways, but always shoot for the remarkable.

## # 8 Partner with Everyone and Anyone You Can (Within Reason)

The cross-promotions with the media and Dodge were genius. Not only was word being spread about *Anchorman 2* in the theaters, but the associated brands were able to leverage exclusive arrangements that provided differentiation with their competition and create even more impressions about their products in a creative, entertaining way.

For so many of us, the festival and event industry is about entertainment, so it's up to us to be able to repurpose great content from our partnerships. Many of the artists and acts we hire are looking for additional publicity to build a repertoire and a career. Why not tap into that eagerness to perform and to build audiences for them and for you?

Meanwhile, partnerships with companies and organization can be the basis for a future of new possibilities. Sponsorship is no longer about cash. The new model is about the ability for properties and sponsors to collaborate to benefit one another. You can grow your event and festival by tying in with companies with remarkable promotions and a single cent never has to exchange hands – yet both partners are satisfied.

So with these eight lessons learned, how will you take these lessons and put Ron Burgundy to work for you?

Stay classy IFEA!

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