



THE CASE FOR CAUSE MARKETING

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We asked a panel of package design experts — which included Amy Graver of Elements — their opinion and advice on cause marketing campaigns.

The successful energizer battery Breast Cancer Awareness campaign and fundraising effort was one good example of cause marketing. Energizer produced 1.5 million pink packages of pink batteries that were on Target shelves to coincide with National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. We asked a panel of package design experts—Aniko Hullner, Wendy Jedlicka, Amy Graver, and JoAnn Hines—these questions:

- What are the pitfalls that occur when using packaging for cause marketing?
- Do cause marketing campaigns ultimately drive brand loyalty?
- What product categories should avoid cause marketing campaigns?
- What would you advise clients who are considering a cause marketing package?

Amy Graver, president of Elements, LLC, New Haven, CT

If the products have “wheels” (meaning the manufacturer is obligated to buy back unsold items, a common arrangement), repackaging of products not purchased during the promotional period can be a very costly proposition. There are, of course, other pitfalls, but few with greater potential to completely erase already narrowed margins.

There is significant evidence that cause marketing (sometimes referred to as affinity marketing) has a positive effect on brand loyalty. The caveat is that if consumers do not see a good fit between the cause and the company, they may become suspicious of the motives. For example, a maker of hiking boots supporting a program to preserve and protect the wilderness will be well-received. Support for that same program by a manufacturer of women’s fashion shoes probably wouldn’t work as well.

All successful corporations have an intrinsic obligation to provide support to social causes. The question of using that obligation as a marketing tool is much less “If?” than it is “When and Why?” With few exceptions, companies should use affinity marketing when their motives will be perceived as pure and completely in the public interest, not merely a strategy to increase sales or an effort to rehabilitate a damaged image.

The Elements design firm believes strongly in the value of cause marketing. Because packaging is the last and best place for a product to capture people’s attention—it may very well be the most effective place to publicize a cause-related campaign.