

Courageous marketers to be honoured at exclusive Banff conference



The Red Bull Stratos project, which featured a world record-breaking free fall by daredevil Felix Baumgartner, is among the notable marketing campaigns to be celebrated and discussed at The Gathering, an exclusive event taking place February 19 and 20 in Banff, Alberta. SUPPLIED

When daredevil Felix Baumgartner stepped from his capsule in outer space to freefall back to Earth in October 2012, his feat not only set new records, it also catapulted sponsor Red Bull to new heights in brand recognition.

As the stuntman hurtled towards the ground at 833 miles per hour, the sheer number of spectators from around the world made the event one of the greatest marketing stunts of all times. It wasn't cheap – estimates put the price tag of the Red Bull Stratos project at around \$50 million – but it yielded impressive results. An audience of 10 million watched the live stream, and the top two official videos boast millions of views. Among a crowd of competitors, Red Bull stands out, its brand firmly linked to adrenaline-fueled endeavours.

Red Bull is not alone in the quest to inspire a new kind of customer loyalty – one that leads to cult-like followings – by sponsoring events, creating custom content or implementing innovative brand strategies, according to Chris Kneeland, CEO of Cult



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Chris Kneeland
is CEO of Cult Collective and co-founder of The Gathering

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For more information, visit www.cultgathering.com.

Collective and co-founder of The Gathering, an exclusive conference and awards gala featuring some of today's most innovative marketers.

Presented by The Globe and Mail and taking place at the Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel on February 19 and 20, The Gathering will celebrate marketing innovation and excellence, and provide attendees an opportunity to learn from the people behind campaigns including Red Bull Stratos.

“It's about time that the real heroes are recognized and rewarded,” Mr. Kneeland says. “The ad industry tends to reward and recognize short-term success and celebrate creativity for creativity's sake. The Gathering honours enlightened individuals and brands who truly engage consumers and enjoy a cult-like status as a result.”

Organizers of The Gathering considered more than 100 brands from across North America and evaluated nominees against 18 criteria. Representatives of the eight winning brands – Harley-Davidson, NHL, Madden (EA Sports), Saskatchewan Roughriders, Red Bull, GoPro, Las Vegas and Urban Outfitters – have promised to

share insider knowledge and ideas with the attendees in a series of closed-door sessions.

“We conceived The Gathering as a bit of a secret society for brands that have built fanatical followings and connected with consumers by making impressions, not buying impressions,” Mr. Kneeland explains. “The leaders behind those brands have succeeded in not only getting customers to buy, but to buy into something bigger than what they sell.”

Cultivating thriving brand cultures that have the potential to win the hearts and minds of consumers across the globe pays off. Recent reports by Forbes, CNBC

and Interbrand on the world's most successful brands indicate that brand affinity and customer loyalty have been fundamental to their prosperity in the face of the recent economic turmoil.

“Clearly, the brands who dominate are those who win the allegiance and advocacy of customers who'll buy them over competitors, and pay more for their products and services,” Mr. Kneeland says.

The Gathering takes place February 19 and 20 at the Fairmont Banff Springs, Banff, Alberta. For details, registration information or to purchase tickets to this exclusive event, visit www.cultgathering.com.

HIGHLIGHTS

The Gathering features presentations by more than a dozen marketing experts responsible for brands including Saskatchewan Roughriders, WestJet, Urban Outfitters, Big Rock Brewery and others. Here are a few highlights:

BRIAN JENNINGS

CMO, National Hockey League, L.P.

Brian Jennings is responsible for the NHL's global marketing strategies, including consumer product licensing and design business that generate more than \$1 billion annually. He leads the integrated marketing team responsible for ensuring consistent and strategic delivery of key messages and further extending the reach and promotion of the NHL brand. His strong leadership has created solid league-wide relationships that provide deeper integration of the brand and product lines among NHL's business partners.

CATHY TULL

S.V.P. of Marketing, Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority

The Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority is the destination marketing organization for Las Vegas and Southern Nevada. Cathy Tull oversees all marketing, advertising and sales efforts. Having joined the LVCVA in 2005, she serves as a staff liaison for the U.S. Travel Association, the Travel and Tourism Advisory Board (TTAB) and is a member of the board of advisers for The Smith Center for the Performing Arts in Las Vegas.

PAUL CRANDELL

Vice President, Marketing, GoPro

Paul Crandell oversees numerous marketing efforts for GoPro, including sports marketing, brand management, content management and distribution, and advertising. Previously he ran marketing for Icon Aircraft and co-founded QSA Marketing LLC, helping companies like Coke and Target market their brands more credibly. One of Mr. Crandell's proudest moments was racing in the Baja 1000 and finishing second.