

Retailers assist NRF's Cyber Monday effort

BY TED MCKENNA

WASHINGTON: More than 550 retailers are assisting an effort led by the National Retail Federation (NRF) to promote "Cyber Monday," held today.

The newly created promotional day, which takes place the Monday following the Thanksgiving weekend, is one on which retailers annually see a sharp spike in online shopping.

Playing off the term "Black Friday," the day after Thanksgiving that traditionally marks the start of the holiday shopping season, Cyber Monday was a term coined by the NRF in 2005 in an effort to generate interest in online shopping.

NRF senior director of strategic communications Ellen Davis said promotion of Cyber Monday had three main elements. First, the group released new research on November 19 showing

among other things that 54.5% of office workers with online access are expected to shop online for holiday gifts from work this year, up from 50.7% in 2006.

Second, Web site www.cybermonday.com, created last year by NRF division Shop.org, is serving as a central source of information on hundreds of discounts available on Cyber Monday.

Finally, a second annual "Shop



NRF found that 54% with Web access in the office will shop online this year

at Lunch" event, held today at the ESPN Zone restaurant in downtown Washington, is expected to attract some 300 area consumers through viral marketing efforts by local retailers touting free food, online access, and more than \$8,000 in prizes to be raffled off at the event.

Davis said as many as 25 reporters attended last year's event, including the *CBS Evening News*, and were able to record video footage and interview online shoppers. This year, journalists were expected from *USA Today*, *The Washington Post*, and Associated Press, among other outlets.

"It's easy for reporters to go to traditional stores on Black Friday and talk to people and take pictures, so the purpose of the "Shop at Lunch" event is to give a face to online shopping," Davis said. ■

NEC unveils Hydrastor twice

BY AARTI SHAH

SAN FRANCISCO: NEC is partnering with its newly signed AOR Spark PR, to publicize the company's grid-storage platform.

Spark took a multi-phase approach, introducing Hydrastor with two launches. The separate platform and product announcements each targeted about 25 business and trade-press reporters and analysts.

"The main reason for this split was that we had far too many

important messages between the Hydra architecture and initial product offering to include in a single announcement," said Amy Walgenbach, an associate at Spark. Additionally, the separate launches helped build product momentum for sales, she added.

The biggest challenge facing the effort was launching a product in a sector that has several brand leaders, said Syreeta Mussante, a senior director at Spark.

"They have a lot of good market

share, they just don't have a lot of mindshare," she explained.

Spark became the AOR for NEC's American operations earlier this year, following a competitive bid. The company's former AOR, Voce Communications, had resigned the account.

"We had some shifts on the team and did not want to subject the client to a lot of turnover issues," noted Richard Cline, president at Voce. "It was a long, fruitful client relationship." ■

Hallmark touts online content

BY RANDI SCHMELZER

LOS ANGELES: The Hallmark Channel hopes to promote its latest films and widen its target audience by encouraging viewers to participate with content online.

To raise awareness for its holiday film, *The Note*, premiering December 8, the network this week launched a microsite for users to post personalized messages to family and friends.

In line with the movie's plot – in which a journalist finds a plane-crash victim's hastily written note and attempts to deliver it by Christmas – microsite visitors can e-mail loved ones that a message is waiting for them at www.hallmarkchannel.com.

With this consumer-generated approach, the microsite helps viewers become more invested in



Hallmark's interactive microsite is based on the plot of 'The Note'

the movie itself, said Nancy Carr, Hallmark Channel's SVP of corporate communications. Users are rewarded for taking part with a sneak peak at the film.

Earlier this month, the network also introduced a new consumer Web site and microsites dedicated to upcoming programming, said Hallmark Channel SVP of creative services Marvin Dorson.

More than streaming video, the sites employ social networking, including community groups where users can share video clips, post photos, and blog about programming.

These newly launched components hope to provide visitors with new entryways to the brand, Dorson noted.

"That adds up to increased site traffic, and increased time spent online," he explained.

The famously Baby Boomer-skewing network will also leverage the microsites to attract a younger audience. On November 1, for example, the Web site began streaming its younger-targeted original series *Adoption* on a microsite.

The network's ongoing outreach is being handled in-house. ■

LAUNCH PAD

Dance Heads booth takes the party craze into arcade arena



Organization:	Dance Heads, Inc.
Campaign:	"Dance Heads Recording Booth: Be a Star, No Talent Required"
PR team:	Dance Heads, Dance Heads Recording, and Media Tonic
Other marketing:	In-house only
Launch:	November 13, 2007
Budget:	Undisclosed

OBJECTIVE: Since 2004, Dance Heads, an interactive entertainment system, has let party-goers lip-synch songs while superimposing their heads on professional dancers' bodies. The new Dance Heads Recording Booth combines the Dance Heads concept with the privacy and ease-of-use of a traditional, arcade photo booth.

IDEA: To understand the Recording Booth experience, one must partake in it, notes Dance Heads cofounder David Gersh. The new product, launched in November, is much more compact than the original Dance Heads. "They're positioning it as the next big interactive entertainment – something you can put into [virtually any] venue," says Stephanie Gocke, AAE at Media Tonic.

TOOLS: The product officially debuted at The 2007 International Association of Amusement Parks & Attractions Expo. Media Tonic is now pitching amusement trade media, targeting local newscasts to attract new buyers in those markets, and entertainment media. The company also hopes to build off the experiential marketing success of Dance Heads – which was on-site at this year's Grammy Awards and at other shows – by teaming with large event producers.

MEASUREMENT: While the booth won't ship until early 2008, several venue proprietors submitted letter-of-intent orders, said Ron Greenberg, managing partner, Dance Heads Recording. Success will be gauged by trade and consumer media impressions and more successful event opportunities. ■

Keith O'Brien and Randi Schmelzer



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