

# Heineken's Diamond

We started working with Heineken four years ago on its first-ever foray into the world's most respected sporting event — the international soccer UEFA Champions League (UCL).

The Frogs, as we like to call ourselves, worked very closely with Heineken's management to develop the strategy underpinning this initiative, as well as the creative communications that ultimately were developed.

The challenge Heineken faced was to use this incredible sporting event to bring home its global brand strategy in a tangible way. Through an official sponsorship of UCL Football, we wanted Heineken not only to associate itself with soccer; we envisioned Heineken associating itself with *champions*.

To achieve that, we needed a “thematic platform” that was credible and authentic, yet fresh and different in the soccer world. It was most critical that we extended a spirit of achievement and leadership to the whole planet.

Our aim was to win new fans for Heineken *globally* — making it the favorite brand in the established American and European markets, as well as the newly adopted favorite brand in emerging markets like Latin America, Asia, and Africa.

Looking across the competitive landscape, we quickly appreciated that the challenge was huge. In soccer, UCL is the premier club championship in the world, and fast gaining on the World Cup, as the most talented global players play for the best clubs.

In terms of soccer sponsorships, brewers trail other categories in capturing the essence of the sport and the spirit of fandom. We faced-off against some of the world's best marketers, and understood that in the soccer arena, Heineken wasn't Nike, MasterCard or PlayStation.

This was, after all, Heineken's first entrance into this sporting event. It had no history and no

credibility among the soccer-loving congregation.

But we knew Heineken could at least do better than Carlsberg and Budweiser. We ended up doing much better than we thought possible.

## DE-FOGGING DEMOGRAPHICS

We began by de-fogging the gamut of information in identifying a very clear global target audience — one that was ever growing and which was a great deal larger than anyone had originally imagined.

The key demographics for all premium beers are people of the legal drinking age, up to age 45. But there is a strong emphasis on single, urban men in their 20s.

However, we recognized that *anyone* interested in the culture of soccer was a potential target. That insight opened up millions upon millions of potential fans, outside of traditional soccer lovers.

If your girlfriend knows of David Beckham, she is a potential fan. If you know about Posh Spice, you're a fan. If you follow the odd off-the-playing field gossip, you're a potential fan, too. All of these people are open-minded, confident, and engaging, and we felt had the means and motivation to buy Heineken.

The process that we apply is called *cultural connection*. It is designed to get to an idea that has the power to spark a cultural movement for a brand, which we define as the mixture of a grass-roots movement and the science of marketing.

## CULTURAL CONNECTION

In this case, the *cultural connection* was based on the insight that this championship was for *champions* — the best of the best — and we felt strongly that UCL appeals to a modern, multicultural fan, for whom *team-ism* is more important than nationalism or provincial rivalries.

American (USA and Latin) fans like the Hollywood-like drama that sports spectacles provide — storylines

Heineken  
makes champions  
of a billion  
soccer  
fans.

building to a climax in the postseason, with the crescendo-like intensity of league playoffs or NCAA March Madness.

Despite the global differences between our targets, they *all* feel that the excitement before, after, and between the matches is as powerful as the matches themselves.

European fans are inspired by new opportunities and behaviors, such as midweek “appointment viewing” (matches are Tuesday or Wednesday nights); road trips to “away” sites; communal viewing; new rivalries in other markets; and player support as they transfer teams. Asian fans are looking for access—to the sport, the teams and the players—as a *badge* to express individual aspirations in a collective culture.

#### EVERYONE’S A CHAMPION

Based on these insights, the cultural connection idea that we developed was called *championism*. Heineken looks to a world where *everyone* can feel like a champion.

From this platform, we built the spirit and religion, the values and lifestyle for a new planet—a planet where everyone is invited to play—open, invitational and connected.

The vision for the future was that Heineken loves and believes in the championship spirit of UCL—football beyond borders with the best of the best. Heineken doesn’t sponsor any individual team or league. Its sole football support is UCL because of its shared values—premium, multicultural, worldly, urban, and fun.

*Championism* was all about celebrating Champion’s League Soccer. But even more it was about celebrating anyone who rose to the occasion and displayed the mindset of *championism*. That meant *anyone*—doctor, lawyer, accountant, mom, dad, sister and brother, bride, groom, police officer—all connected to the love of Heineken, soccer, and *championism*.

The creative idea went one step further to “Welcome to Champion’s Planet.” Using our FrogLogic process (see “Microsoft’s Cultural Connection,” THE HUB, Mar/Apr 07), we aligned *championism* with culture. We then created actions and communities to draw people to the *Champion’s Planet* and applied mass communications to amplify it to a wider audience.

The first break of *Champion’s Planet* was like

the dramatic production of *Les Miserables*, but in a 90-second TV commercial. It captivated the globe by featuring a soccer ball being passed from person to person, as if poetically passing the emotional baton of *championism* from one person to the next.

#### ONE BIG GAME

Entitled, *One Big Game*, this commercial featured 10-second segments from around the world. We shot five minutes of different segments and then cut and re-cut 10-second bumpers, 30-, 60- and 90-second—even a three-minute version.

Next we created the [www.championsplanet.com](http://www.championsplanet.com) website where anyone in the world could go online and report on games being played in their cities. This activated relevant word-of-mouth via content placement, and also continued the conversation.

We invented our own media both online and offline and then used P.R. to spark buzz in everything from blogs to major TV networks. Bars and establishments surrounding the events featured our huge green

*Champion’s Planets* as a huge welcoming sign to come in and drink a refreshingly delicious Heineken—the perfect tie-in, as people were ready to buy.

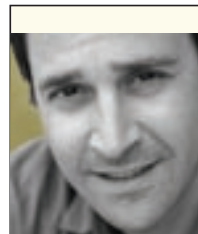
#### BRAND HEAT & PRODUCT LUST

Heineken’s campaign was tested in several international markets in the Americas, Europe and Asia against the other main sponsorship work, including Nike. Heineken

outperformed all other sponsors and achieved equal results as Nike.

Most important, Heineken achieved soaring profits with record sales in 2006.

Heineken shot a “diamond” through the minds of the world’s greatest audience—soccer fans—and created brand heat and product lust for Heineken in more than 150 countries. ■



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