



What's That Smell?



In these tough economic times, exhibitors who follow their nose are far more likely to come out smelling like a rose. Scent marketing can make your customers more relaxed, more alert — and more likely to buy. What's more, they'll stay in your booth longer, read more of your literature, and forge a stronger bond with your brand. *By Charles Pappas*

Scent marketing has been around almost as long as the nose. Medieval women charmed their beloved with gifts of apples they marinated for hours under their armpits. Clocks in ancient Japan burned a different incense every 15 minutes. And Cleopatra advertised her presence by perfuming the sails of her royal barge so thickly, Shakespeare said it made the winds themselves "Love-Sicke." The Romans perfumed their pets, the Greeks their Olympic athletes, and the Elizabethans their jewels. Even cigarettes in roaring 1920s Paris were made more alluring for women with Habanita, a bouquet of peach, jasmine, rose, patchouli, cedar, leather, and other scents they sprayed on their smokes to give them the odor of the "sweet flesh of a sinner."

Today, scent marketing — defined as the use of fragrances to create or extend a brand image — is the new black. Advertising Age formally enshrined it as one of the 10 advertising trends of 2007, and now there are at least 100 scent-consulting, -marketing, and -delivery companies serving the needs of a worldwide market pegged at \$500 million, according to Harold Vogt, co-founder of the Scarsdale, NY-based Scent Marketing Institute (SMI). A potpourri of companies have capitalized on scent marketing to

attract customers and sell products, including R.H. Macy & Co. Inc., Jimmy Choo Ltd., Lane Bryant Inc., and Hallmark Cards Inc. And slowly but surely, scent marketing is starting to make a stink on the show floor, as more and more exhibitors are following their nose to its powerful potential.

But scent marketing is more than just a buzzword du jour for exhibitors, who watch warily as major shows such as the International Consumer Electronics Show, the North American International Auto Show, and the Kitchen/Bath Industry Show and Conference (K/BIS) suffer decreased attendance. With fewer folks walking the aisles, exhibitors are looking for new ways to draw and hold attendees' attention on the trade show floor. For them, scent marketing holds enormous promise. "We now know scent can be used to help people lose weight, buy more, improve their sleep, and reduce pain," says Dr. Alan Hirsch, the head of the Smell & Taste Treatment and Research Foundation in Chicago.

Exhibitors who want a more fetching ROI might be intrigued by the Rutgers University study that discovered "contemplative shoppers" — the lookie-loos who stroll into your booth, take up your time, and then bail without buying anything — might be as much as 14 percent more likely to make a purchase

if you mist your area with a pleasant scent. Further studies by SMI and C. Russell Brumfield, author of "Whiff! The Revolution of Scent Communication in the Information Age," also show that floral and citrus scents can influence people to linger as much as 25 to 40 percent longer in stores. That's a veritable coup for exhibiting companies, considering the Center for Exhibition Industry Research (CEIR) reports that the average attendee spends just 8.3 hours visiting exhibits at a show.

Typically used in large, confined spaces such as hotels, casinos, restaurants, and malls, scent marketing has, for the most part, not yet drifted full steam ahead into the exhibit world. Of course, some exhibitors have always understood scent's innate power: Booths at food and beverage shows — from the Fancy Food Show to Kosherfest — have long baited attendees with the aromas of their latest offerings, whether it was cinnamon or edible flowers. "Smell influences about 75 percent of the emotions we generate everyday," says Martin Lindstrom, the author of "Brand Sense: Build Powerful Brands Through Touch, Taste, Smell, Sight, and Sound." "With the right smell, you can create an emotional and extremely deep relationship between your brand and your customers."

While marketers in general and trade show exhibitors in particular have typically lavished much more attention and money on sight and sound in their promotional mix, science suggests that scent marketing has far more potential: Vision and taste have three and five receptor genes, respectively, in our DNA, while smell has 350 odor-receptor genes, suggesting that nature designed us to be not only more receptive to scent but be more affected by it as well. And yet approximately 87 percent of any given brand's communication with its customers is audio or visual, virtually ignoring scent, according to SMI.

But now, shows and exhibitors are at last catching on that we are scent-ient beings, captivated, relaxed, and made suggestible by smell. There's even an entire trade show devoted to the promotional power of scent. The Scentworld Conference & Expo showcases technologies and tactics for embedding and dispensing scents for the purposes of marketing and retail applications — including exhibit-marketing applications, such as electronic kiosks that can be positioned anywhere in a booth and deliver virtually any kind of smell right under your attendees' noses.

Yet too many exhibitors default to a "spray and pray" approach: Spray your exhibit with what you feel are attractive scents through air cannons, scented electric candles, or aerosol cans, then pray visitors come. Though this approach isn't necessarily futile or scientifically bogus, it is to effective scent marketing what astrology is to astronomy. "If exhibitors want to make scent marketing work, they

should look at who's used it successfully and learn why it worked for them," says Theresa Molnar, executive director of the Sense of Smell Institute and The Fragrance Foundation in New York. "Otherwise, you won't know how to link your brand to the right smell in your customers' minds."

To find out how some exhibitors are using scent marketing, we took Molnar's advice. We looked at five companies who used the power of smell to overcome their respective challenges. In each case, you'll see how scent marketing helped the exhibitor bring in more attendees, spend more time with customers, and nose out the competition. After reading these aromatic examples, you'll come to realize that scent marketing is nothing to sneeze at.

1. Sea No Evil

With the time to develop a drug taking 10 to 15 years, and the cost to create it soaring more than 300 percent since 1987, the pharmaceutical industry is a competitive landscape. That's why Purdue Pharma L.P., the Stamford, CT-based manufacturer of analgesics and other drugs, likes to create a sense of ease in its exhibit and capture attendees' attention by prescribing a bit of aromatherapy. For years the pharmaceutical company baked cookies in its booth.

But with the 2002 tightening of the health-care industry's "Pharma Code" that governs pharmaceutical companies' marketing efforts and activities, Purdue decided to discontinue serving cookies. When it started looking to reintroduce scent back into the booth, it wanted an approach that would be soothing, comforting, and warm.

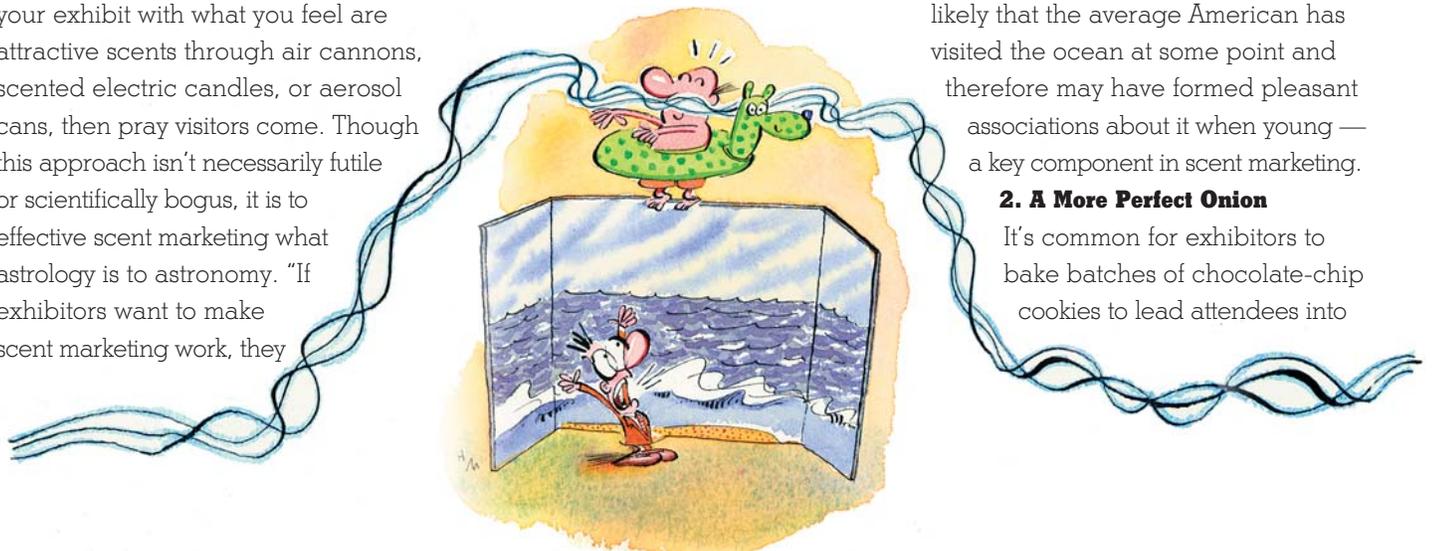
A small in-house group tested 20 various scents, such as fresh-cut grass and lavender, on staff and customers. The favorite that emerged was a spa-like scent that suggested the ocean, orchids, and aloe vera.

Purdue introduced the scent into its 30-by-40-foot booth at the American Academy of Pain Medicine annual meeting. Evoking thoughts of azure seas and exquisite flowers, the scent helped put visitors at ease. Staff also used it as an icebreaker, asking visitors to tell them what they thought of the scent, and how they reacted to it. The scent strategy proved so successful, Purdue has continued using the balmy bouquet in its exhibits to this day.

Natural scents like the one Purdue used can extend dwell time by as much as 40 percent, according to Brumfield, especially since the older demographic among the show's audience — specifically attendees age 40 and older — are most likely to find such organic scents appealing. It's likely that the average American has visited the ocean at some point and therefore may have formed pleasant associations about it when young — a key component in scent marketing.

2. A More Perfect Onion

It's common for exhibitors to bake batches of chocolate-chip cookies to lead attendees into



their booth by the nose. But not everyone's a cookie monster — and not every product is best promoted with the butter, brown sugar, and chocolate concoction. So when Electrolux Home Products-North America wanted to demonstrate its induction cooktop at K/BIS, the Martinez, GA-based maker of home appliances and outdoor products turned to a savory smell instead of sweet. To lure the show's 45,000 industry attendees into watching Electrolux demo the cooktop — which uses magnetic-field technology for hyper-quick cooking that allows you to boil water in 10 seconds — the company set up several cooking stations throughout its 80-by-110-foot booth. At each of the stainless-steel cooking areas, Electrolux chefs stirred and sautéed onions. Within minutes, the aroma wafted over the floor like a savory cloud that acted as a scent-laden signal for the hundreds who followed their noses into the booth.

"The odor compounds in onions are extremely diffusive, which means they carry a long way over the show floor and are detected even at low concentrations," says Avery Gilbert, a smell psychologist and author of "What the Nose Knows: The Science of Smell in Everyday Life." Just as vital to the smell's success was its relevance to the product. Indeed, the onions and the cooktop were as natural a pairing as hippies and patchouli. "New car' smell and pizza smell are great, but probably not together," says Rachel Herz, author of

"The Scent of Desire." "The smells you choose should make sense with the product or service you're promoting, or it's far less likely to be an effective strategy." Based on the hordes of attendees who lined up to watch Electrolux's demo, this scent/product pairing was clearly a match made in heaven.

3. Say it with Flowers

Everything came up roses for Swisscom AG at the World Telecom show in Geneva. In fact, the Bern, Switzerland, phone- and data-service provider garlanded its booth with tens of thousands of the prickly-stemmed perennial flowers. At first blush, mixing roses and electronics would seem to contradict Herz's rule that the smell should be in harmony with the product. But actually, the flowers and the company's audience and brand went together like Swiss bank accounts and white-collar criminals: The company was giving a nod to its 19th century origins in Switzerland's postal system, whose trademark symbol back then was the Swiss cross shaped like a coat of arms and decorated with a post horn, oak leaves, and alpine roses.

"We form most positive or negative associations of smells when we're young," Herz says, "and many of those associations hold on for life." Cultivated for the last 5,000 years, roses are the bestselling cut flower in Europe, and a familiar aroma that is commonly associated with positive events — such as anniversaries, birthdays, weddings

SCENT STRATEGIES

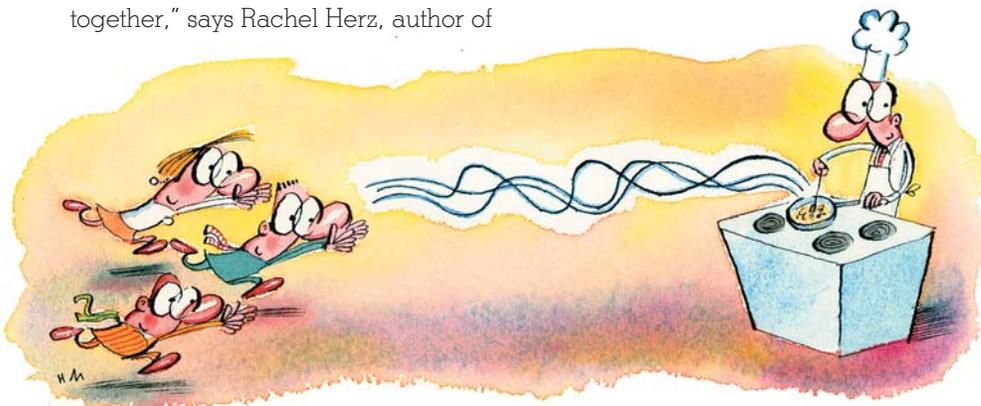
There are four main scent-marketing strategies that you can use to add an aromatic appeal to your next exhibit.

Billboard Smell: Often food-related, this approach saturates a space with scent that extends far outside it, reaching out over the football-field-like expanse of a trade show floor to attendees who otherwise might not be able to see your booth — but can smell it a mile away.

Thematic Smell: Thematic smell is used to complement your exhibit's mood or décor. If your booth's message to customers is to relax, for example, you might use scents associated with calmness, such as vanilla or lavender. If you were selling a product that protected them — e.g., safes or firearms — you might choose smells often associated with alertness, such as citrus or peppermint.

Ambient Smell: More functional than promotional, this approach is the exhibit equivalent of a public restroom air freshener to keep the funk of sweaty attendees in a small space to a minimum. Or, if you're displaying equipment in your booth that gives off a fume-like odor, you might choose to camouflage that scent to keep it from repelling passersby.

Signature Smell: Signature smells are individual scents developed specifically for and used exclusively by one company to convey a brand's "feel" to customers. Generally a mix of scents, they're most familiarly experienced in department stores and hotels such as Harrods Ltd., which wafts a lime-and-basil scent through its entrances that suggests tweedy elegance.



— for all demographics. Women, in particular, at the show might have been the most susceptible to the flower’s olfactory charms, since Herz’s research found that flowers were overwhelmingly the most popular scent for females of all age groups.

Swisscom transformed its exhibit’s 25-foot-high walls into vertical beds of the cherry-colored flowers, placing each one in an individual mini-vase that in turn was fit into a slot in the wall. Every day, the scent of the buds drifted like an invisible cloud over the show floor, drawing hundreds of attendees into the garden-like booth. Plus, floral scents like the one in Swisscom’s booth are known to persuade people of both sexes to browse longer in an enclosed space as well as spend more money, according to SMI.

4. A Breath of Fresh Air

For its booth at EXHIBITOR2009, Czarnowski Inc. needed to go small while still making a big impact. Knowing an ostentatious exhibit during an economic slump could send the wrong message to clients, the Chicago-based exhibit house opted for a 10-by-20-foot booth instead of a 20-by-20-foot exhibit at the show. But having a smaller booth didn’t mean the company had to make a smaller impression. To draw in attendees, Czarnowski used a scent-delivery system to pump in the fragrance of the fresh outdoors — specifically, the scent of a meadow with honeysuckle.

IF THE SMELL FITS ...

With more than 400,000 possible smells in the world, it’s not surprising there is no one odor that’s universally loved or loathed. Keeping in mind that one’s man perfume is another man’s Pepe le Pew, here are a few scents that appeal to specific audiences based on age and gender.

By Age

18-35

Heated plastic, bubble gum, baby powder, Axe-like colognes and body sprays, coffees, teas, and mojitos

36-50

Play-Doh, Pez, Crayola crayons, Keds, Sweet Tarts, mimeograph sheets, chlorine, bubble gum, baby powder, suntan lotion, and vanilla

51 and over

Grass, trees, hay, horses, wood, sand, the ocean, and snow

By Gender



Male

New car, tires, fresh-cut grass, and spicy and woody scents



Female

Lavender, vanilla, floral, and sweet and musky fragrances

It was a smart move. Smells can raise customers’ perception of your company and products, as reported by the Journal of Marketing. As previously mentioned, natural floral scents like the one Czarnowski used can cause people to linger longer, according to Dr. Hirsch. Other research by Hirsch suggests the outdoors/floral fragrance is a favorite of both genders, Southerners, and Easterners — which meant it would appeal to the wide variety of people at the show. Using any scent, for that matter, also increased the likelihood that attendees would retain information about the Czarnowski booth and its brand: Studies indicate

that while 50 percent of people can remember something they saw three months later, 65 percent can recall something they smelled for as much as a year afterward.

While the scent helped draw in customers, the company kept them there with a kind of smell IQ test. On a ledge against a 20-foot-long fabric back wall, Czarnowski placed four clear plastic vials. Inside each transparent container were four scent rods, incense-like sticks each infused with a smell: cinnamon, cedar, fresh-cut grass, or winter spice. Staffers then



challenged booth visitors to see if they could guess correctly which scent was associated with a particular well-known brand. Once they took a whiff of the sticks, they could make their choice of which brands those scents represented from a touch-screen in front of each vial.

After spending an estimated 25 percent more time in the booth than they did at the previous year's show, almost 400 attendees went home with a fragrant giveaway: scent sticks and a sachet imbued with the booth's captivating outdoorsy essence. For Czarnowski, using a bouquet of scents made perfect sense.

5. Pining for You

First United Door Technologies Inc. wants visitors at the trade shows it attends to stick their noses into its business — literally. The Tempe, AZ-based manufacturer of carriage-house-style garage doors typically displays a red-cedar door whose woody scent draws in visitors to its booth. But it also shows an all-steel door it paints to look like it was carved out of pine. Trouble is, steel doesn't quite have the same olfactory appeal as forestry fragrance. To make the metallic door seem more like its natural one, the company bought a batch of tree-shaped, pine-scented car fresheners, and hid them around the product display.

It wasn't just a smell-for-the-sake-of-smell move, either. Natural and woody scents are traditional favorites with the company's main demographic target, males generally 40 and older. The odors tend to trigger positive emotional responses, derived from memories of being outdoors, mowing lawns, woodworking, and hiking in the woods. Because pine's balsamic tang is also linked with relaxation and revitalization, according to the New York-based Sense of Smell Institute, it can persuade visitors to stay in your booth longer.

The aroma was so authentic, attendees gathered around the door and inhaled like they would a Christmas tree. Under the impression that the door itself was fragrant, attendees rubbed their hands over the door and then ran their fingers under their noses to get an even deeper whiff. Additionally, like the Electrolux approach with the cooktops and onions, the car fresheners' aroma was also congruent with the product — that is, the pine perfume would have seemed a natural fit with the door's wood-like appearance.

So whether you choose sweet or savory, strong or subtle, floral or food-related, scents can help you exceed your exhibiting expectations, as attendees breathe in your brand. And with that kind of potential, you can barely help but inhale the sweet smell of scent-marketing success. **E**



SMELLS AND WHISTLES

Once you choose a scent strategy, your next move is to decide how you want to deliver it. According to Harold Vogt, co-founder of the Scent Marketing Institute (SMI), the following three scent-delivery systems represent the most common options for use on the trade show floor.

Nebulization: The most common scent-delivery method, nebulization occurs when a fragrance oil is run through a mechanical device that disperses it into a mist of particles. Those particles are then picked up and moved by the ambient airflow over your exhibit. Since it emits an extremely accurate scent, nebulization is particularly desirable if you've chosen a highly complex signature fragrance. It is, however, more expensive than dry-air scent delivery.

Dry-Air Scent Delivery: The second most common vehicle for scent delivery, this method starts with fragrance oil embedded in a substance contained in a cartridge. Air is then run over or through that substance, picking up the scent, and spreading it via a small blower or fan. These systems cost about 80 percent less than ionization and nebulization. However, the cartridges deliver a less accurate scent.

Ionization: The ionization process applies an electric charge to fragrance oil that breaks the oil into extremely small particles. As with the nebulization method, the scent particles are then picked up and distributed by the ambient airflow throughout your booth. This method is relatively expensive, costing four to five times as much as dry-air scent-delivery systems.