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A proposal sent to a leading real estate group for the marketing of an up-scale development of apartments in the minimum \$2.5m bracket on famous Hedges Avenue. They took my advice on the documentary only and failed in all other areas. They lost the account ultimately, but with due respect to the sales team, the building had some shaky starts, with changes in décor of the display units. Even the display unit on the highway was a mini-disaster. The building did not give the PR machine a chance to work. Then the hierarchy of the developer changed, and of course the usual lack of loyalty cut in when they fired almost the entire team and started again. The result was the same. After the documentary, I handed over the PR to another, and I bailed out. Thankfully. But we were very proud of the documentary we produced on Hedges Avenue.

Dear

Thanks for thinking of me to assist with marketing and PR of the project.

I promised to give it some thought and at the very least, to provide you with my thoughts which may or may not fit in with your strategy.

To begin, I should perhaps clarify the area of creative business in which I would prefer to operate.

I am not interested in conventional publicity PR, the component which you mentioned yesterday and which may require monthly outpourings for media. If you wished to pursue this area, it would be best handled by the boys at ... I prefer the impromptu media attention which is generated by interesting or innovate marketing action, or by the sheer exemplary nature of the project. It's always better for the media to come to you, than to peddle what can only ever be advertorial bumpf to the predictable real estate pages of the media.

I am also not interested in VIP functions, official openings, generation of A lists for functions and the like.

My main interests are in high end documentaries, of a type which are designed to change perceptions, introduce big ideas, explain technology and examine social trends and lifestyles.

Before I explain where this particular component of PR might fit in with your project, I would like to share some general thoughts about marketing.

Advertising and other PR agencies might well fire me down in flames on some of my points of view, but I doubt if any of them can produce any data to support their very traditional approaches to marketing.

It is pretty obvious that the lavishly printed material with the same tired models and the matching "lifestyle" advertising which is usually done on a grand scale, with full page ads in colour has become the default method of generating leads.

I think a lot of this is wasted and ill directed. I feel the same way about the general run of real estate publicity or PR – the editorial or advertorial kind.

I just can't accept that anyone picking up the general brochure, bristling with this couple in a range of lifestyle poses under soft lenses, would be so inspired as to rush to the cheque book.

Nothing wrong with the production, but I just think that for the outlay, something of greater marketing value could have been produced. A documentary on Hedges Avenue perhaps in which all the senses are stimulated.

I've yet to see any research which tells a developer precisely how to find the buyers. It has become a mix of attention grabbers, which traditionally fall within the schedule of PR activity which you outlined to me yesterday.

Again, there's nothing wrong with any of these avenues, but what I'm critical of is the steadfast adherence to what I see as a tired and overworked medium to reach people with the substance, means or desire to spend \$2.5m on an apartment by the sea...and all this in an age of multi media.

I agree with you that this could well be a "different" project. Let's assume that the building will be well built, that the apartments will be fitted out with style, that the whole thing will be architecturally stimulating. I would have thought that the marketing plan should match the product by being, not slightly different, but incredibly different to a point where the market talks about it.

If the aim of the game is to generate leads, I'm saying that the methods for doing so are up for grabs. A new project of this calibre perhaps deserves some boldness in the approach to the market...perhaps a combination of the following things.

DON'T ADVERTISE – in the traditional sense. Don't spew out the usual lifestyle crap which simply aligns with all of the other penthouses and nice apartments in scores of buildings by the sea. Nothing new is ever said in any of these advertisements. They are riddled with tired clichés – very much like the brochure you have already produced. I believe people with style and money skim over this passé form of presentation. They are more likely to read a three line "classified" in Australian Gourmet Traveller, which might say

hedgesnot a new brand of cigarette, just an exclusive building in Australia's most talked about seafront avenue. Inhale the detail at [www.....](#)

Instead of blowing a budget on full page ads full of clichés and no information, simplify the process by mass classifieds in glossy mags and weekend newspaper magazines in the major capitals. You'll get a lot more coverage for your buck and my theory is that with some clever writing, you could well begin a cult following for this mysterious project.

FORGET THE PARTIES – from what I've seen, people with real money and desire don't go to these parties. They are not the type, unless of course they have big egos and want to flaunt. I believe more can be done by the individual approach, stimulated by a concentrated campaign which aims to introduce the project to the locals and maintain confidence in the hedges avenue phenomenon. I'm talking a saturation campaign, with style, within selected beachfront enclaves from Surfers to Burleigh. The basis of this is that those already in or close to beachfront living, will know how good it is and will be more likely to have friends or acquaintances who would like to follow suite.

CAPTURE THE MYSTIQUE OF HEDGES – this is a multi media age, so why go overboard with printed material which few read. Very few people will ignore a nicely presented DVD about their community.

I think there could be big mileage in doing a legit documentary about Hedges Avenue. By legit, I mean non-commercial, hard hitting, well scripted, fascinating interviews with great people from Hedges Avenue. Let's face it. It is the most talked about avenue in real estate circles.

It has commanded more than its share of notoriety because of the prices paid and the people who paid them. It is, without question, one of the most fascinating stories about the noted trend of Australians to capture their piece of the coastline, regardless of the cost.

If done properly, without commercial overtones (the benefits for the project come in much more subtle ways) a documentary could be produced which has wide appeal, including the TV channels. The project is written into it as the culmination of a story based on the great Australian dream of living on the ocean in sheer luxury. How this is done will be critical and will have to be well thought out. The developer will need to understand that this is not a blatant commercial. It is a powerful tool designed to draw attention, create an ambience and appeal to the snob value of those with the where-with-all.

I threw the idea at my co-producer and director Paul Noonan (of the 7.30 Report and lately Big Brother fame) and he thinks a story on Hedges Avenue could well be saleable to a TV channel. Even if it missed this mark, it would still become a vital tool in the direct marketing campaign. DVD's can be produced in bulk for mini-dollars these days.

But above all, the developer, or the project, would go down in history as being the only party to have captured the dream of Hedges Avenue, Australia's most talked about seafront street. It would generate media from a totally different angle. The DVD would be good enough to be presented to Council libraries and a whole range of VIPs. They will be far more likely to watch and enjoy a hard hitting and entertaining documentary than pick up and read a brochure, no matter how enticing it looks, which contains really nothing about Hedges Avenue or its reasons for being and its claims to fame. (It was touched on in the last page of text in the brochure – it should have been printed on the front cover).

In the short time available, I haven't attempted to put figures on any of these concepts. In fact the only area where I am competent to go into detail on budgets would be the documentary process. But before that happens, I believe there should be a conscious decision made on the type of campaign this should be and the type of concepts which might be employed to achieve your ends.

If my small contribution, based on many years of being there and on critical observations, are helpful to this process, I am pleased.

Should you need to discuss any of these concepts further, I would be happy to attend a further meeting to flesh out some thoughts.

Yours sincerely

Ken Newton
Managing Director