

COLONIAL MALL BEL AIR

Renaming Celebration, July 20, 2000

Situation

Bel Air Mall was purchased in 1998 by Colonial Properties Trust. In doing so, Colonial initiated a number of changes at the mall, including \$1.5 million in renovations and the addition of several nationally recognized tenants. In 2000, among continuing improvements, Colonial decided to change the long standing name of the mall from Bel Air Mall to Colonial Mall Bel Air.

Colonial wanted an event that would impress corporate officials and bring awareness of the changes that had taken place since its purchase. The target of their efforts would be area residents who had been patrons of Bel Air throughout its 33 year history. Their message was that Colonial symbolized more than just a name change, but quality and commitment to service.

Dealing with a market skeptical of change, the agency's challenge was to develop a renaming event that was pleasing to both Colonial V.I.P.s and the family alike while delivering Colonial's branding message. Colonial wanted to demonstrate they were more than just a new name and that Colonial properties would deliver Mobile shoppers vast improvements over the pre-existing mall.

Objectives

The agency wanted to provide an upscale reception for elected officials and community leaders while providing a public event that would draw widespread media attention to the positive changes taking place at Colonial Mall Bel Air.

In order to publicize the new name and image of our client, the agency coordinated a drive-in movie. Based on analysis of the market, the agency could successfully anticipate audience tastes, enabling us to design an event with widespread appeal that would satisfy Colonial's goals: to create a lasting impression of their new name in the minds of their demographic, and to host an event that would generate third party credibility within the media.

Strategy

We proposed Colonial Mall invite Mobile shoppers and corporate V.I.P.s to enjoy a drive-in movie shown in the mall's parking lot to commemorate the name change.

The event would re-enact a quintessential drive-in experience, complete with concessions and a play area for children. To utilize "back-to-school" promotions, we organized a fashion show featuring the merchandise that mall tenants would be rolling out for the fall season.

Event publicity would rely solely on the agency's public relations efforts. With no advertising dollars budgeted for the promotion of the name change, the agency's task would be to garner early publicity momentum to generate ticket sales and yield media interest closer to the event date to drive the renaming message.

To draw a large crowd of family oriented consumers into the mall, the gates of the drive-in would be opened two hours prior to the show. Patrons would visit the Mall for collateral promotions, see changes made since Colonial's arrival and have an opportunity to hear opening remarks from mall personnel at the fashion show. When show time arrived, viewers would return to their automobiles to enjoy the movie.

Creative Execution

The agency identified a Pennsylvania company which provided a full service drive-in movie production, complete with a 300 square foot viewing screen, full projection capabilities, an individualized FM broadcast modulator for transmitting the film's audio to viewers' automobiles and a professional crew to set-up and run the show. To fulfill the drive-in experience, the agency created customized "previews" in the form of a laser light show featuring the new Colonial logo. A live camera was also used to broadcast opening remarks from the mall's general manager onto the movie screen before the show.

To maximize public relations opportunities, Colonial charged a \$5.00 per automobile entrance fee benefitting the Ronald McDonald House, a national charity with an affiliation with Colonial Mall Bel Air. The fashion show before the movie would allow Colonial management to directly address their target market with their brand promise. Members of the city council would also participate, providing third party credibility.

The agency provided media materials to radio, television and print outlets in the area. We then personally contacted each of these sources to generate interest and offer development assistance. This included having the head of Colonial Mall's marketing department prepared and available to appear in any of those mediums. The agency also created media packages featuring extensive background information on Colonial Properties Trust, Colonial Mall Bel Air, key mall personnel, interactive components featuring color and black and white logos for the new name (for use with television and print media), information regarding the name change and what it would mean for local consumers, as well as data regarding the production of the drive-in.

The screening area provided a viewing space capable of being seen by as many as 400 automobiles. We opted to sell only 300 tickets, reserving fifty slots for our V.I.P. attendees. This guaranteed optimal viewing and eased logistical concerns.

Prior to the event, the agency handled every detail in the production, from providing aerial photos of the screening area for logistical purposes to maintaining constant contact with all production crew members. The agency composed extensive memorandums detailing power requirements, estimates of manpower needs, a schedule of all arrival, set-up and completion times, and individualized memorandums for each group coordinating their involvement with the entire event.

Local caterers were contacted and a site was chosen for the V.I.P party after the fashion show. While the party itself was planned by the mall's in-house marketing department, the agency was in charge of its implementation into the entire event.

Several different groups of local volunteers were utilized in production. The Boys and Girls Club aided in the construction of the screen and volunteers from the Ronald McDonald House were on hand at show time to take tickets and direct traffic into the viewing area. Mall personnel aided in post event breakdown.

Results

The event was successful, due in large part to media support before and during the event. The drive-in was a sell-out. While a three hundred car limit was small in comparison to normal mall traffic in a day, the unique appeal of the event combined with the focus on Colonial's prime consumers made it an ideal venue. From the overall turnout, we estimate there to have been 1,300 viewers at the mall for the event.

In the week prior to the event, one local television station featured the mall marketing director in a two minute segment for the noon news, allowing her to describe in detail the event and post key information on screen. The major daily newspaper ran a story devoted to the name change itself, as well as a separate column concerning the drive-in event in the city's weekly activities insert. As the event drew closer, several local radio stations provided on-air mentions throughout the day. The agency catalogued the impact of this publicity and noted a direct correlation between ticket sales and the media received. We were able to achieve the goal of driving ticket sales early enough to anticipate event success, while securing exposure near and on the date of the event, creating grassroots enthusiasm about the actual name change.

The event also received a great deal of promotion from local media on the day of the event, with three local stations on hand before, during and after the show. This created public attention for a story that may not have been as newsworthy without the support of such a popular family event.

The fashion show went well, providing additional media opportunities for mall personnel and local politicians to address a large audience without putting forth any production effort of their own.

Colonial Mall Bel Air was able to create awareness of their name change and the improvements made to the mall itself. By having an ideal target audience present for the official announcement, Colonial accomplished their goals regarding their new image while demonstrating to Colonial V.I.P.s their mall's ability to draw a large local audience for a special event.