

New Techniques in Partnership Marketing

“Partnerships seem to be the icing on the cake—the last piece you put into the mix to sort of get you to the rate base that you want to have.” — **Dave Rock, VP, M2 Media Group, LLC**

By [Chandra Johnson-Greene](#)

At the 2007 *Circulation Management* Conference and Expo, which took place in New York City this week, one of the Core Skills track’s hottest sessions was “Partnership Marketing 2007: Newest Techniques, Online and Off,” which featured a panel moderated by Dave Rock, VP, M2 Media Group. The panel provided case studies and gave their views on what makes a successful (or unsuccessful) partnership, as well as how to comply with the auditing rules put in place to make the copies that are sold valid.

Kimberly Shay, circulation director, agency, partnership marketing & audit compliance, Rodale, offered tips to session attendees on how to make partnerships work for their own companies:

Understand your brand. Understanding your brand’s mission and how it relates to any partners that you’re looking to work with is the first step, Shay said. “And understand who your sales people are and what they think the brand is,” she says. “Because your sales team or publisher may think that a partner you’re approaching is down market for them. So really understand your brand when you’re creating your wish list.”

Define volume and margin expectations. Meet with your modelers, circ directors, senior management, whoever is making the decision about what volume and margin expectations are. Find out if you’re using partnerships to find new sources of business or to replace more marginal business.

Leverage your internal and external resources. Work with everyone. Pop into your publisher’s office, befriend your marketing director and go out to lunch with your promotional director. Talk to every person who can help get a partnership going. But also leverage your partner’s resources. If you’re working online, use the opportunity to have your partner’s team create the language and the cover art instead of using your internal resources.

Sell yourself first. Before you present any missions, goals or ideas, ask yourself this question: If you were the partner would you do this deal?

Peter Winn, director of planning & development, consumer marketing, Bonnier Group, began his presentation by demonstrating how trade shows could be used to acquire new subs via three approaches: booth sales, ticket upgrades and inclusion in show ticket. He described the trio approach as “a great way to cross sell and brand our within a targeted demographic.”

Winn also described how *Saveur* sold subscriptions through a culinary class program, where attendees were given a one-year subscription included in the class fee, as well as a recipe booklet and a tote bag stuffed with samples and promotions.

“[This partnership] is a perfect extension of the *Saveur*—it’s a way of bringing the *Saveur* brand to life,” Winn stated. “Die-hard culinary enthusiasts are willing to pay a premium price for the class and they want to get our magazine...the foodies really eat this up—no pun intended.”

Mark Burnette, partnership marketing director, Hearst Magazines, encouraged attendees to consider a career in partnership marketing.

"Partnership marketing is one career you can get into where you get a good grasp of the whole circulation equation and, actually, the whole publishing equation," Burnette said.

"In partnership marketing, you learn ABC real fast, and if you don't, you'll be in trouble. You also get to interact with everyone—publishers, editors, etc. It's a great career. I'd like to encourage you to look at it if you want to expand your horizons."