



Indianhead, Lookout Pass Tie for Marketing Award

Aspen, Jay Peak, Telluride also Recognized.

Indianhead Mountain, Mich., Lookout Pass, Idaho, Jay Peak, Vt., and Colorado's Aspen Skiing Co., and Telluride were presented with this year's annual Marketing Awards during a reception at NSAA's National Convention held in May. The awards, sponsored this year by SnoCountry Mountain Ski Association, are presented annually to ski resorts nationwide, both large and small, for their successful marketing and guest service programs that ultimately help grow the sports of skiing and snowboarding. This year the Marketing Awards were presented in four resort categories based on resort skier and rider visitation: Up to 99,999 visits; 100,000 to 250,00 visits; 250,000 to 500,000 visits; and 500,000 and more visits.

BY TROY HAWKS

Judges for this year's awards were Rob Brown, president of Mountain News Corp., Orinda, Calif., Emilie Kelly, principal consultant of Camp Kelly Inc., Morrison, Colo., Evan Reece, co-founder, Liftopia Inc., San Francisco, Calif., and Kate Thomson, research manager, The Sterling-Rice Group, Boulder, Colo.



Lookout Pass President and GM Phil Edholm tells the audience, and ski icon and Guest Emcee Johnny Moseley, the basis of the resort's award-winning marketing program.

Up to 100,000 skier visits

Indianhead Mountain, Mich.



"The 2006/07 season was very hard on most Midwestern resorts," submits Indianhead Marketing Director Dave Nyquist. "Lack of natural snow combined with the inability to make snow left many resorts marginal at best. Metro areas had little to no snow and as a result, customers' perceptions were that there was no snow anywhere in the Midwest."

In response, the goal of Indianhead's 2007/08 marketing campaign was to educate customers about the quality and quantity of natural snow Indianhead receives on average each season. The tag line "Where everyday is a snow day" was created, as was the term "gourmet snow," and both were used throughout the campaign.

A mix of traditional, direct, retail, point of purchase, interactive and viral marketing was utilized to increase word-of-mouth referrals. Indianhead's website was revamped and emailed newsletters launched the first phase of the viral campaign that featured an interactive holiday card. As a result, 22 percent of guests that received the email also watched the holiday card, and many of those forwarded the card on to family and friends helping to spread the Indianhead brand.



News of a Yeti sighting was sent to email subscribers as part of Indianhead's viral/interactive marketing campaign.

A second interactive, viral phase of the campaign was launched in February. News of a Yeti sighting at Indianhead was circulated via email. A reported 23 percent of email subscribers clicked a link to view the Yeti at Indianhead, making it the most shared page on the resort's website to date.

Finally, Indianhead's campaign utilized a desktop widget that automatically updates users on new snow conditions, upcoming events or special offers.

"Indianhead can now push information to customer without having to rely on them visiting the website or seeing an ad," states Nyquist. "This is much more proactive than waiting for the customer to come to us."

This is Indianhead Mountain's first Marketing Award.

"Good use of taking an overall marketing strategy and then integrating it into simple messages that skiers and snowboarders will relate to. Good use of interactive, print and direct mail." – Rob Brown

Lookout Pass, Idaho



"When you live in the panhandle of Idaho, you're not far from Washington or Montana," submits Marketing Director Jim Schreiber. "We decided that since everyone had one thing in common in that we all live, work and play in the beautiful area we live, we should share our interests in our lifestyles, cultural heritage, business and lifestyle pursuits."

In its marketing campaign, Lookout sought to increase its customer base and season pass holders by creating business alliances in all communities within a 110-mile radius of the resort.



As part of its Community Partner Program, Lookout Pass secured 18 local businesses that offered discounts and benefits to season pass holders.



Left to right: Mountain Uniforms Gehren Thelen, Telluride Marketing Executive Director Matt Skinner, Mountain Uniforms Kim Stearns, Aspen Skiing Co. Marketing VP Jeanne Mackowski, Jay Peak Marketing VP Steve Wright, Lookout Pass President and GM Phil Edholm, Snow Monsters President and NSAA Guest Emcee Jack Turner, Johnny Moseley, and SnoCountry Ski Association's Rob Chandler and Tom Cottrill.

For the 2007/08 season, Lookout Pass secured 18 local businesses in its Community Partner Program, including restaurants, motels, sports retailers, an indoor sports center and car dealership, among other businesses. The program invited local business partners in the community to share in the opportunity to offer benefits to the resort's season pass holders, while also helping to generate additional sales.

As a result, season pass sales for 2007/08 increased 43.7 percent, and skier visits were also up over the previous season.

"Our food court saw a tremendous increase in sales in November and December even though there were three weeks less during this holiday period than last year," states Schreiber. "The Community Partner Rewards Loyalty program has driven new season pass holders and new customers to our resort. With very little cost implementation, this campaign has produced immeasurable results that will benefit Lookout and its business partners for years to come."

This is Lookout Pass' first Marketing Award.

"Lookout Pass put together a clever, effective guerrilla marketing campaign that builds on its core strength – community. The community partner program was a clever grassroots approach to get buy-in from all of their target local customers. The results are phenomenal with what looks like very little budget invested. Big ROI!" – Emilie Kelly ♦

100,000 – 250,000 skier visits

Jay Peak Resort, Vt.



This season Jay Peak's marketing strategy strengthened the messaging of the previous two seasons, communicating to the resort's destination audience in a very direct but out-of-context approach.

As Marketing VP Steve Wright submits: "Our position was that those who take winter vacations at Jay Peak care more about the skiing and riding than the peripheral vacation elements. We did this by building satirized images and scenarios of things that the Jay Peak guest has little interest in. In showcasing these mock scenarios our intent was to build affinity and self awareness. In reality, our future here at Jay Peak will include some of the very things we were poking fun at, but our general axiom still holds: that those experiences will still fall in line behind snow, trails, trees and camaraderie."

Located near the U.S.-Canadian border, a survey conducted by Jay Peak showed that while the French Canadian audience shares similar values to the U.S. audience, they respond quite differently to marketing, advertising and positioning.

As Wright states: "In translating cut lines and positioning statements, past U.S.-based campaigns have not tracked well with our French Canadian audience. With this 'lost-in-translation' issue, we chose to partner with a Quebec-based design firm to help blend our core messaging and create a platform where, although the tone and direction were identical, the imaging and energies were re-skinned and redirected."

In communicating the messaging, the resort utilized radio, TV, web, email and direct mailing. The results include a 30 percent

increase in paid visits over the previous season, netting a new record Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation and Amortization (EBITDA) for the resort. The resort's Buddy Club web pages netted more than 500,000 visits, resulting in more than 25,000 new customer contacts, including names, addresses and cell phone numbers. In addition, Jay Peak's free gas direct mail campaign received a 6 percent track rate resulting in more than \$50,000 in Stay and Play revenue during slower midweek periods.

"What we can impart from these results is that we had lots of help," submits Wright. "From well-timed snow to employees living the brand to a president who allows us to run and gun, the successes here come as a result of the successful coordination of the whole."

This is the second Marketing Award for Jay Peak with a previous win in 2005/06.

"Jay Peak did an excellent job accomplishing their goals. By focusing on who they are and not trying to be 'everything to everyone,' they're able to highlight their best attributes and generate a sense of aspiration to ski and ride there." – Evan Reece

250,000 – 500,000 skier visits

Telluride Ski Resort, Colo.



In developing its 2007/08 marketing campaign, Telluride started with asking itself "what is freedom from the ordinary?" As Sales and Marketing Executive Director Matt Skinner submits: "That is the question we asked ourselves as we sought to take the next step in the evolution of our brand. What does it mean to the guest? What does it mean to the employees? What does it mean to the company and its position in the industry?"

In the end, the question became the campaign as well as the company mission: Unmatched in North America. In furthering its brand recognition, Telluride worked closely with the Telluride Tourism Board and the Town Mountain Village to license and trademark its pick-axe logo. All entities incorporated the image into their marketing programs.

"As a result, the majority of year-round advertising coming out of the Telluride region has a trademark anchor in the pick-axe," says Skinner. "There may not be another destination in the country with such synergy between the resort, town and tourism board, all working toward fulfilling one brand promise."

The resort revamped its Vision, Mission and Goals statement to coincide with its brand promise. Key to the mission, states Skinner, is a focus on resort employees through training, communication and a newly launched rewards and recognition program



"Oh I'd love to try a black diamond, they sound expensive."
Jay Peak's campaign spoke to its core audience through a direct, but out-of-context approach using satirized images and scenarios.



Among the results of Telluride's marketing campaign this season was a 16 percent increase in website visitors and a 26 percent increase in online ticket sales.

with \$150,000 funding aimed at creating employee pride and advocacy in working to be the best in their individual roles.

As a result, skier visits increased 9 percent this season, yields increased 11 percent and revenues also increased by 11 percent. Season and regional pass sales grew by nearly 25 percent, and ski and ride lesson revenues grew by 10 percent. The website experienced a 16 percent increase in visits, and online ticket sales grew by 26 percent. Lodging occupancy rates were up 8 percent for the season. Finally, approval ratings for guest services rose from 89 percent to 96 percent and guest advocacy went from 84 percent to 88 percent.

This is the second Marketing Award for Telluride with a previous win in 2005/06.

"Knowing and communicating their best attributes makes Telluride's campaign honest and believable, likely increasing trial, and retaining those customers by delivering on their honest promises." – Evan Reece

500,000 + skier visits

Aspen Skiing Company, Colo.

ASPEN SNOWMASS.

In the fall of 2006, submits VP of Marketing Jeanne Mackowski, Aspen embarked on a major marketing initiative to engage skiers and snowboarders in the fight against global climate change. The Save Snow campaign featured a winter advertising campaign designed to reflect the resort's 10 years of environmental commitment and the launching of the related website, savesnow.com.

"This year, we decided to try something different," states Mackowski. "Our research over the past two years tells us that concern for the environment and sustainable business practices are important to our guests."

For example:

- 23.4 percent of guests polled said they were willing to pay more for environmentally friendly services or products;
- 15.9 percent said that the resort's environmental policies and practices influenced the guests' decision when deciding where to go for a ski or ride vacation;
- 30.5 percent of guests rated Aspen's performance in relation to environmental issues as being excellent;
- 38.8 percent said Aspen's environmental performance made them more likely to return.

This year, Aspen distributed 42,000 compact fluorescent light bulbs in an effort to encourage guests and the local community to take small steps to decrease their overall environmental footprint. According to Mackowski, the distribution effort has the potential to save 10 million pounds of CO2 emissions, an equivalent of planting 1,435 trees annually or removing 910 cars off of the road every year, and collectively saving \$750,000 each year in energy costs.

"Changing one incandescent light bulb to a more energy efficient compact fluorescent light bulb saves money and instantly increases an individual's commitment to the environment," states Mackowski.

This is Aspen Skiing Co.'s fourth Marketing Award, with previous wins in 2005/06, 2004/05 (twice recognized) and 2003/04.

"A memorable and "buzz-worthy" extension of the Save Snow campaign. Beautiful execution with a real environmental impact. A leading edge breakthrough – no one else is doing anything like this."

– Kate Thomson. ■



Research conducted by Aspen revealed that more than 38 percent of guests said that the resort's environmental performance made them more likely to return.