

**Sanjay Tripathy, EVP and Head, Marketing, on engagement through BTL activities  
Eventfaqs, October 14, 2008**

### **If you want engagement, BTL is the only option: Sanjay Tripathy, EVP and Head-Marketing, HDFC Standard Life**

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HDFC Standard Life is creating a few firsts with its marketing campaigns. Building on its 'Sar Utha ke Jiyo' positioning, the brand has created a music album by the same name to take its premise of 'Self Respect' and 'Self Reliance' to the masses. A live concert 'Swabhimani' was organized to announce the launch of the album.

In conversation with EVENTFAQS' Jagadeesh Krishnamurthy, HDFC Standard Life Insurance's **Sanjay Tripathy** (Executive Vice President and Head of Marketing) discloses that the music album might only be the beginning of more such initiatives. A movie might also be a possibility – given the brand theme, it seems very possible.

The brand claims to be the highest spender on BTL marketing in the category (life insurance). Tripathy underlined the significance of on-ground contact and brand activation for the category. A conscious flexibility in allocation of spends is allowing the brand room for continuous innovation in the BTL space.

As HDFC Standard Life Insurance moves further into non-traditional marketing spaces, Tripathy emphasized on the importance of an idea for it to successfully translate into on-ground activities. Excerpts from the interview:

#### **Who came up with this music album idea for 'Sar Utha Ke Jiyo'?**

We had briefed several agencies, on ideas of a similar nature, and P9 came up with this particular idea. We liked the idea and asked them to take it forward.

#### **What are the possibilities of taking it to a higher level?**

It is fairly early to discuss. The possibilities with a brand thought like 'Sar Utha Ke Jiyo' are very wide. Movies with good scripts are what we are looking out for. We are looking at whether these will work and help us make our brand much more endearing and engaging to our target segment. It is a step by step process and we will take it one step at a time.

#### **How much time do you think it will take to reach that stage (of making a movie to take home the idea)?**

It will depend on how successful this initiative is. And it will also depend on what other

opportunities are coming about. It all depends on a good script and the right integration. Now, we are getting into the ideation stage.

**You mentioned that your sector is mainly about (one-on-one) consumer engagement. How much spends does HDFC Standard Life allocate for experiential marketing?**

What we look at is the idea and how big it is. Our budget spends are not fixed and I would look at ways of spending the money most effectively rather than spending a pre-fixed percentage on OOH or a certain percentage on something else. On a good idea, I may spend 20 percent more.

On-ground activation is not ongoing and we keep on doing different things. Last year, we did an International Arts and Crafts Competition (IACC 2007) with Pidilite. This year, we are evaluating the thought of working with a music or kids television channel. We've got an overall marketing budget to start with, and we look at how the industry is spending. If the industry is not spending more, we can actually maintain spends or reduce it if necessary.

The idea is not to have certain benchmarks and keep spending to that level, but to take the best care of voids using better creatives. It's about smarter marketing rather than just spending money.

**You mentioned spends of about Rs 35 crores on marketing last year. How much was on ATL and BTL? What about this year?**

Last year, the BTL spends were higher at around 25 percent. But there is nothing like a ratio that we work on. It all depends on the idea and the engagement levels in an activity, rather than on spending a predetermined amount.

**Typically, how many campaigns does HDFC Standard Life have in a year?**

We have around five to six (advertising) campaigns that are on for six to eight weeks. We stitch our activation campaigns surrounding it, so that becomes a 360-degree communication campaign.

**Could you list some of the activities done in the past?**

I could list some of our key activities in the past. In 2005-'06, we did 'Art of Parenting'. In 2006-'07, we did 'Nutrition and Young Supersaver' programmes in schools. Then in 2007-'08, we did IACC with Pidilite, where 20 lakh school kids participated from across India.

This year, we are evaluating the thought of working with a music or kids television channel for a school contact program, and it will be a mix of on-ground as well as on-air activity. We have already done 'My Parents Dream' contest and 'Guess what your child wants to be' contests this year, which had a high degree of participation.

**Do you have any specific agencies to work with (for events / on ground activation)?**

We actually work with multiple agencies, and whoever comes up with the best thought gets the preference. We have worked with many agencies in the past. Now, our media agency Mediaedge:cia has an activation and events division. We look at whether the idea is good, and whether they have the execution capabilities. This year, Group M agencies are doing most of our activities. We also tie up with many local agencies.

**What will be the industry average for BTL activities, in your sector?**

Most players still believe in spending higher on ATL rather than on BTL. I believe we are the largest spenders on BTL in the country at the moment, among our competitors. They are all starting out now, and we have three to four years of experience. This helps us in understanding which activity will be much more engaging with our consumers and which will not.

**Measurement of on-ground activities is still not robust. How do you measure the RoIs?**

For us, we still look at leads and what the level of engagement is. Before the start of an activity, we look at the expected target audience, engagement level and their participation level. Hence, it measures both the parameters and how it is executed.

Most of the time, you can plan events at the corporate level, but at the ground level - at multiple locations simultaneously or over a period of time - the quality of execution might vary. So we try to maintain these things, and we have a scale based on which an event is selected. We use it to measure whether we will do a particular event or not.

In activation, we also look at brand experience, which is more of an experiential kind of thing. We look at how many people came and interacted with the brand and understand how many people are serious about the product.

**Can we expect your BTL spends to grow further in the coming years?**

Going ahead, BTL is the way forward, because everyone will crowd ATL. If you want engagement, BTL is the only option. Again, it has to be the idea. We have to take the initial steps as most BTL agencies do not have the necessary ideation and execution capabilities. Most of the BTL ideas are lost at the execution level and not at the ideation level.