

# So Your Bull's-Eye Consumer Tweeted at Your Brand. Now What?



**Joe Sargent**

Brand Manager,  
Wilson Sporting Goods

Edited by Marissa Pederson

What is the value of a tweet about my brand?

This is a question I have asked myself multiple times in my various roles exploring experiential marketing. As all marketers know, understanding the consumer is at the foundation of a successful program. Companies spend millions trying to understand every aspect of their consumers' lives.

- “What does she watch on TV?”
- “What are her shopping habits?”
- “How much of our products does she consume?”

All of these questions feed the research that informs media plans, retail planograms and volume projections. However, there is still a gap when it comes to connecting with these consumers.

This is where experiential marketing plays a vital role. Creating an immersive experience for consumers can turn the curious into fans and fans into advocates. These advocates not only purchase products, but also persuade others to do so as well. In the best cases, experiential marketing helps brands express their core values and physically engage the senses of potential and current fans.

And the best part? Brands have the full attention of everyone in attendance. They are able to engage their audience much more effectively than by having an expensive TV commercial that gets skipped via DVR or is missed while a viewer checks her phone.

So why wouldn't every brand spend all their money in this space?

In my experience, companies are hesitant when it comes to experiential marketing for a number of reasons. It tends to be expensive on a per-consumer basis versus a radio or TV spot. To make a splash, the prevailing thought is that a brand has to spend millions of dollars to reach a few thousand consumers at most.

This represents a gamble for decision-makers. Do you invest a million dollars into an experiential activity or create another TV spot?

We have reams of information on the ROI of TV commercials across multiple product categories. In contrast, many experiential activities do not directly impact sales. Considered together, it is no wonder that experiential marketing activities are often marginalized.

## Creating an immersive experience for consumers can turn the curious into fans and fans into advocates.

How, then, does a brand successfully execute experiential programs?

Consider Bud Light's Whatever USA campaign.

Bud Light flew several thousand people to a small town in Colorado and met them with a nearly complete takeover of the area, including live music, larger-than-life activations and, of course, lots of Bud Light. The activation was supported with TV spots, and entries were accepted via social media as well as at retail locations.

The brand claimed the promotion was a success, saying that sales increased during the summer, which is the most important season for sales in the beer industry. Equally important, more than 200,000 consumers auditioned to be a part of the campaign. This led to an increase in brand affinity with its key consumers.

As this example shows, the key to successful experiential marketing is expanding the message beyond those attending the event and creating an integrated program that maximizes consumer awareness, retail activation and experiential activities.

When an integrated program is executed successfully, evaluating ROI becomes much easier. Post-campaign, the Bud Light

marketing team can now identify sales tied to Whatever through retail execution. This is key because purely experiential campaigns can have successful KPIs, like high social media impressions or increased long-term brand health, but those are incredibly difficult to translate into real dollar value. Many product categories, like beer, are trending downward in volume; therefore, the ability to quantify results is paramount with pressure mounting to turn these businesses around.

So what's the value of a tweet about my brand?

That answer is somewhat moot.

In the future, my work will focus on creating programs that deliver a consistent message at all consumer touch points. Experiential marketing remains a powerful tool to connect brands with consumers, but focusing on it alone would be shortsighted. From the consumer perspective, one great event with no follow through falls flat. From the business perspective, the benefits of that tweet are too far removed from the sale.

The value of a tweet is nothing without a strong program supporting it.

Joe Sargent is a Detroit sports fan by birth with a soft spot for brand marketing. Having lived in several states for work and school, Joe has shared triumphs and miseries with several fan bases. He currently works as a brand manager at Wilson Sporting Goods in Chicago and has several years of experience in lifestyle marketing and experiential activation.

