



The Trigonometry of Talent
Identifying the right celebrity talent for brands

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It's been said that poetry is as exact a science as geometry. Or was it trigonometry?

Whether you agree or disagree with that assessment, for years, marketers have approached celebrity talent buying as artists rather than scientists. And while there is an art to it, we're getting better at the science.

In fact, our business has evolved to the point where identifying the right celebrity for a brand marketing campaign is based less on supposition and more on statistics. Clearly, a marketer's experience and instinct still matter greatly; only now, we have tools that can better guide our judgments.

Using celebrity talent in a marketing initiative is an expensive proposition, making it even more critical to identify talent that will achieve the stated objectives (sales, awareness, preference, etc.). Unfortunately, for most marketers, it's something that's been done without a lot of data or rigor behind it.

But talent identification is more than a financial consideration. Campaigns featuring big-name celebrities frequently elevate to the C-level, with the CMO getting involved and, at times, even the CEO taking keen interest – and for good reason. For most brands, a celebrity-driven campaign can have major, long-term implications for how a brand is perceived in the marketplace.

When working to match the ideal celebrity with a brand, we begin where most marketers begin when handed a brief: By immersing ourselves in the brand. What's the brand strategy? What are the product attributes? What are the key consumer insights? And, perhaps most important, what is the brand trying to achieve with this campaign? What are the objectives?

Only after we're comfortable with what the brand stands for, who the target is and what we want to achieve, do we turn our attention

to the talent. Specifically, we're aiming for talent synchronicity. This is where science comes into play. In our case, we rely on our celebrity index – the Celebrity DBI – to provide us with data to guide our decisions. The Celebrity DBI quantifies consumer perceptions of more than 5,000 celebrities globally, scoring them across a number of key attributes, including Awareness, Appeal, Trust, Influence, Aspiration, Trendsetter, Endorsement, and Breakthrough (the degree to which consumers take notice of a celebrity). In partnership with REPUCOM, the global leader in sports marketing research, we spearheaded the international expansion of Celebrity DBI into 12 additional markets: Argentina, Brazil, China, France, Germany, India, Italy, Mexico, Russia, Spain, Turkey and the United Kingdom. Our data represents the views of more than 1.5 billion people—approximately 30% of the world's population. In 2014, the Celebrity DBI will expand into Japan and Australia as well. We have captured consumer perceptions on over 5,000 international celebrities, including actors, athletes, musicians, models, business leaders and more.

Awareness is the baseline. If our target consumer doesn't know a celebrity, the other attributes are meaningless. Breakthrough is also an important attribute. If the celebrity doesn't capture the attention of the consumer, the brand's message is less likely to be received. Influence is an equally significant attribute for brands. How does this celebrity impact brand consideration and purchase intent?

The importance of other attributes varies depending on the brand. A bank, for example, might be more interested in celebrities who score high in trust, while a fashion brand or even an energy drink may value celebs who are regarded as trendsetters.

Supporting this analysis, we segment our process into six factors or vertices, which we envision as a hexagon, assigning a score to each. Serving as a roadmap to guide our thinking, this process enhances endorser identification, resulting in maximization of engagement between the brand, the targeted consumer, and the celebrity.

Combining scores from each of the following six vertices determines a celebrity's overall fit in driving consumer engagement and brand objectives:

1. Talent synchronicity
2. Cost
3. Creative fit
4. Bookability

5. Social media footprint
6. Interest level

Not all of the vertices of this hexagon are equal, however. Some, like cost and creative fit, carry more weight.

1. Talent Synchronicity

One of the most interesting challenges of our business lies in discovering which celebrity best fits the unique personality of a brand. Imagine a triangle, with the brand, the consumer and the product each sitting in one of the three corners.

The challenge is finding the celebrity who fits best with all three of these variables. Some celebs will fit better with the brand; others match up more evenly with the product itself; and still others are ideal for the consumer. The goal is to land in the center of the (equilateral) triangle. When we do – when we hit the midpoint of that target – we’ve achieved talent synchronicity.

Of course, when additional filters are layered on top of this triangle – target demographics and psychographics; image congruency or the linkage between the brand and celeb; the extent to which the celeb engages the target – it becomes increasingly difficult to hit the bull’s eye using guesswork and conjecture. Considering the investment, it’s important to tilt the odds in our favor.

2. Cost

Costs vary depending on talent level (A-level, B-level, C-level), rights, services, term, territory, exclusivity and brand creative. Will the celebrity appear on camera? Is this a global campaign? Voiceover only? Will the brand use the celeb’s likeness (e.g., Elvis Presley)? Are we licensing a song? Is the creative compelling?

Depending on the situation, celebrity costs can range from the low five figures to eight figures. In addition to talent fees, factor in union fees (if applicable), production fees, including first-class travel or even a private plane, along with other accommodations and other ancillary marketing costs, and you can see how the fees escalate quite rapidly.

We typically identify anywhere from a few to 100 celebrities for a particular project or campaign, before filtering down to 10 or so, and then ranking them in talent synchronicity from 1-10. If Celebrity #1 costs \$1 million and Celebrity #2 requires \$500,000, who do you sign? If you’ve been disciplined in your approach, removing as much subjectivity as possible, the answer should be more clear, but there may be a struggle between the poet and the scientist, which is also part of the process.

3. Creative Fit

In some cases, the brand or its agency has already developed (and received approval from the client on) creative. Based on the existing creative, which celebrity fits best? Are there specific personality characteristics, attributes, or skill sets that the celebrity must possess in order to be a good fit? In other cases, the creative is built around the celebrity. In these cases, it's important to develop creative that suits the celebrity naturally and puts the celebrity in a position to deliver the brand messaging in an authentic way. In some cases, we may decide to allow the talent to have some creative input. Chefs or comedians, for example, may want to contribute and this may enhance the creative fit and overall engagement.

4. Bookability

PR is often a major factor. Which celebrity will generate the most interest in the press? Who is the PR team most likely to book for interviews on TV and radio programs? Which celebrity will best deliver the key brand messaging? Of course, brands must ensure that press interest in a celebrity is for the right reasons and should go to great lengths to avoid riding on the back of negative notoriety, unless their aim is to do just that. This should be noted when booking a reality celebrity from the new breed of dramality TV shows. Caveat emptor!

5. Social media footprint

Social media continues to become more important to brands and celebrities alike. How active is the celebrity on social media? How many followers do they have? Do they engage with their fans via social media and how? Are they constantly posting about their exploits, good and bad. Do they post pictures of themselves in compromising situations; with other brands; does their social networking moral compass point in the same direction of the brand? All of these factors are key considerations when evaluating celebrity options.

6. Interest level

How interested is the celebrity in partnering with our brand? Do they use our product or service? Many agents, particularly at the start of a negotiation, will say their celebrity client uses the brand daily and it has been their favorite for many years. Assertions like these must be qualified. Are they passionate about it? Or do they view the potential partnership as merely a business transaction? Are they only interested in three key factors: Money, money and more money! It's imperative to understand the celebrity's perspective on each opportunity. The success stories occur when the celebrity is passionate about the brand and organically uses the product or service they endorse or promote.

So how do we know when we've really nailed it? How are we certain we have the ideal partner for a brand?

For the poet, qualitatively, it's likely to be evident. But what about the scientist? How can we quantify the consequence of the partnership?

We've found that when attempting to determine the ROI on a celebrity partnership, it's best to take an approach that is holistic, measuring consumer engagement at cognitive, emotional and behavioral levels as it relates to the goals established in the planning stages.

For each consumer engagement or interaction, our approach answers key questions which link back to those specific desired business outcomes. We've developed this multi-dimensional strategy to provide brands with the most reliable and actionable information necessary for effective planning purposes.

Specifically, we ask:

- Will the consumer think differently about the brand?
- Will the consumer feel differently about the brand?
- Will the consumer behave or act differently toward the brand?

Brands have used our celebrity identification modeling, both locally and globally. For example, when Gillette sought to replace David Beckham as the face of the brand globally (he'd been used in 96 countries), we initiated this process. The modeling entailed testing 30 athletes against Gillette's core consumer in 10 countries around the world. The results of testing those athletes in China, Japan, Russia, Poland, Germany, Spain, Brazil, Argentina, the UK and United States netted Tiger Woods, Roger Federer and Thierry Henry.

More brands are moving toward specialists to create oversight and a centralized process. Their goal is greater transparency and efficiencies while at the same time reducing costs and risk. Multinational brands are hiring these consultants for their expertise in signing either locally-known talent for a specific market or internationally-known talent for local or global campaigns.

Traditionally, talent choices have been valued solely by popularity. Marketers are beginning to look beyond who's simply popular to find those personalities who fit the brand, are appropriate for the product, and relevant to the customer. By aligning celebrity talent to a brand's essence, marketers can transform emotion into engagement, resulting in a deeper more meaningful connection between brand and consumer.

Sound like a lot of marketing poesy?

The truth is, there's too much at stake not to put forth the rigor and analysis – the science – to ensure we're getting it right.

Learn more or contact us directly at CelebrityDBI.com.

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