



News

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THE COOL FACTOR: BUILDING YOUR BRAND'S IMAGE THROUGH PARTNERSHIP MARKETING

By Del Breckenfeld, Director of Entertainment Marketing at Fender Musical Instruments Corp
Available from John Wiley and Sons November 2008

"In *The Cool Factor*, Del Breckenfeld shows us firsthand how to get celebrities to partner with corporations for the purpose of positive outreach. Del and Fender have personally shared their expertise with us throughout the course of many years, specifically helping us raise significant funds for families devastated by Hurricane Katrina. We salute Del..."

—Don Felder, former lead guitarist and songwriter of The Eagles, bestselling author of *Heaven and Hell: My Life in the Eagles (1974 - 2001)*

Hoboken, NJ – Define: Cool. Not just the room temperature, but a state of being. What makes something cool? We can give examples of what is deemed cool in American pop culture reaching back to the 50s – James Dean, Marlon Brando, Jack Kerouac, Miles Davis, Elvis. The image we get from each individual is unique, and yet an inherent coolness remains – which is precisely the way they intended it to be.

For someone or something to be defined as cool, they have to have two things going for them: first they have to be imbued with the rebel spirit, and second, they have to be unique when compared with the norm of the day. Then they have to be exposed to the widest possible audience who will publicly or secretly aspire to be like them, or want the association with them

Establishing a cool image for a brand works on the same principles, and yet it has become increasingly difficult to stand out in the cluttered landscape of cable channels, websites, and blogs. **THE COOL FACTOR** (Wiley, \$24.95, October 2008) by Del Breckenfeld explores the world-renowned Fender® Musical Instruments Corp., and how they harnessed their coolness by being associated with the coolest musicians of the time. Breckenfeld looks at the history of cool, and examines the people and brands that are deemed as cool today, illustrating the various factors that must combine to make something cool.

As the Director for Entertainment Marketing at Fender, Breckenfeld reveals first hand examples of how Fender® Musical Instruments Corp., the most recognizable brand name in electric guitars, basses and amps, partners with many other large corporations outside of their own industry to tap into the "cool factor."

From modest beginnings in 1946 to its current status as a cultural icon, Fender® has touched and transformed music worldwide and in every genre: rock 'n' roll, country, jazz, rhythm and blues, and everything in between. From beginners and hobbyists to the world's most acclaimed artists, musicians



have used Fender instruments to bring their dreams to life while changing the world along the way.

Actively producing and marketing some of the most innovative electric instrument amplifiers as early as 1946, the company went on to perfect the art of sound with products that have been recognized as undeniable industry standards ever since.

In 1954, Fender released what would become the most popular, recognizable and influential electric guitar of all time – the Stratocaster®. With Fender guitars in the hands of iconic artists such as Buddy Holly, Eric Clapton and Jimi Hendrix to name only a few, entire genres of music took form. More popular music over the past 50 years has been made and played on the Stratocaster than on any other electric instrument.

Since its founding, Fender has grown dramatically in stature, and still creates everything guitarists and bassists need; from instruments, amplifiers, strings and accessories to professional audio products. Fender became the world leader by defining the sounds of popular music, by exceeding the needs of musicians and by continuing to create quality products.

THE COOL FACTOR describes all the contributions that determine a product as cool. This is not another “how to” book on marketing, but rather an exploration into a world-renowned company through the eyes of an insider. It analyzes the highly regarded reputation of the Fender brand, and reveals how other brands can effectively be driven to new heights by partnership marketing with “cool” products, musicians and events that have already established “The Cool Factor.” Check out www.officialcoolfactor.com.

"Del Breckenfeld's *The Cool Factor* gets the inside story on the music business partnering with major corporations fueling their brands."

—Billy Gibbons, guitarist, singer, and songwriter with the multiplatinum band ZZ Top

About the Author

Del Breckenfeld is Director of Entertainment Marketing at Fender Musical Instruments Corp. (www.fender.com). Del developed a groundbreaking promotional program for Anheuser-Busch, working with some of the best marketers in the world. From there he was able reach the pinnacle of Fender Musical Instruments Corp., where he has been encouraged to expand the boundaries of traditional entertainment marketing.

Through his career, Breckenfeld has worked with some of the biggest names in music and movies, including The Rolling Stones, Eric Clapton, Tom Hanks and Will Ferrell and television shows such as Two And A Half Men and American Idol just to name a few. He has also been involved in promotional campaigns with some of the world's most successful and well known brands, such as Budweiser, Hewlett-Packard and RockBand, all while learning the in and outs of partnership marketing, and sometimes even developing his own approaches to this type of marketing.

The Cool Factor: Building Your Brands Image Through Partnership Marketing

By Del Breckenfeld

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Q&A with Del Breckenfeld, Author of THE COOL FACTOR

What made you write the book?

The motivation for writing the book came from my wife Bettina. I used to come home every night and give her a rundown of the day's activities. I would often get excited about some new program, or promotion, that was leap forward for our company. Maybe she was getting tired of my dissertations as one day she finally said, "Stop talking about it and write it down for a book." I thought "Not a bad idea."

What is the Cool Factor? Is there really only one major factor to make something cool?

If you ask someone, "What is cool?" he would probably reply that he can't tell you in exact words, but he knows it when he sees it. For some it might be Marlon Brando in *The Wild One*, Miles Davis' landmark recording, "The Birth of the Cool", Steve McQueen in *The Great Escape* (his character aptly nicknamed "The Cooler King"), and for others it could be Jimi Hendrix at the Monterey Pop Festival (burning his very cool hand painted Fender Stratocaster® guitar), California's surfing culture or a brand new Dodge retro-styled Charger. The world, past and present is populated with cool people, places and things.

In my opinion, for anything or anyone to have "The Cool Factor", they have to at least have two things going for them: first they have to be imbued with the rebel spirit, and second, they have to be unique when compared to the norm of the day. Once that's established, the Cool Factor becomes something tangible that can be transferred to other people, and for the purpose of marketing, brands, both through association.

How do I know something is *really* cool? What if it's only sort of cool?

Sort of cool doesn't cut it. Someone can't automatically become cool just by simply putting on a cool hat or a cool pair of shoes. Cool is a commitment to the lifestyle. For instance, in my business, if someone purchases a Fender guitar, even though the guitar is cool, that's not enough. But if he then starts practicing and learns to play the guitar pretty well, and that leads to him begin changing to more of a "rock star" look, then people begin to notice his talent, creativity and his look, he is definitely on the road to cool.

What's the difference between something that's hot and cool?

I believe they are two sides of the same coin. In marketing, "cool" begins with a small group of innovators, and once it catches on, it becomes "hot". Once something becomes hot it can still be considered cool, but our second "rule of cool" is that it has to be different from the norm. Therefore once you have established the Cool Factor, sometimes you have to be ready to reinforce, or even reinvent oneself, or product, to keep ahead of the pack to remain eternally cool.

What other factors contribute to something being really cool?

Most importantly, when something or someone is really cool, others aspire to their equity of cool. I refer to that in the book as "coolness by association."

How do cool celebrities fit into this game?

Once again, it becomes “aspirational”. If that’s not a recognized word, it should be. In my book I talk about how when we want to be acknowledged as an individual, the first thing we do to express that individuality is to find others who share the same interests as we do. A paradox? Not at all, because in that group will be born leaders who we can emulate because they will show us the way to individual expression. And on the grand scale, celebrities fill that role. When I was growing up, when my parents bought me my first guitar, I immediately tried to emulate the coolest British bands of the day, not just the music they played, but everything from their hairstyles, to their clothes to musical equipment they used. Eventually, the local girls took notice, and the other guys started to try and be like me. Looking back, I realize now that was lifestyle marketing at its most effective and dynamic.

What’s your story? Who are you to talk? Are you really that cool?

No, I don’t consider myself cool. However, I have a very cool job in the entertainment industry working for the world’s most recognizable brand name in guitars, amplifiers and other musical instrument products. So therefore my job requires me to be a “connoisseur of cool.” To remain an industry leader, we need to be either the first or the best when it comes to new products and trends. And that’s what also attracts other brands to want to partner with us to share a little bit of the equity we have in cool.

Can you provide some examples of cool campaigns you’ve worked on?

Yes. Way back in the 1980’s, I worked with a small guitar manufacturer in Chicago called Dean Guitars. We came up with an idea for a Rock n’ Roll marketing campaign built around our guitars. We chose the best known brand of beer – Budweiser, and created a guitar based on their famous trademark “bowtie” logo that became the icon for all their entertainment marketing, which eventually included everything from POP displays down to lapel pins.

Twenty years later, working with Fender VP of PR, Jason Padgitt, we created a national campaign with Fox for the 2007 release of the *Alvin & the Chipmunks* movie. Fox’s campaign featured full page color ads in newspaper across the country with sweepstakes to win a Fender Stratocaster guitar that included the “new cool” Chipmunks logoed on the face of the instrument. The huge amount of people that entered the contest represented all ages, from young children to grandparents who remembered the original Chipmunks.

What are the most important points to take away from *The Cool Factor*?

Once a celebrity or brand has established the “coolness quotient”, that equity can easily be transferred to other brands and that’s why my book is subtitled “Building Your Brand Through Partnership Marketing.” You don’t even need to have market research to tell what is cool; simply look around you to notice other people’s aspirations that will guide you to people, places and things that have established “The Cool Factor.”