



Project Description

For years, Burbank-based 3ality Digital was virtually unknown outside a select group of technophiles who followed the world of 3D entertainment. While the company had produced one of the highest-grossing concert films of all time – *U2 3D* – and its senior leadership was well regarded throughout the broader entertainment industry, 3ality Digital had yet to experience the breakout moment that would pluck its brand name from relative obscurity.

That opportunity presented itself in November of 2008, when the upstart company signed a groundbreaking deal to conduct the first-ever live 3D broadcast of an NFL game. If managed properly, news of the deal could create lucrative business opportunities for 3ality Digital – as preferred providers of live 3D sports content. Therefore, the announcement of the deal had to be handled flawlessly – maximizing the equity of the NFL brand without diminishing 3ality Digital's integral role in the historic broadcast.

Sandy Hillman Communications (SHC) devised and executed a rollout plan that did just that.

Challenges

When David does business with Goliath, it is usually Goliath who gets all the attention. And all the credit. But finding a way to leverage the NFL's status as the 800-pound sports entertainment gorilla without overshadowing 3ality Digital's contributions to the broadcast was only the first of a series of challenges.

More daunting was the project timeline. 3ality Digital inked the broadcast deal in mid-November, just three weeks prior to the December 4 broadcast. With the Thanksgiving holiday falling a week before the game, the window was tighter still.

Further complicating the announcement was the need for 3ality Digital, the NFL and other project partners to invite VIPs, including top-tier media, to three private broadcast screenings across the country. In order to prominently break the news – with the proper messaging – SHC had to execute its announcement strategy in days. The agency then needed to shift gears to begin securing media at the VIP screenings.

Strategic Approach

As the world's premier sports league, SHC knew the NFL was going to capture the lion's share of the headlines surrounding the deal. By taking the story to a prominent sports writer, SHC could secure a quick national placement and alleviate the time constraints it faced. But that approach would fail to achieve SHC's objective of elevating 3ality Digital's position in the story.

Instead, the decision was made to keep this story off the sports page by finding a prominent business writer to break the news under an exclusive arrangement. Given the timelines involved, SHC settled on one of two national dailies as targets: *The Wall Street Journal* or the *New York Times*. *USA Today* would be a backup option, as its consumer orientation was likely to play up the NFL's stance on the broadcast and minimize 3ality Digital's participation.

Research

SHC conducted all the standard research in identifying the most likely journalists to target at the *Journal* and the *Times*. Staffers thoroughly reviewed Cision, the agency's database of journalists, and conducted Internet and Nexis searches to identify journalists who had, over the past year, covered 3D, technological advances in televised entertainment and related subjects. The team reviewed journalists' relevant articles to sharpen its focus and then took the process a step further by (1) contacting established contacts at both papers to get insiders' opinions on who would be best to handle the story and (2) querying colleagues at partner agencies who were familiar with the journalists SHC considered its most likely targets.

Campaign Execution

With the clock ticking, SHC quickly reviewed the findings of all its research and identified Sarah McBride, technology writer at *The Wall Street Journal*, as the journalist most likely to write a well-positioned article on short notice. The agency offered her right of first refusal if she could turn the article by Monday, November 24. After consulting with her editor, McBride agreed to the timeline and began reporting the story. To maximize 3ality Digital's presence in the story, SHC arranged for the company's chief executive officer to be McBride's first interview. SHC also provided the reporter with multiple 3ality Digital-specific photographs to illustrate her piece. The agency then worked with the NFL's public relations office to secure the league's participation in the story.

As planned, the article ran on the technology page of Monday, November 24's edition, ensuring 3ality Digital could compete for space with the NFL. The *Journal* teased the article on the *Marketplace* section cover using one of the 3ality Digital images SHC provided. The paper also ran the same photo with the story.

Within hours of appearing in the *Journal*, news of the 3D broadcast ran on ABC's *Good Morning America* and *Sports Business Daily*. SHC leveraged the article to secure additional 3ality Digital-specific coverage via the Associated Press, the *New York Times* online, Reuters, CNN Headline News, CNBC, Fox News Channel and other outlets, generating hundreds of millions of media impressions. The December 4 VIP broadcasts were attended by every media outlet of interest to 3ality Digital; the subsequent reporting followed the lead of the *Journal* story, positioning 3ality Digital as the clear leader in its space.

Within a week of the NFL broadcast, 3ality Digital won the contract to conduct the first-ever live 3D broadcast of college football's national title game on January, 8, 2009.