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A Full-Circle Approach

How Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices
Has Marketing Covered from Every Angle

by Maria Patterson

The past two years have been a thrilling ride for Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices. In what felt like the blink of an eye, the network firmly established itself and now boasts nearly 39,000 sales professionals. As the network continues its growth trajectory, an important engine hums in the background: the Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices marketing machine. From technology to advertising to research and communication, the 360-degree reach of the firm's marketing juggernaut is ensuring the fulfillment of the brand's vision: to be the best-recognized, most highly respected homeownership services brand in the United States and worldwide.

Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices entered the playing field with a clear advantage in the branding department. Leveraging the Berkshire Hathaway name helped the brand build a solid network of strong brokerage firms and name recognition among consumers.

"To be able to springboard off the integrity of the Berkshire Hathaway name has been fantastic for our network," says Gino Blefari, HSF Affiliates CEO. "The name is a gift and we treat it with utmost respect."

"We started with the core attributes of strength, integrity and trust and then built our brand on that foundation," says Stephen Phillips, president of Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices. "In addition to the brand, our success to-date is the direct re-

sult of starting with a great network of affiliates and an extraordinary corporate team."

A United Effort, a Full-Circle Approach

While a variety of players—from outside ad agency BBDO Worldwide and public relations firm Edelman, to Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices' in-house technology, marketing and communications teams—contribute to Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices' multi-faceted marketing campaign, there is a unifying thread that runs throughout.

"We don't work in silos," says Kerry Donovan, vice president of marketing for HSF Affiliates. "We have meetings where we share direction and ideas. We started out by

buttoning up the look, feel and voice of the brand, and because we have that as a guidebook, it's now easy to stay on target and work together as a unit. BBDO has been with us as a partner for about two years—almost since the brand started, so they understand our brand personality and messaging, and are an extension of us. We also have our in-house creative team. But we're all working together under the brand's overarching look and strategic direction. We're all singing from the same song sheet."

This unified effort is expressly designed to benefit the brand's brokers and their sales associates. "With everything we do, we really think about how the affiliate and the agent will use it," says HSF Affiliates Marketing Director Wendy Durand. "Kerry and I have both worked for and with affiliates and have an understanding of what's needed, from direct mail to listing presentations. We never create something for the sake of creating it. We create it with actual use in mind."

"Everything we produce here is designed as turnkey materials for agents and affiliates to promote themselves and the brand without having to create anything on their own," adds Donovan.



Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices' television spots (here and left) are designed to be authentic, reflecting real lifestyles and life stages.



Television Focus Courts Consumers, Benefits Affiliates

This multi-audience approach is clearly evident in Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices' recent television campaigns, designed to connect with consumers while giving the brand a unique positioning in the real estate space.

"We created a television spot that focused on the home-selling process," explains Donovan. "Real estate advertising is usually buyer-focused—that's typically what the industry is producing. We decided to focus on one of the most poignant and meaningful moments in the home-sale process, when the Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices agent comes through as the hero and delivers the message to the seller that their home has sold. With inventory low, it seems people are a bit hesitant to put their home on the market. These spots position Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices agents as the experts who can help them through the process."

According to Donovan, the campaign also plays nicely off the brand's "Good to Know" slogan, emphasizing that for buyers and sellers, it's "good to know" a Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices agent who can guide them through

the sale of their homes.

An additional goal for the brand's ad campaign is an accurate representation of diversity. "We thought it was important to portray different lifestyles and life stages, anywhere from single parents to empty nesters to life partners and expectant couples," Donovan explains. "We believe this is critical. We want to portray ourselves as being authentic and relevant."

Another innovative direction the marketing team has taken through television is a recent alignment with HGTV.

"We wanted to help increase brand awareness and extend our broadcast campaign by doing something different," says Donovan. "We worked with our partners at BBDO and its media-buying arm PHD, who did research into consumer viewership

and determined that we could build brand awareness by doing a national network media buy and working with HGTV on a special promotion."

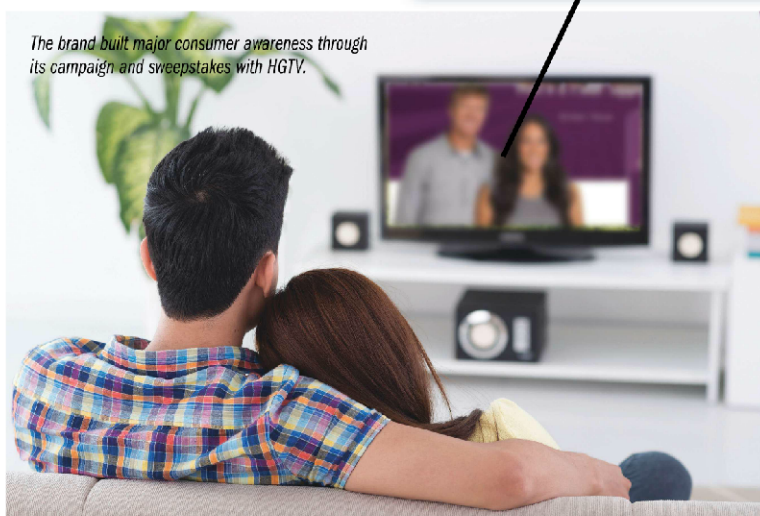
Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices signed on with Chip and Joanna Gaines, hosts of HGTV's hit show "Fixer Upper," to develop a \$50,000 Sweepstakes campaign (see sidebar). The promotion involved a 30-second vignette where the Gaineses provided "good to know" tips for putting your home on the market. The end of the spot touted a \$50,000 giveaway, which contestants entered through a dedicated website.

"At the outset, we were told we should be happy to get 200,000 entries," says Donovan. "We netted over 1.5 million entries! The winner not only received \$50,000, but will also have a consultation on home renovation from Chip and Joanna Gaines."

The Sweepstakes also provided a great opportunity for network affiliates to market at the broker and agent level. "This was embraced by our affiliates and sales associates," says Durand. "They promoted the Sweepstakes on their websites, through direct mail, at open houses—it really became a full-force marketing campaign."



The brand built major consumer awareness through its campaign and sweepstakes with HGTV.



Targeting Growth Markets

While Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices' television campaigns effectively reach the masses, other more targeted marketing efforts are shoring up the brand in critical market segments, such as luxury.

Now in its second year of publication, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices' Prestige Magazine is a high-end, 64-page magazine published in the spring, summer and fall that showcases the brand's luxury listings while providing relevant fashion, design, travel and lifestyle content aimed at the affluent consumer. The publication is created to

have a long shelf-life and encourage pass-along readership, thanks to its clean and contemporary look and relevant content.

“In the luxury arena, sellers still want to see a magazine with great distribution,” says Durand. “We distribute Prestige at airport lounges and insert it into Unique Homes. Prestige gives our luxury listings a coffee-table lifespan—it has a soft-touch cover because luxury is about the senses. We have 16 pages of editorial content in each issue and luxury properties featured from all over the nation. We mix up the editorial content and pick subjects that we can interview our agents on—for example, our next issue (at press time) will focus on ‘Emotions of the Ocean’ and we’ll interview agents living near the coasts.”

Prestige features templated pages to showcase Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices listings, all featuring a cabernet-colored corner to help these pages stand out. To help further maximize exposure, Prestige is also available in digital format, and has its own Facebook and Pinterest page, as well.

Donovan and Durand have received tremendous feedback on Prestige, and welcomed some impressive advertisers as well, such



Prestige Magazine gives Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices listings a “coffee-table lifespan.”

Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Wins Big for Kentucky Homeowner

Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices recently made a big impact on one homeowner’s life when she was announced the winner of its \$50,000 Sweepstakes held during the spring in conjunction with HGTV and its popular show “Fixer Upper.” Barbara Wakefield, a Lawrenceburg, Ky., housewife and grandmother, was drawn for the cash prize from among more than 1.5 million sweepstake entries.

The prize includes a design consultation with show hosts Chip and Joanna Gaines, who are remodeling and design pros. “We are stunned and so blessed,” says Wakefield, who lives on a farm outside Lawrenceburg with Richard, her husband of 50 years. She said the timing couldn’t be better for the \$50,000 Sweepstakes windfall. Her husband and two sons-in-law have begun renovating her kitchen and fixing structural issues within the home, which was built about 100 years ago.

Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices launched the \$50,000 Sweepstakes in March with TV spots and DIY vignettes featuring the Gaineses and a digital campaign appearing across Scripps Networks. Consumer registrations during the \$50,000 Sweepstakes set a record for similar contests on HGTV. Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices affiliates were put in contact with consumers who expressed interest in buying and selling homes.



Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices \$50,000 Sweepstakes winner Barbara Wakefield (fifth from left) along with granddaughter Cassie Fannin and husband Richard Wakefield (far right) accept a check from network representatives (from left) Dave Parks and Judy Parks, broker/owners of Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Parks and Weisberg, Realtors®, Louisville, Ky.; Kerry Donovan, HSF Affiliates marketing VP; Chip Diehl, sales manager, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices de Movellan Properties, Lexington, Ky.; and Anthony de Movellan, president of de Movellan Properties. The Wakefields reside in Lawrenceburg, Ky.

as Berkshire Hathaway’s private jet service, NetJets, on the back cover.

The Vision of a Thought-Leader

Another important component of the brand’s persona is its growing status as an industry thought-leader. Thanks to a series of compelling research reports, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices is providing its affiliates and agents with valuable market data.

“We’ve established the brand and it is growing nicely,” says HSF Affiliates Director of Communications and PR Kevin Ostler. “The next step to help the marketing of the brand

is thought leadership. Edelman did an assessment of what competitors are already talking about in the marketplace, and we decided to go after the notion of value. One aspect of that is how consumers value real estate, so we established the Homeowner Sentiment Survey to find out what’s on the minds of buyers and sellers. What are their priorities? Based on this research, our brokers and agents can shift their approach to how they work with clients.”

According to Ostler, each quarterly survey has a different emphasis, bringing to light an important market trend, such as inventory shortage. A

series of questions related to listing one's home was designed to unlock the reasons why so many are still on the fence about selling their home. Each survey polls 2,000 homeowners and 500 prospective homeowners, who are broken down by age group to further splice the data by key demographic groups, such as millennials.

"We break down the survey findings into PR templates, slide decks, short videos and more," says Ostler. "We create cool bits and pieces that are easy to incorporate into the affiliate's listing presentations, websites, blogs and social media."

The effort toward thought-leadership status reflects Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices' commitment to its namesake. "We understand and appreciate the value of the Berkshire Hathaway brand," says Ostler. "We also understand the responsibility of representing this name in real estate. Everybody here is focused on quality and integrity and is proud to be a part of this brand."



The Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices app serves as a "mobile business card."

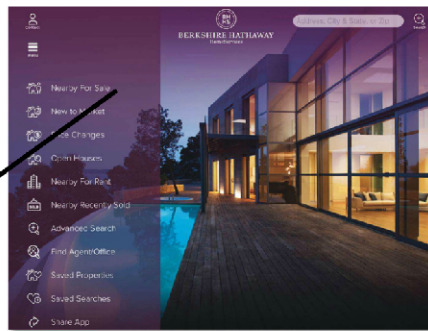
Looking Ahead with Technology

At Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices, technology does not happen behind closed doors, but rather, remains front and center, engaged with every facet of the firm's marketing goals.

As Director of Product Development and Strategic Alliances for HSF Affiliates, Mike Fortes is constantly on the lookout for new technology relationships. "My job is to see what else is out there from the technology perspective, and to see what unique offerings would really help our network grow."

When the brand launched with a vision statement that included worldwide growth, Fortes took that very seriously during the creation and build-out of Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices' Global Network Platform (GNP).

"We're not a technology company, so we didn't want to create a home-grown platform," explains Fortes.



"Instead, we went out and searched for the best apps out there and vetted programs until we found the best partners. We then looked at how we could customize those programs to meet our needs and apply them to the Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices brand."

Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices connects its various technologies in one hub, or resource center, which is the GNP. From here, affiliates and associates can have single access to all of the brand's products.

Among the programs accessed from the GNP is the Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices mobile app. "We recommend that our associates don't give out a business card anymore, but instead give out our mobile app, which serves as a mobile business card," says Fortes. "The app has all the agent's information and travels with clients wherever they go."

Another example of the technology accessed through the GNP is the Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices social media resource center. "Social media has become a critical avenue for marketing and soft branding," says Fortes. "We created a social media tool that allows our network to have a strong social media presence by investing very little time each day. They can create content once and push it out over their free Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Google+ accounts. We provide original content for them a few times a week, and we have an algorithm that pulls up other real estate-specific content. This is a comprehensive solution to the time management issues involved in building a robust social media presence."

A Clear View for the Future

Donovan and team plan to take the brand's current success to the next level, setting it apart even further with unique positioning and messaging.

"Our goal is to continue to build on the momentum we have created for the Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices brand," says Donovan. "We have a clear understanding of who our target audiences are from a marketing standpoint: our affiliates, our agents and consumers...because at the end of the day, it is the consumer who will decide whether or not to use one of our agents." **RE**

For more information, please visit www.berkshirehathawayhs.com.