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Experts offer businesses tips for marketing during the G-20

BY PATTY TASCARELLA

As the G-20 summit nears, time is running out for businesses to develop a marketing plan geared toward international visitors.

Ann Dugan, assistant dean and founder of the Institute for Entrepreneurial Excellence at the University of Pittsburgh's Joseph M. Katz Graduate School of Business, believes companies should make sure whatever they're doing during The Pittsburgh Summit 2009 fits into their overall marketing strategy.

"You could blow your marketing budget for the year on something you don't have the capacity to follow through on," she said. "Companies need to have an overall goal and determine why they're doing this, what their international strategy is, and how it fits with their branding platform."

Signs in windows are a good vehicle, said Michele Fabrizi, president and CEO of MARC USA,

Pittsburgh's largest advertising agency.

"Companies on a retail level could post welcome signs in windows, there are templates they can go to at www.pittsburghg20.org, and they could use different languages," Fabrizi said. "Visitors are going to be looking for specific services, so they should be clear about their hours."

Meade Johnson, president of the Pittsburgh Advertising Federation, said companies should keep it simple. Appropriate options for small companies might include bus wraps and signs, she said.

"Some top-line communications could help, lined up with your business and your objectives, but I don't think any in-depth messages would work," she said. "It's more, here is our city and here is our region."

ptascarella@bizjournals.com | (412) 208-3832

Branding tips

Advice for getting your company's name on the world stage during the G-20:

Keep the message consistent: Whatever you're doing for G-20 should tie in with your overall marketing strategy. The message should line up with your business and your objectives.

Signs: In your windows, on your property: they are a good way to get your company name out.

Conquer language barriers: MARC USA's Michele Fabrizi suggests welcoming window signs in different languages. The History Center has interns translating materials that will go into binders in eight languages for people who want to know more about the history center's exhibits and events.

Update your Web site: Make sure the information is clear and current. Bayer, for example, has launched a G-20 Web site, www.bayerg20pittsburgh.com.

Get to know hotel staff: Retailers, restaurants and personal service providers should get to know the concierges at area hotels.

Remember your local audience: Don't forget your local customers who'll need products and services before and after the event.

SOURCES: ANDREW MASICH, MEADE JOHNSON, BRYAN JAMS, MICHELE FABRIZI