

Timex Pulls Out Stops For ING NYC Marathon

by Karl Greenberg, Yesterday, 4:38 PM



Timex has been quietly winding up programs to move the brand away from an "old reliable" sort of brand equity toward a more athletic positioning, using its Iron Man sub-brand to reach younger consumers.

The company is in its second year as official timing partner of the ING New York City Marathon. Elements include TV ads, newspaper print ads, out-of-home and a variety of executions around the race itself. The new 30-second spot will run

internationally via NBC Universal, nationally via NBC network and locally via WNBC-TV's five-hour broadcast of the race.

Timex will be official timekeeper throughout the course, and will also offer a commemorative timepiece engraved with the ING New York City Marathon logo. There will be a Timex-branded truck at the race's starting point in Staten Island on race day offering hand-warmers to all participants, and the company is sponsor of pacers this year: the 30 to 40 runners dispersed in the field setting specific paces will wear "Powered by Timex" bibs. The company is using the race to promote its 150-Lap Ironman TouchScreen watch.

Heberto Calves, VP of marketing at the Middlebury, Conn.-based company, tells *Marketing Daily* that last year Timex did relatively little activation because the four-year deal was struck shortly before the race. "Last year, we signed up with the marathon in September, so last year we scrambled and got a few things together. This year, we have jumped it up."



Timex ad spot

The TV spot is a heritage ad that touts Timex functionality and design, but says the brand isn't about what's fashionable today or next week. The ad shows a range of Timex products. Calves says it will air seven to eleven times.

Timex will run a half-page ad in the Friday pre-race issue of the *New York Times*, and a full-page ad in the paper's national Monday edition.

Calves says Timex' strategy is to focus marketing on exclusive sponsorship of major triathlon and marathon races in Hawaii, London, New York, and Frankfurt. "We do sponsor most of the World Triathlon Corporation's Iron Man races as principal sponsor, and our last big key event is the Virgin London Marathon, New York, Kona (Hawaii), London and Frankfurt are our four key global events," he says. "But we also sponsor what we call 'B-level' events and expos."

And in June, Timex signed a 15-year partnership with the New York Giants that gives the company title sponsorship of the Giants' training center, now called "Timex Performance Center" in the Meadowlands in New Jersey. The center will actually have a physical brushed-chrome appearance to align with the brand, per Calves.

He says the Giants were the right team because New York is a global market. "A couple of years ago, we started to express interest because we had an insight that all athletes run -- not just foot racers. The New York marathon is such good fit because of its global reach -- 50% of the field is international. The NFL is trying to grow overseas." He says Timex will advertise during Giants game broadcasts.

Per Calves, the Timex concept around the training center will be similar to Gatorade's around its Gatorade Sports Science Institute: Timex wants both to build its athlete-timepiece credibility and use the center as an incubator for new products.

"Ultimately, we want products in market that are the result of an advisory board we are putting together with the performance center," he says. "Timex is perceived as trusted, friendly and conservative. Those are good things that any brand would want to be associated with, but we want to increase awareness of products with a younger audience and add energy. It's a fine line. We don't want to be 'trendy,' and we don't want to be another Swatch."

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