



Ringling Bros and Barnum and Bailey Circus Goes Hispanic

rbb Public Relations and Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, Jan 1,2013

Summary: 2013 Silver Anvil Award of Excellence Winner — Multicultural Public Relations — Business

rbb PR created the first PR program to bring the spectacular Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey® Circus to a new generation of families. Capitalizing on the American dream attractive to so many Hispanics, rbb brought stories from the circus frontlines to a Hispanic audience of more than 200 million nationwide, with focus on Chilean animal trainer Taba Maluenda and other Hispanic performers. By appealing to Hispanic motivators, celebrity interests and family experiences, rbb increased ticket sales by an average of 7 percent in top Hispanic markets and attracted Hispanic audiences to enjoy the circus for generations to come.

Multicultural public relations includes any type of program, such as institutional, marketing and community relations, specifically targeted to a cultural group.

Full Text: BACKGROUND

Everyone knows *The Greatest Show on Earth!* is Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey® Circus unless, of course, you are Hispanic. rbb PR created the first public relations program to bring the spectacular daredevil antics of the circus to a whole new generation of families. Capitalizing on the American dream attractive to so many Hispanics, rbb brought stories from the circus frontlines to a Hispanic audience of more than 200 million nationwide. A centerpiece of the program was focusing on Chilean animal trainer Taba Maluenda in addition to other Hispanic performers with larger than life success stories. By appealing to Hispanic motivators, celebrity interests and heartwarming family experiences, rbb increased ticket sales by an average of 7 percent in top Hispanic markets and attracted new Hispanic audiences to enjoy the circus for generations to come.

RESEARCH

Primary Research

Research indicated that Hispanics would better relate to a spokesperson who embodied the core tenets of the Hispanic community. rbb interviewed a number of performers and selected Taba as the primary spokesperson who would also become Ringling Bros.' newest Hispanic celebrity. As the first and only Hispanic animal trainer, Taba's strong sense of family and achievement against all odds hit all the right notes to resonate with Hispanic audiences and build a new fan base for Ringling Bros. The challenges he faced, including being apart from family for a decade, were certainly relatable to Hispanics who have left home for a better life in America. However, pitching Taba to the media presented some obstacles. Controversial statements by animal extremists made positioning an animal trainer as a spokesperson potentially risky, despite Ringling Bros.' positive record of animal care and conservation efforts. To mitigate this risk, we researched every national reporter across Hispanic networks for ties to or strong opinions about animal rights. Supplemental spokespeople were later identified to satisfy media's cravings for broader content and additional human interest stories.

Secondary Research

- **Hispanic markets:** To prioritize market focus, rbb identified the top four U.S. cities with the largest Hispanic populations where Ringling Bros. performs: Miami, Los Angeles, New York and Houston
- **Media consumption:** With 88 percent of Hispanics watching Spanish-language television (*Yankelovich Partners*), TV instantly became the media priority
- **Motivators:** rbb identified what inspires and attracts Hispanics – family, language, heritage, culture and an emotional connection (*Forbes*)

PLANNING

Objectives:

- Increase ticket sales in top four U.S. Hispanic markets by 5 percent in 2012 versus 2011
- Garner more than 50 million media impressions in top tier Hispanic media outlets maintaining positive tone on Ringling Bros.' treatment of animals

Target Audiences: Hispanic families in top four U.S. Hispanic markets

Strategies:

- **Phase One:** Bring the circus to life in top outlets, including the Spanish equivalents of People, "Saturday Night Live" and the "TODAY" show, resulting in longer, livelier and more memorable segments
- **Phase Two:** Share stories of multiple successful Hispanic circus families showing the depth of talent across the Ringling Bros. brand

EXECUTION / TACTICS

Strategy #1: Craft unique pitches showcasing elements of the circus that match our researched Hispanic motivators – family and emotional connections, combined with a bit of show spectacular. Here are just a few examples of the coverage we garnered in 80 percent of top national Hispanic outlets.

- **People en Español Magazine:** It's no secret that People en Español's most read issue is the "50 Most Beautiful" where A-list Hispanic celebrities from around the world such as Jennifer Lopez, Ricky Martin and Sofia Vergara are featured for their looks and success. We approached the editors to rethink their idea of beauty with a pitch for Taba, who has more than 200 scars from his animal training. Using a "beauty comes from within" approach, we coordinated an interview for Taba and his wife and children – also part of the Ringling Bros. family. Our approach not only landed a two-page spread in the renowned beauty-themed issue, but more ink than any of the 50 celebrities featured, reaching more than 1 million Hispanic readers.
- **Univision's "Sabado Gigante":** Because the circus travels year-round, it had been impossible for Taba to see his mother in Chile for more than 10 years. What better opportunity to highlight a reunion than with the Spanish equivalent of "Saturday Night Live" and the #1 national Hispanic show, Univision's "Sabado Gigante?" Host Don Francisco, who also is Chilean, welcomed Taba for a segment featuring two Bengal tigers and discussed methods in training. Halfway through the segment, rbb set up a surprise reunion for Taba and his mother on air via satellite. The reunion aired during "Sabado Gigante's" New Year's special and proved to be one of widest reaching media hits of the campaign, reaching 6.5 million viewers.
- **Univision's "Despierta America":** Considered the Hispanic "TODAY" show, this was a critical hit to reach our target audience nationally. Leveraging the importance of family among the Hispanic culture, we brought a piece of circus extraordinary in studio, showcasing one of Ringling Bros.' most exciting families– Taba and his Bengal tigers.

The segment ran approximately 10 minutes reaching more than 1.8 million viewers.

Strategy # 2: Capitalizing on unprecedented behind-the-scenes moments, we drew media attention on Ringling Bros.' range of Hispanic talent. Here are a few examples:

- **Telemundo's "Un Nuevo Dia":** To visually feature the depth of Hispanic talent within Ringling Bros., we invited the second highest ranked Hispanic TV show, "Un Nuevo Dia," to air live from the circus and showcase a few of its best acts performed by Hispanics. In addition, the show's anchors became clowns for a day and received a behind-the-scenes look into Taba's animal training methods. A full hour of nothing but entertainment, talent and clowning around with Ringling Bros. reached 1.4 million viewers.
- **Siempre MujerMagazine:** We convinced one of the top U.S. Hispanic magazines to try a new theme for their winter fashion shoot – circus-inspired couture. Featured prominently in a seven-page fashion spread, the table of contents and letter to the editor page, Ringling Bros. and *The Greatest Show on Earth!* logos and performers were the spotlight of the 2012 December / January issue, which perfectly captured the circus' whimsical beauty for 500,000 Hispanic readers.

EVALUATION

The Ringling Bros. Hispanic program far exceeded all objectives.

- **Objective 1:** Increase ticket sales in top four Hispanic markets by 5 percent in 2012 versus 2011. **Goal was exceeded by 40 percent with ticket sales increasing an average of 7 percent in the top four Hispanic markets in 2012.**
- **Objective 2:** Garner more than 50 million media impressions, maintaining positive tone on Ringling Bros.' treatment of animals. **Goal was exceeded by 300 percent, garnering more than 201 million media impressions with 100 percent positive tone of coverage.**

Public Relations Society of America © 2013

Product #: 6BE-1315A01