

MLK Day

Since today is Martin Luther King, Jr. day (which, as an aside, should be celebrated by ALL businesses—it often isn't), I got to thinking about tie-ins to holidays. This type of advertising is big in print, specifically newspapers. You know, using the upcoming holiday either for a sale (as in "Our biggest President's Day Sale ever) or riffing on the holiday ("Do it for your valentine"). Many companies take the time to remind you that they are open (if they are retail) or closed (if they are banks) on the holiday.

In public relations, practitioners sometimes find obscure days (Spaghetti Lovers' Day) to give a spin to their press releases. In fact, Chase's Calendar of Events is a book dedicated to listing all the events, holidays and special days for the upcoming year and is usually found in any public relations or event management firm's bookshelf (or CD shelf). Of course, events always have a theme (St. Patrick's Day Bar Hop, Fourth of July Barbeque, New Year's Eve Gala, etc.)

Do these endless holiday tie-ins dilute the message or the holiday itself? In some cases, the answer is a definite yes. I bet most people don't know which presidents are being celebrated on President's day (Washington and Lincoln) but do know that EVERYTHING is on sale at the mall! In a way, we are doing a huge disservice to our civic celebrations and commemorations when we use them to promote sales. Is MLK day a day to go shopping or is it a day to think about how short the history of full civil rights in the U.S. really is?