



## Event Marketing Helped Make Paramount's Social Campaign a Screaming Success

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It's been six months since Paramount Picture's fright flick "Paranormal Activity" became one of the most profitable movies in history. And while social media marketing has gotten most of the credit, Amy Powell, Paramount's executive vice president of interactive marketing strategy and film production, tells *Marketing News Exclusives* that event marketing gave the \$15,000 film enough momentum to become a \$100 million-plus hit.

While Powell doesn't think she'll be able to replicate the "Paranormal" campaign again, or the sort of runaway success it netted, one major takeaway that she might apply to future campaigns is to incorporate event marketing techniques into social media-driven film promotions. Setting up simultaneous screenings across multiple cities could increase the odds that a marketed film will be mentioned enough online that people will pay attention to the conversations and try to learn more about the movie.

"It's critical to reach that buzz-worthy level of conversation online at the right tipping point in your campaign," she says. "The Internet is so big that you can't try to slowly funnel out conversations across different locations and different times. It has to be a concerted effort to hit at a specific time so that your message becomes a zeitgeist that people talk about."

Last September, with no set plans to release "Paranormal," Hollywood, Calif.-based Paramount gave Powell's department the green light to orchestrate a social media marketing experiment: They wanted to see if interest could be generated in a little-known, low-budget movie with no stars through online word of mouth. An online trailer wouldn't be distinct enough to scare up significant buzz, so Powell sought a partnership with Ain't It Cool News guru Harry Knowles, one of the most followed voices in film gossip online. Each September, Knowles hosts Fantastic Fest, a multiple-day event primarily devoted to horror and sci-fi flicks in Austin, Texas. Powell suggested taking Fantastic Fest nationwide for one night to show free midnight screenings of "Paranormal Activity" in eight cities. By doing so, Fantastic Fest could extend its reach while Paramount could encourage an audience of Web-centric Knowles followers to see the film.

The crucial component was having the movie screen at midnight across the country, Powell says. Once it was over, viewers took to Twitter and Facebook at about the same time to talk up "Paranormal" at the encouragement of movie bloggers who hosted the events. Paramount set up computers in theater lobbies to give viewers instant access to spread the word online. Because the screenings ended in the dead hours of the morning when Twitter traffic is slower, "Paranormal Activity" garnered enough Tweets to push the film's name and links to relevant Tweets onto the Twitter home page, where the most Tweeted-about topics are listed.

The film secured enough recognition to cut through the online conversation clutter. And the buzz grew thanks to subsequent midnight showings in select markets and contests through entertainment planning site Eventful.com, which encouraged fans to demand that the movie be

shown in their cities. Midnight screenings in winning cities followed, and the fandom grew so fierce that Eventful dared users to submit 1 million demands for “Paranormal” to open nationwide—which it did, with great results at the box office.

*The “Paranormal Activity” campaign is one of a baker’s dozen of digital marketing efforts profiled in Marketing News’ special digital edition. Look for the story in the March 15 issue or online at [MarketingPower.com](http://MarketingPower.com). And learn more from Powell about digital’s role in the “Paranormal” campaign at the Marketing News blog, [MarketingPower.com/MarketingNewsBlog](http://MarketingPower.com/MarketingNewsBlog).*