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Driving Growth in Uncertain Times

Bob Liodice, President and CEO, ANA

This past October, the ANA's Masters of Marketing Conference brought together a bevy of chief marketing officers, senior industry executives, and chief executive officers to discuss a very simple, targeted theme: growth. The presentations did not disappoint as we gained unique insight into their companies' marketing growth engines.

What was striking was the individual and collective sense of optimism, which seemed overtly and intrinsically counterintuitive given the alarming business headlines. What was compelling was the demonstrated ability to generate real, tangible, and organic brand and business growth despite a wavering economy and uncertain business expectations.

Some common threads:

- Positive energy and commitment to winning. Having found strategic underpinnings to drive business, brand, and financial success, these companies were not backing down in their quest to maintain strong franchise momentum.
- Expanded use of media while concurrently embracing the foundation of a truly integrated marketing strategy. With a hefty dose of metrics and accountability, the insights and knowledge seemed to be at a higher level.
- Courage to make bold and substantial business decisions to differentiate brands and evolve business models.

Let me briefly share cornerstone presentation insights and messages:

- Jim Stengel, the former global marketing officer at P&G, talked of the need to

unleash the power of people to develop the right business and brand-building strategies. This requires an environment that values contributions and personal and professional needs.

- Mike Mendenhall, the CMO at Hewlett-Packard, discussed the massive revolution



toward digital and social networking solutions, including marketplace technology and insights sharing. With innovation and creativity generated from multiple sources at faster speeds, HP's business system was prepared to incorporate out-of-the-box concepts.

- Tony Hsieh, the CEO at Zappos.com, shared the ultimate business model — an organization that makes customer service and care its singular and unrelenting focus. He demonstrated that long-term growth is built on a foundation of loyalty and quality, a combination that can't be shortchanged or managed inconsistently.
- Joe Tripodi, the CMO at Coca-Cola, demonstrated that a great and powerful brand that had lost its way can be reinvented and energized to transform an entire business enterprise. He developed and leveraged a global integrated marketing platform that was strengthened with consistent and compelling brand messaging.

There were many more stories that would fill a marketing library. For me, Interbrand CEO Jez Frampton said it best when he empirically and evangelically implored the audience to believe and invest in the power of brands to deliver the short- and long-term growth objectives that corporate executives and shareholders are demanding. ■