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NEW SPONSOR

Mad Science Group Seeks Down-to-Earth Benefits From Space Tie

The Mad Science Group has signed a two-year tie with a privately funded deep-space probe set to launch in 2004. The science education company's goals? Giving its brand the opportunity to rub elbows with expected major cosponsors and providing its franchisees with fresh content for their programs.

Mad Science will be the global marketing partner of Team Encounter for the lead-up to the launch of its first probe, the unmanned Humanity's First Starship. The probe will spend more than 13 years in space before it leaves our solar system.

Mad Science, 137 on *Entrepreneur's* Franchise 500 list, provides entertaining science education classes through 133 franchisees in the U.S., Canada and 24 other countries. Franchisees conduct 90 percent of their programs through hosting organizations such as schools, summer camps and theme parks, marketing directly to school principals, PTA presidents, venue programmers and parents.

The 10-year-old company has established awareness among middle and upper-middle-class parents of three-to-12-year-olds. Partnering with the mission, which expects to sign a title sponsor next year, will take the company a step further, said president & CEO Ariel Shlien, who approved the deal. "We want to create a prestige level for our brand, so we want to associate with large projects that give us a chance to mingle with major corporations."

Mad Science also took the tie to provide franchisees with a programming platform that local providers of similar classes cannot, Shlien said.

Integration of Team Encounter content into the company's programs is in the planning stage, but likely will include participant access to exclusive Web content and presentations about the space mission, said Judy Haber, senior partner at Performance Sponsorship Group, the property's sales agency.

In addition to a rights fee and a guaranteed promotional commitment, Mad Science agreed to become a sales channel for Team Encounter. The company will promote the project's archival kits—which offer the opportunity to place letters, pictures and DNA (through hair samples) on board the spacecraft—to the several million children who attend Mad Science programs annually.

Kit purchasers will be able to follow the craft online and vote on different mission activities, said Alan Ladwig, vice president of marketing for Team Encounter's parent organization, Encounter 2001, LLC.

SOURCES
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