

## What's in a name?

*If it's attached to a new sports venue in the heart of hockey-mad Toronto, 10 million bucks. If it's hanging from the facade of a popular outdoor stage, a fraction of that figure.*

DAVID GARRICK IS DIRECTOR of Premium Seating and Sponsorship at the Coliseum Entertainment Centre. Here's how he sold naming rights to the Coliseum, an 80-some-year-old venue on Toronto's Exhibition Grounds, for \$10 million:

He cold-called Ricoh Canada and pitched them a corporate box in the building once re-development was complete. As an aside, he mentioned that naming rights were also available.

A month later, he had a deal.

If only it were always that easy.

Just down the road from what is now known as the Ricoh Coliseum sits what is now known as the Norigen Stage, formerly the Concert Stage at Harbourfront Centre. The naming was brokered by Performance Sponsorship Group (PSG), a company that specializes in securing naming rights.

Unlike David Garrick, whose approach to securing a naming partner was unscientific, but extremely fortuitous, PSG's Senior Partner, Judy Haber, follows a rigid discipline. It begins with a thorough inventory of the venue's assets and ends, if all goes according to script, with a naming partner who brings leveraging opportunities to all, including existing sponsors and, of course, venue. Bruce Hutchinson, Manager of Marketing and Media Relations at Harbourfront, says the marriage between Norigen and the Concert Stage was the culmination of courtship that spanned 6-8 months.

Ricoh's \$10 million investment allows it to hang its shingle on the Coliseum and a billboard overlooking the Gardiner Expressway, which slices through the city's heart. The contract runs for 10 years, and includes two five-year renewal options. Inside the venue, which is being renovated and expanded to seat 11,500 for hockey, Ricoh will have its name on the scoreboard and a few "product pods" in the concourse areas. And, of course, it gets the corporate box that was the original pitch in David Garrick's well-timed call.

When weighed against the heavy price tag

attached to the Ricoh Coliseum's name, the Norigen Stage was quite a bargain. Norigen won't reveal what it paid for naming rights to the former Concert Stage, but Eva Innes, Norigen's Director of Corporate Communications, says that over the life of the 10-year contract, the tab will hit seven figures. The company also gets naming rights to Harbourfront's information line, which receives thousands of calls per month, exclusive telecommunications supplier status, tickets to events and access to Harbourfront facilities for noncommercial purposes.

In corporate Canada, Norigen is one of the new kids on the block. The privately held company has been in business for only a couple of years. Japan-based Ricoh has been around for much longer, but still suffers from a weak corporate presence in Canada.

In both cases, a principal objective of the naming is to give each company a sense of solidity and permanence in the corporate landscape.

"We wanted to increase our brand awareness and our brand identity and we thought that this would be a wonderful springboard for us," says Christine Tomaselli, Marketing and Communications Manager at Ricoh Canada.

The same goes for Norigen. "It will help deliver the message that they're here in Toronto and they're here to stay," says PSG's Judy Haber.

Association with Harbourfront, a well-respected cultural venue, also delivers a message about how Norigen feels about Toronto and the surrounding community. This is important for Norigen, whose core information technology business is geared toward commercial installations usually located in large urban centres.

For Ricoh, the naming is an extension of the parent company's association with sports sponsorships. Ricoh USA sponsors a PGA golf tournament, and the Japanese parent has a number of major sports properties. The Coliseum represents the company's first naming of an important sports venue.

The Ricoh Coliseum will become home to the Toronto Roadrunners, the city's IHL hockey franchise and the newest addition to its crowded sports marketplace. Ricoh was drawn to the venue, and to its new prime tenant, because of the affordable entertainment it promised.

"It's awfully expensive for a family of four to go to the Air Canada Centre for a hockey game," says Tomaselli. The average price for a Roadrunners game will be in the \$20-\$25 range once the team takes to Coliseum ice in 2002. "We're pretty proud to be able to offer that kind of alternative," she says.

Ricoh, whose core business is document imaging, is seeking to reinforce its presence nationally. It expects exposure from coast to coast as a result of the naming. Roadrunner games will be televised, says Tomaselli. Game summaries will appear in national newspapers like the Globe and Mail and the National Post, and the venue will also enjoy visitors from across the country thanks to the many trade shows and other events it hosts.

Down the road at Harbourfront, Norigen is already at work leveraging another key element of its naming contract. The company will be the exclusive telecommunications supplier for Harbourfront for the next ten years. Harbourfront has a full-time staff of 175, says Bruce Hutchinson. With the addition of temps and part-timers, that staffing complement swells to as many as 500 during summer. It operates three buildings, a number of outdoor sites and extends its reach throughout the city during international festivals and events. Its telecommunications needs are extensive, he says, and Norigen will integrate services previously delivered by four separate providers.

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