Case 8: No Such Thing as Bad Publicity

In a 2025 interview with Hypermodern Marketing, Waldo Honker, the CEO of Silverlode.com, attributed the company’s success to its unusual approach to marketing. Silverlode, an online bookie service, doesn’t talk about its product or the benefits it offers or a lifestyle it represents. Silverlode just wants people to remember its name. The operation is illegal in the United States and other countries; thus, since many media outlets won’t carry its ads, Silverlode can’t very well employ mainstream advertising approaches when targeting the US market. Silverlode has thus adopted a unique marketing strategy: putting its name on anything in the public eye.

This approach is common—up to a point. Companies have long put their logos on their own products, on clothing, on billboards, and so forth. Silverlode, however, paid professional weightlifters to have large, temporary (henna) tattoos blazoned across their chests, SILVERLODE.COM, so that the company name would be in front of the viewers for the full duration of competition. Building on the success of this tactic, they approached other people in the public eye. Silverlode paid counterprotesters at Westboro Baptist Church rallies to carry signs saying, “Silverlode.com loves gays!” Honker worked out a deal with a cash-strapped US National Parks Service to project nightly Silverlode’s URL across the forehead of the sculpture of George Washington at Mount Rushmore. In 2023, in the most audacious and expensive stunt of all, it paid Elon Musk over $3 million to dedicate a SpaceX mission to precision-dumping a payload of powdered graphite in a thin layer across the surface of the Moon, which now displays SILVERLODE.COM in letters visible to the naked eye from Earth.

Silverlode went into the naming business, too. It paid a woman pregnant with quadruplets $25,000 per child to name them Silver, Lode, Dot, and Com. It bought the naming right, auctioned by the Wildlife Conservation Society, to a newly discovered species of wolf spider, which is now in the scientific books as, you guessed it, the Silverlode.com spider (Pardosa argentilacus). Scattered around the country are lakes, mountains, and waterfalls named Silverlode.com. You might even say this last gimmick really put them on the map.

One item never purchased by the company is the right to be discussed for forty minutes at an Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl competition.

Case from the 2017 International Ethics Bowl on February 26, 2017 in Dallas Texas

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