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NBA ALL-STAR WEEKEND > BASKETBALL SPONSORS SHOW THE WAY TO USE PLAYERS'  
OWN PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS AT THE HEART OF CAMPAIGNS

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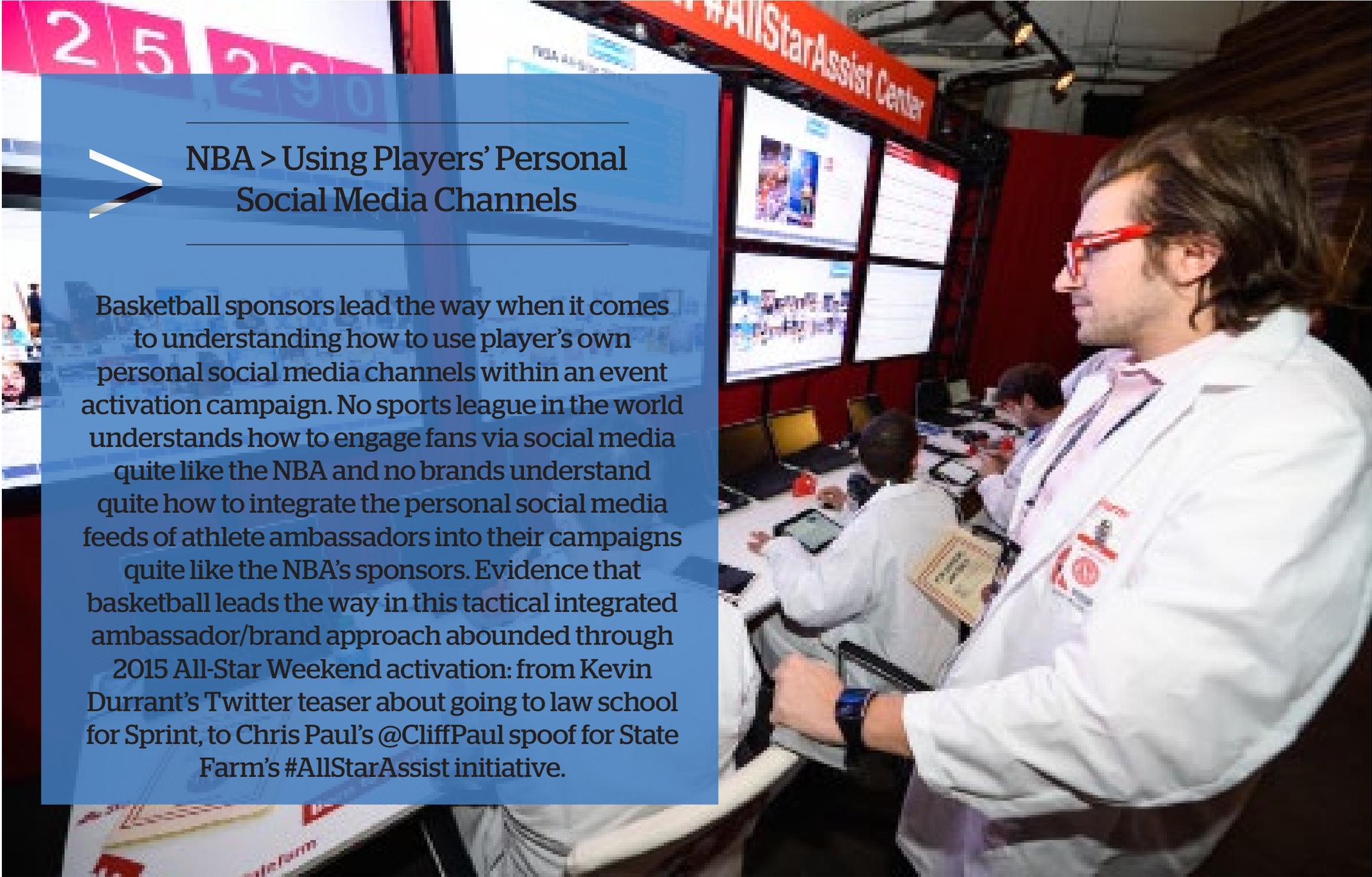


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INSIGHT > BRIEFING > 2015

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ACTIVATIVE



## NBA > Using Players' Personal Social Media Channels

Basketball sponsors lead the way when it comes to understanding how to use player's own personal social media channels within an event activation campaign. No sports league in the world understands how to engage fans via social media quite like the NBA and no brands understand quite how to integrate the personal social media feeds of athlete ambassadors into their campaigns quite like the NBA's sponsors. Evidence that basketball leads the way in this tactical integrated ambassador/brand approach abounded through 2015 All-Star Weekend activation: from Kevin Durant's Twitter teaser about going to law school for Sprint, to Chris Paul's @CliffPaul spoof for State Farm's #AllStarAssist initiative.

Of course, it's not just All-Star activation but work right across the basketball landscape that leads the way when it comes to integrating with baller ambassadors' own social channels (from LeBron's 'Flo Halloween Costume' posts for Progressive Insurance to Dwight Howard's 'NBA Swingman' tweets).

While When the NBA's own ground-breaking approach to social media is combined with the huge personal social media reach enjoyed by so many of the league highly charismatic (and sometimes outspoken) basketball stars, sponsors who are subtle enough not to destroy the authenticity of the players' channels often find themselves with incredibly powerful and effective activation platforms.

ILLUSTRATIVE CAMPAIGNS

**Sprint / Kevin Durant '#KDLaw'** > When NBA super star Kevin Durant started tweeting to his nine million followers about going to law school earlier this month eyebrows were raised and it seemed certain something unusual was afoot.

Could the 26-year old Oklahoma City Thunder player really be preparing for his post-basketball career?

(After all, he did bring back his much-discussed school backpack to his press conferences.)

But his last tweet suggested that the 2013/14 NBA MVP was involved in some kind of stunt.

After all, 'Seat Pleasant University' doesn't even exist.

It turns out that the fictitious college was invented as Durant's alma mater by NBA communications partner Sprint and his law school tweets were merely the first trails for the brand's new campaign - NBA Half Court - which broke during the NBA All-Star Weekend.

The whole story became clearer when Sprint rolled out an accompanying online teaser on the Friday before the All-Star game.

Sprint's spoof spot claimed Durant had gone through law school in four days and now was

ready to perform both on-court and in-court.

The central campaign commercial itself then aired on game day itself - featuring Durant's legal mind helping rival Verizon and AT&T customers cut their wireless costs.

This was followed up by a shorter, 30-second ad trumpeting that "Kevin Durant & Associates are the league leaders in getting wireless rates torn in half, courtesy of Sprint".

Creative the fun ads all parody those frequent plaintiff lawyer commercials that litter US television.

'I've been working with Sprint for several years now and we challenged ourselves to do something different for our newest commercial,' explains Durant.

'The "Cut Your Bill in Half" ad was a fun spot for me to shoot and I loved being in the courtroom and playing 'KD, Esq.

The whole activation was part of Sprint's wider, ongoing 'Cut Your Bill In Half' campaign (which launched late last year).

*Comment > This is a great example of how to use a set of sports league rights (NBA) and leverage interest in a specific property event (All-Star Weekend) and an athlete ambassador (Durant) within the context of a wider marketing campaign (Cut Your Bill In Half).*

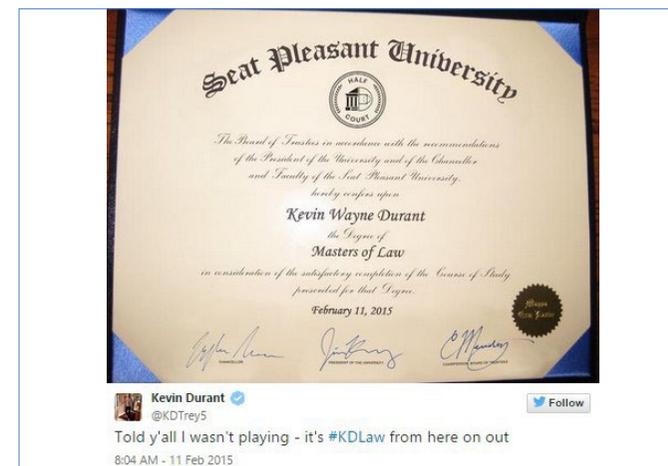
*This is Durant's fourth year as a Sprint ambassador and he previously fronted Sprint TV campaigns in both 2013 and 2012.*

*In fact, Durant has a fairly impressive line-up of sponsorship deals.*

*As well as Sprint, he is currently working with Nike, Sonic, Kind Bars, Orange Leaf Yogurt and Zero ice Water*

*Sprint itself is currently in its third season as the Official Wireless Partner of the NBA and its primary engagement approach is to reach the league's millions of fans through unique and compelling content.*

*As part of its partnership, Sprint customers can enjoy unlimited NBA action for free with the Sprint NBA Game Time app (which delivers live home and away radio broadcasts, game highlights and video alerts as well as real time stats*



Links >

Sprint Half Off Website:  
<http://www.Sprint.com/halfoff>

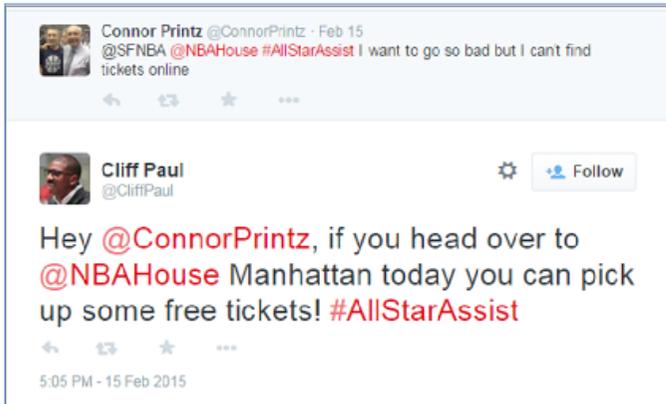
Sprint Half Off Twitter  
<http://www.twitter.com/sprint>  
 #KDLaw

Sprint Half Off Facebook  
<http://www.facebook.com/sprint>

Sprint YouTube  
<https://www.youtube.com/user/sprintnow>

Kevin Durant Twitter  
 @KDTrey5





and scores).

*Sprint also features in the 'Halftime Report' on both TNT and ABC through the season.*

*Within the NBA All-Star Weekend's event line-up, Sprint is the title sponsor of the 'Sprint NBA All-Star Celebrity Game'*

*As well as its NBA deal and its Durant partnership, Sprint's other basketball activation include sponsoring the Boston Celtics and an ambassador relationship with TNT NBA presenter Kenny Smith.*

*Beyond basketball, Sprint sponsors the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series and it currently also has team relationships with the Kansas City Chiefs, University of Notre Dame, Brigham Young University, University of Maryland, Kansas City Royals, and Sporting KC. <*

State Farm / Chris Paul 'All Star Assists' > The NBA's official insurance partner State Farm activated at All-Star Weekend with a fascinating social and digital campaign actually assisting New York All-Star Weekend attendees.

The brand continued its 'National Bureau Of Assists' initiative (playing on the word 'assist' - which in basketball means a pass that leads to a basket) by working with agency Translation to set up a social media command centre in the event's NBA House( at Moynihan Station).

The centre then launched the Twitter handle @SFNBA (which took over the campaign's previous @cliffpaul handle) through which offered to assist All-Star attendees on all sorts of topics and challenges.

To get an 'assist', All-Star attendees, basketball fans or just local New Yorkers simply had to send a tweet using the hashtag #AllStarAssist.

All requests to the account were addressed with either a 'digital' or a 'physical' assist.

For some the assist was an NBA ticket, for others public transport advice, or even advising on the songs Ariana Grande would sing at the opening ceremony.

The brand even delivered a hat in response to a tweet from an NBA fan waiting outside in the cold.

This social strand is a real-life extension of State Farm's 3-year-old 'National Bureau of Assists' initiative which has been led by spoof TV spots fronted by NBA point guards (known for their 'assists) Chris Paul, John Stockton, Sue Bird, Damian Lillard and Stephen Curry.

In the ads the ballers play their non-athletic 'twin' brothers who help consumers with off-court mishaps.

The most recent spot in the campaign ran in late December featuring Chris Paul's twin brother Cliff Paul.

The star players in the ads also promoted the All-Star campaign on their own Twitter feeds.

For example, LA Clippers point guard Chris Paul's parody twin Cliff Paul's twitter account was rebranded @SFNBA and through it he offered to 'assist' people in New York at the All-Star Weekend was held.

Other NBA stars and influencers - like John Wall, Chris Bosh and Anthony Davis - joined the campaign on Twitter and helped generate momentum and reach.

ESPN's sports business analyst Darren Rovell even commended State Farm's integration.

The official @NBA handle also tweeted a clip promoting the campaign that helped it trend nationally.

Furthermore, the real-life All-Star State Farm assist squad were all dressed to match the players in the ad.

'As such, everyone was outfitted in lab coats and red glasses like our SFNBA members in our TV Spots,' explains Translation social media strategist Casey Savio .

'We even had a lounge and charging station with argyle pillows so that people could relax after they were done assisting or get recharged.'

Indeed, the whole #AllStarAssist Centre itself was built to look like the State Farm Na-

Links >

State Farm YouTube  
<https://www.youtube.com/user/statefarm>

State Farm Facebook:  
[www.facebook.com/statefarm](http://www.facebook.com/statefarm)

State Farm Twitter:  
[www.twitter.com/statefarm](http://www.twitter.com/statefarm)

State Farm Instagram:  
[www.instagram.com/statefarm](http://www.instagram.com/statefarm)

State Farm Flickr:  
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/statefarm/>

State Farm Website:  
<https://www.statefarm.com>

Cliff Paul Twitter:  
[www.twitter.com/cliffpaul](http://www.twitter.com/cliffpaul)

Cliff Paul Instagram:  
[www.instagram.com/cliffpaul](http://www.instagram.com/cliffpaul)

Translation Website  
<http://www.translationllc.com/>

 **Cliff Paul**  
@CliffPaul

Follow

Lost in the #BigApple? The City Assister Team will be helping all week! Tweet @SFNBA using #AllStarAssist. [ow.ly/i/8CCXj](https://ow.ly/i/8CCXj)

← ↻ ☆ ⋮



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RETWEETS	FAVORITES	
19	58	

3:00 PM - 14 Feb 2015

 **NBAHouse**  
@NBAHouse

Follow

.@spurs center @tiagosplitter checking out the @SFNBA #AllStarAssist Center in #NBAHouse!

← ↻ ☆ ⋮



RETWEETS FAVORITES

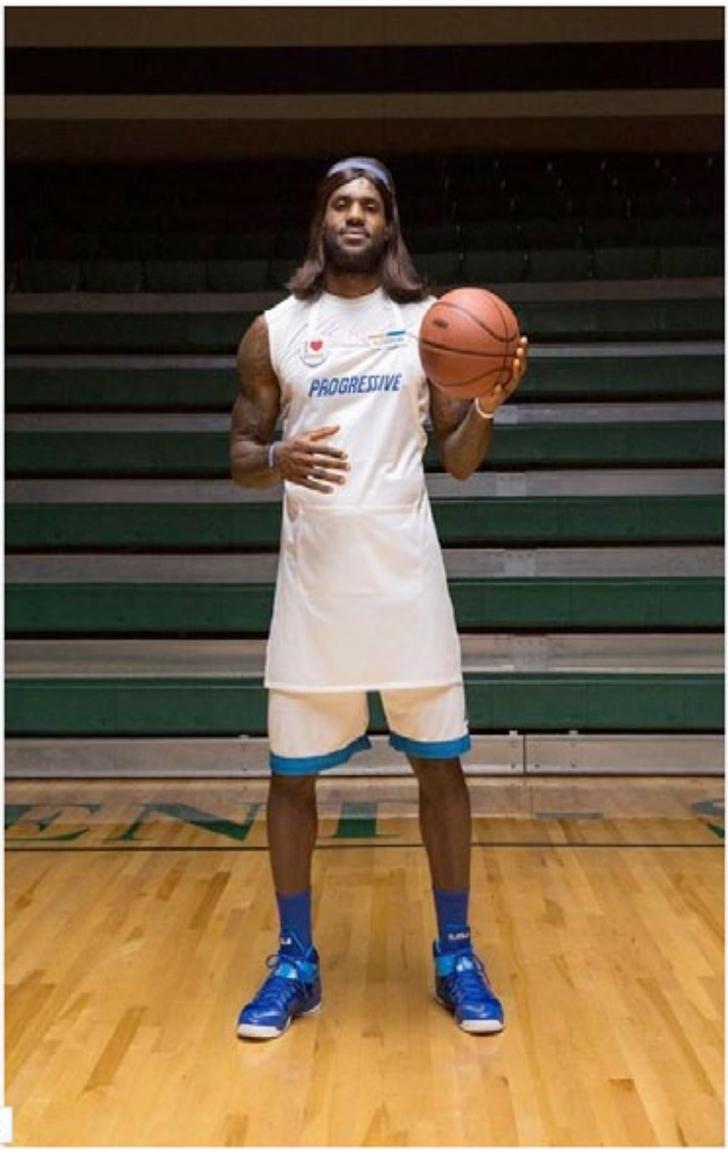
14	43	
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4:01 PM - 14 Feb 2015



**Timeline Photos**

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Like Comment

**LeBron James**  
Happy Halloween #FloBron #Switch #IPROMISE

Album: Timeline Photos  
Shared with: Public

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tional Bureau of Assists from the commercial. The branded space was built with clear panels so fans could actually watch as the five-strong assist team helped people out in real-time.

The centre had six big screens show a campaign hashtag counter and a rolling tracker of real-time conversations people were having with the @SFNBA handle.

As well as the staff at the centre, 175 State Farm City Assisters were on ground in the NYC streets helping people: delivering CP3 shoes, promotional merchandise and warm clothes to help fight the NYC weather.

The campaign also includes a 'Making Of National Bureau Of Assists' behind-the-scenes YouTube film.

'If you think about one of our main marketing objectives and our brand mission, it is the idea that State Farm is here to help,' outlines State Farm marketing director of branded content Patty Morris.

'The campaign that we run specifically for the NBA is all about bringing out the parallels between assisting both on the court and off the court. So All-Star Weekend was the perfect opportunity to put that into action.'

*Comment > Like Sprint's All-Star work, this was a seamless blend of social and physical that dovetailed with an ongoing ad campaign. Both activations used a big property event to link integrated campaigns to ambassador personalities and create a more personal feel.*

*How did this ambitious approach perform? Well, the metrics are complex and it's hard to judge which measurements are the key ones to judge it by.*

*There were more than 3,623 mentions of #AllstarAssist on Twitter and more than 5,000 total engagements and several hundred people were 'assisted' - either digitally and physically.*

*Real-time tweeting around Stephen Curry's All-Star 3-Point Contest win drove the most @SFNBA traffic*

*And, yes, after @SFNBA's 250 All-Star tweets, the handle once again reverted to @cliffpaul and resumed being the player's personal Twitter feed. <*

**Progressive Insurance / LeBron James 'FloBron' >** In the US sports marketing world, late October and early November 2014 seemed to be dominated by one name - LeBron James..

His 'Back to The Cleveland Cavaliers' homecoming story certainly provided a powerful narrative to promote the new NBA season and a huge number of big brands leveraged the story.

But not all his promotional work was based around big budget, emotional storytelling campaigns from giant global brands (such as those by Beats By Dre, Nike and Sprite) which all had size-

Links >

**LeBron Facebook**  
<https://www.facebook.com/LeBron/photos/a.146568808943.115160.64637653943/10152832362708944/?type=1&heater>

**LeBron Facebook**  
<https://www.facebook.com/LeBron>

**LeBron Website**  
<http://lebronjames.com/>

**LeBron Twitter**  
[@KingJames](https://twitter.com/kingjames)

**Progressive Insurance**  
<http://www.progressive.com/>

able budgets and big media buys that saw them run for several weeks across multiple platforms

LeBron also led some snappy, low-cost, timely promotions – such as his simple, sponsored social media ‘Halloween Tweet’ work for Progressive.

Everyone dresses up on Halloween in the USA and even image conscious LeBron is no exception.

This year he wore a costume in the style of the fictional character ‘Flo’ from the long-running Progressive Insurance ad campaigns – complete with long-haired wig – and shared it on his Facebook page wishing everyone a happy Halloween.

The superstar player was mimicking the brand’s well-known, fictional commercial front-woman character.

Indeed, there is a long tradition of dressing up as Flo for Halloween – to the extent that in 2012 a spin-off spot was created specifically on that theme.

This snapshot piece of paid social promotion for Progressive seemed somewhat inevitable after the Cleveland Cavaliers star tweeted out his admiration for the brand’s ‘Flo’ character despite having a sponsorship deal with rival State Farm at the time.

The single post alone racked up 372,000 Likes and nearly 19,000 shares and it gained huge unearned media coverage too.

But it seems likely that this simple, single selfie tweet is the start of a wider new campaign by LeBron and Progressive.

Various reports suggest that it is the prelude to a new digital-first campaign that Progressive is calling ‘The Switch’ which will activate across social channels.

*Comment > This may well essentially have been little more than simply be a teaser for a bigger brand campaign, but even a single branded tweet from LeBron can be a powerful engagement tool in itself.*

*After all, his own personal media channels certainly have impressive reach.*

*James personally has huge reach via his own social channels. He boasts and impressive 22 million Facebook fans and has racked up more than 16 million Twitter followers. Impressive for an athlete who, a few years ago, was seen by some as one of the most hated men in sports.*

*Now ames’ rehabilitation is complete (well, as far as the marketers are concerned anyway).*

*Indeed, Forbes has recently announced that he has overtaken Tiger Woods as the biggest active brand in sports (in terms of the combined value of endorsements) - although many argue that Michael Jordan, despite retiring in 2003, still pulls in more) . And quite what Real Madrid’s Cristiano Ronaldo (with his 34.5 million Twitter followers) thinks of that one can only speculate. <*

progressive Sponsored

ttaking, margiehansenas86, landsdownelindsey, nikegiftcardusa, cocob3tty, candyyams\_iam, bossladii\_jerz, est.6.21

thejawnwitjerz Catch #Lebron aka #FloBron as a new addition to the #Progressive family.....can't help but say this is too funny!!

shwnwats49 @bigdaddylakers

5h



PROPERTY OVERVIEW

Why do brands get involved with All-Star Weekend? Because they seek an NBA star halo effect!

February marked the 64th annual NBA All-Star Game as once again 10 of the NBA's best players took to the court in New York's Madison Square Garden to showcase their skills, play for bragging rights and for the love of the game.

While the All-Star Weekend doesn't attract the 10 million viewers that it did in its heyday, the All-Star Game remains the highest rated and most viewed event on US cable during the first quarter (January to March) of the cable television season.

There are good signs from 2015 viewing data. The 2015 NFL Pro Bowl and NHL All-Star games both saw declining TV ratings, Sunday's NBA All-Star Game earned 7.2m viewers and a 5.5 overnight rating - which is up 12% from last year.

Plus Saturday's festivities added another 6.1 million viewers (up 7% from 2014) to the total.

Collectively, NBA All-Star Weekend content across Turner's NBA on TNT and NBA TV digital/social accounts reached a gross audience of 150m fans - generating 25+m clip views, while hashtag #NBAAllStarNYC drove over 300,000 mentions.

The Turner-owned broadcaster TNT, which has a long NBA history, also ran a half-hour special, 'The City Game', celebrating New York City's basketball love affair across the five boroughs.

It also compliments the NBA's own new app and interactive map celebrating New York.

Ratings aside, one thing the All-Star Weekend does generate is impressive revenue as it attracts significant fan and brand partner interest.

Indeed, the festival has now ballooned into a full-blown supporter experience and a big part of the weekend is now brand-created activity.

Sponsor brands are attached to all aspects and every minute of the weekend and are creating in-person, social and media-based fan experiences and basketball-themed happenings.

State Farm has title sponsorship of the All-Star Saturday Night, Sprite sponsors the Slam Dunk Contest, Sprint backs the 'NBA All-Star Ce-

lebrity Game', Foot Locker hosts a 'Three-Point Contest', Taco Bell sponsors the 'Skills Challenge', while the 'Degree Shooting Stars' event paired up a current All-Star, an NBA legend and a WNBA player to face off against other teams 3-on-3.

There was also a Dunkin' Donuts 'Dunk Cancer' social media fundraiser led by the Orlando Magic's Victor Oladipo - who asked fans to join the charitable efforts by participating in his 72-hour fundraising push by sharing his own All-Star experiences via his Twitter and Instagram accounts (@VicOladipo) and the hashtag, #dunkcancer to drive purchasing through www.dunkcancer.com.

Among retailers, there were player appearances in NY stories for Nike, adidas, Foot Locker, Under Armour, Samsung and Harman/JBL.

Nike's logo, with its Jordan subbrand, appeared all over NYC: from Brooklyn to its 21 Mercer Street the Bowery (where it took over a bank), while its RSVP-only pop-up shop in Manhattan was designed to look like a giant shoe box.

Transport work was a popular choice too

Sprite pasted ads across bus shelters and billboards across the five boroughs, while State Farm's campaign ran on taxis, subways and buses.

First-time NBA All-Star advertiser Kumho Tires ran a Carmelo Anthony led campaign that took over an entire subway station and the 'S' shuttle train between the Times Square and Grand Central subway stations (with a pop-a-shot game and a sweepstakes competition).

Under Armour linked with Golden State Warrior Steph Curry on the launch campaign for his first signature shoe (Curry also fronted a new Degree deodorant ad), while other new sponsor campaigns launched during All-Star Weekend included work from Adidas, American Express, BBVA, Gatorade, H&R Block, Kia and Footlocker.

Other major event-based opportunities for brands included the NBA All-Star All-Style Fashion Show, (which actually saw eight NBA players strut down the on the runway) and the free All-Star concert in Manhattan's Flatiron district on the Thursday night (featuring Kanye West and Kevin Durant and produced by Jay Z). <



Links >

- NBA Website  
<http://www.nba.com/>
  
- NBA YouTube  
<http://www.youtube.com/nba>
  
- NBA League Pass  
<http://www.nba.com/leaguepass>
  
- NBA Game Time Mobile App  
<http://www.nba.com/mobile>
  
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<http://nba.tumblr.com>
  
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<http://store.nba.com>



## TAKEAWAYS

### 01 > An Appropriate Athlete Ambassador 'Fit' Is The Right Starting Point

The ambassador must fit the sponsor, the property, the consumer target group and the campaign idea. The player's social media should reach audiences the brand can't reach as effectively by other means.

### 02 > Match The Content To The Ambassador's Own 'Tone' & 'Personality' To Maximise Credibility

It is vital to fit the idea and creative to the athlete ambassador's own personal tone of voice.

Ensure the sponsor content has authentic synergies with the player's regular social output and persona.

### 03 > The Best Athlete Ambassador Content Has 'Insider Insight' & 'Authentic Expertise'

Usual rules apply to what content drives social sharing: entertaining, funny, intriguing, emotional and useful. Genuine expert insight is the key advantage of athlete social ambassadors and consumer ambassadors.

### 04 > In Terms Of Event Timing & Campaign Cycle, It's Often 'Pre-Game' & 'Post-Game' That Work Best

Using a player's own social channels for pre-game teasers can pique fan/follower interest and intrigue. It can also extend campaigns after the specific event/property is over and create a post-event long tail. In-game ambassador activity is tricky: players might be participating & too much in-game activity distracts.

### 05 > 'Transparency' & 'Honesty' Are Essential

At some point (& not too late) make it clear that brand content on a player's own social media is what it is. Don't pretend 'brand content' is 'player content' (well, not for long), or brand/player risk a backlash.




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Activative provides unique intelligence and insights that keep our clients - rights owners, brands, agencies and professional services - at the forefront of this evolving landscape.

The old sponsorship model, based on one directional brand-biased claims, vanilla hospitality, logo badging, eyeball metrics, cost per thousand, reach and frequency, is being replaced by one based on authenticity, customisation, dialogue, interactivity and permissive engagement.

Sponsorship is flourishing in this new environment as brands seek symbiotic passionate platforms around which to build consumer conversations.

Activative explores this landscape's emerging strategies, tactics and trends, champions original thinking and innovation and showcases future facing media and new technologies across the sponsorship community - from sports, music, arts and culture, to education, ecology and cause.

Our role is to explore, filter, analyse and advise - we stimulate marketers across the entire space: from traditional sponsorships and to brand tie-ins, to strategic collaborations and commercial partnerships.

A key aspect of the value in our work lies in linking standout sponsorship activation to contemporary socio-cultural, economic and technology trends and in making connections, finding fresh and daring ideas and identifying breakthrough thinking.

We work with some of the world's most forward thinking brands from right across the partnership space - including property owners, brands, agencies, media businesses and other sponsorship professional services companies.

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