

How Feld Entertainment has successfully responded to animal activist driven campaigns.

FACS Conference
Saskatoon
December 2005

Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey

- 136 Years Old
- 3 Touring Shows
- Road & Rail
- Arenas
- 1-3 Rings
- U.S., Canada and Mexico

Regulation of the Circus

- National
 - Animal Welfare Act (USDA)
 - Endangered Species Act (FWS)
- State/Provincial
 - Regulations and permits
- Local
 - Permits and ACO Inspections

U.S. National

- Animal Welfare Act
 - Exhibitors License
 - Surprise Inspections
 - Routes/Animal Inventories
 - Public Record
- Endangered Species Act
 - Prohibited Acts
 - Exemption: Captive Bred Wildlife Registration
 - Education
 - Bona Fide Breeding Program

The Activists

- Humane Society of the United States
- PeTA
- Zoocheck Canada
- American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)
- Canadian Federation Of Humane Societies
- Animal Protection Institute (API)
- Local AR Activists out front

Activist Tactics

- Negative Publicity
- Protests/demonstrations at shows
- Bans- species/ activity/ tools
Local/State&Provincial/National
- Litigation
- Regulatory Complaints
- Secondary Targeting
(Venues&Sponsors)
- Illegal Activities

Ringling Responses

- 1992, started behind the scenes tours
- 1995, established 80-hectare Centre for Elephant Conservation in Florida dedicated to the conservation, breeding, and research study of the Asian elephant
- Full-time animal care specialists, Vice president of animal stewardship, staff training/animal handling policies

Ringling Outreach

www.ringling.com

- Amazing Animals
 - When you hear Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey®, think “Great Animal Care”
- Animal Open House
 - See how our amazing animal partners live, work, and play
- CIRCUSWORKS®
 - Teacher Workshops
 - Curriculum-based classroom materials
 - Educational Shows

Ringling Media Relations

- Pre engagement press kits
 - Animal care, public safety and circus issue fact sheets
- Media previews
 - Tours and Interviews
- Media training for animal staff
 - Designated spokespeople
- Letters to Editor, Op-Eds, Advertorials, Editorial board meetings

Ringling Government Relations

- National and Local
- Focus on Ringling Markets
- Support Regulation not “Bans”
- Support Wildlife Legislation
 - (Asian Elephant Conservation Act, CITES)

Results

- Market research shows that Ringling Bros. patrons as well as a majority of the general population support performances with animals.
- A prolonged 2001 campaign for a provincial ban on circus animal acts failed to win over a majority of Nova Scotians. Of 400 polled, 52 per cent opposed outlawing circuses with animals, while 44 per cent supported it.

Outcomes

- No State/Provincial circus bans in US or Canada today
- Some “stricter local measures”
 - Animal Welfare or Public Safety Ordinances
- Small number of local bans in U.S. and Canada
 - Most local bans enacted in smaller cities with limited circus activity

Losing Strategies

- Ignore activist campaigns
- Debate activists
- Deal making/capitulate to activists

- “No comment”
- Attack campaigns
- Over reactions

Winning Strategies

- Build Relationships
- Educate Patrons and Politicians
- Use the Media
- Develop Allies in other Industries
- Work Together/Share Information
- Show Care and Commitment
- Know the Law



Leslie Ballentine

Canadian Consultant to Feld Entertainment, Inc.