The Re-Release of
_The Best Years of Our Lives:_
Marketing Proposal

Marketing Research Industries

Prepared for:
President Paul Marchbanks

Prepared by Team 3:
Team Member Name _____
Team Member Name _____
Team Member Name _____
Team Member Name _____
Team Member Name _____

November 1, 2005
TO: President Paul Marchbanks

FROM: Team 3

SUBJECT: Marketing Proposal for The Best Years of Our Lives

On October 11, 2005, MGM Studios called on Marketing Research Industries to market their 1946 classic film The Best Years of Our Lives for it’s re-release onto new DVD formats. Marketing Research Industries’ president Paul Marchbanks assigned this important task to Team 3. Team 3’s research is now complete and enclosed in the following proposal.

We analyzed the current and future movie market with attention to current declines in movie ticket sales, Blu-Ray’s gains in the Blu-Ray and HD-DVD battle, unpopularity of drama and romance films in terms of 2005 total gross sales, and competition offered by similar films in the past and on DVD currently.

We also researched the reasons why the original trailer did not create enormous movie sales. We have found several reasons why the original trailer needs to be redone in order to market the film for its future re-release onto HD-DVD and Blu-Ray. Reasons for revision include the following: issues with vague references, a central romantic theme, absence of appeal to middle/lower class citizens, lack of color, poor use of text, lack of movie dialogue, and pacing issues.

We have proposed a new trailer free of the marketing issues that may have hindered the film’s original sales performance. Our new trailer opens by handsomely presenting the film as a timeless classic coming out onto HD-DVD and Blu-Ray as a Special 60th Anniversary Collectors Edition disc. The trailer continues with a series of clips that gives the audience a true feel for the film. The actors and actresses are then introduced and followed by a narrator who establishes relationships between specific characters. Then, one of the films most memorable scenes will play for roughly 16 seconds and the trailer will end with the title written in cursive on a vibrant cloud background.

We have decided on a forty to fifty year old target audience, as this group will likely be able to both recognize the stars of the film, as well as purchase the new format DVD players. The pacing of the trailer should be a comfortable mix of fast and slow pace to move the plot along quicker than the slowly unraveling plot in the actual film. We will highlight romance scenes and scenes with men in uniform to draw out our female and male target audiences.

Finally, we have offered some other suggestions for marketing the film, beyond advertisement, at the beginning of other DVDs.

Dear President Marchbanks,
Team 3 has composed a comprehensive marketing plan for the future re-release of *The Best Years of Our Lives* onto HD-DVD and Blu-Ray. We have conducted a great amount of research on the subject and have documented our findings in the following report. Team 3 would like to thank you personally for assigning us to work on this project and MGM Studios for trusting our marketing firm with the future success of their film.

**Analysis of Current Movie Market**

Krysten Crawford, CNN/Money staff writer and author of “Beating the box office blahs: The Memorial Day weekend gave Hollywood a much-needed lift. But can it last?” reports that movie attendance has been declining for the past three years, and it continues to decline in 2005 (par 6). She mentions in her article that Exhibitor Relations stated a 7.5% decline in attendance since one year ago, with a 5% decline in ticket sales (as higher ticket prices have been used to offset the decline in attendance) (par 9). Robert Bucksbaum, theater owner and president of the box office tracking firm Reel Source, believes that high movie ticket prices in relation to rental costs, movies-on-demand, and narrowing time periods between the film’s theater and DVD release dates are major causes of declining ticket sales (*qtd. in* Crawford par 12). Though these challenges may seem impossible to overcome, Bucksbaum recalls that fifty years ago, when television was first released, theater owners thought the industry was doomed, but, through the use of gimmicks and giveaways, managed to keep movie theater attendance up (par 15).

In the Blu-Ray and HD-DVD battle, a fight between competing formats of future high quality video discs, Blu-Ray has managed to gain an advantage (par 6). Sony-supported Blu-Ray offers more storage than Toshiba (and supporters’) HD-DVD, allowing additional features, such as games and interviews, to be added to each disc which will likely increase their demand (par 7). HD-DVD will reportedly be less expensive to produce and players may even support current DVD discs (par 7). Many business, such as Warner Brothers Entertainment, are split between the two formats and plan on releasing films on both HD-DVD and Blu-Ray discs in order to reach the widest possible audience (par 1-3). Still, Sony Pictures Disney, Fox, and Lion’s Gate still strongly back Blu-Ray (par 6). Alternately, many expect HD-DVD to lose Universal Studios’ exclusive support just as it has from Paramount and Warner Brothers, who have decided to produce DVDs in both formats (par 2).

Drama/Romance films fall behind in popularity at the box office this year. Instead, fiction and fantasy, action and adventure, and comedy currently bring in the top gross. as illustrated by the following chart from IMDB.com

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gross</th>
<th>Movie</th>
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<tr>
<td>380,262,555</td>
<td><em>Star Wars: Episode III - Revenge of the Sith</em> (2005)</td>
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<tr>
<td>233,846,752</td>
<td><em>War of the Worlds</em> (2005)</td>
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<tr>
<td>205,336,261</td>
<td><em>Charlie and the Chocolate Factory</em> (2005)</td>
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<tr>
<td>205,279,168</td>
<td><em>Batman Begins</em> (2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>186,064,011</td>
<td><em>Mr. &amp; Mrs. Smith</em> (2005)</td>
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<tr>
<td>177,575,142</td>
<td><em>Hitch</em> (2005)</td>
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The Best Years of Our Lives had an estimated movie budget of $2.1 million (about $19.8 million today), with $11.3 million in theatrical rentals (an estimated $106.7 million today). The latest US gross of The Best Years of Our Lives reaches $23.7 million, nearly twelve times the movie’s budget. These numbers suggest that this movie did a great deal better in theaters than it did on DVD or on VHS. The film’s total gross does not significantly exceed the price of theatrical rentals in today’s market even though the purchasing power of the US dollar has significantly fallen since 1946. Thus, the $12.4 million accumulated after the theatrical rentals of the film represents a significantly smaller value of money. Frank Capra’s It’s a Wonderful Life, a film produced in the same year, had an estimated budget of $3.2 million (roughly $30 million today) with theatrical rentals totaling to $3.3 million ($31.2 million today). James Cameron’s 1997 movie Titanic had an estimated budget of $200 million ($24.3 million in 1946) with a latest US gross of $601 million ($71.8 million in 1946). Ron Howard’s 1999 A Beautiful Mind had a budget of $60 million ($6.5 million in 1946) with a latest gross of $171 million in the US ($18.5 million in 1946). The Best Years of Our Lives theatrical rentals account for a profit of over $9 million, nearly five times the movie’s production cost. Comparatively, the more well known It’s a Wonderful Life made only $100,000 in profit from theatrical rentals, barely accounting for the movie’s original production costs. In comparison to current movies such as Titanic and A Beautiful Mind, The Best Years of Our Lives had significantly higher returns in proportion to the budget spent on the movie, though the overall profits of Titanic and A Beautiful Mind were greater (http://pro.imdb.com/; McCusker).

The Failure of the Original Trailer

This theatrical trailer needs several improvements to ensure the best performance for its re-release on HD-DVD in 2006. However, in order to create a successful trailer for The Best Years of Our Lives, marketing group 3 has first examined the features of the original trailer that not only contributed to its failure, but also would hinder its success in the current movie market.

The theatrical movie trailer for The Best Years of Our Lives opens with textual script rolling from the bottom of the screen to the top. This text advertises the movie in an extremely biased and uninformative way, as it claims that all other films pale in comparison to this one: “Now, Samuel Goldwyn presents the best thing that ever happened”. While this form of marketing was most likely successful in the 1940’s era, it does little to grab the attention of the audience at the beginning of the trailer and fails to give the viewer any substantial reason to be interested in the film itself. The use of the word “thing” is vague and unspecific about exactly which aspect of the movie makes it “the best thing that ever happened”. This leaves the audience clueless at the very beginning of the trailer.

The plot of the trailer indicates a central theme of a love story. Romantic scenes in the trailer express a passionate tone. A wedding at the beginning conveys fond love between newlyweds. The reunion of a married couple presents a rekindle of love. This plot fails to appeal to men due to women’s overwhelming attraction to love stories.
This trailer also appeals to the wealthy. The wedding scene that is included in the trailer takes place in a well-to-do home with fancy furnishings. The characters also wear elaborate and expensive clothing. This deters the general population (middle-class individuals) from enjoying the trailer and wanting to watch the film because it is offensive in that it portrays an unrealistic life to them. It portrays the idealistic image of domestic life without any adversities. Middle-class individuals will show indifference towards a movie in which they cannot relate.

Also, the trailer displays in black and white. This is unattractive to the younger generation that expects every modern movie to show in color. Symphony music plays throughout the trailer. This music may be unfamiliar to the younger generations and prove uninteresting to them. Thus, these aspects of the theatrical trailer narrow the perspective audience.

Huge white letters introduce the movie at the beginning of the trailer. These letters scroll up from the bottom of the screen, creating a “Star Wars” type effect. This text overwhelms the screen and makes the introduction of the movie bland and boring. Additionally, the same letters display the names of the characters in the movie during their introduction. This diverts the audience’s attention to the letters instead of the characters themselves.

The omniscient narrator speaks for the duration of the trailer. He reveals the writer of the movie along with the characters and the scenes associated with them. Therefore, no spoken dialogue occurs between the characters during the entire trailer. Without audible interaction between the characters and only the continuous voice of the narrator, the trailer becomes monotonous.

Although this trailer presents the story to the audience in an organized manner, the pacing of the scenes varies. The narrator whips through the scenes at the beginning of the trailer. Afterwards, he slows down as he introduces the main characters of the movie. The theatrical trailer spends the majority of the time introducing the main characters of the film. This completely interrupts the flow of the trailer. Also, it takes away from the fast-paced scenes at the beginning of the trailer.

The original trailer of *The Best Years of Our Lives* fails to attract a diverse audience due to its monotonous tone and limited plot. In order to produce an effective trailer, we must focus on improving the faults of the original trailer. When we do this, the re-release of *The Best Years of Our Lives* on HD-DVD will gain profound profits and popularity across the world!

**Description of Proposed Trailer**

The MGM logo and media clip opens the trailer. The screen shifts to a solid red background with effects that make it appear to be a thick theater curtain. White cursive text rolls onto the background in Script MT Bold font which reads “this spring” while a narrator markets the film’s upcoming release on HD-DVD and/or Blu-Ray in 2006. “This spring, bring home the sixtieth anniversary edition of Samuel Goldwyn’s classic love story: *The Best Years of Our*
Lives.” As the narrator reveals the movie’s title, it is also strongly presented in text that flashes onto the background one word at a time in large, bold letters—again in Script MT Bold font. The title remains on the screen as an enhanced version of the film’s original score—the mono sound mix by Western Electric Recording—begins to play. Smaller text flashes onto the top left corner that recognizes Samuel Goldwyn as the producer. This phrase vanishes as another appears in the bottom right corner, recognizing William Wyler as the director. At the end of this opening section, the trailer has played for nine seconds.

The score still plays but at a lesser volume, allowing for narration. A sequence of significant film clips captures the essence of the film without revealing any substantial elements of the plot, since the clips contain no dialogue. The first clip shows the three veterans—Al Stephenson (March), Fred Derry (Andrews), and Homer Parish (Russell)—in the back seat of a taxi on their way home from the airport after the war; the second, third, and fourth clips briefly show each of the men as they arrive at home for the first time; the fifth shows Homer and Wilma (O’Donnel) talking emotionally about their relationship in his bedroom; the sixth shows the three veterans hugging and laughing when they reunite at Butch’s Place; the seventh shows Fred and his wife, Marie (Mayo), kissing; the eighth shows Milly (Loy) and Al Stephenson sitting lovingly together on the terrace. During these clips, the narrator addresses the film’s age and portrays it as a timeless classic, advertising its themes “of hardship, change, love, and war” and their ability to “transcend generations.” The narrator promotes these and other appealing qualities of the film and describes the new features that will be available on the sixtieth anniversary edition of The Best Years of Our Lives. He very generally explains the plot, depicting the condition of three unique families who must find a way to cope with the various changes that the war has produced. Further, the narrator explains that the soon available special edition will enable viewers to “finally experience this classic film the way it deserves to be seen”—in Technicolor, with enhanced audio, sharpened image resolution, and bonus features that include past and recent commentary by the actors (Myrna Loy, Frederic March, Dana Andrews, and Hoagy Carmichael), the director (William Wyler), and several famous critics from three generations. This section plays for seventeen seconds.

A new sequence of media clips from the film now introduces each character individually. Their names accompany the appropriate clips in Informal Roman font that quickly increases in size, making the characters’ names appear to grow from within the image. The order of the introductions is as follows: Myrna Loy, Frederic March, Dana Andrews, Teresa Wright, Virginia Mayo, Cathy O’Donnell, Hoagy Carmichael, and Harold Russell. All through these introductions, the score still plays at a dampened volume allowing the narrator to comment on the characters played by these actors and actresses. He briefly remarks about each couple in the film, careful to avoid revealing key elements of plot. This commentary aims to capture the viewers’ interest more strongly by focusing not only on the dominant theme of love, but also on how the characters so effectively expose the many transitions and hardships faced by post-war veterans and their loved ones. Each character introduction lasts for slightly longer than two seconds, making the duration of this section nearly seventeen seconds.

Once the character introductions conclude, the narrator aims to captivate the target audience with powerful phrases that will hopefully ignite memories of not only the story itself,
but also of war, family, love and all of the film’s themes and associations. The phrases are as follows:

- “Relive the powerful story that so beautifully portrays the post-war transitions and uncertainties faced by three veterans and their families”
- “Restore your belief in the ability to triumph over hardship”
- “Remember the unyielding capacity and strength of love”

While the narrator says each of these quotations separately, each italicized word (above) flashes on the screen for one second, introducing three separate scenes from the film. The score stops at this point so the dialogue and other audio in each scene may be heard. The first scene plays for seven seconds and shows the three main male characters—Al Stephenson, Fred Derry, and Homer Parish—arriving back home from the war, peering down through the plane’s large windows toward their estranged home town. The second scene plays for six seconds portraying the emotional struggle and insecurity Homer faces after losing his hands in the war. He sees his younger sister and her friends looking through the window at Wilma and him, and assumes the children are mocking him for his disability; he gets angry and asks if they want to see the “freak.” The last clip depicts one of the film’s most significant scenes. It plays for the longest amount of time—sixteen seconds—and shows Milly and Al Stephenson explaining to their despairing daughter how their love has been strengthened by the many trials and hardships it has endured. Milly turns to Al and says, “How many times did I tell you I hated you and believed it in my heart? How many times did you tell me you were tired of me; that we were all washed up? How many times did we have to fall in love all over again?” This section of the trailer lasts for twenty nine seconds.

The trailer concludes with the movie’s title appearing on a background of vibrant, moving clouds. It takes two seconds for the title to develop entirely, because a graphic effect creates the illusion that the words are being written in cursive on the screen as viewers are watching it. The writing begins at the top left corner of the screen and continues to the opposite bottom corner. Lastly, an image of the film’s cover from the original DVD of *The Best Years of Our Lives* alongside the text quickly reminds the reader to be sure to “bring home the classic love story” once it becomes available on DVD and Blu-Ray in the spring of 2006.

The proposed trailer lasts for seventy one seconds.

**Rationale for Proposed Trailer and Target Audience**

We aim to identify with forty to fifty year-olds. This age group is perfect because it can recognize the names of these stars better than teenagers or kids. Older people that saw this movie in theaters are not targeted in this teaser because it advertises its re-release on DVD. Most seniors do not have a DVD player, and this technology is too advanced for them.

The trailer’s pace is important because it is necessary not to show the audience how slow this movie actually moves. If we show a few fast-paced scenes along with the love scenes, it will make it seem like the movie moves right along. For example, when we tie the drug store fight scene into the slow plot of Hoagy Carmichael’s character, it makes his story seem much more
dramatic and intense. The combination of fast and slow pace will mix perfectly to produce a comfortable speed.

In the teaser, romantic scenes are highlighted mostly to target females. The movie is about the love that can and cannot survive war. Women are interested in the romantic scenes, and if we show a little about these three different stories, it peaks their interest. The scene that involves the older couple’s many problems throughout their marriage and how they had to “fall in love all over again” perfectly illustrates scenes likely to appeal to women. Some women might even be able to relate to these clips due to the war in Iraq. By the few love scenes that are shown, it is obvious that these couples are having trouble since the war. If females are able to relate, it will evoke an emotional response, which is always important in grabbing a viewer’s interest.

Men will automatically be drawn to this movie because of the variety of scenes with men in uniform. On scene depicted in the trailer are when the three main characters are in the airplane returning home from serving all wearing uniforms. These uniforms automatically infer action and war to males, attracting their interest. Maybe these war-related clips will not single-handedly make males buy the movie, but if their wives show an interest, these scenes will make them less hesitant to buy the DVD.

The mention that this DVD marks the sixtieth anniversary of this film’s release lets the viewer know that this movie is a classic. People will be much more likely to buy the movie, and not just rent it, if they know it has passed the test of time.

Suggestions

A different means of marketing must be used in order to increase sales of the re-release of The Best Years of Our Lives. Marketing Research Industries will target the largest possible audience by advertising the trailer during various hours of the day. In addition to airing the trailer on television and as a preview before other movies, we will advertise in different areas of entertainment, such as sporting events and video games. In order to attract the large percentage of the population that attend or participate in sporting events, we will hire sport icons to host movie reviews for the public. Our company will also sign with Milton Bradley to create a family-oriented board game based on the return of the three soldiers from war. Even though this board game alone will entice families to purchase the movie, we will include a discount coupon for a copy of the on Blu-Ray or HD-DVD. Using this same idea, we will create a video game based on the three main characters’ roles in the war, including a discount coupon for the movie.

Theatre is another venue that we will use to market the film and introduce the story line. The play will eventually trickle down to grade school, high school and college plays from professional theatres. This will increase sales because the immediate and extended family members of the actors and actresses will feel obligated to purchase and view a copy of the original film. The thespians may also want to watch and own a copy.
One last suggestion for marketing the film is to attract both the international population overseas and here within the United States. To accomplish this goal, our company will translate the film trailer using subtitles in Spanish, French, German, Italian, and Chinese. We will then produce a similar trailer that appeals more specifically to the international population by using music familiar to their culture, also stating that this movie is the heart of the American society.
Works Cited


