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SBJ In-Depth

Fox Sports en Español takes show on the road

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At some point over the past year, executives from Fox Sports en Español soured on the idea of staging a traditional upfront advertising presentation in New York.

Network executives found out that several key buyers would not make the trip to Gotham for the presentation, victims of a sluggish economy that — while showing signs of life — still hasn't fully recovered.

So the network, which is in 6 million Spanish-speaking homes, decided to take the presentation to the buyers. It set up a mobile studio that will drive to five of the biggest Hispanic markets in just over three weeks: Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, Miami and San Antonio. Executives will fly to each market while staffers drive the truck.

"We're a guy network. We are sports. So when they put a big truck in front of us, it was like testosterone for us," said Tom Maney, senior vice president of advertising sales for Fox Sports en Español. "We loved the idea."

The first stop was held April 22 on the Fox lot in Los Angeles. It attracted more than 75 people.

The trailer — a traditional 45-foot semi — folds out into a full theater that seats 90. At the first stop, guests walked in to a tent on the Fox lot to the music of Randy Newman's "I Love L.A."

"The idea is to make this fun. We're not having a rubber chicken lunch at a table for 10 in a ballroom," Maney said. "It's all about what we're doing and how we have it set up. I mean, we're not wearing ties. We're just trying to be a little more casual, a little more true to the brand and making it fun."

The truck then motors to Chicago for an event on Tuesday, before driving to New York for a Thursday event and Miami for a May 13 one. It winds up in San Antonio later that week.

The presentation focuses on two main points. First, the cable and Spanish-language TV universe is growing. (Hispanic cable has almost eclipsed the 90 percent penetration mark among U.S. multichannel homes, Maney said.) Secondly, the most passionate audiences are watching live sports on Fox Sports en Español, which has 1,500 hours of live Spanish-language events, including the UEFA Champions League, Major League Baseball, Top Rank Boxing and UFC.

"Our brand is about us being the live game," Maney said. "That's our key point of differentiation in the marketplace."

Like other networks, Fox Sports en Español's ad sales took a hit last year. But Maney said the market has been recovering nicely.

"We've all survived the challenges of 2009," he said, pointing to the automotive sector as one where the network took the biggest hit.

But the network added advertisers in the wireless and consumer electronic categories. "We've been pretty successful in being able to offset some of the automotive with a lot of new business advertising," Maney said.



FOX SPORTS EN ESPAÑOL (2)
The network's mobile upfront is centered around a 45-foot semi that folds out into a theater.