
Digital Equipment Corporation and *Nightly Business Report*:

Background

In 1982, when Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC) first underwrote *Nightly Business Report*, it was a company driven by the profitability of its Product Lines. One organization, the Word Processing Group, marketed systems that were precursors of today's personal computers and saw the underwriting opportunity as a way to increase visibility for its product offerings. Audience data showed that, even in its early years, *NBR* reached a highly influential "national" audience in most major markets.



Co-anchors, Susie Gharib and Paul Kangas

Benefits of Sponsorship

From the beginning, the chief benefit of the sponsorship was clearly provided by the opening and closing on-air, 10-second underwriter credit. Particularly in the early '80s, PBS underwriter guidelines were very restrictive in terms of language and visuals. However the first credit did state that the company provided word processing solutions for business and gave prominence to the Digital logo.

After six months, company management agreed that the *NBR* sponsorship would be a more appropriate vehicle for corporate visibility. For the next 15 years, as PBS guidelines evolved to permit more robust on-air credits, the messages and visuals were redesigned every six months or so, to focus on DEC's solutions and services for business.

Maintaining an Ongoing Commitment

As in most corporations, marketing budgets were proposed and approved on an annual basis. Since every year saw competing “promotional” opportunities presented, it was necessary to continue to demonstrate benefits derived from the considerable underwriting investment. The challenge was to keep DEC’s involvement visible to external and internal audiences – customers, particularly senior and IT management who were key decision makers; employees at every level; and, by inference, investors.

Over the more than 15 years of underwriting support, there was close collaboration with *NBR*’s senior management and marketing staff to increase visibility for the program and, as a consequence, Digital.

Initially, easel-back posters promoting *NBR* and high-lighting Digital’s sponsorship were produced and distributed to reception areas in sales offices, manufacturing plants, and all other U.S. facilities. Accompanying handouts often highlighted the coming month’s *NBR* guest commentators and special features. This approach was effective because the overwhelming majority of employees, from top management on down, were keenly interested in news related to the financial markets and their own investment portfolios.

Company:

Digital Equipment Corp.

Target audience:

Business Decision Makers

Sponsorship:

Nightly Business Report

Term:

1982 – 2002

Rep:

**WGBH Sponsorship Group for
Public Television (SGPTV)**

Taking the Sponsorship “On the Road”

Next there evolved a series of business leader educational luncheons in key major markets around the country. This lively series featured speakers, many of them noted economists and prominent *NBR* guest commentators, who gave their opinions and fielded questions on the current business and economic climate and outlook. These events helped add to the value of the underwriting relationship with *NBR*.

NBR placed tune-in advertising in such vehicles as *The Wall Street Journal* and *Business Week*. The ads gave visibility to Digital and the other national underwriters, again to the business decision makers Digital needed to reach.

The End of an Era

After a prolonged recession in the early 1990’s and other dramatic changes in the computer marketplace, Digital was acquired by Compaq in 1998, and subsequently by Hewlett-Packard a few years later. H-P had other marketing priorities and the *NBR* sponsorship, begun in 1982, came to an end in late 2002.

Throughout its long involvement, Digital benefited greatly from its support of *NBR*, and was proud to see *Nightly Business Report* continue to gain stature and become the most widely watched business news program on television.

“The long-term sponsorship of Digital Equipment Corporation on *Nightly Business Report* provided the production funding that helped the series develop in its early years, laying a foundation for future growth. With the continuity of funding *NBR* was able to plan for and expand its news-gathering reach, opening bureaus around the nation and internationally. Ultimately, *NBR* was to become the most watched program of this kind with a loyal audience including investors, decision makers and community leaders.”

– Linda O’Byron
Senior VP and General Manager
of *NBR Enterprises*

SGPTV's Next Success Story: Your Company!

Let SGPTV help your company achieve its marketing goals. To learn how SGPTV can develop a customized, turnkey sponsorship opportunity that's right for you, contact:

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