

## Allan Feldman and the Genius of Bowling in a Snowstorm

Have you ever wondered where some of the greatest ideas for brand extension licensing came from? Here is the story about one of the most interesting sources of some of the world's most successful and iconic brand licensing programs.

It was that time of the year again ... January. The entire staff at LMCA would come together each year for a dedicated 2-3 day-long meeting to discuss the pros and cons of the past year in brand extension licensing, what we learned, and how we could do a better job going forward.



This year, one member of the team thought it would be good to start the meeting with an exercise intended to build the team spirit. "Let's go bowling together!" I think he had taken a psychology course in college and was adamant about this being a good way to get the ball rolling. So, we did!

We reserved a lane at Bowlmore Lanes, Greenwich Village, NYC. A great place, a lot of history, and they had all the right shoe sizes available. We scheduled to meet there at 9:00 am sharp. It was the first week of January, the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> I believe.

Little did we know that our kick-off date was going to bring one of the worst snowstorms in New York City history. By 9:00 am, 14-15" of snow had already fallen and the blizzard was in full tilt. Regardless, everybody showed up! We had the place to ourselves. It was the bowling alley owner/manager, maybe one employee ... and the 14 of us.

We went from 9:00 to noon in this otherwise empty bowling alley and bowled what felt like an endless number of games. Our spiritual leader for this, Mr. Psychology, had us doing all kinds of teammate changes and run-offs and playoffs, etc. I don't remember much impact on team spirit/unity... but what was clear is that he liked bowling. He beat the pants off everybody!

Tired of bowling and hungry, it was time for lunch. It was still blizzarding outside, but we lucked out ... just down the street was a pub restaurant. We could make out through the snow that their lights were on and the place was open. They fit together 4 or 5 tables for us. After a few appetizers and some drinks, we ordered and started feeling OK.

**MENSA BRAINSTORMING**

We decided we were going to just stay at the pub after having lunch and begin our meeting ... how could we do better in the coming year. It was mid-lunch, and everybody was talking ... there were 6 or 7 different conversations taking place at the table. There was a din of noise ... but suddenly, some words were heard ... "MENSA BRAINSTORMING." All conversations stopped ... there was absolute silence, you could hear a pin drop. WHAT?? It was like striking gold. I think a hamburger fell out of someone's mouth onto the table or floor.



Serious brainstorming was always a hallmark of LMCA. From day #1 of the firm, we took great strides to identify unique and powerful brand extensions for our clients that could generate strong results. Caps, t-shirts, and the usual merchandise of most licensing programs of the time were not of interest ... we wanted to reach way beyond that and did so by bringing together diverse groups of creative people to identify high fit/high potential extension possibilities. Augmenting that group with MENSA geniuses would catapult/supercharge the process and bring it to a whole new level.

You see, the MENSA organization was one of our licensing clients. We had worked with them for about a year then and enjoyed it. They were brilliant (with an IQ in the top 2% of human intelligence), they were enthusiastic, and they had a great sense of humor. Their minds were wondrous ... they could get to places in the speed of a bullet that others might never reach. And there were nearly 100,000 of them spread throughout the world. Harnessing that power for LMCA brainstorming ... WOW!

Even to this day, we were never sure who among the team first uttered those words. I think it was Tim, one of our licensee solicitation managers ... a Penn State football star and graduate of the Army's famous 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne unit. He jumped out of planes with a parachute. Whatever, it was a great day!!

### **MENSA Process Becomes Prodigy Works**

Shortly after that snowy team meeting, LMCA entered a joint venture with the MENSA organization and created the MENSA Process. The unit has evolved and expanded since its beginning in 1991 to become PRODIGYWORKS, one of the most sought-after innovation resources for the licensing industry and well beyond. Today, in addition to thousands and thousands of MENSA geniuses from all over the globe, this exceptionally diverse brain trust includes thousands of super

creative thinkers, including artists, musicians, writers, poets, choreographers, comedians, Hollywood actors and more.

Now, in addition to brainstorming for brand licensing, PRODIGYWORKS capabilities extend into product innovation, new product development, process innovation, naming, and future work to help companies better understand emerging trends, shifts in consumer preference, and competitive threats – before they occur. PRODIGYWORKS has brought diverse and rapid high-IQ outside thinking to dozens of the world’s leading companies and best-loved brands. Successes range from iconic white-space innovation for brands like HP, ARM & HAMMER, SNUGGLE, and KRAFT FOODS, to product innovation for companies like BAZOOKA CANDIES, SIMMONS BEDDING, OREO cookies, and HEINEKEN beer, to process innovation for companies as diverse as PFIZER and CHICK-FIL-A, and future for companies such as GEORGIA PACIFIC, the TOY ASSOCIATION, and CHASE FINANCIAL.

MENSA is an unbelievably diverse and incredibly eclectic group of fascinating, passionate problem solvers, and PRODIGYWORKS takes unique combinations of these creative geniuses and unleashes them on companies’ toughest challenges. The LMCA-PRODIGYWORKS journey has been an interesting one, to say the least, and we’ve only just begun to explore the extent of the capabilities of this incredibly rich global resource. Stay tuned for more.

