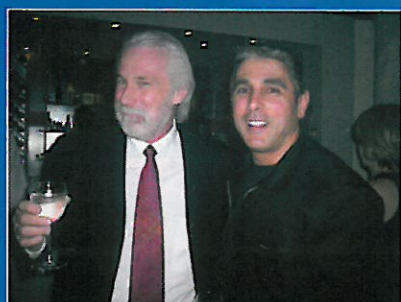


NETWORK Video 10

TEN YEARS ON, AND THINGS ARE JUST HEATING UP

Network celebrates with the summit, strippers, fireworks and one hot party!!



It was always going to be an immense task, following up Network's biggest ever Product Summit in Airlie Beach in late 2002, but if a 10th birthday bash isn't a good reason to see Melbourne in the springtime, then you're never going to get there.

It wasn't all wine and roses though; while delegates and state co-ordinators had been descending on Head Office from all over Australia in the lead up, on Thursday morning they really got down to business at Summit HQ, Rivers Conference Centre at Southbank. MC Leonie Collins kickstarted proceedings Sybil Fawty style in her Audrey Tawdrey persona, lucky for all, as there was a lot to fit in.

While the day was littered with celebrity appearances and photo ops, Retail and Marketing were the real focus, with Network Managing Director Keran Wicks and several of the senior management team presenting to delegates. IT Manager Daryl Robinson presented new developments and online services for stores. Daryl was followed by Rebecca Gigliotti, Retail Product Manager, and Steve Callick, Rental Manager, who discussed plans and projections for the coming year. They also outlined future initiatives that will simplify and boost retail DVD at store level.

Invited distributors gave Network tremendous support, presenting to the group, conducting Q&A sessions and hosting various events. Impromptu birthday tributes were the order of the day, resulting in strained vocal chords, red faces and chocolatey smiles. There were plenty of celebrity guests - Nick Giannopoulos got everyone excited about *The Wannabes* and Mungo McKay from *Undead* made an impression with his triple barreled shotgun. Universal even put on an *American Pie: The Wedding* themed

lunch which included a couple of strippers so all the guests could get into the spirit of Stifler's bachelor party for a few minutes (and receive a hard to explain photo to boot).

October 9 was World Mental Health Day, coincidentally one of Network's favourite charities, so it was appropriate to support this cause by holding the First Annual Videology Trivia Night and Charity Auction. It took place at The Castle Hotel in North Melbourne, and it was a blowout.

Attendees on the night were more than double the initial bookings, as Network's best (and most competitive) Videologists from across the nation battled for supremacy and some comically dodgy prizes, the good ones being saved for the Charity Auction. It was a loud and boisterous affair with many underhanded tricks employed to achieve victory and distract opponents. At the final count however, it was clear that Network's stores and staff are all worthy of the lofty title of Videologists.

The movie and games distributors really came to the party for the auction, donating a range of terrific prizes including signed posters for the *Enter The Matrix* game (signed by Keanu Reeves!), *Dreamcatcher* (signed by the entire cast and Stephen King), *Big Fat Liar*, *Undead* and *The Wannabes*. It wasn't just fantastic movie posters though as there was also an EA Sports leather golf bag and Lorus watch, game packs, collectibles, and tons of product. Let's not forget the stores however, who really opened their wallets to make sure that every last cent went to a good cause.

After witnessing the amazing generosity of distributors and stores alike, Network MD Keran Wicks got right behind the cause and volunteered to work for a day in a store. It quickly became one

of the most unusual and hotly contested lots for the night. And as a result Keran will shortly be setting off for Queensland (lucky for some) to spend time scrubbing floors and washing windows for Lance from Network Dalby and Rog from Network Thornlands. Although they were laughing on the night, Network Management are on notice that next year it will be their turn. It was a big night that raised more than \$12,000 for Beyond Blue, the national mental health charity. To find out more about Beyond Blue, go to: www.beyondblue.org.au

On the Friday morning it was up and early and out to Melbourne's newest movie house, Anderson Cinemas, where Buena Vista turned on a lavish breakfast before some lively presentations from Network Marketing Manager Cherie Krake and Keran Wicks. They unveiled the next phase in Network's award-winning Videology campaign. Buena Vista's National Sales Manager Rocco Zerbi turned up the enthusiasm again as he presented BV's upcoming release schedule and marketing and followed that with a pre-theatrical screening of *Seabiscuit*, their big Oscar hope, appropriately slated for cinema release mid-November.

Friday night was the culmination of the week and what a climax to what had already been a very successful two days. Rivers Conference Centre was transformed into the ultimate party venue, playing host to Network's 10th Birthday celebrations, perhaps the biggest night in the industry for the last decade. With over 350 guests from stores, staff and distributors, everyone was fired up for a grand night out on the banks of the famous Yarra River. As is always the case with Network parties, the entertainment was both extreme and extremely memorable. Guests were treated to a world of gothic decadence, passing through an avenue of baroque candelabras to be greeted by The Count and his band of extraordinary performers.

Better than Johnny Knoxville, and in PVC, the Extreme Circus Troupe were a collection of contortionists, snake 'charmers', fire-breathers, horn-blowers (trust me, this one is hard to describe), razor-blade eaters, stilt walkers and self-acupuncturists kept the hordes amazed and entertained. Even Mungo from *Undead* returned to take care of some gate-crashing zombies for us. After the impressiveness of the acts I don't think anyone will look at a circus quite the same way, but eventually the extremists moved way for the smooth sounds of Renee Geyer and her band.

Renee played her award winning blend of jazz and soul standards, turning the gothic celebration into a jazz club for an hour or so. But that wasn't the end of the music as soon afterward the Reverend Funk and his nine piece band the Horns of Salvation stepped onto the stage, and before you could say "Motown" everyone was on the dance floor strutting their stuff to the classic R & B standards until the wee hours of the morning. Even the police, who arrived no less than three times during the night to turn down the music, looked like they would rather be at the bar.

About halfway through the evening, Keran Wicks took to the stage to thank everyone involved with Network's success over the 10 years and all who made such a memorable night possible. Keran also pondered the various theories held over the years of Network's success and what has made it clearly the third biggest group in the industry. Could it be due to astute planning and hard work? Could it be the team at Network Head Office or perhaps the buying and marketing advantages? Keran also suggested the theory that some people attribute to the group's success was the "Erin Brockovich Approach." (Although she left it to the audience to decide whether it was Julia Roberts' line "They're called boobs, Ed" or her explanation for getting so many signatures in one day and replying with "I just went out there and performed sexual favours.")

But whatever the reasons attributable for Network's success, the major factor is undoubtedly because Network stores themselves remain totally and unflinchingly dedicated to their independent place in the industry. It is because of their undying belief that Network has continually grown and strengthened as a group. Keran stated that their ongoing support of Network's strategies over the past ten years and into the future remains Network's strongest asset.

After that, the assembled guests were invited outside for one of the many highlights of the night, Network's traditional fireworks extravaganza. The Yarra lit up in a thousand colours as the guests (and half of the people in the City for that matter) were treated to a fifteen minute fireworks fiesta culminating in a pyrotechnic Network Video logo and the announcement that they are here to stay. When all was said and done, everyone left the party more than adequately refreshed, absolutely spellbound by the size and effort involved, and looking forward to the Network Video 20th Birthday event. It'll be a hard act to follow, but they've got ten years to come up with something.

