



Alliance Sciences



Al Ovadia is Executive Vice President of Sony Pictures Consumer Products, which handles the merchandising and branding efforts for some of the most recognized properties in film and television, including *Stuart Little 2*, *Men in Black II*, and *Spider-Man* theatrical releases and "Harold and the Purple Crayon," and "Jackie Chan Adventures" television properties, as well as a number of high-profile film and TV projects in development.

A veteran of the marketing, promotions and licensing industry, Mr. Ovadia boasts a number of excellent domestic and international relationships with brand-name packaged goods companies and consumer products manufacturers, developed throughout a career which includes executive positions in film and television studios,

as well as a start-up Web-based business, marketing and newspaper advertising companies. He is a past board member of the Licensing Industry Merchandisers' Association and the catalyst for several industry awards for licensing and cross-promotion, including LIMA's Promotion of the Year and Property of the Year in 1991, for *Home Alone/Pepsi* and "*The Simpsons*," respectively, as well as Promotion Marketing Association Awards for several property promotions, such as a Super Reggie for Nestle (Butterfinger)/ "*The Simpsons*" in 1994, and Reggie Awards for both McDonald's/*Power Rangers Movie* and MCI/ "*The Simpsons*" in 1995.

From 1988 to 1995, Mr. Ovadia headed licensing and merchandising for Twentieth Century Fox, where he oversaw worldwide licensing, promotions and product placement for all of the studio's film, video and television properties, including the long-running hit series "*The Simpsons*." During his tenure, "*The Simpsons*" generated over 1,200 worldwide licensee agreements and 150 promotional tie-ins with global clients including Burger King, Holiday Inn, Pepsi, Japan Airlines, Pizza Hut and Sabritas. While at Fox, Mr. Ovadia worked on a number of other successful properties, including *Aliens*, *Predator*, *The Tick*, *The X-Files*, *Home Alone* and *Home Alone 2*, *Independence Day* and *The Mighty Morphin Power Rangers Movie*. He also spearheaded cross-News Corp. synergy efforts for select films such as *The Pagemaster* and *The Mighty Morphin Power Rangers Movie*, and launched Fox Interactive, the company's in-house video game unit.

Mr. Ovadia began his career with NBC Television, where he held a number of senior management positions leading to a four-year term as Vice president of Network Creative Services. He was responsible for national publicity and promotion, and affiliate creative services for news and entertainment programming, including publicity launches for such hits as "*Miami Vice*," "*Cheers*," "*Hill Street Blues*" and "*The Cosby Show*."

Mr. Ovadia most recently co-founded Mediacentrix, Inc., a Web-based syndication company, and served as Executive Vice President. He also previously served as Executive Vice President of Worldwide Promotions for Equity Marketing, Inc., a full-service marketing company whose clients included such top international companies as Burger King, Coca-Cola and Shell Oil; and as President of News America FSI, the nation's largest newspaper insert company, working with a number of top U.S. packaged goods companies, including Kraft Foods, General Mills, Proctor & Gamble, Nabisco, Mott's and Dole.



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Serving as the Executive Vice President for Sony Pictures Entertainment, Consumer Products Group, Al Ovadia is responsible for licensing contracts with external organizations for the promotion and merchandise sales of Sony Pictures blockbusters like Men In Black 2. We asked Al to spend a few minutes with us to discuss the challenges presented by bringing new consumer products to market and the tactics he employed to make the large scale marketing alliances effective.



JF: I want to start off by stating why I was interested in interviewing you – the tie-ins for MIIB were significant; Sprint PCS, Hamilton Watches, Rockport, Ray Ban, Mercedes, Burger King, etc. When Sony decides to move forward with a movie like MIIB, what are the challenges that they face as a company? Which of these do you own in particular?

AO: There were a number of great partners we worked with for tie-ins, as you & George (Leon, EVP Global Promotions) discussed, the original tie-ins are more his department. Obviously, with any of these high profile pictures, the challenge is to get the pictures noticed – in a very competitive environment. It's "share of voice"; the more you talk about MIIB, the less you can talk about competitors. Our objective is to supplement and support the overall objectives of the production.

JF: How did you decide to define your success? What were your specific success objectives?

AO: We look at number of measurements to define the success of a relationship - were the parties able to sell more product, sell it faster, increase revenues, enhance brand? On the retail side, with Spiderman, merchandise was in stores 6 weeks before release. Most movies go in and out in 8 weeks. But we had sell through levels in retail in the 7th week at the 40% range – this is inventory moved. Swimwear was moving at a 70% rate – not on 10 pieces, but on 10's of thousands of pieces. It is important to determine how to measure success, take sweepstakes for example – the number of entries isn't necessarily the key metric – it's the impact on brand & sales of product.

JF: How was internal divisional support important and how did you garner it? How did you manage these internal dependencies?

AO: The company is broadly addressing these Alliance issues long before the project is started. We have regular meetings that ensure the integration of our efforts with regard



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to these partnerships. This requires the alignment of objectives cross-divisionally. There are core Sony companies within Sony Pictures Entertainment that must align with music, gaming, online, retail, etc. Corporate synergy – it's much easier to get buy-in from a sister department when you are creating solutions to help them meet their objectives.

JF: How did you define an attractive prospective partner? How were you able to determine the opportunity for success with each?

AO: Alliances are based on partners who make a commitment to entertainment as a key marketing commitment. It is imperative to know all the objectives of a partner and align your partnerships based on these objectives. Our ability to work effectively with external stakeholders is contingent upon our ability to align with external stakeholders – they have brand issues, motivations that we address with things like packaging to meet their partnership needs. But we must be on the same page – we have to listen. Rather than pitching, we have to know their objectives and timeframes. How will they define success?

JF: How were your programs successful?

AO: MIIB has had a tremendously successful launch and our partners have reported success from their work with us.

JF: What's your alliance lifecycle – are you done working when the contracts are "done"?

AO: Hardly – that's when the real work begins!

JF: What advice would you give to our readers regarding creating, implementing or managing effective alliances?

AO: I think some of the things we mentioned before are important – I think working from a solid foundation is key. We've got a solid team here at SPE, and we've developed a thorough and effective approach to partnering – both internally with our sister departments and externally with our partners. Of course, there's always room for improvement... but we're pleased to have a solid foundation on which to build.

About the Alliance Advisory

[Alliance Sciences](#) publishes the Alliance Advisory every quarter to report on alliance activity and provide real world insights on effective organizational partnering. Interviews with alliance executives at leading organizations are featured, as well as recently announced partnership and alliance deals. Resources are also provided to provide additional value and utility for the newsletter's readers. The Alliance Advisory can be found online at www.alliancesciences.net. Subscription is free and is available online at our [corporate site](#) and at the [newsletter site](#).