

AT&T to splurge on post-merger ads

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AT&T may have had more than its fair share of being in the public limelight this year as national and local lawmakers debated the pros and cons of the company merging with rival SBC Communications.

Legislators finally agreed in November that the deal would not compromise anti-monopoly or any other fair-trade practice regulations, and so the two companies have fused into becoming one of the biggest telecommunications giants in the world, and by far the biggest within the United States. The new company will provide not only long-distance and international phone services, but will also offer wireless connections and provide access in local markets, too.

Simply having the marriage approved by the authorities is apparently not good enough for the newly founded company, however. The telecommunications giant is also set to win over the hearts and minds of its users, both big and small.

So come 2006, AT&T will be launching its biggest advertising campaign in its 120-year history with the slogan "Your World. Delivered" the company announced Thursday.

"This campaign will bring to life our pledge to deliver the real and proven solutions that enable our customers -- consumers, small businesses, federal government agencies, global and regional corporations -- to take charge of their world," said the company's Chief Executive Officer Edward Whitacre. "AT&T's passion to invent and SBC's drive to deliver have come together to deliver what matters most

in their lives," he added.

Whether or not accessing telecommunication services is the most important factor for an individual or a corporation is debatable, but the former Ma Bell will be kicking off a yearlong blitz of electronic, print, online and non-traditional media advertising on more than 30 television networks and 50 national publications and more than 100 local publications in addition to 1,000 billboards. The company also said that it will take a multicultural and international approach as well, with African-American, Hispanic and Asian advertising in U.S. markets as well as targeting global business publications.

AT&T will also be sponsoring a number of events to increase its visibility, including the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic teams at the Torino Winter Games.

Interestingly enough, even though SBC had bought out AT&T for \$16 billion, the San Antonio -based group has sought to play down the aggressiveness of the dealings leading to the buyout and has even gone so far as to drop its own name and instead simply call the soon-to-be-formed company AT&T, instead of calling it SBC-AT&T or come up with a brand-new name in its place. The company has been trading under the "T" symbol on the New York Stock Exchange since Dec. 1.

The first national television spot will debut Dec. 31 during a number of special television programs for the New Year, including the telecast of the crystal ball in New York's Times Square. The ads will feature "All Around the World," a song by British band Oasis.

The company did not, however, disclose just how much the latest campaign assault will cost.

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