

BSkyB will offer QVC on Skynow internet service

BSkyB is joining forces with QVC to make the home shopping channel available on its new free internet service, Skynow.

The link-up is intended to drive take-up of the service, which is available to anyone in the UK with access to a personal computer.

The QVC deal would make it the second joint venture channel to have a presence on Skynow; the other is The History Channel.

Other services available are Sky Sports and Sky News, which have dedicated editorial staff.

At the same time, BSkyB has bought the internet broadcast rights to the Cricket World Cup in the first deal of its kind, and is understood to be bidding for the internet rights for the Rugby World Cup.

A Sky spokesman refused to comment on the QVC deal, but said: "There are lots of channel brands we'd like to partner. The idea is to offer sexy things on the portal so people stick around."

Skynow is a free internet service provider and a new 'hub' of online services, which builds on the Sky.co.uk website. It also offers online services such as Scoot, the information directory service available through the telephone, and InFront, a UK based online retailer.



Walsh: leaves Forte as chain

Forte chief exits as new ad pitch is called at hotel

Forte Hotels' trade marketing director, Breffni Walsh, is leaving the company less than three months after a new management structure was announced.

Last year Walsh was responsible for placing Forte's £10m advertising account with WCRS. The agency then created a campaign for its upmarket Heritage chain, featuring musician and TV presenter Jools Holland.

However, last week it was revealed that the agency and the hotel chain had parted company and a pitch will be held later this year.

The agency review follows the appointment of Peter Cardnell as worldwide managing director of marketing and sales. Cardnell moved across from Forte-owned Le Meridien Hotels and Resorts (*Marketing*, March 18).

Walsh, who has not confirmed if she has a job to go to, will leave at the end of this week. She started at Forte in 1997 as marketing communications director, and was appointed as trade marketing director in August last year.

Shell faces court battle on its Smart scheme

By Neill Denny

Shell will this week defend a multi-million-pound law suit from sales promotion agency Don Marketing, which claims Shell stole its idea for the Smart loyalty scheme.

The oil giant is facing charges of breach of contract and misuse of confidential information in the case which begins this Thursday in the High Court.

John Donovan, managing director of Don Marketing, maintains that between 1989 and 1992 he had a series of meetings with Shell's promotional marketers at which,



Donovan: has taken legal action over Shell's Smart Card loyalty scheme

in response to a verbal brief, he outlined plans for a card-based, multi-brand loyalty scheme.

Shell liked the idea and in 1990 paid Don Marketing for an option, giving the oil giant first refusal on the idea.

During this period Donovan obtained outline agreement from Sainsbury's that it would participate in the scheme.

At his final meeting on November 24 1992, Donovan claims he was assured that if Shell decided to pursue a multi-brand loyalty scheme he would be involved.

Two years later Shell Smart was trialled in Scotland, and by July the following year it became a multi-brand scheme after John Menzies joined as the first of many partners.

"This is a landmark case for ad and promotional agencies," says Donovan. "Does

the law of confidentiality protect ideas if they are presented in confidence?"

A Shell spokesman said "it is not appropriate to discuss the issue" before the case but added it would "vigorously defend the action". It is counter-suing Donovan for breach of confidentiality.

Donovan, who will have to sell his house in order to cover the legal costs if he loses, has on three occasions since 1994 initiated action against Shell over forecourt promotions. Each case has been settled out of court, with Shell paying Donovan.

Nationwide hands BBH £12m advertising task

By Neill Denny

Nationwide Building Society, the UK's biggest building society, has picked Bartle Bogle Hegarty to handle its £12m advertising account.

The media account, currently at CIA Medianetwork, may also be reviewed. Nationwide's marketing director, Mike Lazenby, will make a decision within three months. BBH's media arm, Motive, currently handles NatWest.

Advertising was previously handled by Leagas Delaney on a project basis. Before that the account had been at GGT for four years.

One of Nationwide's key concerns is to continue to promote the benefits to its customers of it retaining its mutual status.

BBH deputy chairman Martin Smith, who led the pitch team, said: "The prime objective isn't to fend off the carpetbaggers, but if we do our job correctly and point out the benefits of Nationwide, it will have that secondary effect."



Nationwide: Leagas Delaney had handled the work on a project basis

An attempt by former Royal butler and specialist carpetbagger Michael Hardern to get on the Nationwide board was turned down in April.

Last year a conversion vote among more than two million members, instigated by Hardern, was defeated by 50.8% to 49.2%. A 75% vote in favour of conversion was required.

Brian Davis, Nationwide's chief executive, said: "We have a unique position as the world's leading building society and it is important that this is well represented in our advertising. As an organisation committed to the fair delivery of a full range of personal financial services, and without the usual profit motive of our competitors, we believe this provides a

unique basis for our future advertising."

Although Nationwide is spending £8m annually on a raft of football sponsorships, the advertising solution will not be built around the football-friendly positioning. Instead, BBH will focus on the wide services that Nationwide can offer, from telephone banking to investments, pensions and current accounts.

The board-level marketing position at Nationwide has just changed, as part of an ongoing rotation policy. Stuart Bernau, currently retail operations director, is swapping jobs with Philip Williamson, marketing and commercial director. Both were involved in the BBH decision.

Grey and DMB&B are believed to have pitched for the account, with Roose & Partners and Publicis dropping out earlier. Direct marketing, through Wav Rapp Collins, is unaffected.

The society has eight million members and 680 branches.

EC issues tough warning on 'get out' for tobacco

The European Commission this week issued a stern warning to national governments – including the UK – that it would not allow them to exploit a loophole which means 'world' sports can retain tobacco sponsorships until 2006.

The move comes after suggestions that sports such as snooker could qualify as a global sport, like Formula 1, which has been given an exemption. All other sports have to phase out tobacco sponsorship before 2003.

There have been reports that snooker will be exempt because of its heavy reliance on tobacco brands Embassy, Regal, and Benson & Hedges. A report by the Department of Health will reveal which sports are exempt later this month.

But if snooker manages to gain an extension to the tobacco ban, other sports such as darts, angling, rugby and clay-pigeon shooting have indicated they would seek the same concession.

A spokeswoman for the EC said: "We will be examining how member states transpose the legislation. If we discover they are opening the door for infringement, we will take legal action."

ITV fights arts charity over millennium copycat claim

By Conor Dignam

ITV is facing a legal challenge from a charity which claims its idea has been ripped off to form the basis of the network's Year of Promise millennium campaign.

Arts charity Images of Enterprise claims it developed a project called We Made It, which is similar to ITV's Year of Promise.

It has called in its solicitors to ask questions about how ITV's project was originated.

Both projects are designed to get people in the community doing good works to mark the millennium and both include registration of the deeds on a national database. We Made It would have charged people £5 to have their achievement registered.



Year of Promise: faces challenge

The money would have gone to arts-related charities.

We Made It originally approached the New Millennium Experience Company and the Millennium Commission about the idea. Harley Miller, who developed the We

Made It concept, claims he spoke to Susannah Wheeler when she was working at the NMEC in June last year. Wheeler has now left NMEC and heads ITV's Year of Promise campaign.

In January Images of Enterprise was told that it had failed to receive funding from the Millennium Commission for the project. Miller then discovered Year of Promise had been launched by Carlton TV.

ITV has built the Year of Promise into its marketing campaign, and has developed a logo from ITV's heart motif.

Miller said he did not want to stop ITV but wants the two projects to be linked. NMEC and Carlton deny Miller's idea played any part in the creation of Year of Promise.



With husband Mick Jagger still trying to sort out his tangled love life and strutting his stuff on the latest Rolling Stones tour, fashion model Jerry Hall is taking part in an endorsement deal with Lever Brothers to promote its Persil Tablets brand, which launched in May 1998. The advertising campaign sees Hall link up with fashion retailer Debenhams and washing machine manufacturer Hotpoint to push the brand as 'Britain's most highly recommended washing tablets'. The press and poster campaign is through J Walter Thompson, with media buying through Initiative.