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## Waiting Game: 28 Super Bowl Sponsors Lined Up



JoAnn Ross

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By Anthony Crupi, *Mediaweek*

NEW YORK -- With a significant chunk of inventory remaining on her hands just 11 days before Super Bowl XLI kicks off in Miami, CBS president of network sales, JoAnn Ross, said that television's premiere event has been no tougher to sell than in previous years.

"It's not that it's been harder to sell, it's just that the clients have different needs and we have to respect that," Ross said during a Reuters panel discussion in New York Wednesday. "There are the clients we know are going to get in early...and then there are the others who are waiting to see if they can get a discount."

Ross said that CBS has "more than 25" sponsors lined up for the Super Bowl, later revising that estimate to 28 by close of business Wednesday.

Of the perennial big spenders, Anheuser-Busch has placed the largest commitment, buying 10 of the 59 or 60 available in-game spots. Other long-time sponsors onboard for next Sunday's big game include Pepsi, General Motors and Fed-Ex.

Anheuser-Busch enjoys the Super Bowl's only category exclusivity, shutting out the "official" beer of the NFL, Coors. In the soft drink category, Pepsi will make room for Coca-Cola, which has bought time in the NFL's marquee game for the first time in nine years.

Ross said that Coca-Cola would not run new creative, opting instead to air a 60-second animated spot that has been running in U.S. movie theaters since Dec. 29, plus a different 30-second ad.

While Ross declined to offer a roster of all of her Super Bowl clients, saying that some sponsors would like to preserve the element of surprise, she did name a first-time advertiser in the Web site SalesGenie.com. The dot-com has bought time in pre-game slots, as well as in-game and post-game. Besides making its Super Bowl debut, the Feb. 4 game will mark the first time that SalesGenie.com has bought prime-time real estate.

Other than cost—the average price of a 30-second Super Bowl spot is now \$2.6 million a pop—one consideration that may be slowing CBS' sales efforts this year is the quality of creative. Ross acknowledged that there has been "some worry that the commercials some clients are producing aren't Super Bowl worthy," adding that newer clients are sticking with more straightforward executions.

No matter how effectively each spot works, the Super Bowl ads will once again enjoy a certain deathless quality in the days after the final whistle. Ross said that CBS.com would post the entire spot load after the game, and suggested that a deal with Verizon is being worked out that will allow subscribers to access the ads via the telco's VCast application.

That "third screen" approach may be vital toward ensuring that each sponsor will see a return on its not-inconsiderable investment. According to a new survey conducted by the **National Sports Marketing Network**, 75% of advertising executives polled said that they believe that a new media campaign lends greater value to their brand than a standalone Super Bowl spot.