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Buckfield duo named game-changing group by Internet company

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BUCKFIELD, Dec 29, 2009 (Sun Journal - McClatchy-Tribune Information Services via COMTEX) --

A worldwide company that helps businesses use the Internet has named a Buckfield duo's videos -- creating fizzy fountains by plopping Mentos candies into Diet Coke bottles -- as the decade's top game-changer. The local guys' homegrown videos beat out big budget online campaigns by Burger King, Dove and President Obama for the top spot.

"It's humbling," said Fritz Grobe, who created the Diet Coke and Mentos videos with Stephen Voltz. London-based GoViral picked 40 nominees for the game-changers list.

"It's an incredible list of moments from the last 10 years," Grobe said. He singled out the Dove ad, "Evolution," which quickly showed the manipulation a woman's face goes through on its way to a billboard's beauty ad. It ends with the line, "No wonder our perception of beauty is distorted."

"It's a beautiful social message," Grobe said.

GoViral Chairman Jimmy Maymann personally nominated Grobe and Voltz, who work under the name Eepybird, for the honor. His company has offices in London, Copenhagen, Milan, Moscow, Tokyo, Frankfurt and Paris.

"Mentos experiments with Diet Coke by Eepybird was incredibly popular," Maymann says on GoViral's Web site. "But what made it a game-changer was that initially Mentos and Diet Coke didn't know about it. It proved conclusively that in the Internet age, when it's so easy for people to create content and broadcast it, brands no longer have full control over their marketing. It also proved that brands who embrace what's happening around them in social media can go on to achieve incredible results."

Millions of people saw the Grobe and Voltz' videos, shot on a pasture in Buckfield. Millions more saw the duo on TV shows or in live performances that took them as far away as Turkey. At the videos' height of popularity, 2-liter bottles of Diet Coke saw a 5 percent boost and Mentos had a 15 percent hike. Grobe and Voltz have since performed at both companies' headquarters.

Since then, the pair have debuted other experiments, such as one with sticky notes that had an underlying advertising role. Audiences see something fun and genuine in them, Grobe said.

"You're not being fed the same marketing message," he said.

The performers are scheduled to visit China and Germany in the new year. They are also waiting for word on whether a national cable TV channel plans to hire them for a new series. A pilot was shot last fall in Buckfield.