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## It Only Takes an Instant, Lottery Ads Declare

By [STUART ELLIOTT](#)

The lottery that contributed “Hey, you never know” to the lengthy list of memorable advertising catch phrases vernacular is hoping to do it again, with a new slogan for its scratch-off games.

The slogan is the centerpiece of a campaign that formally begins this week for the New York Lottery. The campaign, by DDB New York, carries the theme “Be ready” — not to be confused, presumably, with hit songs like “Get Ready” or “People Get Ready” or the [Boy Scout](#) motto, “Be prepared.”

The message of “Be ready” is that anyone who plays the instant games sold by the New York Lottery ought to be prepared to win immediately in a moment of instant gratification. That is underlined by a decision to use “Be ready” as an umbrella theme and keep a previous tag line, “Good things happen in an instant.”

The implied message of the new campaign is that it takes less time to win an instant game than the so-called draw games sponsored by the New York Lottery, among them Lotto, Mega Millions and Powerball.

The campaign, with a budget estimated at \$9 million, includes television and radio commercials as well as print and out-of-home advertising. There are also ads at point-of-sale locations like stores and newsstands.

There will also be a presence on the New York [Lottery Web site](#).

The New York Lottery spent \$43.1 million in advertise in major media last year, according to the Kantar Media unit of WPP, compared with \$33.9 million in 2009, \$43.6 million in 2008 and \$40.8 million in 2007.

The New York Lottery sells a constantly changing lineup of scratch-off games. “We introduce 30 or 40 instant games a year,” says Gordon Medenica, director of the lottery, which is based in Schenectady, N.Y., and at any one time, “there’s a total of 60 to 70 in our inventory.”

Prices for scratch-off games start at \$1 a ticket. Others cost \$2, \$5, \$10, \$20 and \$30. The games are presented on colorful cards with eye-catching graphics that play up the names of the games.

Many of those found on a visit on Sunday to a store on the Upper West Side of Manhattan had, not surprisingly, money connotations in their names, among them Big Money, Fast Money, My Money, One Million Bucks, Sweet Million, Money Ball Bingo, Cashword and Magnificent Millions.

The penchant for players to gravitate to certain numbers is reflected in game names like Lucky 3s, Lucky 7s, Double Wild 7s, Triple 7s, Amazing 8s, Find the 9s and Wicked 1s.

Other names evoke gambling terms and symbols, among them Welcome Back to Fabulous Las Vegas, Lemon Twist and You In.

For the sentimental, there are games called Happy Mother's Day and Happy Father's Day.

Although "the draw category is what most people think of when they think of the lottery," Mr. Medenica says, instant games usually account for 53 or 54 percent of the total revenue for New York State.

In the fiscal year that ended on March 31, instant games took in more than \$3.5 billion, he adds, compared with \$3.2 billion for games with drawings.

When it comes to draw games like Mega Millions and Powerball, "the focus is on the top prize," Mr. Medenica says, and about two-thirds of the prize fund is devoted to first prize.

By contrast, with scratch-off games, "80 percent of the prize fund does not go to the top prizes."

And while most draw games pay out 50 percent in prizes, Mr. Medenica says, "in an instant, it's 65 or 70 percent in prizes."

Instant games attract "a lot of churn play," he adds, meaning that people who win "turn their winnings around and buy some more tickets."

There are typically eight or nine campaigns a year for scratch-off games, Mr. Medenica says, each of which is promoted in a four-week period, or flight.

"It's a bit of a black art deciding which games to support before we have an idea of how they do," he adds.

A recent campaign from DDB New York for new games that include Cash Multiplier, a \$2 ticket, and Lucky Tables, a \$5 ticket, includes posters that show everyday items scratched off and replaced with upgrades that suggest a step-up in spending power.

For instance, a mug of beer in someone's hand is replaced by a tropical-type mixed drink or a dog on a leash is supplanted by a tiger cub.

The idea is to signal that "what's underneath is better than what's on top," Mr. Medenica says, as may be the case with a lottery game card.

Recently, lottery officials began discussing with the agency whether there is “a better way to market the instant category instead of individual games,” Mr. Medenica says.

That was supported by research among players indicating they “are not that attached to individual games,” he adds.

After agency executives presented “multiple concepts” for campaigns, Mr. Medenica says, “we were pretty early on smitten with the ‘Be ready’ concept.”

That was reinforced by DDB New York’s finding a song to be used for the commercials that helped convey “the mood, the fun of playing” instant games, he adds.

The song is called “Are You Ready?” and it is performed by a group named Fatty Gets a Stylist.

The song plays in the background of the initial television commercials as unusual scenes appear on screen.

In one spot, a man and woman are glimpsed in the subway in their bathing suits. A welder in a garage is wearing a tuxedo. A woman in a bridal gown is filing papers in an office. A family is walking through a soccer field in a park, followed by a valet with their luggage on a cart as if they were checking into a nice hotel.

There is also a pair of flippers that appears over the top of a cubicle. A bus driver is seen wearing tennis togs. A barber is cutting hair while clad in a captain’s cap and a life vest. And a couple emerges from a subway exit wearing equestrian outfits.

In a second commercial, a doctor is shown walking barefoot through the halls of a hospital, meditating in an examining room, wearing a green face mask at a nurse’s station and lighting candles in a patient’s room.

In the final scene, an orderly sees her lying in a bed as if she were awaiting a treatment at a spa.

In a third commercial, a man starts his day wearing scuba gear under his clothes. As his workday progresses, he sheds the everyday garb until he is in full dive mode.

In the final scene, one of his flipper-shod feet gets caught in an elevator door. (Yes, it may be the man from the cubicle in the first commercial.)

All the spots end with the words “Good things happen in an instant” appearing on screen, followed by the theme “Be ready” and this advice: “Play instant games.”

The posters that are part of the campaign take a similar tack. One shows a man walking on a city sidewalk dressed as if for work with a couple of critical distinctions: he is wearing flip-flops rather than dress shoes and toting a pool float under his arm.

The New York Lottery is required to conduct periodic reviews of its advertising agencies. DDB New York created campaigns for the New York Lottery from 1988 to 1998, then lost the assignment to what is now Grey New York, part of the Grey unit of the Grey Group, a WPP agency.

DDB New York — part of the DDB Worldwide division of the [Omnicom Group](#) — regained the account in 2001 and has held onto it ever since. In the most recent review, in 2007, the agency was awarded a six-year contract.

DDB New York came up with the “Hey, you never know” theme and others like “All you need is a dollar and a dream.” The agency also created the first campaign that the lottery ran after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, a low-key effort that featured state residents singing along to the song “If I Had a Million Dollars.”

Those ads were “brought up by the client” in discussing a possible campaign for instant games that could “sell the virtues of the category,” says Leo Mamorsky, group account director at DDB New York, in trying to “help us reach new players and get them engaged.”

In addition to instant gratification, those strong points include the tactile nature of scratch-off games, he adds, and “different playing behaviors” in terms of “how people scratch and where they scratch.”

The campaign is also different from ads for other lottery offerings in it does not celebrate big jackpots or top prizes. That partly reflects the nature of instant games, which provide winners with both smaller and larger prizes.

“One of the things we set out to show in the work is the range of the winnings,” says Matt Eastwood, chief creative officer at DDB New York.

“A lot of lottery advertising is ‘You can be a millionaire,’” he adds. “But a lot of instant-game players win \$20, \$200, \$500.”

So the campaign depicts situations in which winners “might have won enough money for a nice night at the theater,” Mr. Eastwood says, rather than grand plans like, say, enough money to retire.

“Everyone’s got something they are saving up for, wishing it will happen,” he adds. “The thought is that they’re in a constant state of readiness.”

That, of course, is expressed through the “Be ready” theme, bringing to life the idea that “you don’t have to wait” to win, Mr. Eastwood says, as you do with draw games.

“It happens then and there,” he adds, referring to finding out a scratch-off game is a winner.

Mr. Eastwood says he hopes the song “Are You Ready?” will “become a signature of the campaign.”

“I was looking for a song that helped tell the story lyrically,” he says, and help came from Eric Johnson, executive producer for music and integration at the Chicago office of DDB, who is also known as DJ Bunny Ears.

“There were seven of us in a room, reviewing a long list of songs, and when we heard it, everyone just smiled,” Mr. Eastwood says.

“The day I presented to the client, you could see the same feeling come across their faces,” he adds, “like ‘You had me at ‘Hello.’” ’ ’ ”

Mr. Medenica says he likes the celebratory nature of the song because “one thing that drives our advertising approach, in a broader sense, is entertaining people for playing” the lottery’s games.

“Part of what you get for playing is to dream about what you might do,” he adds. “The ‘Be ready’ campaign picks up on that” — and without “the superlong odds and life-changing money” of draw games, the winnings are more along the lines of enough to “go out to dinner or a day at the beach.”

These days, when so many days are no day at the beach, the prospect of winning enough money for a day at the beach sounds like, well, a day at the beach.