

Record Makers

By Robert Klara Setting a world record—Guinness-certified or not—can mean fame, fortune, and tons of Facebook friends. No wonder so many brands are trying to do it.

With any luck, by the time you read this, the 18,103 rubber ducks that Catherine Captain's marketing department purchased a few weeks ago will have paid for themselves.

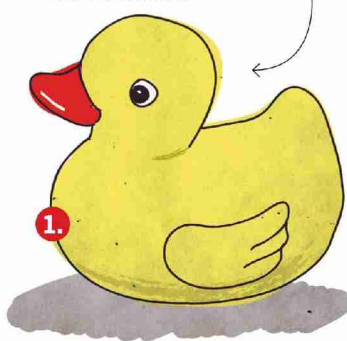
Captain is the CMO for Seattle-based **Cozi**, an online and mobile family-calendar organizer. For some time now, the six-year-old company has used the tagline "Helping families get their ducks in a row." Cute—but not the stuff that viral videos are made of. So Captain's team came up with an idea: Why not set the world record for ducks arranged in a row? *That* would get the hit counter waddling.

"We don't have a big bucket of marketing dollars," Captain says. "But we're hoping that setting a world record will give us a platform to elevate our brand."

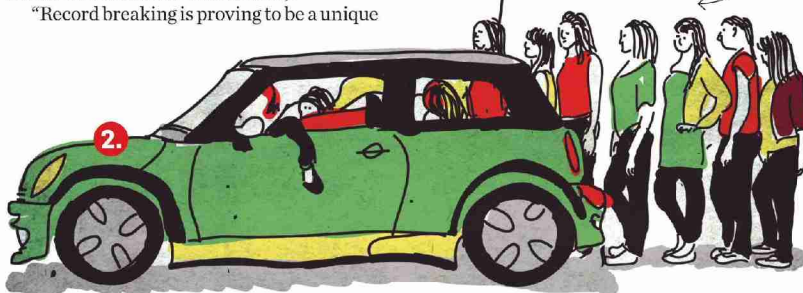
Lately, it seems, lots of other brands have had that same idea. From Energizer batteries setting a record for most flashlights flicked on at the same time to data-storage company EMC cramming a shocking number of grown adults into a Mini Cooper, brands of every stripe are angling to get into the record books. Make that the *Guinness Book of World Records*, which furnishes the ultimate seal of approval (though not all records claimed herein are Guinness-sanctioned).

"Record breaking is proving to be a unique

Cozi, the Web-based family planner that uses the tagline "Helping families get their ducks in a row" has planned to do just that: lining up 18,103 rubber ducks in a linear mile in hopes of creating a new world record.



To demonstrate its "simple and efficient storage," EMC set a world record last December by fitting 26 women into a Mini Cooper.



promotional tool for companies looking to stand out," says Guinness spokesperson Jamie Panas. "It's also a way to make a mark in actual history and be a part of something global."

Of course, brands pulling off one exploit or another to generate headlines is nothing new. Back in the 1930s, the Curtiss Candy Co. used to fling thousands of Butterfinger bars out of airplanes over major American cities. Today, the head-turning, talk-generating power of a good publicity stunt still works great—though setting a world record does the idea one better.

Which is why Hard Rock Hotel & Casino opened its Seminole, Fla., outpost not just with a guitar smash (which is actually customary for the brand), but with the simultaneous, Pete Townshend-like pulverizing of 1,914 acoustic guitars—a world record. Or why Hot Wheels, which makes toy cars and miniature jump ramps, decided to get a real car and a real ramp and jump the vehicle 332 feet into the air (another world record) during the recent Indy 500.

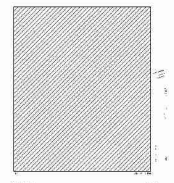
"If we're going to compete for boys—boys of all ages—we need to be front and center," says Hot Wheels marketing vp Simon Waldron. "So we thought: Let's do what we do for real. It was about cultural impact. The world-record component gave it the scale."

The world-record component gives these brands something else too: serious social media punch. While 1.8 million people watched the Hot Wheels jump on ABC on May 25, nearly 3 million checked out the YouTube video the following morning. "Social media outlets played a huge role," adds Hard Rock spokesperson Ana Lanzas. "The online posts and videos generated tons of buzz. The event earned \$1,215,697 in media value."

If the record is Guinness-recognized, the returns are even greater. Brands holding official Guinness records are entitled to use that imprimatur in their marketing free of charge. Plus, they get an added exposure on *Guinness Book's* Facebook page, which boasts 394,000 fans.

Speaking of those, it seems the latest fad in brand-sponsored record setting has moved into the digital realm. When Frito-Lay debuted its "Flavor Kitchen" cooking-demonstration billboard in Times Square this past April, Frito-Lay spokesperson Chris Kuechenmeister recalls that the company's Facebook page was getting a lot of activity—a whole lot. "We had this surge of likes in the last day, then we started hearing from people at Facebook and thought, 'Hey, I wonder if this means something.'" It did. After checking with the Guinness people, the snack maker discovered it had set the record for most Facebook likes in a 24-hour period: 1,571,161.

Meanwhile, back in Seattle, Catherine Captain's team at Cozi was scheduled to line up a linear mile's worth of rubber ducks on June 5. "We're excited," she says. "I feel like this idea really has legs." —Robert.Klara@adweek.com; Twitter: @UpperEastRob.

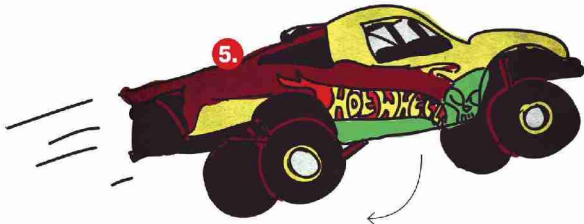
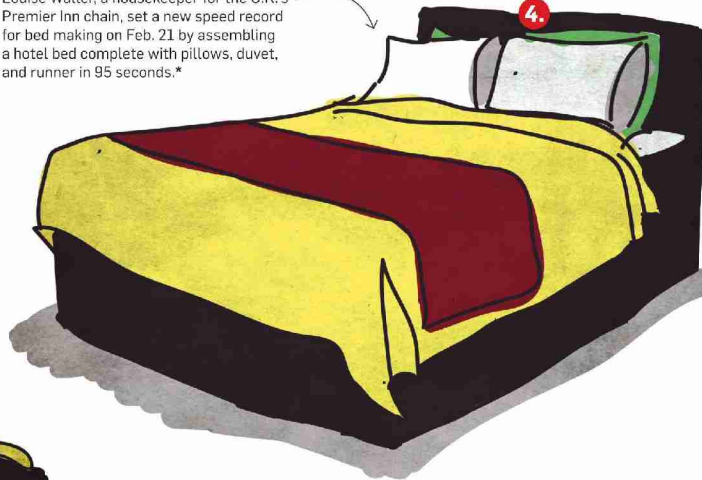


Brand Genius



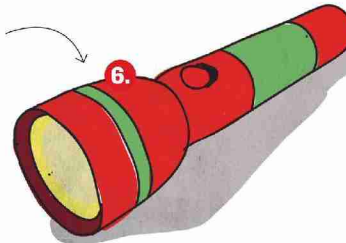
3. ESPN-sponsored sculptor Kelly Graham created the world's largest belt buckle (6½ x 8½ ft.), which went on display at Fort Worth honky-tonk Billy Bob's Texas a week before the Super Bowl.

4. Louise Waller, a housekeeper for the U.K.'s Premier Inn chain, set a new speed record for bed making on Feb. 21 by assembling a hotel bed complete with pillows, duvet, and runner in 95 seconds.*

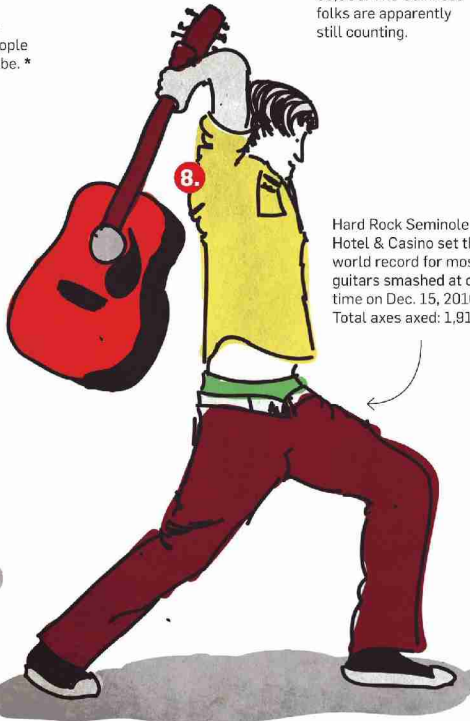


5. Top Gear host Tanner Foust jumped a real-life Hot Wheels truck 332 feet into the air during the Indianapolis 500 on May 25. Some 3.5 million people have since watched the motorized leap on YouTube.*

6. At NASCAR's Charlotte Motor Speedway on May 21, Energizer claims it set the world record for the most flashlights turned on simultaneously: 65,000. The Guinness folks are apparently still counting.



7. The Frito-Lay Flavor Kitchen event inadvertently set a record for Facebook likes (1,571,161 of them) on April 11-12.



8. Hard Rock Seminole Hotel & Casino set the world record for most guitars smashed at one time on Dec. 15, 2010. Total axes axed: 1,914.



9. Unilever's Vim brand of dish detergent set the record for longest line (2.4 miles) of freshly washed plates (15,295 of them) on April 6 in Chennai, India.

Notes: *This record not officially recognized by Guinness.

ILLUSTRATION: LARRY BUCHANAN