

RHB Bank bullish about My1 Home Loan response

By M. HAFIDZ MAHAR

STAR 15 SEP 2001

RHB Bank Bhd expects its *My1 Home Loan* marketing campaign to spark strong interest and lead to RM800mil in housing loans being approved by year-end.

Head of consumer banking Peter England said RHB, like many banks in the past, had had a strong corporate and commercial focus, and now it was moving toward more retail and consumer banking.

The bank would therefore be more visible in many communications media, he said.

"The thing about consumer marketing is that you got to have continuous presence in the marketplace. When you pull back on advertising, you would generally see your sales result fall back," England told *Star Business*.

RHB Bank has sealed a 12-month contract with Airtime Management & Programming Sdn Bhd, starting July, to sponsor Mix FM's *Mix Breakfast Show*. The show was initially "brought to you by RHB Bank" but when *My1 Home Loan* was launched on Aug 2, the sponsorship credit line was switched to "served to you by RHB *My1 Home Loan*."

"We've made it very specific to the product," England said. "You can spend so much time building the corporate brand, but ultimately the best way to do it is to drive it by product. The concept is to use a product focus to direct people to certain product lines, but at the same time, because of the nature of the show and the sponsorship, it gives you the (desired) corporate image as well."

He said that after the home loan campaign ran its course, RHB Bank would switch its focus to credit cards and the *Mix Breakfast Show* would then be "served to you by RHB credit cards."

The bank plans to run the *My1 Home Loan* campaign till the end of November. And to broaden its audience from just the morning drive-time listeners (the *Breakfast Show* runs from 6am to 10am), it is also sponsoring a contest segment called *Mix FM's Virtual House* which recurs throughout the day starting this coming Monday.

"It's one thing to sponsor a show, but after a while, you tend to get a burn-out from people hearing the same message every morning. This tactical contest allows us to pull the excitement level back up," England said.

Mix FM listeners, mainly aged 24 to 39 years, are invited to call in and select two of a total of 100 numbered virtual doors, and if they manage to "open" two doors that reveal the same prizes, the prizes become theirs.

There are 50 prizes, ranging from a 29-inch flat screen TV to oven mitten, and the grand prize is an RHB *My1* account with RM15,000 in cash. The contest will continue until all prizes have been won, and England expects it to run four to five weeks.

RHB Bank is also involved in TV sponsorship, i.e. for the business news segment of TV3's news bulletin. "We've tended to use TV very much from a corporate perspective, whereas we feel that for marketing of products, radio and press are stronger mediums for us. It's easier to change press and radio ads, while it is expensive to keep switching in a TV campaign," England said.

RHB Bank was the first bank to come out with four home loan options, England said. *My1 Home Loan* has four packages - one-, three- and five-year fixed-rate housing loans as well as one-year fixed rate with free moving costs.

In the past, RHB Bank only had one discounted fixed-rate home loan product. "This time we have put together a package of products so consumers can make choices on what home loans suit them best," he said.

Asked about new products to be launched, he said: "My view on this is that there's nothing new under the sun. It's really a case of fine-tuning all the products that we've got and adding more features and benefits to them."

England said he adopted a back-to-basics approach - looking at the real needs of the customer and what products they required.

"Most banks typically have all those products in their range, but they tend to clutter them, offering 100 products instead of 10 core ones. So our approach is to get back to basics and make sure every single product we offer has all the features and benefits that a consumer wants, and just promote those products for our simplicity and the customer's," he said.

"That's why we've modified the home loan. *My1 Home Loan* comes bundled with a *My1* deposit account, a credit card and the various insurance schemes that go along with the home loan. You get a whole financial services management system," he added.