

# Nike: celebrity advertising

Phil Knight is the co-founder and Chief Executive of Nike, the world's largest sports and fitness company. He has just been named 'Advertiser of the Year' at the 50th Cannes International Advertising Festival and is the first person to win the award twice.

1 The following famous sportsmen have all been sponsored by Nike in personal sponsorship deals – except one. Which one? Do you know which sport is associated with each sportsman?

Michael Johnson Carl Lewis Tiger Woods Andre Agassi David Beckham  
Jimmy Connors Michael Jordan Michael Schumacher Pete Sampras

2 Read the article about Nike and check your answers.

## Nike just do it!

Phil Knight, who has built Nike from its humble origins in Oregon in 1971 to the international empire it is today, is a firm believer in celebrity endorsement. By using famous athletes to endorse Nike's products, Knight has been able to expand into many different sports. In 1974 Jimmy Connors collected his Wimbledon trophy wearing Nike shoes. Carl Lewis jumped and ran in Nike shoes to win four gold medals at the 1984 LA Olympics. In 1995 Nike signed a contract with the racing driver, Michael Schumacher. At the Atlanta Olympics in 1996 Michael Johnson won the gold medal in the 400 metres wearing his now famous Nike gold shoes.

Nike's mission is to bring inspiration and innovation to every athlete in the world. Knight himself says his number one advertising principle is to wake up the consumer, and Nike's adverts are daring and attention grabbing. One example is the advert of Pete Sampras and Andre Agassi playing tennis in the streets of Manhattan.

Nike created a powerful image around the basketball player Michael Jordan. He became a superstar, and it was his image as part of the Dream Team which helped the company to become world-famous. In 1997 Tiger Woods won the US Masters and Nike moved into another sport – golf. In 2000 the company signed a £300 million deal with Manchester United, which has 50 million fans worldwide. Nike's well-known logo appears on the famous red shirts, but it is Nike's competitor, Adidas, which actually sponsors Beckham personally.

Today, Nike's unmistakable trademark 'swoosh' is instantly recognisable on sports shoes and clothing the world over, and celebrity advertising has certainly been crucial to this global success. Along with winning the 'Advertiser of the Year' award at the 50th Cannes International Advertising Festival, the company recently announced an increase in both sales and profits.

3 Complete the chart with the missing verbs and nouns related to advertising. Use a dictionary if necessary.

verb	noun
endorse	
expand	
	inspiration
	innovation
sponsor	
	advert(isement)

4 Discuss the following questions.

- Do you know of any other famous people who have promoted specific products?
- Apart from celebrity endorsement, can you give other examples of effective advertising?
- Does your company have an advertising slogan or logo? Does it sponsor anything e.g. a sport?
- What is your favourite advert?

**Answers 1**

*David Beckham (paragraph 3) has not been sponsored by Nike  
Michael Johnson (athletics), Carl Lewis (athletics), Tiger Woods (golf), Andre Agassi (tennis), David Beckham (football), Jimmy Connors (tennis), Michael Jordan (basketball), Michael Schumacher (motor racing), Pete Sampras (tennis)*

**Answers 3**

*endorsement, expansion, inspire, innovate, sponsor/sponsorship, advertise*