

James Cracknell Cycle Helmets Campaign (United Kingdom)

Scope of Good Practice

Rather than lecture cyclists who don't wear helmets, the campaign used social media to give helmet wearers

valuable content they could share to persuade their friends. With a tiny budget, but great attention to planning

and creative detail, the campaign team could quantify the value of the earned media created for the

cause, estimate multi-million pound savings made in terms of healthcare provision and be confident of

having saved lives. The campaign won the Marketing Society's 'marketing on a string' category in 2012 and an

EACA Care award in the same year.

The Problem Addressed by the Campaign

Years of advertising and millions of pounds have been spent trying to persuade cyclists to wear cycle

helmets. While helmets cannot prevent all deaths and serious injuries sustained by cyclists on Britain's roads,

there are still cases every year where deaths or severe injury could have been prevented if helmets were

worn. The campaign was created to encourage cyclists to make the choice to wear a helmet.

Background Research

Research showed that dictatorial 'man from the ministry' messages or analogies were relatively poor ways

to persuade people of the merits of helmets. The campaign avoided entering into a debate about

legislature because the challenge was to convince individual cyclists to make choices for themselves. The

market was split between those who were happy to wear their helmets, and those who had ignored

previous messages. Research showed that messages from friends, via social media networks are significantly

more powerful than 'conventional' advertising messages paid for channels. Thus the campaign strategy was

created.

Strategy

The challenge was to get the message across that wearing a helmet could be the difference between life and death for a cyclist in a creative package that people would share. From talking to James Cracknell – a British rowing champion and double Olympic gold medalist who attributed his survival from a cycling accident to wearing a cycle helmet – the campaign team became convinced that his story of his experience would be the most powerful tool for achieving the objective. Despite a small budget, the campaign based everything on a video, in which James told his story to fellow cyclists. The next challenge was to share James ' story with as many people as possible, without paying for media placement.

Creative

With a simple campaign message, the campaign team realized early on that the quality of the production would be paramount. The campaign had to keep the viewer engaged in what could never be an easy or comfortable watch, while simultaneously maximizing the impact of the details James explained. With this in mind, the film was deliberately kept raw in feel, with sound design and post production used very discreetly to bring to life the

nature of James' injuries in a way only special effects could.

Media

The campaign relied mainly on social media and encouraged audiences to spread the message themselves.

The media plan was written into the film – James ending with “make the choice to wear a helmet. If you do too,

please send this on to a friend.” July 20 was chosen as the launch date for the video and for James to tweet

the link. This date was significant to the campaign because it is anniversary of James' accident. This

significance maximized opportunities for PR and helped create momentum for the views, favorites and retweets

of his friends and followers. A partnership was formed with Headway - the brain injury association – in order to

help spread the message. With this kind of support, the campaign secured free TV spots around Eurosport

cycling programming. James further promoted the film through appearances secured on mass market TV

and radio programs including This Morning, Newsround and The Wright Stuff with Gabby Logan.

Impact

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<http://www.weforum.org/best-practices/creative-good/james-cracknell-cycle-helmets-campaign-united-kingdom>

The campaign video is in the top 2.6% of all YouTube videos, having been watched over 70,000 times. This is way ahead of any comparable cycle safety videos, the nearest being Transport for London with 4,425 over the same period – barely a 15th of the campaign video views. The Government's drunk driving campaign generated 863 mentions within social media throughout 2011. This program's film generated 1,627 mentions over a three month period (Jul-Sept 2011) – 88% more mentions in 75% of the time. A similar comparison can be made with Talk to Frank and the National Health Service's Stop Smoking campaign. Despite these campaigns' owned media, in the 3 months since the James Cracknell Cycle Helmet Campaign launch, neither ever received more than 11 tweets a day. The campaign's daily peak capped out at 1,316. Mortality rates for cycling is 11.1 per 100,000 cyclists per km per year. The fact that the campaign reached over 70,000 views, not counting word of mouth among the cycling community, eyes on the TV spots and PR, the campaign team can infer that the campaign could save up to 6 lives in the first year alone. Given Department of Transport calculations of the cost of a life saved of £936,380, this could have saved nearly £6,000,000. Given that a helmet need only be bought once, this number will only increase as the years and

kilometers tick by.

Conclusions and Recommendations

With public safety budgets slimmer than they have ever been it would be easy to conclude that media money should be protected at the expense of that spent on production. This campaign shows that by providing a piece of truly compelling content – an Ad Age ad of the day, in fact, who described it as ‘ A stunning public safety announcement ’ – viewers can become engaged and spread the campaign message through their own personal media. Organizations become engaged as well. The Bikeradar blog sent the link to their 21,000 fans. The East Midlands Ambulance Service contacted James ’ PR agent to ask to host the film on their website, and advised that other regional ambulance services would like to do the same. In fact, the campaign team has been able to calculate that the equivalent value of digital response would have been £37,100.

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