

Who Killed Deon – A Youth Violence Campaign for the Metropolitan Police Service (United Kingdom)

Scope of Good Practice

This campaign was designed to help tackle youth violence by educating teenagers on the periphery of

crime about a complicated legal principle known as Joint Enterprise. It shows how you can communicate a

highly sensitive and complex message to a disenfranchised, niche audience on a modest budget, with

great success. But it also demonstrates the long term effects of tackling complex social issues by preempting

behavior and stopping crime before it starts. It proves that communications can be a vital and effective

weapon in preventing violent crime, a problem that affects society financially and emotionally.

The Problem Addressed by the Campaign

Youth violence is a serious issue in London with 15 teenage murders between January and September, 2010.

Often 13-15 year-olds on the periphery of crime are surrounded by weapons and see them as normal. They

get involved because they think the law can't touch them because of their age. They are wrong. There is

a 150 year-old legal principle known as Joint Enterprise that states that if you are connected to, or

have knowledge of a crime, you can be charged for it. Involvement in weapons at a young age also often leads

to more serious crime in the future.

Background Research

The success of this campaign relied on a granular understanding of the people, crimes and the deterrent. The

operational officers who deal with youth violence every day and an ex-con turned mentor working with

disenfranchised teenagers were interviewed. They explained that the sort of crimes kids committed were

often minor playground arguments that escalated because weapons were involved. They involved

multiple people, each playing a specific role. Each individual action on its own seemed innocent but was

instrumental in the final crime, which is why Joint Enterprise applied. Through the Metropolitan Police, the

campaign had access to two ‘ typical ’ London schools. Rather than interviewing the kids and showing them

ideas, they were asked to co-create an idea from scratch. They became collaborators: their opinions became

the strategy; their experiences the backdrop for the creative work. The campaign learned that the kids weren ’ t

aware of the law. They rejected it as unfair unless they were shown how an action or a role they played

was connected to the end crime. The kids also unearthed a fascinating sub-culture of the types of roles girls

and boys might play, including Miss Chinese Whispers (the stirrer); the Link (co-ordinator); and Transporter

(weapon carrier).

Strategy

The creative strategy evolved directly as a result of co-creation with the target audience. It hinged on

connections: to explain Joint Enterprise, the campaign needed to show how seemingly innocent roles played in

a crime are connected to the final crime. To make the story relevant it needed to include the different roles

played by boys and girls. To be engaging it needed to use their environment and language. To be credible it

needed to be where the kids were and could discuss. The kids cited Facebook as instrumental in organizing

and stirring situations and where the campaign should happen.

Creative

The idea was an interactive murder mystery for Facebook, a ' Whodunnit ' about the murder of a boy called

Deon. The campaign created six films, each featuring a different role that led to murder. A trailer on MTV set

up the six characters and Deon ' s murder, and the campaign challenged viewers to work out who killed

Deon. On guessing a suspect, the viewer would get to watch the role the character played, and each film

ended by explaining that the character did not kill Deon but was charged under Joint Enterprise because of

the role they had played. Viewers would be asked to try again by clicking on another character ' s film.

The campaign ' s teenage co-creators helped create a storyline that could escalate in a stabbing. To ensure

that they didn ' t ' reject it as ' fake, ' the campaign captured the truth by shooting on a London estate and using

a mix of normal kids and actors. The kids brought their own wardrobe and did their own styling and, instead

of a script, the creative team and director gave them key sentences to say and let them ad-lib, so the dialogue was

natural.

Media

The media strategy aimed to engage and educate the target about Joint Enterprise and encourage

discussion. The campaign launched with an unbranded trailer, airing on Sky music channels, setting up the

characters and Deon ' s murder and driving people to Facebook. Teaser radio spots ran on youth stations

and Spotify. The campaign was hosted on Facebook, the place where these crimes are often being

organized. Using Facebook allowed the campaign to reach teenagers where they were comfortable,

encouraging peer-to-peer debate about who killed Deon, an encouraging the link to be shared with friends

commenting on the films. A commentary matrix helped answer questions and deal with negativity around Joint

Enterprise. A radio partnership with DJ advertorials on youth stations was used to further explain Joint

Enterprise. The campaign was provided as a DVD to be used as an educational resource by Safer Schools

Officers in London schools during Joint Enterprise talks. A short five minute film that combined all the

characters ' points of view ran in local cinema, and a teaser poster campaign appeared in key London

estates. After the launch, people who ' liked ' the film on Facebook were prompted with provocative questions

about Joint Enterprise to keep the debate alive.

Impact

In the short-term, this campaign needed to reach a difficult audience, engage them in a complex message

without disenfranchising them and deter them from getting involved in crime. The campaign achieved 135,371

unique visitors on the Facebook page, 4.5 times more than estimated, at a cost per user of £1.33 vs.

£6.04 as originally budgeted. Additionally, 45 percent of 13-15 year-old Londoners recognized at least one

element of the campaign and 59 percent of Facebook fans were 13-17 years-old. The audience

understood the complex Joint Enterprise message, with 59% agreeing that, “ You can be charged with

murder even if you didn ’ t actually kill someone, ” and 39% agreed, “ If you are with someone and they commit

a crime such as murder, you too could be arrested and charged. ” Most importantly, the campaign encourage

them to not get involved with weapons, with 41% of 13-15 year-olds agreeing, “ Don ’ t get involved with

weapons/guns/knives. ” The campaign achieved 6 times the level of engagement for the average Facebook

campaign with comparable subject matter. An average of 3.5 videos (eight minutes of film) were watched by

students before guessing “ Who killed Deon ” correctly. Over 60% of the videos were viewed in full, and there

were 3,857 comments. However, the real intention of this campaign was to prevent young people from

entering into a life of crime in the future. Applying the awareness of the advertising, claimed intention,

likelihood to commit a crime, and subsequent likelihood of imprisonment, it was predicted that 22 young people

will stay out of the young offenders system as a result of the campaign. This is a saving to society of £2.54m and

gives the campaign an ROI of 1:8.5.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This case recommends a new model to get to a great creative idea, by sacrificing the modus operandi

of creative development and opting for co-creation and collaboration to allow an idea to grow organically. It

shows that listening and trusting consumers can help get to truly effective award-winning creative

ideas. It demonstrates how clients can set budgets based on the smallest potential effect to ensure the most

responsible use of public money. But most importantly, this case shows the importance of preventing even

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<http://www.weforum.org/best-practices/creative-good/who-killed-deon-youth-violence-campaign-metropolitan-police-service-uni>

one person from getting into a life of crime because it represents a disproportionate burden to society

financially and emotionally. This campaign makes a compelling case for the development of publically funded

preventative behavior change ideas in the future. This campaign has won both IPA and APG Effectiveness

awards and was the Gunn Reports ' most awarded creative TV/video campaign of 2011.