

AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN PUBLIC RELATIONS 2006

CATEGORY: E. Integrated Campaign

PROJECT: Guinness "Stuff of Legend" Campaign

A Brief / Background

Guinness has sponsored the Hurling Championship for 11 years. The same cross-functional team has worked on the sponsorship for the past five years. The challenge each year is to continue to develop ground breaking, world class campaigns that are truly integrated from the beer mats, to the media coverage to the epic advertising. Each year the bar is raised, KPI's are increased and expectations are high. The 2004 campaign had been successful and we knew that we faced an ever greater challenge in 2005.

The 2005 campaign, entitled, "The Stuff of Legend" focused on the unique place that hurling has in Irish mythology, from the legends of Cú Chulainn, to stories about Fionn Mac Cumhaill and Na Fianna. Irish folklore is littered with tales of hurling and this provided a really rich canvas and a very strong platform for the 2005 campaign, across all disciplines, advertising, PR, BTL and digital media.

B Objectives

- Deliver a truly integrated, through the line campaign delivering against the creative theme.
- Drive affinity for Guinness.
- Engage the interest of hurling fans.
- Provide an interactive platform where the brand could engage and communicate with the fans.
- Create debate, noise and media coverage for the Guinness Hurling Championship, above and beyond what is happening on the pitch.
- Demonstrate that Guinness is an innovative brand, who really understands what matters to true hurling fans.

C Programme planning and strategy

The overall strategy was to integrate the creative theme into every element of the PR campaign, from the launch, to the press conferences, to match programmes, to the RTE Man of the Match competition, to the consumer competitions and a huge interactive consumer led promotion of legendary status. No stone would be left unturned.

In line with the overall strategy, the PR strategy was to leverage the place that hurling has in Irish mythology, but put a modern twist on the folklore by incorporating modern day legends of the game. Many of the marketing team are genuine hurling fans, which made the consumer insight generation process second nature.

The campaign was built around the premise that hurling fans, eat, sleep and breath hurling. It's pretty much all they think about. They are totally committed to the game. They like nothing more than to talk about hurling, so a further part of the strategy was to invite fans, including the media, to be part of one of the biggest conversations about hurling over the last decade - the search for the 15 greatest modern day legends of the game. We knew that this would really get the banter flowing, due to the huge differences of opinion and mass county rivalry. Facilitating this close relationship with fans would build emotional proximity for the brand.

In going through the planning process, we continuously asked ourselves, does this piece of activity integrate with the other elements of the campaign? If the answer was 'no', it was dismissed right away.

The cross functional team made a commitment at the outset of the campaign to forget about individual disciplines and focus purely on how best to deliver on the activity goal, which was ultimately about building affinity for the Guinness brand because awareness levels couldn't go any higher.

This was critical to the success of the integrated campaign because it ensured that all opportunities were explored. Indeed, the traditional carving up of the budget, where advertising receives the lions share was cast aside, which resulted in a bigger PR budget and for the first time ever, an interactive, digital and website element.

The PR team was given the lead role in managing the cross functional team. Every week, the team met to critique and review the plans and explore other possibilities. Due to the sheer size of the campaign, this was a very important exercise.

Our recommended strategy was to launch the Championship with iconic photography that really drew on the creative source of "Stuff of Legend", we also recommended giving the GAA Media a sneak preview of the new advertising at the launch. All the other elements of the campaign fell out of this singular successful launch, including the subsequent launch of the main consumer PR activity,

We felt for the brand to really engage and interact with hurling fans we needed a platform where fans felt in control of the activity and played a vital role in its outcome. We devised the mechanic whereby fans could select a "Guinness Stuff of Legend" team – the 15 best players from the previous ten years of the Guinness Hurling Championship.

PR Programme

(1) The Launch/Launch Photocall

The launch of the Guinness Hurling Championship is the singular most important occasion in the sponsorship – it sets the tone for the campaign, is the first public 'airing' of the new campaign and announces to the hurling fan that the Championship has begun.

The first execution in the advertising campaign had been shot at the Giants Causeway, depicting the story of Fionn Mac Cumhaill and the Scottish Giant. This iconic, visually stunning landscape would provide an ideal backdrop for a dramatic launch and ensure integration with the above the line campaign.

We flew four of the captains from the Munster and Leinster finals in 2004 to Antrim, where they were photographed. Four modern legends in the most legendary of sites.

The official launch was held in Croke Park the following day, where the creative theme for the campaign was revealed to the GAA media and players. "Na Fianna" drummers opened the launch with a rousing performance that set the tone for the new campaign. The media were informed that they would also be entertaining the fans pre-match around the country during the Championship.

So successful was the strategy that the photographs appeared in all media the following day, including TV, with the majority using "Stuff of Legend" in the caption, or feature. A number of papers, including the Irish Times, wrote at length about the new campaign. Already, the creative theme for the campaign was part of the daily vernacular of the media.

(2) "Stuff of Legend" Team

The Mechanic

We needed a strong data collection mechanism, which would ensure continuous conversations with Guinness and hurling fans and would provide statistical information on how the voting was going.

In order to collate the nominations and provide a focal point for fans, a microsite was created with an online voting mechanic, whereby fans could select their greatest "hurling legends" from the past eleven years of the Guinness Hurling Championship. Fans could choose from a shortlist of players selected by GAA media to ensure credibility.

Content on the website was updated daily, with Match previews, stats, and updates on how voting was going, by player and by county. There were weekly prizes, ranging from match tickets, to signed memorabilia – which kept fans coming back for repeated visits after they had selected their team.

To ensure we delivered a fully integrated campaign we had multiple touchpoints with the consumer – not just online. Fans could vote in pub, and at matches, where the voting page was duplicated in match programmes to ensure that those without internet access could still vote.

The consumer careline number was promoted so people could dial in with their selection, which was then uploaded on the microsite. 90,000 hurling fans on the Guinness RM database received advance notice of the campaign.

The Launch of the Modern Day Legends

Key GAA media were invited to the Guinness Storehouse for a briefing on the campaign, and were taken through the entire microsite and voting mechanic. As they were our key first point of information for the general public, we felt it was essential that they were briefed on a one-to-one basis to ensure they were completely clear on the process involved.

Three key players who were on the shortlist were used for photography, TV and Radio, and were pictured canvassing for fans votes. The Website went live three days later, the day of the Munster final, and we had staff at the Pairc Ui Chaoimh before the match with “Who would be on your Guinness legends team?” placards, with details of the website address to create word of mouth among the target audience.

Maintaining Interest

To keep consumer and media interest alive, we issued regular updates to all media, including stats on where players were in the voting stakes, who were the most voted for players, percentages of votes per county, votes from abroad etc. We also sent targeted releases to specific counties, generating county rivalry (“C’mon you Rebels, there are more votes in from the Cats right now”).

This ran in conjunction with an integrated digital marketing campaign and Guinness utilised their access to the big screens at Croke Park to run updates and voting reminder at hurling games.

Delivering beyond the Brief

We secured TG4 as a TV partner to air a 90 minute live awards show to mark the end of the campaign. This took place in the Guinness Storehouse on 30th September.

All the players who made the final “cut” were invited and the final team was announced live on stage by commentary legend, Michael O’Muircheartaigh. We secured the services of other hurling legends, such as Liam Griffin and John Allen to present various awards and they were also interviewed live on stage. Fans who won competitions through the Guinness microsite and relationship marketing activities were invited along to the gala awards dinner.

(3) Consumer Promotions/Man of the Match

All consumer promotions in press and radio incorporated a “legends” theme in both the mechanic and pre promotional copy. The Guinness/RTE Man of the Match competition also incorporated the “legends” theme, where fans were asked to text in their nomination for the “legend of the game”.

(4) Press Releases/Press Conferences

The creative theme was integrated into all press materials and any pre-match press conferences. The juxtaposition of the modern legends of the game with the heroes of the old myths and legends was a theme used on many occasions throughout the Championship by GAA media.

D Measurement Stage

“The Stuff of Legend” campaign has been the most successful campaign to date, breaking all previous records in terms of media coverage, affinity scores with consumers and efficiency. We believe this was due to the very strong integration of the creative theme into all elements of the programme.

- Highest ever coverage achieved for Guinness Hurling sponsorship over last 10 years
- Launch coverage on national TV and in all national papers
- 2.5m equivalent media value coverage
- 1.7m press coverage throughout duration of Guinness Hurling competition
- 0.8m TV and radio including; Guinness Hurling Legends awards evening = 1.5 hours
Live coverage on TG4, repeated

www.guinnesshurling.ie Microsite:

- Total entries : 11,918 (117% over target)
- Average visit duration : 6min 45 sec (125% over target)
- Total no. of site visitors : 23,066

The average visitor spent 6min 45 sec, way above average for a single purpose microsite. Key to this “richness of engagement” was the topical content of the website, which kept fans engaged and interested and returning for updates.

The PR that the website and competition delivered was incredible, capturing the imagination of journalists and driving talkability for the sponsorship outside of a “match review/preview” environment.

Overall results:

- Spontaneous awareness of the campaign 88% among target audience
- Feeling closer to the brand as a result of the campaign 77% among target audience

Specific PR

- 65% aware of Guinness association with PR campaign
- 77% of target feel closer to the brand as a result of the PR campaign

E Budget

€ 125 - €320