

AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN **PUBLIC RELATIONS** **2021**



Best Use of Digital PR Including Content Creation



#GardaJerusalem

Campaign

An Garda Síochána Jerusalem Dance Challenge
#GardaJerusalem

Description of Campaign

An Garda Síochána's mission, is as important as it is simple: 'Keeping People Safe'. The #GardaJerusalem dance challenge video provided an opportunity through our national and local social media presence to promote public safety, provide reassurance and engage directly with the public during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Organisation

An Garda Síochána

Background to the Campaign

An Garda Síochána is the national police and security service. It is a community-based organisation employing approximately 18,000 Garda personnel across the country. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in Ireland the Gardaí have adopted the 4 Es approach – Engage, Explain, Encourage and as a last resort Enforcement. The focus being on the first E of this approach – engagement.

Engaging with our continuously growing 1.6 million social media followers as well as retaining our close connection with our community is key to our 'Keeping People Safe' mission as we continue to encourage public compliance with the Government's Plan for Living with COVID-19 public health measures and promoting Health Service Executive (HSE) advice to reduce the spread of the virus. Over the last year we have adopted the use of the hashtags #HoldFirm #StaySafe and in particular to the Gardaí #HereToHelp across our social media communications.

When the Swiss Police force laid down the gauntlet for An Garda Síochána on Twitter to take part in the #Jerusalem dance challenge, it was decided that this would be a great opportunity to reach out to the community. The key aim

was to remind people that the Gardaí are here to help but also spreading a little joy and bringing a smile to faces across the island of Ireland in particular those that might be struggling during this COVID-19 pandemic.

The challenge was to perform the choreographed routine which went viral in 2020 when an Angolan dance troupe recorded themselves dancing to the tune “Jerusalema” which was created by a South African DJ. In response the #GardaJerusalema video was produced in-house adhering to the parameters of COVID-19 restrictions during the filming. Garda personnel dusted off their dance shoes to show off some of our country’s culture and heritage whilst putting an Irish spin on the dance challenge.

Statement of Objectives

In line with the organisation’s strategy of keeping people safe and by accepting the challenge there were numerous objectives defined as outlined below.

Key objectives:

- to bring a smile to faces around the country at a time when there is so little to smile about;
- to engage with the community via social media given that now more than ever there is an increase in usage of all social media channels;
- to reassure and remind the public that An Garda Síochána are #heretohelp those that are vulnerable and/or isolating particularly in these difficult times;
- to provide an opportunity for the public to have a sense of pride in our country as well as our national police service;
- to encourage public compliance with the Governments Plan for Living with COVID-19 and the associated public health measures to reduce the spread;
- raise morale of Garda personnel internally by showing to the public the human side of An Garda Síochána.

Added value objectives:

- to increase the public’s trust and confidence in the organisation;
- to increase the reputation of the organisation;
- to increase our social media following by engaging on all platforms;
- to deliver a significant reach across the country;
- to show off the culture and heritage of Ireland;
- to increase the recognition of our social media presence.

Programme Planning and Strategy

Social Media – Key Communications Strategy

An Garda Síochána has been using social media platforms since mid-2011 but since 2016 has greatly expanded its presence both nationally and locally. The social media accounts across Twitter, Facebook and Instagram are key to our communications strategy with greater emphasis during this COVID-19 pandemic. The Office of Corporate Communications (OCC) based in Garda Headquarters is responsible for the daily oversight of the 21 accounts.

The Challenge

Following the ‘Jerusalema’ dance challenge laid down by the Swiss Police force on Twitter in January, significant planning was undertaken in a short timeframe by Garda personnel to respond and achieve the objectives as outlined above.

The Objective

The overall aim was to spread joy during the COVID-19 pandemic by accepting the challenge and to put smiles on faces of our citizens at a time when there is very little to smile about. During the pandemic Gardaí have been out in the community more so than ever and engaging with the public is key to day to day living. The Gardaí have been supporting the vulnerable in our community through various activities i.e getting shopping, prescriptions and sometimes just an ear to listen. This challenge presented another avenue of reaching out to the community and getting the involved safely.

The OCC Plan

The OCC undertook to coordinate the effort on behalf of the Gardaí to produce a video incorporating Garda personnel from different Units and Divisions performing the dance throughout Ireland in response to the challenge. The OCC were conscious that the video produced should differ from that of our Swiss counterparts whilst adhering to all COVID-19 public health measures in place. This made for a difficult task in such a short timeframe. The video includes a nod to Riverdance and whilst it would have been a very apt theme it was not an option to provide the Riverdance style line of Gardaí. Instead the OCC opted for showing some of the beautiful locations on the island of Ireland.

The OCC set out a plan which detailed the following:

- The video output;
- The distribution and audience;
- Community engagement call to action – public challenge;
- Public response compilation.

Video Outcomes

The creation of a video for the viral Jerusalema Dance challenge following challenge by the Swiss Police incorporating Garda personnel from different Units and Divisions.

An online tutorial for the dance was chosen in order to ensure consistency throughout the video as Garda personnel learn the routine prior to recording.

Video Distribution and Audience

Given that the challenge was laid down on our Twitter channel account and has already gained major traction there it was agreed that the video would be no more than the required length of 2 minutes and 20 seconds to allow for it be uploaded natively to Twitter. The video was to be uploaded across all An Garda Síochána social media channels. The Swiss Police were tagged in our tweet/post text to ensure they were aware of our response and they kindly responded with a heart-warming video of thanks.

Community Engagement

It was planned that we would engage with the community by asking them to show off their best moves by creating their own video at home in the sitting room, kitchen, or the attic even but making sure to stay in their COVID-19 bubble! We asked the public to use the hashtag #GardaJerusalema.

Video Spokespersons

A plan was put in place to make available two spokespersons for the aftermath of the video. Two Gardaí were identified as being suitable – one with extensive experience of media relations for previous digital projects and the other an ex Riverdancer. Subsequent to the video being released both were interviewed across multiple media outlets and the ex Riverdancer appeared on The Late Late Show with other frontline workers. All media interviews were coordinated by the Garda Press Office.

Public's Response Compilation Video

The use of the hashtag allowed for monitoring of entries from the public and as a result of numerous entries submitted a second video was compiled of snippets of some of the entries received by way of a thank you to the public for engaging with this challenge and An Garda Síochána.

Measurement

In early February 2021, the #GardaJerusalema video was posted/tweeted on An Garda Síochána's social media platforms and quickly went viral. It was significantly retweeted/reposted and picked up on by both online and traditional media channels.

The key objectives as described above were to reach out to the community and bring a smile to the faces of Ireland as well as promoting compliance with COVID-19 public health measures. The success of the video which has rarely been matched by any other public organisation in Ireland can be measured in the statistics detailed below.

During the first 24 hours post release of video:

- **Social media channels**

- > Over **4 million** views across social media platforms.
- > A reach of **10 million** on social media platforms. We gained almost **33,000** followers.
- > There were almost **40,000** comments which demonstrates the extraordinarily high level of engagement which was an average of **15.3%**.

- **Print, online and broadcast**

- > A reach of **7.2 million** for print and online.
- > A reach of **9.5 million** for broadcast.
- > Featured mostly across RTE, Newstalk, all of the National and Tabloid papers, as well as many Regional papers.

Within a week of the video going viral the views on social media had increased by **60%** to over **7 million**, the reach over **17 million (65% increase)** and the average engagement rate was still significantly high at **13.5%**. Print, online and broadcast continued with the coverage of the video widespread across Ireland.

The response from the public was overwhelming. It is clear from the thousands of comments received as well as the high level of engagement that our key objectives were achieved and went way beyond expectations. Support from internal sources was tremendous with many Garda personnel praising the efforts of those involved.

The compilation of the public's response was then released two weeks later providing snippets of the numerous videos received. It has generated further overwhelming support and pride from the public.

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