

Category 9 – Consumer Relations

Entry name: The Future is Oblong

Entrant organisation: Loud Group

Client: Bahlsen (German confectionary company), for its product Messino Jaffa Cakes

Strategy

Bahlsen wanted to raise awareness of its Jaffa Cakes (Messino), which had low brand awareness despite having been on sale for years. The Company had a small marketing budget with which to make an impact, and asked Loud for help.

The objectives were to:

- increase awareness and raise the brand profile of Messino
- encourage the public to participate in taste tests
- maximise audience reach within a limited timescale and budget
- stimulate interest from the media and influential people
- protect Messino's presence on the shelves of Tesco and Waitrose
- drive purchase of Messino

With the absence of a solid news hook, Loud decided to highlight the oblong shape of the Messino, along with its taste. These were key points of differentiation from the market-leading jaffa cake which is round. From this, 'The Future is Oblong' campaign was born.

Implementation

Loud launched the campaign by activating a Twitter account and teasing new followers with obscure oblong-related tweets, without revealing who was behind the messages.

The Twitter activity, which included tweets such as 'an oblong a day keeps the doctor away' and 'those who say good things come in small packages, have never received anything in an oblong package', gave the campaign initial momentum and allowed for engagement with followers, who were intrigued by the messages.

Loud then planned and executed live activity at the fifth Ashes test at the Oval and the Reading Festival to further 'tease' the public. At these events, volunteers (AKA 'oblongeers') carried signs around the venues which read 'The Future is Oblong', and included the microsite URL, www.thefutureisoblong.com. The activity spread awareness of the campaign, while engaging with the public and generating interesting content, such as tweets, images and event reports, which were featured on the site.

Following both events, the microsite unveiled that the teaser activity related to jaffa cakes. After this reveal, new sample Messino boxes branded as 'Oblong Jaffa Cakes' were created and sent to 750 regional and national journalists. The parcels also contained a news release declaring that the future of the jaffa cake was oblong. This aimed to encourage journalists to sample the Messino and make up their own mind which they preferred.

The team also sent parcels to influential online voices for sampling. These included prominent commentators on chocolate or confectionary, bloggers, Flickr users or founders of large jaffa cake groups on Facebook.

Loud then brought the Messino to the general public through sampling activity at three major shopping centres over consecutive weekends: the Trafford Centre, thecentre:mk and Bluewater. Activity included handing out Messino samples and discount vouchers, plus inviting the public to take part in taste tests. An oblong jaffa cake costume was designed and worn by an entertainer at the events to further interact with the public and help generate social content.

Creativity

With a small budget and limited public awareness of Messino, Loud had to create a clever idea which would capture media attention.

Jaffa cakes are a well-loved treat, with many people incredibly loyal to the market leader, but a combination of creative design, clever messaging and good humour, enabled the team to encourage the media and public to carry out taste tests and come to the conclusion that the oblong jaffa cakes are far tastier!

Evaluation and measurement

In total, the campaign yielded 250 mentions across the full range of media. Of this, 122 pieces were featured across national, regional, online and broadcast media. This included:

- **Broadcast:** This Morning, Radio 1, Radio 2, Radio 6, Metro Radio, BBC Radio Manchester
- **National newspapers:** Daily Telegraph, Daily Mail, Daily Mirror, Daily Star, Daily Express, The People
- **Trade:** The Grocer, International Supermarket News, Farm Business, Kennedy's Confection
- **Regional newspapers:** London Evening Standard, London Lite, Liverpool Daily Post, The Southern Daily Echo, Milton Keynes Citizen
- **Online:** Biscuit Encounters, Chocablog, BBC – Russell Howard's Good News, T5m.com, Manxradio Online

In social media, discussions about the campaign and oblong jaffa cakes took place in over 20 online forums. There were also more than 100 references to the campaign on Twitter, with celebrities such as Alan Carr, Kate Lawler, Christine Hamilton and well-known Conservative blogger Iain Dale commenting.

Cost-effectiveness

For a PR budget of £20k (£40k for the complete creative and communications programme), Loud achieved the following:

- 250 mentions of the campaign across the full range of media
- Sales increase of 94% since the campaign started
- New listings secured for Messino at Asda, Sainsbury's, Morrisons and Co-op
- 34,000 Messinos and 14,000 discount vouchers distributed
- Anecdotal feedback from the public about the campaign proved how widespread the message reached

Final results against objectives

- Loud spread awareness and increased the brand profile of Messino through 250 mentions of the campaign across the full range of media
- The team encouraged the public to participate in taste tests. 34,000 Messinos and 14,000 discount vouchers were given to the public and 90% of participants preferred the Messino. Taste tests carried out on radio shows and reported online also sought to encourage listeners/readers to carry out their own at home.
- Loud was tasked with trying to protect the Messino's presence on the shelves of Waitrose and Tesco through increased consumer demand. Not only was this achieved, Loud actually helped Bahlsen to expand into other stores. The company has secured listings for the cakes in Asda, Sainsbury's, Morrisons and Co-op.
- Most importantly, sales of Messino are up 94% since the campaign started.

Jon Dance, Marketing Manager at Bahlsen, commented: "The Future is Oblong campaign demonstrated what can be achieved when online, traditional PR, live and experiential activity are all used to great effect. The campaign spread awareness of one of our lesser-known products and positioned Messino as a potential challenger to traditional jaffa cakes."

Budget

b) £11k – £50k (full communications/creative programme)

Timescale: July – October 2009

Ends