

Category Name:	Low Budget Campaign
Title:	Planet Whale - Making a splash about Whalefest 2012
Submitting Organisation:	Midnight Communications
Budget:	£9.5k

Planet Whale is the global online community which harnesses the passions of individuals to protect whales and dolphins globally. It organises the annual **WhaleFest exhibition**, bringing together conservationists, divers, whale and dolphin experts and the general public for the world's largest cetacean celebration. Midnight more than **doubled visitors** to the 2012 event and supported a proposed **international expansion** of the exhibition.

Brief & Objectives

Midnight was appointed by **Planet Whale** in July 2012 to create and implement a three month long PR campaign focused on raising awareness and driving attendance to WhaleFest 2012, a weekend long public event held at the Hilton Brighton Metropole.

The main objectives set for Midnight were:

- Provide **PR support** for a range of PlanetWhale activities
- Raise **awareness** of WhaleFest 2012 amongst target audiences
- Raise the profile of PlanetWhale as an organisation
- Our measurable goal was to **increase attendees** to WhaleFest 2012 by 50% on the previous year

Strategy & Tactics

Midnight's facilitation of a strategy workshop with senior management identified that prospective attendees at Whalefest were diverse - from the world's leading conservationists and campaigners to the general public. We therefore created a comprehensive nationwide campaign combining multi-layered media relations programme and social media, underpinned with a local ticket competition strategy.

Implementation

VIP Launch Event

Midnight advised that a VIP event should be held in advance of the weekend for VIP and international visitors to meet the PlanetWhale team. This enabled local stakeholders to collect free tickets and make plans to attend, and offered an additional advance publicity opportunity. (It was originally scheduled for Saturday.)

The VIP launch evening was attended by around 100 influential environmental guests, including international representatives from **al Jazeera**, **DEFRA**, **Greenpeace** and the **University of California**. Midnight negotiated room hire & catering, distributed invites and handled guest list management, and managed the attendance of a Mentorn TV crew and photographer.

Media relations

To raise national awareness of Whalefest Midnight created a template story on the best UK whale and dolphin spotting locations, issuing nine regionalised stories across the country. Feature articles were created for leading environmental publications, including *Headline Environmental*. Media coverage stretched from *BBC Radio Jersey* to *The Shetland Times* and *ITV's Daybreak*.

Midnight used *googlenews* to monitor the international news agenda for breaking whale and dolphin stories. The discovery of Noc, the talking dolphin just weeks before the exhibition, for example, provided Planet Whale with highly topical comment opportunities.

Regionally, and for consumer media, a summary of family-friendly interactive events happening over the weekend was created and issued to regional media and "What's On" titles for their diary pages. Family web sites and bloggers were contacted with stories relating to specific WhaleFest events such as the virtual whale-watching, **life-size whales** & dolphins, PADI dive zone, 'try dive' pool for snorkelling, workshops and expert talks from Pete Bethune (ex-Sea Shepherd, star of Animal Planet's "Whale Wars") Doug Allan, award-winning

underwater photographer (BBC's Blue Planet); TV and radio presenter, Mark Carwardine and Bill Oddie. Life-size whales were also placed at **Brighton train station** to capture the attention of visitors across the weekend.

During the weekend, a film crew from Mentorn Media interviewed Ingrid Visser - "the woman who swims with whales" and a speaker at the event - for a Channel 5 documentary, drawing on Ingrid's experience of wild versus captive whales, as she provided expert analysis on clips of captive whales attacking their trainers.

Social Media

Midnight worked alongside Planet Whale's website team providing support and advice for its social media strategy. Throughout the campaign we tweeted links regarding key dolphin and whale stories from around the world, demonstrating that Planet Whale had taken ownership of the "Save the Whale" agenda and that WhaleFest2012 would be the place to gather with likeminded individuals.

Competitions

Nowadays regional media can be loath to allocate editorial if it is not supported by local advertising. To meet this challenge, Midnight recommended a competition-led strategy creating a total of **14x bespoke competition packages** for WhaleFest, each individually designed and pitched to target publications across Sussex.

Ticket giveaways were subsequently secured across **nine Sussex titles** in newspapers and monthly consumer magazines, reaching over **542k** readers.

Alongside this **five tailored competition** packages were arranged in conjunction with WhaleFest supporters, including local radio stations and restaurants, helping reach a further audience of **586k**.

Budget

Working to a slender budget of £9,500 Midnight's multi-layered campaign had to work smart to deliver outstanding results.

Results

Outputs

- 51 x regional print items
- 10 x conservation trade press articles
- 51 x online items across regional media
- Reached over **25m** online unique users
- 12 x broadcast interviews
- 14 x competition packages secured
- A total audience reach of **2.7m**

Online coverage for Planet Whale was equally successful with articles secured on environmental websites, including *Sport Diver* and *Headline Environmental*, alongside family friendly communities such as *Mumsnet* and *LetsGoWiththeChildren*. A feature also appeared on *BBC.co.uk*, one of the UK's largest websites with over 6.5 million users.

Extensive broadcast media outreach was delivered with interviews secured across a variety of media including numerous **BBC radio stations**, **Heart FM**, **Pirate FM** and **Latest TV**.

Outcomes

Most importantly, Midnight's vibrant campaign surpassed its measurable goal. Instead of increasing attendance by 50%, Midnight **drove up attendance by 140%**, **more than doubling visits**, with over **6,000 visitors to WhaleFest2012** from across Europe and the UK.

Such was the success of the event with international audiences that PlanetWhale has since received approaches from the USA and Australia to take the exhibition overseas.

"Fast, fabulous and effective, Midnight really helped us to put Brighton centre stage of the whale and dolphin world in 2012. WhaleFest and our two conferences had a hugely raised profile due to your inspired and tenacious work, and has given us a powerful platform for global change and dramatic growth. Thanks so much for all your hard work, and here's to the next festival..." Planet Whale