

Coca Cola's Expedition 206

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365 Days, 206 Countries, 1 Mission

Overview:

In order to bring awareness to Coca Cola's "Open Happiness" campaign, the company focused on reaching young people worldwide via social media networks. The largest task was effectively reaching their target audience of teens and twenty year olds using compelling content, subsequently igniting a "buzz" about the campaign. With the help of Fast Horse Incorporated, Coca Cola came up with the extraordinary idea for a journey called Expedition 206. In this unique journey, in just 365 days, three young people travel to 206 countries where Coke does business. The mission of the yearlong excursion is to talk to young people from all different cultures and find out what makes them happy. Through brilliant use of social media networks, every day throughout the journey, the feedback that the travelers or "happy ambassadors" receive is all posted and documented online. The work and achievements of Expedition 206 supported the brand's Open Happiness campaign and brought exceptional attention to the meaning of the original campaign.

Research:

Coca-Cola realized through use of consumer loyalty studies that consumers who are active with Coke's online programs are 31% more likely to "like" Coke, 43% more likely to "love" Coke and 68% more likely to "exclusively love" Coke. This research caused Coke to want to engage their consumers in a new, exciting and innovative way. Because teens are so involved with social media, they were the

audience for which the program Expedition 206 was erected. Coke also conducted research about what factors lead to happiness. In 2008, the Coca-Cola Happiness Institute published a study of 3,000 interviews focusing on causes of happiness. The findings put great value on “the smaller things in life” which became the focus and mission of the journey. It was crucial to understand the 206 different markets that the team was traveling to and to. Coca-Cola’s marketing teams in each location were asked information about local publicity opportunities in order to create excitement for the Expedition.

SWOT Analysis:

Strengths:

- Quick “buzz” and positive media coverage about the expedition
- Excellent use of social media facets which generated ongoing dialogue
- Worldwide engagement and support
- Personal interaction with consumers
- Enlightening feedback

Weaknesses:

- Culture barriers
- Prior to Expedition 206, the “Open Happiness” campaign was not making sufficient use of social media venues.
- Small target audience, (teens and twenty-somethings)

Opportunities:

- Opportunity to hear viewpoints directly from consumers.
- Personally reach consumers; humanistic value calls attention to program.
- Increase presence of brand where Coca-Cola does business.

Threats:

- Competing companies; ex: Pepsi , the Pepsi Refresh Program.
- Very long program, threat of decreased interest of target market.

Planning:**Communication Objectives:**

1. Produce compelling content in order to further engage target audience.
2. Gain positive media coverage of Expedition for a program that will be accessible in each country where Coke does business.
3. Increase support and love for the Coke brand.

Key Publics:

1. Teens and those in their twenties that participate with social media.
2. All people within the cities and countries where the “Happiness Ambassadors” would visit.
3. All media outlets.

Strategies:

1. Quickly launch Expedition 206 with much attention.
2. Get Coca Cola consumers involved prior to the start of the expedition.
3. Show the world the personalities of the travelers or the “Happiness Ambassadors.”
4. Create opportunities to share the stories along the journey with many audiences including media and bloggers.
5. Make the best use of Coca-Cola’s global marketing and communication teams.

Techniques & Tactics:

1. Maintain support by holding events and selecting “Happiness Hosts” at each location visited.
2. Distributing one of a kind Coke bottles at each location.
3. Maintain the Twitter account to encourage ongoing dialogue and interest in the expedition.
4. Share with the world via social media the focus of the expedition; what makes people happy.

Execution:

Phase one of the execution of the program was to launch the idea and promote involvement by the target audience by having them vote. The vote was held to determine which three lucky youths would be chosen as Coke’s “Happiness Ambassadors.” On October 21, 2009, the expedition was uncovered and the story of the vote was immediately shared via media outlets across the globe. Nine finalists of the vote campaigned and competed for one of the last three spots.

Phase two included announcing the three winners of the vote. Winners Tony Martin, Kelly Ferris and Antonio Santiago were revealed to the public during the “Happiness Ambassador Training Camp” at the World of Coca Cola Museum in Atlanta, Georgia. In order to keep the media and target audience

interested and to build momentum for the program, the three got involved in fun activities geared toward the expedition that were visually appealing to the media. These activities included travel-themed obstacle courses and eating exotic foods which they will encounter along their journey. The popular culture site JSYK.com as well as Mashable.com, the world's top technology blogging site, attended the event and shared their photos and videos with the "Happiness Ambassadors" team.

After the Training Camp event, Tony, Kelly and Antonio also appeared via a satellite media tour to different talk shows from New York to Mexico City. They interviewed on Telemundo and other Hispanic outlets. The "Happiness Ambassadors" lent interviews with various print and online media throughout the world by telephone, Twitter and Skype. Compelling content about the Ambassadors and Expedition 206 circulated via both traditional and social media that just weeks after the unveiling of the project, they were seen and treated as near-celebrities.

The final stage of the execution process was the actual start of the journey on January 1, 2010. The starting location was Madrid, Spain where lives the Coca-Cola Happiness Institute. A key element to the team's expedition was the extensive activation toolkit. The toolkit helped local markets where the Ambassadors traveled, to maintain excitement for the program. It made event suggestions, gave template media materials as well as encouraged ongoing programs before, during and after the team was in the city. The toolkits was updated regularly and had activation ideas such as who should serve as the local "Happiness Hosts" to guide the team as well as present the one of a kind coke bottles for that country. The bottles depicted the simple moments of happiness that the people of that country shared. Along the journey, the Twitter account @x206 was maintained by Coca-Cola, Fast Horse and the Happiness Ambassadors. The team also shared information and photos via blog and Facebook posts, YouTube and Flickr. At the finish of the expedition, Coca-Cola held a live question and answer interview with the Ambassadors via webcast which generated global media coverage.

Evaluation:

Coca-Cola's Expedition 206 has been the topic of over 900 blog posts and online news stories. The awareness, excitement and support of the program have proven to be global. Expedition206.com, the homepage for the program has been viewed nearly 900,000 times since the start of the project and the average visitor spent nearly seven minutes on the website.

There were over 4,300 clicks, retweets and replies to the @206 Twitter posts. China's largest social networking site, Q.Q.com partnered with Coca-Cola and created the popular Expedition 206 "virtual stamp." Q.Q users would collect, trade and showcase the stamps on their profiles. One billion users participated in the collection and trading of more than 10 billion stamps. The live webcast between fans and the Ambassadors at the end of the expedition was viewed by 3,00 people from 112 different countries.

The positive media coverage of the program is astounding. Expedition 206 was covered by over 400 media outlets even before the journey began. These outlets include Fox Business News, the LA Times, Telemundo, CNBC, BBC, Mashable and more. "Global media and online outreach resulted in 775 million media impressions," (PRSA.org).

Expedition 206 is one of the most visible and supported non-advertising program and contributed to the global growth of Coca-Cola. Sales rose 4 percent during the fourth quarter of 2009, when the winners of the vote for the "Happiness Ambassadors" were revealed. Also, sales increased within the regions when the Expedition 206 events were taking place. China was a large market for Expedition 206 and its sales increased by six percent during the second quarter of 2010.

The expedition earned much recognition as Travel.com awarded it the “Innovator of the Year” Award. PRWeek named the program “Campaign of the Month” in January 2010.

What we would have done differently:

Although there was much support and awareness of the Expedition prior to the start of the journey, Coca-Cola could have reached out further to their target demographic of teens and twenty-somethings. After the winners were revealed, we would have taken them to college campuses here in America and in Spain where the journey began. Personally meeting the “Happiness Ambassadors” prior to the expedition would generate more excitement and support as well as would better showcase their personalities to their key publics.

Also, we would include more incentives to participate in Expedition 206. For example, we would post onto the expedition’s Twitter page, “If you help the Ambassador’s reach X amount of Tweets using our hashtag @x206, fifty lucky winners will receive an exclusive Expedition 206 tee-shirt.”

Shortly after the completion of Expedition 206, the site expedition206.com seemed to have been forgotten about. Also, the last Tweet by the expedition’s account, @x206, was posted over a year ago. We would encourage the team of “Happiness Ambassadors,” Tony Martin, Kelly Ferris and Antonio Santiago to maintain the account and keep their fans updated on their lives. The extraordinary impact this program produced should not be forgotten about.

Current Status of Coca-Cola:

- On March 22, 2012, Coca-Cola released its fifth annual Global Water Stewardship and Replenish Report. The report displays how the company is improving its water performance as well as how it manages its water resources. Many of their Tweets stress to their followers and consumers the importance of clean water and water performance.
- On March 1, 2012, Coca-Cola was ranked number four on Fortune's annual ranking of the world's fifty most admired companies.
- Released in an article on February 27, 2012, under Coca-Cola, Sprite is teaming up with six professional basketball players to work together to find 24 amateur players. The players will compete in Sprite's Uncontainable Game at NBA All-star 2013.

Also, in Coke's financial news, the company will release first quarter 2012 financial results on Tuesday, Apr. 17, 2012.