



Category: Arts, Culture or Sport Campaign

Company: Gardiner Richardson and Active Northumberland

Entry title: Join for a Coin

Brief and objectives:

Active Northumberland is a chain of 14 gyms and fitness suites. Changes to their pricing structure saw a huge fall in members and revenue in November 2016. We were tasked with increasing membership, signing up members to a 12 month contract and repositioning the brand as value for money.

This was the first ever Active Northumberland marketing campaign, bringing together 14 centres which had previously been disparate and had separate operating and pricing structures and member offers.

There was a lot of ill feeling around the brand for existing member in terms of price increases which were implemented without consultation, as well as the fact that some facilities had enjoyed multi-million investment, whilst others had seen very little, yet the pricing was the same across the board.

Rationale behind campaign, including research and planning:

We worked at pace. We were given 6 weeks from initial meeting to 'Go Live', and that meant that our planning and research had to be relatively quick and immediate. We worked with the membership and customer service team to understand the driving factors behind why members were leaving in droves (price), and what their general complaints were (price; not being able to get through to leisure centres via telephone or have their queries answered.)

The time we had did not allow us to talk to customers in depth (we have since commissioned segmented customer research and conducted focus groups which have informed the current membership campaign). However, we talked to key members of the Active team, particularly those running their social media channels and those talking to customers via the call centre to understand customers' pains and how Active is able to fulfill their needs. We used this information to inform our strategic approach to the campaign.

We split the campaign between youth (14-21) and adult (everyone else) as this was the basic premise of the membership structure. We also segmented via geographical area within Northumberland and in the tertiary area of Newcastle as we recognized many potential

members worked in the city during the day and would be researching membership during this time.

Strategy and tactics, including creativity and innovation:

Given the complexities around the pricing structure and the negativity around the brand we decided a simple, straightforward, uncomplicated message would resonate most effectively. We wanted to combat the negativity around pricing and win back lost members.

We created a simple and compelling membership offer that was irresistible to residents of Northumberland. 'Join for a Coin' soft launched in mid-December 2016 with a full scale launch from 1 January 2017; Join for just £1 for 1 month, followed by a 12 month membership at £32pcm thereafter. Unlimited access to 14 gyms, 10 pools and 450 fitness classes.

We knew anecdotally that members valued centre staff so we used them as our ambassadors. We also knew that many people were under confident about attending the gym or a fitness class. We therefore took a two pronged approach to content messaging;

- Our centre staff are experts, they are helpful and friendly, they will show you the ropes.
- Normal people like you have a great time at our centres, they have achieved great things, you don't have to be super-fit to come here, it's about being healthy and happy.

Tactics: We worked at pace to pull together a predominantly digital campaign incorporating online advertising across digital display and social, content creation for Active Northumberland Facebook & Twitter platforms including case study videos, health and fitness vlogs, posters, pop ups, OOH, radio and on street.

Implementation of tactics:

Active Northumberland has limited in house marketing resource – one member of staff working two days per week. We worked with her to agree the campaign focus and then co-manage social media pages, which is where the majority of content was housed.

Video began to play a key role in content and highlighted the expertise of staff through 'Top Tip' videos from instructors on a range of subjects such as how to keep motivated. We tried to keep these light and friendly and the aim was motivation.

We also filmed case studies to highlight the positive effect of regular exercise, and focused on those who were not initially regular exercisers, including a woman who went from no exercise to weekly attendance, discussing how that made her feel positive about life and her health.

Weekly advertorials in local media on a range of subjects from swimming to gym use, to keeping motivated supported the predominantly online campaign.

We also worked to help procure and train call centre staff to answer customer queries (unanswered calls had previously been a problem for members) as well as address customer queries online, which had historically gone unanswered with a negative impact on particularly the main Active Facebook page.

We also identified and trained 30 social media champions across the 16 sites who could positively manage the community led individual centre social pages, capturing content on the ground and responding to specific customer queries in a timely manner.

We managed the campaign very closely and used the data we were receiving to make changes to copy and imagery. For example, the search strand of the campaign revealed that pilates was a key search term. We changed one campaign image and copy to incorporate pilates and saw a 50% uplift in click through rates.

Measurement and evaluation:

- 2,863 memberships sold, 11 December 2016 – 28 February 2017, outstripping centre targets across the board
- 99,642 visitors to the Active website including 50,808 new visitors
- Most members joined in centre – which led us to review the join online process and we are now working a project to streamline membership and simplify the Active Northumberland website.