



Category: Regional Campaign of the Year

Company: Gardiner Richardson and Nexus for Tyne and Wear Metro

Entry title: Great North Snowdogs

Brief and objectives:

In Autumn 2016 the North East became home to a series of 61 individually designed Snowdog sculptures, painted by artists. Great North Snowdogs, inspired by the film, The Snowman™ and The Snowdog, was a large-scale public art event in aid of St Oswald's Hospice.

As Presenting Partner of Great North Snowdogs Trail, Nexus, the owner of the Tyne and Wear Metro worked with us to devise and execute an integrated campaign. We launched and promoted the campaign and positioned Metro as the perfect way to explore the trail.

Objectives:

- i. Increase Metro revenue and patronage
- ii. Enhance customer approval and brand reputation
- iii. Build stronger relationships with stakeholders
- iv. Increase staff engagement

Rationale behind campaign, including research and planning:

People are at the heart of Metro's business strategy and we help cement Metro's status as a North East icon in the hearts and minds of people in the region.

We researched art trails elsewhere, speaking to sponsors, media and civic bodies to hone our strategy, planning all activities with reference to our four key objectives.

Audiences and stakeholders:

- The public
- St. Oswald's Hospice
- Trail sponsors
- Metro's North East partners
- Metro staff
- Regional media

Strategy and tactics, including creativity and innovation:

Strategy and tactics

- i. Revenue and patronage
 - Media – As Presenting Partner we put Metro at the heart of all Great North Snowdogs official literature.

We capitalised on our strong relationship with the local daily Chronicle to help them set up a Snowdogs online blog.

Coverage was sustained throughout the campaign across traditional, digital and social media and marketing – positioning the Metro as the best way to enjoy Snowdogs.

- Advertising – including a Primary Times wrap aimed at families, all ticket machines and signage at stations. Web content, digital banners, flyers and kids' activity packs at TravelShops and on-street.
- Social Media – Linking with the wider social media conversations on Snowdogs exposed new audiences to Metro. Utilising Metro's existing social channels to communicate with Metro customers.

We created user generated content by asking the public for help to replace the names of the 60 Metro stations with doggy puns like Paw Lane Ends (Four Lane Ends). A live interactive map replaced names as suggestions were submitted via Twitter, resulting in media coverage and high engagement. #GreatNorthSnowdogs was the highest trending item in the North East the day it aired.

Innovation

Using a GoPro and specially adapted harness we time-lapsed a 'dog's eye view' of a day out on the Metro generating 7,000+ YouTube views

- ii. Customer approval and reputation
 - Interventions on stations and social media updates to engage passengers as well as widespread promotion of Metro's involvement to boost Metro's positive reputation regionally.
 - Metro sponsored 11 smaller 'community dogs' for schools near Metro lines to strengthen rail safety work in classrooms.
- iii. Stakeholder relations
 - 5 major business networking events to maximise face-to-face opportunities
 - Highlight the economic impact Snowdogs would deliver by increasing footfall, as well build support for long-term investment plans in Metro
 - These events grew sponsors from 50 to 61 sculptures
- iv. Staff engagement
 - Nexus nominated St Oswald's as their official charity, encouraging staff to raise money. Staff competition to design a community dog attracted 61 entries, with the winning design realised by an artist.

Implementation of tactics:

With September to December being identified as the best time to run media campaigns for Metro, we devised a campaign to create vibrant and engaging content to encourage people from across the North East to become 'tourists in their own home town' and explore the Snowdogs trail by Metro. For Metro customers, Snowdogs provided a feel good narrative during autumn, when rail performance is usually at its lowest due to seasonal factors affecting the infrastructure of the system.

Timeline:

- January – June 2016: Initial planning including early media liaison, campaign collateral and content planning. Stakeholder and sponsor liaison
- August – November 2016: Above the line campaign planning and booking including digital, OOH and on system/in station

- September 2016: Trail launch including Snowdogs tickets and wristbands Social media “Thunderbark” to rename all stations with dog puns. 15 stations physically renamed using bespoke vinyls, bespoke Metro map, ticket machine vinyls and Snowdogs Metro activity booklets
- September – November 2016: 10 week snowdogs trail. Ongoing PR, social and marketing activity
- December 2016: Evaluation and reporting

Measurement and evaluation:

- Revenue and Patronage: Ticket sales up 3% during trail despite overall decline in patronage during the year. Child ticket sales rose 19%. Positive revenue impact, £200,000+.
- Approval and reputation: Metro customer satisfaction had fallen 2-4% May-November each of previous three years, but rose 2% in 2016, bucking this trend.

Snowdogs campaign had the highest recall rate among passengers (41%) for all PR and marketing by Metro in 2016/17.

Research for the period showed Metro was ranked 5th in the list of most iconic features in Tyne and Wear, a 10% increase, which now puts Metro ahead of Stadium of Light and Millennium Bridge.

Brand tracking also showed:

- Metro’s net promoter score rose from -17 to +1
- 83% people would consider using Metro (up from 75%)
- 54% positive sentiment towards Metro (up from 46%) and 56% among infrequent users (up from 42%)
- 83% agree Metro helps local communities and the economy (up from 61%)
- 71% agree Metro offers value for money (up from 53%)
- 89% agree Metro enables people to enjoy the area (up from 75%)

@My_Metro achieved 60 media mentions in connection with Snowdogs and Twitter followers increased 16% to 90,683 over the 11 weeks. 1 in 4 tweets to @My_Metro included #GreatNorthSnowdogs.

Stakeholder relations:

- 100+ regional businesses attended Snowdog events
- Relationship building with Chamber of Commerce and Sunderland BID led to active public support for Metro’s £1bn investment plans
- An economic impact for the region of £16m, with 70% of those surveyed exploring new places - now used in public affairs work to showcase Metro’s vital role.

Staff engagement

- £17,000 raised by Metro staff for charity
- 2.8% increase in staff agreeing that Nexus ‘gave something back’ in annual staff engagement survey

Other:

- 12,600 page views to the Snowdogs by Metro web page
- 3.8million opportunities to see

Budget and cost effectiveness:

Media & third party spend £47,894.86

Metro revenue impact £200,000

St Oswald's Hospice raised £367,000

ROI: 12:1