



**Category:** Best Use of Media Relations

**Company:** WPR Agency

**Entry title:** Chief Adventure Officer (CAO)

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**Brief and objectives:**

In early September 2016, WPR won a last-minute consumer brief from the Rail Delivery Group to increase sales of the 16-25 Railcard during its peak selling period of September and October.

- 16-25 Railcard is part of a suite of national railcards
- Costs £30 a year and gives 1/3 off rail fares for passengers aged 16-25

This was a challenging brief for several reasons. Primarily, we had tough coverage targets against a backdrop of a no news story. The card had been on the market, unchanged, for over 30 years. There was simply nothing new to say: no offers, discounts, deals or anniversaries. Secondly, the card, having seen marked growth during the recession, had been in sales decline ever since. Regular product placement in mainstream media was failing to make an impact with 16-25 year olds. Finally, we had just six weeks to set a strategy, formulate a creative campaign, agree tactics and budgets, and deliver all aspects in full to ensure the Rail Delivery Group could take full advantage of the core late September to early October peak selling period.

**Output Targets**

To deliver, within six weeks:

- One article in top tier 16-25 media (viral sharing sites). This meant coverage on UNILAD, the LADBible or BuzzFeed, a challenge in itself as all have a paid/earned model at the heart of their business strategy
- Three articles in wider core media. This applied to titles with a significant student following such as The Guardian, MailOnline, thenationalstudent.com and Huffington Post
- Fifteen articles targeting parents of 16-25 year olds – chiefly regional dailies and weeklies

**Outcome Targets (website)**

- Increase unique users by 10% (equivalent to just over 100,000 additional visitors)
- Increase website sessions by 10% (equivalent to circa 66,000 additional sessions)

**Impact Targets**

- Reduce sales decline by one percentage point during the campaign period.

### **Rationale behind campaign, including research and planning:**

While railcards as a subject aren't particularly interesting to our millennial audience, the overall theme of travel clearly is – so positioning the card as an enabler of travel had to be central to our strategy. The question was how to package 'travel by railcard' in a way that would appeal to viral sharing sites - our bullseye media. Peer endorsement was also fundamental if we were to translate brand awareness into actual sales. We needed user-generated content at the heart of our campaign.

### **Strategy and tactics, including the types and variety of media utilised, creativity and innovation:**

And so, the campaign saw us launch a search for the UK's first ever Chief Adventure Officer (CAO). The ultimate part-time job, the 16-15 Railcard CAO would receive a £10,000 salary to travel the UK for a year vlogging about their experiences, ensuring ample noise around the launch of our campaign during the peak sales season, but also longevity throughout the academic year. CAO hopefuls had to submit video entries, via social media, in order to apply, with social media users voting for the winner.

### **Implementation of tactics:**

The campaign fell into three distinct phases

1. Campaign launch and call for entries
2. Voting for final winner
3. Winner announcement

### **Measurement and evaluation:**

Output targets

The target was to deliver:

- One article in top tier media
- Three articles in wider core media
- Fifteen articles targeting parents of 16-25 year olds

Output Results

- Targeted to deliver at least one piece of coverage on a top tier viral sharing site, we hit gold with coverage on both TheLADBible (with 28m followers on Facebook, 52% of their audience aged 18-24) and UNILAD (with 24m Facebook followers). The UNILAD coverage alone was shared 1,100 times across social
- Challenged to deliver three articles in wider media, we delivered 10 times that, with 30 media hits across online titles including huffingtonpost.co.uk (twice), dailymail.co.uk, theguardian.com, the sun.co.uk (twice), aol.com, msn.com, metro.co.uk, fella.com, comspolitan.co.uk, lonelyplanet.co.uk, look.com, mirror.co.uk, gosocial.com, thenationalstudent.co.uk, style-etc.co.uk, udsu.co.uk and fashioninsight.co.uk
- The article on metro.co.uk was shared a staggering 1,900 times and carried three brand mentions. The dailymail.co.uk ran a profile of each of our finalists, the Huffington Post carried both a news article announcing our winner and a by-lined blog penned by the lucky applicant, and the winner had an extended interview in The Sun
- Asked to deliver 15 regional articles, we have exceeded our target 7 times over. Regional coverage included the Daily Record, Yorkshire Post, Scottish Sun, Nottingham Post and Leicester Mercury. Coverage targeting the parents of our 16-25

year olds didn't end there. We also generated coverage in the Daily Express, Prima, Discover Britain, the Independent and the Sunday Independent

Thanks to the online buzz and media attention:

- 763 16-25 year olds submitted video applications, generating 43,000 organic video views
- The five finalists received 12,597 votes between them

#### Outcome Targets

The aim was to increase website unique users during the campaign by 10%, and website sessions by 10%. Instead:

- Unique visitors increased by 21% (over 140,000 more than the same period last year)
- Sessions increased by 18.62% (nearly 200,000 more than the same period last year)
- The campaign landing page had the longest dwell time of any page on the 16-25 website Critically:
- The number of people arriving at the site via organic search (from increased brand awareness) increased by 18.65% and the transactions from organic search were 26.85% higher during the campaign period. People weren't just searching for more information on the railcard, they were buying them too Impact
- Briefed to reduce the sales decline by one percentage point, we reduced it by two
- This meant that (as other marketing activity ran as normal) the campaign was responsible for the sale of at least 3,500 cards @£30 each, generating an income of £105,000 in just six weeks
- The first week of the campaign was also the highest performing sales week of 2016

#### **Budget and cost effectiveness:**

- The PR budget was £28,900, meaning for every £1 spent on PR, we delivered £3.60 in sales