



CIPR PRIDE AWARDS 2019 GOLD WINNER

Category: Internal Communications Campaign

Company: Loughborough University

Entry title: Operation Jingle Bells

Brief and objectives:

In the build-up to Christmas 2018, students at Loughborough University saw an opportunity to support Leicestershire-based charity Toys on the Table - an organisation working to provide gifts during the festive season to children from all religions and backgrounds who otherwise wouldn't receive anything. As a result, Action (the volunteering section of Loughborough Students' Union) launched Operation Jingle Bells in partnership with Loughborough University, with the aim of donating 500 toys to this brilliant cause.

The idea, research and planning:

SMART objectives focused solely on achieving a gift total of 500 presents for the charity and securing coverage for them in the local media with an overall reach of 50k.

The target audience for the campaign comprised predominantly of students and staff with the potential to reach members of the local community as an additional bonus.

The project was designed to tie in with pre-Christmas Gift Day celebration to mark the end of term.

Insight was pulled from Action's previous experiences and a working group including the charity themselves. The Union team spoke to existing volunteers and potential supporters to help devise a compelling thematic at a very busy time of year.

Strategy, tactics, creativity and innovation:

Operation Jingle Bells saw the design, creation and installation of a full-sized sleigh in the main hub of the Students' Union to house donations, alongside a full Christmas light display which created a fun and festive focal point for the campaign. The University created a Grotto to collect additional staff donations which provided multiple accessible donation points across campus. The eye-catching thematic helped support word of mouth promotion and boosted engagement with an amazing feel-good atmosphere created as a result.

Key challenges were the scope of the ambition and a very short lead time plus a tiny budget and the need to slot the campaign into other activity within the Students' Union before

Christmas break. Action is hugely focused on supporting our local community and this is their core business aim. The University was positive and excited at being engaged and worked with the SU team, particularly around social reach on University channels and in connection to providing PR support which isn't something that could be done within the SU's limited resources.

Challenges included timescales, managing expectations, coupled with a really strong sense of ambition for a project this important so close to Christmas and the need to gain cut-through.

Delivery:

Promotion included social, video and PR coverage alongside internal staff and student communications, the use of digital screens across campus and the eye-popping sleigh and Grotto gift stations. All work was delivered by in-house teams in the Students' Union and the University, culminating in Give a Gift Day which saw the SU transformed into a winter wonderland with over 1,000 visitors throughout the day, featuring real reindeer, a photo-booth with Santa Claus and a dusting of snow. Student volunteers ensured the day ran flawlessly, giving out hot drinks and encouraging people to get involved with the activities on offer.

Measurement and evaluation:

Success measures included media and reach in line with the focused objectives set alongside achieving the goal of 500 gifts.

Budget and campaign impact:

The impact of the campaign was wide-reaching with the initial target of 500 gifts exceeded within the first week of the campaign. In total, 736 gifts were donated (setting a record amount of donations from a single organisation) alongside raising over £250 on Gift Day. The gifts contributed to over 10,000 collected by Toys on the Table in 2018, ensuring 3,600 children between the ages of a few-months-old and 16 years of age received a gift at Christmas.

Across the SU's digital platforms, Operation Jingle Bells saw 118,703 engagements across Facebook (a reach of 77,500 along with 5,482 click-throughs), Twitter (over 50k impressions and over 7k engagements) and Instagram (over 9k likes and 24,729 story views). The campaign also featured heavily in local news outlets including the Loughborough Echo and the Leicester Mercury and on BBC Radio Leicester.

The campaign involved the entire #LboroFamily including Campus Nursery staff, parents and children, the local community as well as students and staff. Student volunteers led the campaign supported by Halls of Residence and Departments.

Alumni reaction to the campaign was massive and additional student input included an open-casting call to the student community to share their best Christmas gift memories in a video reaching over 6,000 people.

The project cost a total of £643.24 to deliver (budget was £650). That cost also included delivering the Gift Day as part of the wider student experience. The sleigh was constructed and decorated in house with the only costs being wood and paint. Flyers and posters for Halls and Departments cost £53.24 and the reindeer visit (at a reduced rate due to the nature of the campaign and including transport costs) came in at £470.

This is a unique and highly collaborative campaign that was student-led but engaged with an entire community. It delivered amazing impact to children in need whilst also delivering a wonderful experience for all those involved in the Give a Gift Day.

Delivering a campaign this wide-ranging with the profile and goodwill generated, the positive impact on student engagement and the halo effect for the University makes the ROI of this project extremely impressive. For the children involved, it was priceless.