



Category: Integrated Campaign

Company: Plinkfizz

Entry title: Closer than you think

Brief and objectives:

The City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College is the only dedicated sixth form college in Staffordshire (one of 94 in the country).

In September 2010 it opened a new state-of-the-art development that incorporates world class resources and design features to provide outstanding learning facilities for young people across the city and beyond.

The college is home to 1410 students and 122 members of staff.

In 2016 Plinkfizz was asked to develop a campaign to increase applications for the college's September intake.

The sixth form's natural geographic audience had a falling cohort due to a low birth year in the area in 2000. This meant that it needed to attract students from further afield.

The campaign objectives were to:

- increase footfall to the 'find your feet' open day event 27th-28th June 2016
- increase applications to City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College for September 2016.

Rationale behind campaign, including research and planning:

Plinkfizz conducted structured competitor analysis of the sixth form provision across Staffordshire and identified key strengths and benefits that the City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College offers students that would make it stand out.

Through in-house qualitative and quantitative research, the team identified key geographic areas to recruit students from based on the performance and facilities of their existing sixth form providers.

Some sixth forms in the surrounding area had closed leaving a cohort of students that needed somewhere to study.

Plinkfizz researched travel time, routes and forms of transport available from these areas to the City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College to assess how feasible it would be for students from these areas to study there.

This research formed the basis of the 'closer than you think' campaign.

The team scoped a campaign to engage with prospective students, parents, guardians and influencers including grandparents and those working in the education sector who may offer advice or guidance to a young person.

A multi-channel approach was designed to engage all target audiences. The team prepared audience reach projections and worked closely with the marketing manager to successfully achieve buy-in from her senior management team. The main challenge was to reassure them that reallocating budget from traditional advertising spend to PR and social media would not negatively affect applications.

Strategy and tactics, including creativity and innovation:

Plinkfizz devised a targeted, multi-channel campaign to engage with students, parents and influencers in the identified geographical areas.

One channel alone would not reach our entire intended audience, so a blended campaign of PR, social media, digital marketing and outdoor was planned.

Local and hyperlocal media (print, online and broadcast) were targeted through media relations. Creative video content was used to engage the target audience through Facebook, YouTube and Instagram.

Key messages were:

- closer than you think
- 30 minutes to your future
- Crewe - 24 mins; Uttoxeter - 24 mins; Alsager - 12 mins; Kidsgrove - 8 mins; Blythe Bridge - 12 mins
- In the heart of the Stoke-on-Trent University Campus
- Guaranteed offer for all applicants

Plinkfizz identified the 'futures programme' as a real strength of the college's offer to students and worked with a local film company to create a three minute film that could also be edited into shorter films to promote all eight futures programmes individually.

The narrative was based around the true testimony of students from the college to give the film authenticity and to make it relatable for the target audience.

Implementation of tactics:

Outside the period considered (in April and May 2016) we covered a lot of ground work in preparation for the campaign.

We worked with the college to upgrade its travel facilities with more parking, secure bike sheds and a college minibus to make it as easy as possible for students from further afield to get to the college.

From June 2016, a series of news stories were developed to communicate positive messages about the college to hyper-local, local, regional and national media:

- Investment makes college travel easy
- Nick Hornby speaks to students ahead of literary festival
- Pupils encouraged to aim for Oxbridge
- Find your feet event

- Ex Stoke City star teams up with college for scholarship
- A Level results

Highlights included positive features in The Sentinel, Stone & Eccleshall Gazette, Leek Post, Uttoxeter Advertiser and broadcast coverage on Signal Radio, Radio 5 Live, ITV Central News and the Victoria Derbyshire Show.

Outdoor billboards were secured at Crewe, Stoke-on-Trent and Stafford train stations from 4th to 18th July 2016, to communicate the 'closer than you think' messaging.

A three minute film highlighted the features and benefits of City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College and engaged prospective students on the college website.

Eight 20 second film clips with targeted messaging were seeded through Facebook with a strong call to action encouraging click throughs to the City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College website open days page.

A targeted e-mail to parents within key catchment areas was sent to 3,269 recipients.

Measurement and evaluation:

The main campaign objective was to attract 1,310 students to enrol at City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College in September 2016. Applications between June and September increased by 30% year on year and 1,510 students enrolled, smashing the target.

Regular media coverage containing all key messages was achieved in key locals including The Sentinel, Signal Radio and ITV Central News. Hyper-local coverage was achieved in the Stone & Eccleshall Gazette, Leek Post and Uttoxeter Advertiser.

National coverage on positive A-Level results was achieved on the Victoria Derbyshire Show on BBC2/BBC News Channel and Radio 5 Live.

The 'find your feet' event, promoted as part of the campaign attracted the best ever turn out of prospective students, providing an increase in footfall of 50% from the previous event.

Facebook marketing reached 11,772 14-18 year olds, generating 136 web clicks, with a campaign cost per click of £0.55, and 14,692 35-55 year olds, generating 180 web clicks, with a campaign cost per click of £0.42.

The campaign video attracted 28,589 Facebook views and 30,272 impressions with an average cost per view of £0.01.

24% of recipients opened the e-mail and 10.7% clicked through to the website.