



Category: Best Event

Company: Loughborough University

Entry title: Spit Happens

Brief and objectives:

Spit Happens was a ground-breaking, rapid turnaround collaborative initiative between Loughborough University, Loughborough Students' Union, Anthony Nolan and the Rik Basra Leukaemia Campaign. It aimed to raise awareness of blood cancer and to increase the number of potential stem cell donors to help fight this vicious disease.

Our target was to recruit 2,000 fully qualified* donors from across campus within a single day to beat the previous record of 1,404 held by the University of Leicester within a budget of £3k and to recruit and pre-train a minimum of 400 staff and student volunteers.

Our secondary SMART objective was to raise broader awareness of the need for stem cell donors through media coverage and social media.

*A qualified donor is 18-30, in good health, meeting minimum height/weight criteria and resident in the UK for the next 3 years.

Rationale behind event, including research and planning:

In developing the campaign, we drew on personal staff insight alongside insight from Anthony Nolan and Rik Basra around what would work logistically and in media terms. We worked closely with the Students' Union to understand student motivations to help incentivise involvement. We pulled stats and data from existing national materials and used this to support staff training whilst seeking opportunities on campus and via a focus group approach to comms planning to help us identify the optimal methods to reach and encourage students and staff to get involved.

Target audiences for the campaign were staff and students and we also reached out to Loughborough College via colleagues there to encourage pick-up selectively as the College also teaches students who are too young to get involved and it wasn't therefore appropriate to use a blanket approach.

Strategy and tactics, including creativity and innovation:

This campaign has been ground-breaking in galvanising the entire community behind a common goal. The personal connection via one of our PVC's own experience, the support of the Students' Union Executive team and the VC, massive engagement from staff and students who gave up their time not only on the day but for a separate evening training session...all of this was instrumental in making this campaign very special and very unique.

#SpitHappens captured the imagination and helped build engagement and feedback and encouragement from our broader stakeholders across social – so many messages of support from alumni, staff and students; many of them people whose families had been impacted by the loss of a loved one or whose siblings, sons, or daughters had got involved and of whom they were very proud.

We even recruited Visit Day attendees; such was the feeling on campus. One family held off on travelling all the way home to Bristol so their son could get involved because he felt it was just the right thing to do.

Implementation of tactics, including details of design, production and support teams employed:

The team here worked long and hard behind the scenes to pull everything off within just six weeks – on top of the day job. We borrowed vans from our Creative and Print Services team to ferry supplies across campus; our social media team were here and pushing hard from 7.30am and all the way through to the final count-up at 8pm; we produced videos, infographics, images and perhaps more importantly, we secured whole campus buy-in on a Wednesday when many of our students are actually away competing at sporting events.

The atmosphere on campus all day was electric and it was wonderful to see whole teams come and sign up late into the evening after travelling back from away fixtures and to hear the stories of those who were getting involved and had a personal connection to blood cancer through their own friends and family.

Measurement and evaluation:

The campaign smashed its targets. We recruited 2,056 potential donors in just 12 hours statistically speaking, 12 life savers based on the 1:170 statistic. In the end 486 staff and students got involved, the largest volunteering group of students and staff that Anthony Nolan has ever had for a single event.

Our extensive social media campaign helped us trend nationally at 36th at one point (UK wide) whilst we were second in the 'tailored trends' feed which lists what Twitter thinks is most relevant to you subject to location/what you follow etc.

Social stats included a big sign up for our Facebook event (523 people confirming in advance and 172 expressing an interest) whilst 147 people pledged support to our Thunderclap with a social reach of 210,203. 17 Snapchat posts generated 49,700 views and 16 screenshots with LinkedIn seeing 39,404 impressions and engagement with 114 people. 797 liked our two posts on Instagram and we saw 1,144 tweets using #SpitHappens on the day with a 4.9 million hashtag reach and 382 unique users getting involved. 90 video shares of PVC Steve Rothberg's personal story resulted in 11.7k views in just one day.

Our Spit Happens web page saw 2,105 page views from 6 countries. We secured coverage including the Loughborough Echo, Leicester Mercury and BBC Radio Leicestershire.

Importantly, Marketing and Advancement are now positioned as the leaders in advocacy, galvanising the entire University community via this life-saving collaboration with the Students' Union.

The success of this project has now led to the team being asked to play a role in additional CSR activity University wide which is highly significant for us and will also support our

internal communications work and cultural change required to support initiatives being implemented from the recent staff survey.

Budget and cost effectiveness:

The campaign budget was £3k, of which £2,853 was spent. The bulk of this was spent on T-shirts for participating volunteers (£1,543) which we anticipate will be worn consistently over coming months and will provide ongoing visibility. Loughborough students are keen on what they describe here as 'stash' – branded kit they wear almost as a day to day uniform – and free t-shirts are a great way of engaging support. Other costs included £220 for banner stands, £1,000 for posters, fliers and digital signage and £90 for bottled water at various locations for helpers.