

Basic Information

Region (Check Region):

Midlands

Category:

22. Best COVID response

Entry Information

Entrant company name:

Loughborough University

Entry title:

Train At Home

Entry

Brief, objectives and budget:

Brief:

Plans for our Tokyo 2020 media campaign were derailed by the pandemic, but our aim was to ensure that planned and recorded content with our elite-level athletes was repurposed.

Instead of a focus solely on the Olympic and Paralympic Games, we reconnected with our athletes, shifting the narrative to how they were training at home during this time.

Adapting the government's 'Stay at Home' slogan to 'Train At Home', our main aim was to spotlight our athletes' adapted training regimes on a national level and inspire non-elite athletes to do the same.

We also planned to keep our high-profile sporting names front of mind in the media and reiterate Loughborough University's status as a sector-leading sports institution.

Objectives:

We ensured that our campaign followed SMART objectives:

Specific – we recognised a gap in the market and used our connections and knowledge to help provide positive news stories during an unprecedented time and assist journalists with engaging, ready-made content.

Measurable – our aim was to generate five pieces of national coverage for this campaign, supported by social media content.

Assignable – this campaign was a collaboration between our Sport PR Officer, our in-house Video Journalist, social media team, and our elite-level athletes and practitioners.

Realistic – we understood that with sport on ‘pause’ we had to stand out and offer the media something truly unique, all of which would be delivered remotely.

Time-related – in line with the government's ‘Stay at Home’ message we knew we had to act quickly to ensure our campaign remained relevant and newsworthy.

Budget:

This was a zero-budget campaign.

The idea, research and planning:

Ahead of the campaign, contact was made with a wide range of journalists, across international, national and local media, specialist publications and sporting National Governing Bodies (NGBs). We were soon made aware that many of the outlets were short-staffed due to the furlough scheme and were eager for sporting content. As a result, we had multiple outlets ready to publish the features.

At a time when access to interviewees was off-limits due to the pandemic, we found a workaround by connecting with athletes remotely. We also guided them through the process of filming their own workouts, which allowed us to bring the features to life with cutaways, including some we had shot for the delayed Tokyo campaign.

We knew that journalists were stretched due to furloughed staff and we saw this as an opportunity to provide topical content suitable for their platforms, first and foremost. We made articles and video easy to break down (e.g. raw footage and audio, in addition to edited content), which allowed for a quick turnaround from press release to news article. Overall, we created an engaging series that preceded a similar trend on the BBC and other mainstream news sources.

Strategy, creativity and innovation:

One of our biggest priorities was ensuring that the content was simple for journalists to break down and adapt for their own stories. Extended quotes were provided to save transcription time and raw audio/video highlights were created in addition to edited features to give media outlets the option of editing together their own news items, though many opted to embed the ready-made content.

Delivery/implementation of tactics:

Once it was clear that the lockdown period was going to last longer than initially anticipated, we quickly established a plan of action, bringing together our PR, Video and Social teams. A host of athletes were identified, ensuring we included diversity across gender, nationality, ethnicity, sports and ability levels. Interviews were arranged over Skype/Zoom in the following weeks and were published in May 2020.

In addition to the journalist-first content syndication, we maximised all relevant in-house social media channels, including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram, sharing subtitled video content natively and drove content to the main website news pages and

linked in the 'Stay At Home' guidance. Certain features were also adapted for the student audience, ensuring we were aware of each segment of our audience. Video features were also provided to the athletes to share on their own channels and drive views directly from their followers.

Measurement, evaluation and impact:

The campaign delivered on the following SMART objectives:

Specific

After engaging key media early in the process, we secured exclusives with the likes of the Daily Telegraph and Swim Swam. We also ensured that the stories we told were authentic and interesting and made a conscious effort to ensure the diversity we see at Loughborough was reflected in the content produced.

Measurable

This campaign resulted in extensive media coverage and generated 76 pieces of coverage, with an estimated news reach of 36 million people. The video aspect of the campaign generated over 25 thousand views with a combined social media reach of 216 thousand across the Loughborough University channels, with a further 4,486 engagements recorded.

Assignable

Drawing upon the expertise within our team we were able to produce content that was engaging and unique for the media and external audiences. By speaking with our elite-level athletes and practitioners we were able to identify newsworthy content which was also supported by contacts at National Governing Bodies (NGBs).

Realistic

By identifying the newsworthy content, we were able to present stories that grabbed attention and also inspired people. This included pole vaulter Holly Bradshaw training with a tin of baked beans on the end of a washing line pole, and England Rugby player Emily Scarratt returning to her parent's farm and using hay bales as a squat rack.

Time-related

This campaign was delivered across a two-week period, allowing time for the media to action exclusives and plan in social media communications. We knew the media would crave quality content during this difficult time and by providing video content alongside written comms we managed to reach new audiences through their various platforms.

We also demonstrated to the average person the ways in which athletes were adapting their training schedules from home, encouraging people to be resourceful and creative with their physical activity at this time.

Supporting Information

Additional supporting information (images, artwork, clippings and other media):

Provided
