

CASE STUDY

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STEEL London's social media advertising campaign for retailer Greggs.

Andy Hinder, CEO, STEEL London

With 25 years' experience, Andy has undertaken practically every agency role including strategic planning, design, art direction, copywriting, account management and studio management. Since being appointed to the STEEL board in 1992, he's turned his talents to high-level strategic direction, acquiring and growing such accounts as Debenhams (who STEEL launched online in 1998), AOL, TalkTalk, Ladbrokes, Greggs and Mark Warner.

Having acquired the business (with 3 other partners) in 2005, he's helped to steer the agency from a heavily resourced, production based model, to a leaner, forward looking, strategically led digital agency that's firmly focussed on consumer social value and the rapid employment of new technology and trends.

Background

Greggs is the UK's largest food brand, with more shops than McDonald's, Costa or Subway. Greggs started out over 70 years ago with one man delivering yeast and eggs to local families so they could bake their own bread. In 1951 the first shop was opened with a bakery at the rear, allowing Greggs to bake superb quality bread, using flour milled from specially selected wheat for that distinctive Greggs taste and texture.

From the 1960s Greggs began to grow by acquiring regional bakery retailers across the UK and, despite strong competition from supermarkets entering the bakery market, today Greggs has nearly 1,600 shops - serving six million customers each week - with plans to open 600 new shops over the next few years. This has been achieved by continuous focus on Greggs' strengths, developing fresh, quality food-on-the-go at great value prices and although Greggs is a national business, they're rooted in their local communities. In 2011 – a challenging trading environment – Greggs achieved record sales of £701 million, a rise of 5.8 per cent with pre-tax profit (before exceptional items) rising 1.1 per cent to £53.1 million.

The problem

Greggs was launching a new product in their high-street shops - a range of flavoured doughnuts. Within a tough economic environment, rising food prices and an increasingly crowded and competitive marketplace, Greggs needed to promote the launch and drive awareness of the product. As a consequence of this tough trading environment, Greggs' wider marketing had been tactical rather than brand-building over the previous year and the same would be true for this campaign. Only a small marketing budget would be available, so advertising in the traditional sense wasn't an option.

The objective

To maximise awareness and drive sales of the doughnuts range – the average Greggs customer visits stores an average of two or three times a week, spending between £2.20 and £2.30 a time – the campaign needed to generate word of mouth to spread the message naturally.

This would require mobilising a passionate army of Greggs' supporters (STEEL had helped grow Greggs' Facebook fan base from 40,000 to 280,000 in the previous 12 months and the Twitter following from 2,400 to 5,000 in the previous 9 months) so social media was deemed to be the ideal platform to achieve this objective, particularly factoring in budgetary considerations. Furthermore, this was the first time Greggs ever commissioned a digital advertising campaign to support a product launch.

Strategy

The strategy was based on generating product advocacy and earned media. STEEL wanted to build a meaningful connection between the new products and the audience, something which would resonate far more than a 'traditional' advertising approach.

- The central idea was to 'bring the products to life' across Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to help mobilise Greggs' passionate army of supporters. It wasn't just about raising awareness about the range, it was also about wanting to entertain and involve people.
- Providing entertainment and conversation is more conducive to helping consumers naturally spread product and brand awareness amongst their social circles. We wanted to deliver a rich social experience that invited participation, in line with the increasing trends in people's digital behaviour. The campaign strategy wasn't about advertising. It was about social entertainment.
- As part of the awareness drive, the strategy also looked to broaden Greggs' appeal to new audiences and a younger demographic, without the need for additional expensive, traditional paid media.

The campaign was six weeks in the making and was 'live' for one month.

Tactics

1. Creating the Characters

There were four doughnuts in the product range so each one of them was transformed from an 'ordinary' doughnut into an individual character with personalities based on popular A-list stereotypes and detailed backstories, including their jobs, hobbies and past romances. Together they formed the "Superstar Doughnuts":

- Jaffa Cake Doughnut became a rock star from America

- Strawberry Milkshake became a ditzy supermodel from Cheshire
- Triple Choc Vanilla became a Premiership footballer from Newcastle
- Coconut Snowball became a Hollywood actress.

A lot of effort was put into visuals and artwork. Firstly, each doughnut was given the star treatment they deserved. From their handmade chairs and props to the animated miniature video screens, fireplaces and windows, each intricately designed set was flawlessly 'real' and perfectly to Doughnut scale.

Secondly, the Doughnut World was given further depth and intrigue by creating additional scenes and stills plus movie posters, magazine covers and newspaper articles. By creating this virtual Doughnut World, the doughnuts felt like real 'people' consumers could talk to, get to know and have fun with.

2. Utilising Social Media Channels

Each of the Superstar Doughnuts was then brought to life on social media through YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. Essentially, YouTube shorts introduced the Superstars, with the conversation continuing through their Twitter and Facebook profiles:

- **YouTube:** Each Doughnut featured in their own video to bring them life, showing their back-story, key life moments and their relationship to the other three doughnuts. It also gave them a chance to use their catchphrases and to make an impassioned plea for votes. These videos were viewed via YouTube or the Superstar Doughnut campaign hub. Additional short videos added to the experience. Viral video seeding was also undertaken with Rubber Republic's viral network.
- **Twitter:** was critical to the success of this campaign - it helped bring each of the four doughnuts to life at a very personal level.
- **Facebook:** As well as each doughnut having their own Facebook profile, Greggs' Facebook page released 100,000 vouchers one week after the campaign launch, which gave the user one free doughnut from the new range with any purchase. The campaign was partly seeded through targeted Facebook advertising.

3. The Call to Action

The key theme running through all these channels was that they fought to be crowned Greggs Superstar Doughnut of 2011. These awards were positioned as the Oscars of the Doughnut world - they were a BIG deal.

Consumers were encouraged to vote for their favourite doughnut and a digital hub was created to allow consumers to do so. To drive voting a 'what's in it for me' box was created with a free Doughnut voucher given to everyone who voted for their favourite. These were awarded on Doughnut Day – the day the winner of the Superstar Doughnut Awards was announced – with the aim of driving footfall and related sales in-store.

Results

- Thousands of brand ambassadors were galvanised and a very powerful earned media reach was delivered. The campaign was incredibly successful, achieving outstanding cut-through, awareness, engagement and footfall.
- 1.5 million Doughnuts were sold in just 5 weeks (circa £1.3 million sales revenue). Greggs' CEO said this contributed to Greggs reporting a "5.4% rise in total sales in its third quarter."
- Specific digital ROI in the first four weeks:
 - **150,000** web visits to Greggs.co.uk, an increase of 13% month on month
 - **13,000,000** impressions across Facebook and Google Search
 - **6,000** email sign ups
 - **11,000** new Facebook likes, double the growth of the previous month
 - **20%+** growth in views and feedback to Facebook posts
 - **4,000+** new Twitter followers and 600 conversations
 - **46,450** video views via YouTube and the Doughnut campaign hub
 - **Thousands** of Doughnuts Vouchers claimed
 - **Significant** media coverage
 - **1 unsolicited song** written by an MTV-nominated artist

The Future

The success of the digital launch of superstar doughnuts has encouraged Greggs' CEO to continue focusing on tactical digital advertising.