

Case teaching note: Designing a multiple sting, digitally focussed, marketing communications campaign plan for Cirque du Soleil's next London show. Group role play seminar activity.

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Case study summary

This armchair created case is based on the events marketing challenge of selling a perishable service, seats for a Cirque du Soleil winter show series, located temporarily at London's iconic Royal Albert Hall venue. A real-world advertising agency client campaign brief format is used as the core case body content to provide a concise and rich problem statement. Preparing initially individually and then working in small groups, students are invited to address the campaign brief, building a digitally focussed, integrated marketing communications plan. Students are required to use their marketing knowledge of the RACE and AIDA frameworks, tentpole and content marketing and to apply their understanding of personas and segmentation. The role play format also offers the opportunity for students to reflect on their team working skills.

Teaching objectives

- (1) Through experiential role play learning, enable students to feel what it might be like to work in a team creating a digitally focussed advertising campaign plan.
- (2) Practically apply the user journey 'persona' concept applying critical inference from a concise advertising agency campaign brief.
- (3) Experience the complex challenges faced when designing engaging email marketing messaging.
- (4) Critically apply conceptual framework learning on content marketing and the digital funnel to create an integrated marcoms touchpoint plan.

Target audience

This small group role play is designed to form part of a marketing, marketing communications or digital marketing module for intermediate and advanced undergraduates or Master's level programmes in the field of marketing, specifically in digital and marcoms modules.

Suggested teaching strategy

To complete all four questions in-class using small group discussion, this case benefits from being allocated 90-120 minutes of class time. However, the timings below assume only a short, 60 min session is available, with the case and questions 1-3 attempted individually prior to the instructor facilitated session taking place. Questions 1-3 essentially scaffold students towards being able to create a campaign plan.

Pre-class

Invite students to engage with the case, read some of the linked reference materials, and undertake wider independent reading/research. This might include exploring the company website to appreciate the sales and booking user experience. Students may be allocated small group study time to work together (social learning is popular and can be powerful) to discuss the case and attempt questions 1-3, capturing their insights in detailed notes for later use in class.

In-class

5 mins - Remind students about the key case highlights and group task (question four). Remind them of the content marketing, RACE, and AIDA frameworks, and introduce the tentpole marketing framework [three phases: pre-event, event and post-event]. Encourage one group member to capture ideas using a PowerPoint slide/white board/flip

chart sheet with a horizontal timeline, with the event period towards the right (allowing some space for post event marketing).

25 mins - In groups of 4-5 students, challenge them to develop an integrated, digitally focussed marcoms plan.

25 mins - In plenary ask each group to present in 30 seconds their plan. Then, if time permits, invite groups to consider some of the following wider discussion questions:

- What roles did group members play? [e.g. chair, time keeper, creative, problem solver, numbers person, time keeper, documenter, presenter]
- What challenges did you face in completing this task?
- What are your development areas for working with other people?
- What kind of budget do you think a campaign like this would require? How might you estimate a realistic budget figure from publicly available information? [Use question to explore forecasting by inference. Assume perhaps 5%-20% of revenue might be 'invested' in advertising (point students at the company report and accounts for a more precise figure). Estimated Revenue = % seats sold x average ticket price x capacity x performances + food & drinks sales + merchandising sales + partner sponsorship].
- How would you measure the marketing campaign's success? What are the SMART commercial objectives? [e.g. % seats sold and/or £?m sales, plus new customer acquisition and enhanced net promoter scores by end of the tour?]

Close 5 mins: What did you learn from this exercise ?

Alternative teaching method

Assuming limited pre-class preparation, assign specific groups to consider one question only for 25 minutes and then allow 20 minutes for play back and discussion (5 minutes per question). Close with the reflective 'What did you learn from this exercise ?' question.

The richness of the case means that it benefits from more class time, and could easily be used across one 120 minute session or two separate seminars: first seminar 5 minutes reminder and 40 minutes 'development of the campaign' where the seminar tutor visits the teams and answers questions. The second seminar could be used for group presentations (after some polishing took place in between seminars), challenging questions (and answers) and

reflection.

Indicative answers to discussion questions

(1) Create 3-5 'typical customer' named personas and bring them alive using four evocative bullet points.

Billy & Willy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dual income, working professional parents in their late 40's • Live in Woking with their two school aged children and dog, Rufus • Busy social lives, enjoy travelling for regular city breaks and inter-continental holidays, enjoying the finer things in life • Travel to central London six times/year for a meal and a live show (musicals)

Charli
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fun loving Bridget Jones type, works in an unfulfilling city finance admin role • Privately educated, lives in a central London shoe box flat, spending all her disposable income on socialising and the latest Kings Road fashions • Enjoys nothing more than a flamboyant girls' night out on the weekends

PeeKay
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larger than life senior procurement professional for a global company • Pescatarian, single, homeowner with no debts, enjoys treating themselves to the good life • Enjoys a diverse range of evening and weekend excursions with their wide circle of friends • Generous supporter of a range of LGBT+ charities and events

Bee
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single, suburban house mum, focussed on her two kids • Busy with school runs, the parent governor role she has and other charity work • Sold up highly successful events business to focus on more family time after divorce • Enjoys occasional visit to high-brow arts events, provided they are child friendly

(2) Develop six pre-event, one in-event, and two post-event email marketing headlines that would be used to engage existing, known customers.

Pre-event

Coming soon! From Cirque du Soleil introducing: "SHOW NAME" (creates anticipation and word of mouth)

Cirque du Soleil's newest show "NAME" is coming to the Royal Albert Hall. (demonstrates newness of the show and takes advantage of the prestigious hosting venue)

"NAME" from Cirque du Soleil – Tickets Now Available. (Simple awareness)

Treat Yourself to Some Mid-Winter Spectacle: "NAME" awaits you. (Rewarding yourself)

Don't Miss Cirque's Hottest Show: Book Now. (Fear of missing out)

Limited Seats Still Remaining – Book Your Show Tickets Now. (Urgency and scarcity)

In-event

Limited Tickets Still Available for Last Remaining Shows: Don't Miss This. (Fear of missing out (FOMO) evocation)

Post-event

Cirque du Soleil Bids You 'Au Revoir' (Cross-cultural reminder of sophistication)

We're Missing You Already: "NAME" Show Highlights (Nostalgic reflection)

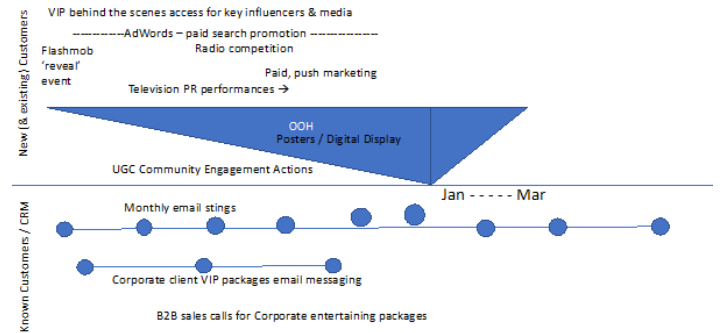
The monthly pre-event email headlines, starting six - eight months out, start by building awareness of the new show, shifting through interest and desire to book now action urgency [AIDA]. During the live show period, a FOMO (fear of missing out) message is used, progressing to a post-show period low cadence frequency mail out that seeks to drive fond, nostalgic memories.

The revenue management team at Cirque du Soleil shade out or limit seat sale capability for the second half of the run to encourage demand to fill up in the less popular show nights (Mon, Tue, Wed). This also limits the time commitment risk in each market – if sales flop – the troop can cancel the tail end shows and move their sales capacity to another city. Double show days (using 1600 starting matinees that are family friendly) can increase peak demand capacity, sometimes even triple show days (adding a 1200 performance) are offered. Clearly, dark (non-performing) days are scheduled in too.

(3) Using a content marketing approach, formulate a RACE funnel of marcoms touchpoints for new customers.

Reach	Morning radio competition to win tickets Flashmob 'surprise' reveal event Live performance on high profile television talk show(s) Poster campaign "Coming Soon"
Activate	Multi-media explainer of show theme Boosted Tik Tok UGC competition Behind the scenes VIP trips to preview the show for influencers and prize winners Engagement with grass roots performing arts organisations OOH FOMO 'Don't Miss This, Secure Your Tickets Now'
Convert	Long Tail AdWords (including: circus, Cirque to London Show, Musicals, SHOW NAME, West End Musicals) Targeted tech platform serving of video shorts with book now messaging Remarketing using web cookies
Engage	Pre-show email engagement teasers Serve up shareable creative content to encourage advocacy Exclusive behind the scenes insights & updates

(4) Using a single screen timeline, create a visually impactful marcoms campaign summary.



The visualisation is meant to merely be an indicative example of the kinds of digital marketing actions that a group may develop in a short time period.

Potential task-related assignment/examination questions

- Identify longtail keywords that might form part of a pay-per-click (PPC) paid search initiative.
- Discuss (using long and short-term thinking) where you would set the upper limit target for cost per acquisition (CPA) for two scenarios; (a) eight weeks before curtains up and (b) an off-peak, mid-week evening at the back end of a lacklustre run (assume 50% of the 5,200 capacity is still available for the performance).
- Identify how best to drive engagement through culture/entertainment journalists and appropriate social influencers using PR.
- Develop an eCRM onboarding plan for new fans using the tent pole marketing events framework (i.e. consider three distinct phases: pre-event, event, post event).

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