



PUBLIC RELATIONS | WINNER | HILL & KNOWLTON
LG MOBILE | LG CHOCOLATE PHONE LAUNCH

This project is arguably the most innovative new media marketing campaign undertaken in the mobile phone sector, using social media to spread sustained word of mouth as part of a wider PR campaign. It required a complete mind shift from 'traditional' broadcast methods of communication where messages are tightly controlled by advertisers, to ceding that control to consumers and encouraging them to spread their views and opinions about the product in a way that contributed towards a more open and honest relationship with the LG brand. In many ways, this project set the standard for the many 'blogger relations' campaigns we are seeing today.

By positioning the product as a 'must have' item the campaign raised awareness of LG by 20% and the phone sold out within 3 days of launch with sales 100% higher than previous models.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM / OPPORTUNITY

The brief from LG Mobile was simple - make the launch of their innovative Chocolate slider phone stand out in a market crowded with consumer choice.

Having already sold over 300,000 units in 3 months in Asia and won two European design awards, its popularity amongst celebrities and socialites had led to the handset claiming over 7% of the Korean market, arguably the world's most competitive.

Alongside traditional marketing activities, the specific digital challenge was to generate word of mouth purchase recommendation by getting people talking about the Chocolate phone.

RESEARCH AND PLANNING

Research indicated that consumer-to-consumer recommendations carry a higher trust factor than virtually all other forms of advertising, and that word of mouth is frequently a factor for purchase across 9 out of 10 product categories.

From our insight and experience in social media, we also knew that half of all bloggers write about a company or product at least once a week, and that this group of influentials was one of the most important initiators of online conversation.

We knew that bloggers would talk about the Chocolate phone, but would focus on function rather than form. Our strategy was therefore to create a campaign that emphasised the design and desirability of the product.



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EXECUTION

The solution was simple, yet required a deep understanding of the personal nature of the blogging medium.

The LG Chocolate blogger relations programme launched in April 2006, the month before the phone's official UK release. Twenty-five influential design and marketing bloggers were identified and - with their permission - pre-launch phones were sent to them along with invites to the star-studded launch party in London.

Responses were aggregated on LG's own blog (<http://chocolate.lgbloggers.com>) along with information about the campaign and the team behind it. All online conversation about the phone was tracked and responses to negative opinions were posted.

The key to the campaign was authenticity and transparency. At no point were bloggers asked to write about the phone and the identity of the agency and its relationship with LG was fully disclosed.

EVALUATION

The results were phenomenal, with 1.7 million phones being sold worldwide in the two months following the campaign launch.

The Chocolate blog received over 22,000 page views in the first month alone. On an average day, mentions of the Chocolate phone on blogs exceeded those of competitor handsets from both Samsung and Nokia. Reviews appeared across the blogosphere, with consumer-generated videos posted on YouTube, and one blogger review was featured on the front page of social book marking site Digg.com. According to Opinmind, blog posts mentioning the Chocolate phone attained a 92% positive word of mouth rating.

This consumer-generated content accounted for 3 of the top 10 results on Google for lg chocolate review, and one review is the second result for chocolate phone (out of 31 million!).

The campaign also received recognition amongst industry peers. Paul Holmes (editor of the Holmes Report) and Antony Mayfield, writing in PR Business, both highlighted the transparent nature of the campaign.