

DIGITAL INNOVATION IN DISTRIBUTION

Case study

4.3.2.1.

Distributor: **The Works**

Release Date: **2nd June 2010**

4.3.2.1.



4.3.2.1. is a slick crime thriller, following three days in the lives of four girls, and is the brainchild of Noel Clarke – who wrote, co-directed, co-produced and acts in the film.

The film's distributors The Works identified the primary target audience for 4.3.2.1. as 15-24 year old urban females, with a secondary audience of 15-24 year old males.

These demographics spend a lot of time online, much of it shopping, blogging and communicating with their friends through social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Live Messenger. In addition to this, Noel Clarke already had a significant online fanbase that he interacted with on a daily basis - through his twitter page and website. As such, an innovative digital campaign was a natural move.

In order to capitalise on Noel Clarke's pre-existing fanbase, The Works set up a film website (www.4321movie.com), which both supported and was supported by the film's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/4321themovie) and Twitter feeds ([@4321themovie](https://twitter.com/4321themovie) and [@4321spy](https://twitter.com/4321spy)).

The strategy was that all of these social networking sites would work together to create an online buzz in the months and weeks prior to release, to form an online platform across various sites from which the central promotional application could be launched.

The Concept

The concept for the promotional application was a Facebook app in which users would be asked questions of the form: "Which of your friends would be most likely to...", with situations relating to the plot of the film. After answering, the app would create a photo album of a series of frames of footage, in which the profile picture of the selected friend would magically appear.

The app was advanced in terms of what could be achieved through Facebook at the time. Technical constraints meant that the output was in the form of a series of stills rather than a video clip.

Partners

The Works' partners on this project were Sony Music Creative and Universal Pictures Home Entertainment UK. The Works has a longstanding output deal with Universal, their partner on the financing and distribution of the film.

Sony's online creative team had been highly recommended to The Works by various people. Having then met them, the distributor was impressed by their obvious knowledge and was keen to learn from ex-

perts within the music industry who have had to adapt to the online environment in the same way that the film industry will need to.

Other agencies working on the online campaign included SocialMediaBox (www.socialmediabox.net), who previously worked on the social media campaign for Noel Clarke's *Adulthood* and so were able to identify and reach the existing online fan base, MarketMe (www.market-me.co.uk), a company which specialises in online PR, and Grapevine Digital (www.grapevinedigital.com) who maintained the website and streamed video content for online sites.

Implementing the campaign

The Facebook application was developed to appeal to a young, female urban audience, concentrating on publishing 4.3.2.1.-related photos to users' photo galleries and aiming to capitalise on the tagging behaviours exhibited by this group. It was developed on the Facebook platform and was publicised by the official 4.3.2.1. social networking sites and website.

The Works initially looked at going live with the application three weeks prior to the film's release, in order to generate awareness of the film at the optimum time. However, they encountered a number of problems that delayed the launch. Firstly, there was a delay in contracting Sony Music Creative. Although the project had been proposed and approved several months prior to the film's release, the purchase order required to engage suppliers was only signed off by all parties and delivered to Sony six weeks prior to the initial project launch date.

Due to this delay in contracting, and further delays in receiving approvals and getting access to key materials, Sony were not able to deliver the project in the way initially planned. Usually on a project like this, Sony Music Creative would employ a group of freelance producers and direct the project in a hands-on way in order to produce the best results.

In this instance, due to a hugely compressed timeline, Sony ended up using a digital production company to oversee the entire project. This production company had more resources available than Sony could access through their usual preferred freelancers. In the end the application was launched a little over a week before the theatrical release and it is likely that this had an impact on the quality of the final application.

Promotion

The production team was able to supply a large amount of 'Behind the Scenes' video footage, which was ideal for launching at key times on YouTube, or as exclusives on significant sites, in order to generate and maintain an online presence for the film. The Works were also able to secure exclusive launches for both the teaser and full-length trailer on key websites.

The social networking sites were supported by an online advertising campaign which accounted for 20% of the overall advertising budget. In addition to advertising on findanyfilm.com's Streetdance 3D pages, banner ads, MPUs (a standard format of mid-page advertisement), video files and text links were placed on key sites such as Google, YouTube, MySpace, MTV, w00t! Network, MSN Messenger and Channel 4's 4oD. The TV spots and outdoor campaign for 4.3.2.1. all featured the website URL which, in turn, would drive traffic through to the Facebook and Twitter pages.

What went wrong?

Sony found it was particularly challenging to deliver a technically complex and innovative marketing campaign in such a short space of time, and with so many interested parties involved. As a result the user experi-

COSTS

Creative direction	6 days	£2000/day	£12000
Project management	10 days	£1200/day	£12000
Filming and photography	n/a	Transparent production recharge	£10000
Design	5 days	£1000/day	£5000
Development	12 days	£1250/day	£15000
		Subtotal	£54000
		Discount on Sony Music services	(£24000)
		Total	£30000

ence of the application was felt to be below par: it was confusing and earned very little of the anticipated media coverage as a result.

Overall the usage figures for the application were poor, with 1,364 users - around 10% of the minimum 12,000 users The Works had set as a basic target. This level of usage does not provide enough data for Facebook to produce graphs on demographics.

There also appears to have been a failure to create enough awareness of the application throughout the rest of the online campaign. Unusually for this type of project, 99.65% of traffic came from inside Facebook, meaning that the official website and Twitter pages did not contribute any significant traffic to the application.

Upsides

However, whilst the results for the use of the Facebook application on a consumer level were below expectations, the application itself proved to be an important business-to-business marketing tool for The Works, and central to their distribution pitch to exhibitors. When showing them the plans for an innovative and original application, which would potentially reach a heavy cinema-going demographic, The Works found they were able to generate a lot of interest in exhibition. In this manner, the risks involved in innovating were reduced, due to the ability to work with exhibition partners, who shared the view of the potential in this form of marketing.

The Works view the project as a valuable learning experience, which gave them the opportunity to work very closely with a number of on-line production agencies with whom they would not otherwise have worked.

What can we learn?

The key lesson taken away from this campaign is that on innovative projects of a technical nature, the timeline is crucial and can't be messed with. It wasn't possible to fully test and tweak the user experience and messaging prior to the launch. Ideally there would have been a two week period in which to do this, but working with so many interested parties on a film project such as *4.3.2.1.* naturally creates delays and so Sony were unable to work to their initial timeline.

Furthermore, for an application of this nature to be successful it must be fully supported by every area of the campaign. There were three different agencies working on online PR/marketing/social networking for *4.3.2.1.*, with varying priorities and so it is entirely possible there was neither the focus nor the attention on the application that there should have been from other areas of the online campaign.

If The Works were to embark on a project like this again, they would be keen to work much more closely with the UK Film Council, involving them at every step of the process and using their influence as a funding body to help drive the messages of accountability, quality and delivery.

They would also focus less on technical innovation and, rather than initiating a stand-alone tool or application they would concentrate on a more holistic approach of additionality to an existing project. The Works felt that if they were to look at doing a Facebook application again, they might look at coming up with a simpler idea that didn't rely on other parties for access and delivery.

Moreover, Facebook as a platform is always changing and applications are becoming less and less prominent in the site's user experience. Given this, and the limited functionality of a Facebook application, The Works would in future consider Facebook as a medium to reach and redirect users to an external application. Alternatively, a news story or piece of content that interests users could be created, one which they could talk about and share naturally within Facebook. The Sony Music

Creative teams see their recognition of this shifting trend in the effectiveness of Facebook applications as a tool for marketing as a key 'learning' from their experience on 4.3.2.1.

In music promotion, if the application or tools work well it will sustain the interest of the user and potentially convert into an online purchase of the song. This conversion rate is something with which Sony have had success with other projects. The difficulty for film, however, is that with this type of application, the outcome is not always easily measurable.

It is not yet clear how effective this type of application will be in driving cinema ticket sales or whether it would be more effective in a DVD 'click-through to buy' marketing environment. While the need for a suitable method for gauging effectiveness in film marketing is apparent, the method itself remains elusive.

