

PRWeek

Verizon takes FiOS viral in NJ

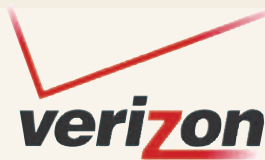
VERIZON NEW JERSEY

PR TEAM: Verizon New Jersey (Newark, NJ) and Winning Strategies (Newark, NJ)

CAMPAIGN: The Ultimate Eye Candy

DURATION: January to March 2007

BUDGET: Less than \$40,000



When Verizon New Jersey set out to spark interest in its new FiOS TV fiberoptic technology, director of marketing Mark Adams knew it needed a campaign that capitalized on the “eye candy,” or visual element of the technology. He likened early feedback from FiOS users to his own experience when he switched from cable to satellite television.

“The visual impact is just so stunning, it made me think of the other things that we come across in everyday life that offer such powerful images,” Adams says. “I wanted this campaign to somehow engage the audience and enable them to interact and share their experiences, in a context to help build Verizon’s FiOS brand.”

STRATEGY

“Following on [Adams’] concept, we envisioned a sort of YouTube-style viral marketing approach,

where contestants share their stories, and visitors vote *American Idol*-style,” says James McQueeney, chairman of agency Winning Strategies.

The resulting idea was a six-week Web contest, in which contestants could submit video clips to www.ultimateeyecandy.com that answered the question, “What is your Ultimate Eye Candy?” Up for grabs were prizes, including HDTVs.

“It made sense for the New Jersey market,” McQueeney says, “which is bereft of a major broadcast outlet. And we sensed a real hunger for self-expression.”

To overcome the cynicism many hold for commercially sponsored contests, the campaign did not reveal Verizon’s identity until contest winners were announced, while Winning Strategies teased the media, saying only that the sponsor was neither a pornographic or gambling interest, but rather a reputable *Fortune* 500 company with a substantial business in New Jersey, Adams says.

TACTICS

Verizon tapped Pierce Promotions, which supplied two three-man teams to haunt dozens of New Jersey communities, shopping malls, commuter train stations, and other high-traffic areas, armed with cameras and asking people to reveal their own “ultimate eye candy.”

Celebrity spokeswoman Stephenie LaGrossa (pictured) from CBS’ *Survivor*, a resident of Toms River, NJ, was recruited. Her presence at media events and

on the Web site helped generate buzz, providing that photogenic hometown celeb angle that attracts local media.

Winning Strategies also executed a series of press releases distributed to New Jersey-specific media and Web sites.

And contestants mounted mini campaigns of their own to drive traffic to vote on the site.

“We sensed a real hunger for self-expression”

James McQueeney
Chairman, Winning Strategies

RESULTS



More than 400 people competed via video to win two HDTVs, ultimately producing more than 2,000 registered users, 3 million media impressions, and more than 7 million online ad impressions, with 13 times the average click-through rate on New Jersey’s leading Web site, NJ.com, Adams says.

Local media that covered the story included *The Star Ledger* (Newark), *Asbury Park Press*, *Daily Record* (Parsippany), *Courier News* (Bridgewater), *Home News Tribune* (East Brunswick), Woodbridge Sentinel Online, radio station 94.3, and Sirius Satellite Radio.

FUTURE

“This sets the gold standard of what we will look for in the future,” Adams notes.

With Verizon’s identity revealed, the site was redirected to www.discoverfios.com, which is already hosting a new contest, the FiOS Scavenger Hunt. It challenges participants to find various FiOS-related items around the state and post photos online.

Craig McGuire

PRWEEK’S VIEW

Viral marketing is not nearly as easy as they make it look on YouTube, especially for a commercial interest such as Verizon promoting a service that extends beyond the scope of its core identity as a phone service provider.

Focusing on a specific geography, mounting guerrilla-style ground assaults on New Jersey’s suburban malls, and borrowing a tactic or two from American Idol were key elements in why this effort was successful.

And Verizon was prescient enough to not trip over its own brand before the campaign had a chance to engage an audience.



www.winningstrat.com