

The Time to Change 'edvertorial'

LONDON, UK: The Time to Change charitable campaign partners with IPC Media for true editorial integration around mental health problems...

Insight

Mental health problems are surprisingly common: in the UK, one in four of us will experience a mental health condition during our lives. But despite this a shocking 90% of people who have lived with mental health issues say their lives have been adversely affected by stigma and discrimination as a result - and in many cases the stigma can even be a worse problem than the symptoms themselves.



Time to Change is a charitable campaign dedicated to tackling mental health stigma and ending the discrimination sufferers face. Backed by the likes of Mind, Comic Relief and Re-think, Time to Change aims to change attitudes by getting the nation talking more openly about mental health.

But getting the British to talk openly about anything is a big challenge, and conditions such as depression, anxiety, psychosis and schizophrenia unfortunately tend to generate fear, uncertainty and embarrassment in equal measure. The reality is that many of us are guilty of avoiding the issue because we simply don't know what to say, or feel uncomfortable talking, even with our closest friends or colleagues.

So Mediacom's challenge was tough, but simple: how to overcome the stigma around mental health problems and help people to realise that it's time to talk?

Strategy

Showing real people talking about mental health issues breaks the taboo. The insight was that, despite the fear and challenges involved, a significant minority of people had already bravely taken the individual leap to start a conversation with a friend or colleague about a mental health problem. Mediacom realised that to break the taboo and start changing behaviour on a major scale, it needed to find these people and celebrate them as positive examples.

So the team set out to tell these real world stories on the national stage - demonstrating the positive impact that having a simple conversation can have and using them to normalise talking openly about mental health.

But it also realised that with an issue this complex traditional advertising would have limitations: while ads can grab people's attention, they weren't going to enable Mediacom to sensitively explore some of the subtle issues involved in the depth required. So it had to find a way to grab people's attention on mass scale, but at the same time engage them in the subject in a deeper way.

Content was the answer, so the agency partnered with IPC, the UK's leading magazine publisher, to develop a new way for agency, client and publisher to work together to create proper, in-depth editorial coverage that went way beyond the 'Promotional Feature' ghetto of advertorial or 'native advertising'.

In order to make sure the content drew in the audience, Mediacom reached out to well known, respected celebrities who had faced mental health challenges and were prepared to tell their real-world stories of how friends raising the issue with them had helped them cope.



Execution

This was true editorial integration, not just advertorials. The agency worked with IPC to fund editorial content directly - which it calls 'Edvertorial'. Unlike advertorials they aren't marked as 'advertising features' - they feature on the contents page, and while Time to Change advised on content, final copy approval remained with the magazines. This approach delivered better buy-in from editors and more engaging content that people actively want to read.

The brief was to reach audiences we struggle to engage by focussing on titles that you'd least expect to cover mental health issues. For example, the editors of Rugby World, Nuts (a lad's mag whose readers were more used to pictures of semi-naked girls) and NME (the UK's leading indie music magazine) really got behind the cause, ensuring the features resonated with their communities in a way that was right for their readers. This was executed across every IPC platform: Facebook, Twitter, magazine features, and video content on the websites.

IPC managed to deliver celebrities from each brand's field including former England Rugby Union international Duncan Bell, Liz and Natasha from Atomic Kitten and Carl Barat from indie band the Libertines. They talked about their own mental health problems and how friends had helped them.

The editors and IPC staff showed support by developing 120 pledges to talk about mental health across the company. IPC as a business made a corporate pledge to tackle stigma and discrimination, a structured programme requiring involvement from the entire business.

Results

The client was delighted with the astonishing success of the campaign. It saw over 200,000 conversations about mental health across Facebook and Twitter. There were excellent levels of recognition across those exposed to the titles (65% vs norms of 40%) and the number of readers talking about mental health was 240% above the average.

Some of the best results were seen amongst readers of the lads' magazine Nuts - which was particularly important as Time to Change had previously struggled to engage a young male audience.

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