

QUEST FOR SUCCESS



In spring of 2006, over 700,000 people 'joined the quest'.

Piers Taylor, Managing Partner, and Jenny Howard, Strategy Director of Vizeum, explain how curiosity and intrigue drove their Eurostar/Da Vinci Code campaign, emerging with their own holy grail: increased passenger numbers for Eurostar.

'The Da Vinci Code' by Dan Brown tapped into many people's latent desire to uncover conspiracies and solve puzzles. And the phenomenal interest it generated was resurrected when Sony Pictures released a film adaptation in May 2006. Travel industries in the UK and France flourished as people flocked to every site mentioned in the novel, hoping to discover something others may have missed. And Eurostar was ready to take them there.

Since Eurostar travels to most of the destinations listed within the novel, the film partnership with Sony Pictures couldn't have been more ideal. And Vizeum came on to the scene with perfect timing, having been hired in the summer of 2005 as Eurostar's media communications planning company.

"We worked hard with Eurostar to develop a genuinely different partnership with the film," says Piers Taylor. "There's a fairly conventional way of doing film partnerships which involves just using the film to draw attention to your brand or product and then offering some kind of giveaway that is relevant to the film. This campaign went further and was all about helping people to reappraise the destinations Eurostar went to



and getting people to think differently about Paris.

“Our strategy was to view Paris through the perspective of the Da Vinci Code,” he continues. “It was a way for people to enjoy a different perspective of the city, outside of the classic iconic landmarks such as the Eiffel Tower or Arc de Triumph and it was imperative for Eurostar in driving their business and traffic by getting people on the train.”

“Vizeum's work with the other agencies involved – glue, Deconstruct and Diffiniti – was about integrating the campaign and making it stand out,” says Jenny Howard, “putting the brand experience, which is the online quiz, at the heart of the campaign and then feeding that out into the advertising, rather than having them as separate ad campaigns and promotional lines. It was about trying to make the whole greater than the sum of its parts, which we did well. It was a strong campaign, executed with some fun and funky stuff.”

“We evolved the digital brand experience by intriguing consumers with very interesting clues within the broadcast media,” says Taylor. “This drove traffic to the website and allowed the site to entice people into Eurostar’s view of Paris, which is all about curiosity and getting underneath the skin of the city.”

The interactive online game was developed by Deconstruct. Participants were seated in a virtual Eurostar seat with a table and book as well as various clues to help solve puzzles they discovered whilst travelling through different locations in London and Paris.

“The clues included things such as a cryptex with 5 letters which rotate and you place them in the right order. There were also shapes which had to be arranged to make a perfect

square and some general knowledge questions related to different parts of Paris. It was a bit difficult; I didn’t get past the first level,” laughs Howard.

“glue developed all the online advertising which was designed to promote the website and get people to play the games,” she continues. “The puzzles were constructed around Paris and getting people to travel to the city.” And glue’s mysterious ‘running monk’ overlay had an average interaction rate of 30% - far exceeding the industry average of 2%.

Vizeum were given free reign to exploit every possible venue in order to drive website visits and ultimately promote the Eurostar brand experience. And their collaborative brainstorm with other members of the Aegis Group produced some brilliant ideas which were taken on by the client.

“Usually when you go through the creative process, you know in the back of your mind that most of it will be dismissed by the client,” says Howard. “But this was quite different because everyone was charged up. We came up with some really fun ideas and the client was very positive, pushing to make sure they all happened. So, it was satisfying to see the more innovative things we put forth come to life.”

“Eurostar are a fantastic client because they are always looking for their agency to bring them new and different ideas, to stretch our thinking and make the most of every element of the plan,” says Taylor. “They are very focused on detail. It’s not just about coming up with the big idea but making sure they are executed brilliantly. And I think that is why this campaign has been such a success.”

During the campaign, guerrilla marketing tactics inundated public areas with cryptic messages, some projected onto London landmarks. From exhibitions in Waterloo station to monks distributing small puzzles at Victoria, no part of London could escape the intrigue. Chalk written messages on walkways and notes wrapped around takeaway coffees beseeched people to ‘Join the Quest’.



Word of mouth ensured the message spread quickly and those who answered the call were many. The website recorded over 27 composite years of online interaction with an amazing 1.3 million visits globally. Over 15% of all visitors registered to compete for the prizes and 15% of players completed all of the puzzles. And considering the puzzles were released over a one month period, the retention rate is impressive. The result: travel between the 'two cities' rose significantly. Ticket sales rose 15% and the campaign stands as Eurostar's most successful to date.

Astute cryptographers were rewarded with cash and Sony products. The ultimate prize included a lifetime of free travel on Eurostar and €200,000.

"The campaign delivered all of the Eurostar cues and elements that they wanted to get across, over and above what the film could deliver," says Taylor. "The amazing thing was that the level of spend to deliver the number visitors to the site was comparatively low. Sony outspent Eurostar by a significant amount and yet it felt like Eurostar did a better job in bringing the film to life for people."

"We exceeded the expectation," says Jenny Howard. "There was quite a lot of pressure to make this a successful campaign but Eurostar were really positive because we executed a lot of innovative and interesting ideas."

Vizeum is currently working on a new campaign for Eurostar to coincide with the opening of St. Pancras railway station in November 2007. "We're working on a brief

now to make that a symbolic moment for the country in terms of reappraising the way we think about travel," says Piers Taylor.

"There has been significant focus on the environment, especially the environmental effects of short haul flights over the last year or so which has been building to a head with potential taxation being mooted. We see the train as the future of travel and Eurostar is the brand that connects us to Europe. So it's a huge project and a fantastic brief for us to create a communications strategy around," he concludes.

A Perfect Solution

The Da Vinci Code/Eurostar campaign was recognised for its excellence by receiving the award for Best Travel Campaign at the Campaign Digital Awards.

Piers Taylor said, "It is a very important award which recognises all of the big Aegis companies involved, including Deconstruct, glue, Diffiniti and Vizeum, for the work that was done at the launch."

"The most integrated, creative and effective we have ever been as a business. Vizeum were central to that and we could not have done without the team's passion and vision."
Eurostar

To see the Da Vinci Code campaign movie, please visit: <http://www.aegisplc.com/aegis/globe/g0407/eurostar.html>

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