

TARGET

MARKETING

\$10.00

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Regan  communications group
PIERCE  COTÉ ADVERTISING

NUTS & BOLTS

INDUSTRY STRATEGIES, TECHNIQUES, SOLUTIONS

CASE STUDY

Making Vegas.com the Odds-On Favorite

Challenge: Raise brand awareness, acquire customers and increase sales conversions.

Solution: Create a multichannel, direct marketing campaign and promote it through sponsoring the 2009 College Slam Dunk Contest held on April 2.

Results: Using the measurement from four weeks prior as the control, Vegas.com saw a 60 percent rise in calls on April 2 and a 30 percent increase in sales throughout the month-long promotion.

Vegas.com thought it had a slam dunk. But the travel services Web site headquartered minutes away from the Las Vegas Strip decided to make sure. So this year, the site chose to use direct marketing techniques to promote its sponsorship of the 2009 College Slam Dunk Contest.

Pushing aside anecdotal evidence of the warm reception its T-shirts and foam fingers had gotten historically at the increasingly popular contest, Vegas.com hired direct response agency Mercury Media Holdings of Santa Monica, Calif., and spent the entire month preceding the April 2 competition at The Palace of Auburn Hills in Michigan promoting the event and Vegas.com. Year three of its contest sponsorship became dominated by television, social media, e-mail and newspaper prompts urging Vegas.com fans and sports aficionados to enter the code "SLAM" during Web checkouts to receive \$25 off purchases of \$250 or more.

Web visitors typing in the URL of vegas.com/slam would be directed to a

specific page where they would see offer details, as well as the highlights video that Vegas.com placed on YouTube. (Or they could navigate through site tabs like "gambling" and "weddings.")

Meanwhile, everyone, including Facebook fans and Twitter followers, also had the option of dialing (888) LAS-VEGAS, a toll-free number Vegas.com hadn't promoted in prior slam dunk competitions.

Then, at the event, players dribbled past scores of courtside signs bearing the red arrow Vegas.com logo.

The signs, and the rest of the promotions, did seem to point the target audience toward Vegas, says Bryan Allison, Vegas.com's vice president of marketing.

"Obviously, we were trying to combine brand elements with a direct response type of event," he says. "I mean, our business name is already kind of a call to action. So having Vegas.com all over the place and in your face like that provides a really strong call to action. And then we added, this year, 1-[888]-LAS-VEGAS, the phone number, to again reinforce the activation that people could take immediately upon seeing everything."

Allison explains that, mostly, the toll-free number accommodates impulse shoppers, while the Web has a more long-term effect on brand awareness and sales.

"We're not a Coca-Cola or some enormous company that can just do brand advertising," he continues. "We always have to have a strong call to action in everything that we do. And we did see our orders increase about 30 percent over the prior four-week average. ... So that shows that we did have an immediate impact. And

then ... there's always a tail effect to it, as well, because people are exposed to the brand. They're exposed to the ways that they can reach us."

Dan Hippler, Vegas.com's director of marketing, adds that there's a reason Las Vegas speaks to slam dunk



Get \$25 off your VEGAS.com purchase of \$250 or more. See www.vegas.com/slam for terms and conditions.

During a 30-second commercial, Vegas.com used DRTV to send viewers to a Web landing page to receive a \$25 discount on site offerings. The promotion related to Vegas.com's sponsorship of the 2009 College Slam Dunk Contest.

fans. There's a reason Vegas.com got 30 percent more phone calls than usual and 60 percent more on the day of the event.

"It does fit our demo nicely," Hippler says. "A lot of different kinds of people come to Vegas. But a lot of people that are into sporting events tend to come to Vegas more often [and are] pretty high-value. So it fits both into that demo and psychographic profile that works really well for us. And ... [the contest's] proven out, so we continue to do it."

—Heather Fletcher