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graduated from Cambridge with a BA (Honours) in Economics. He worked initially at corporate strategy consultants LEK Consulting (www.lek.com) on projects such as the launch of the Prudential Bank (later renamed Egg), refinancing of Eurostar and various online strategies for media companies in Los Angeles in the mid-1990s. In 1998 he joined global diversified media company Clear Channel International as Group Development Director, responsible for strategy, acquisitions and early stage development. In 2001 he and James Hubbard decided the time was right to capitalise on recent advances in mobile data services in order to enable brands to connect with customers via ordinary mobile phones and Incentivated was founded. As Managing Director, his role also includes business development, account management, including consulting services, and public relations. He is a full member of the Institute of Direct Marketing and sits on its digital council.

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Case Study

Safer travel at night: Mayor of London, Transport for London, Metropolitan Police, Incentivated Ltd

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Abstract

The Mayor of London, Transport for London (TfL) and the Metropolitan Police have teamed up with mobile marketing agency Incentivated Ltd to launch the world's first text service that enables safer minicab travel in London. The service connects Incentivated's cross-network 'find my nearest' application to TfL's constantly evolving database of licensed minicabs, enabling Londoners to receive and call the phone numbers of local licensed minicab firms, from their mobile phones, wherever they are in Greater London. For the telephone numbers of two licensed minicab operators in your area and one general black cab number, text HOME to 60835 (standard rate +35p). With extensive press and news coverage generated, the 'Safer Travel at Night' campaign, now TfL's most popular mobile service, has seen an ongoing rise in the number of text requests, more than 70,000 unique users to date, while reducing the number of minicab-related assaults in London by an estimated 45 per cent. *Stop Press: TfL's HOME service relaunched on 12/12/06 as 'cabwise'.* For further information please email: info@incentivated.com *Journal of Direct, Data and Digital Marketing Practice* (2007) **8**, 254–258. doi:10.1057/palgrave.ddmp.4350057

Background

Mayor of London, Transport for London (TfL) and the Metropolitan Police have teamed up with mobile marketing agency Incentivated to provide the world's first text messaging service, which uses location-based mobile phone technology to promote safer travel in minicabs at night.

Prior to the Safer Travel at Night campaign, an average of over 18 sexual attacks and rapes by illegal minicab drivers were reported each month. The campaign up to mid-2005 reduced this to a reported ten per month. However, this was a high-profile awareness-raising campaign and a key piece of feedback was that there was no easy way for Londoners away from home to locate and contact the nearest taxi company.

Figure 1: Safer travel at night advertising

Objectives

Targeting mainly women aged 16–34 and students, the Safer Travel at Night campaign has been running since 2002, promoted by television and cinema advertising (Figure 1), but lacked a key response mechanism or *interactive* component. By adding a direct response capability via mobile phones, the Mayor of London, TfL and the Metropolitan Police, through Incentivated, gave the campaign a new lease of life. The HOME text service enables Londoners to receive the phone numbers of local *licensed* minicab firms, wherever they are in Greater London, and so help to reduce attacks by unlicensed drivers.

The campaign for 2005–2006 entered a new phase: the previous campaigns had begun to see diminishing reductions in reported attacks each year as the advertising awareness had done its job to a degree. In order to reach a minority of Londoners who remained cynical and dismissive of the campaign (risk too small, won't happen to me, etc), a new campaign creative was produced focusing on the victim and the call to action was — for the first time — a strong and simple solution to the issue, namely ‘how do I get a licensed cab?’

Strategy

Londoners in need of a safe ride home are particularly vulnerable on the streets late at night (especially when drink or other stimulants have been consumed), so the solution had to be immediate, easy, memorable and reliable. A full through-the-line media campaign was developed to continue the campaign and to promote the new SMS service.

Incentivated's text messaging solution is the latest execution of the campaign. The SMS service is referred to as ‘HOME’ because this is the keyword used by Londoners to access the service. The service is simplicity: simply text the word ‘HOME’ to 60835 (the TfL short-code, which spells ‘60TFL’ on the keypad) or 62967 (spelling ‘MAYOR’). Moments later, users receive a text message with contact numbers for

Figure 2: SMS service

two licensed minicab companies in their vicinity which they can then phone to order a safe cab journey home, as well as a general number for ordering Black Cabs from any of the pre-existing booking services (Figure 2).

The database of minicab companies used for this service is supplied by the Public Carriage Office (PCO) — who regulates taxis and minicabs in London and are part of TfL — and is updated every day to ensure that newly licensed firms are available via the service as quickly as possible. Firms that have broken any regulations are removed and not supplied to customers. Only minicab companies operating services at the time of request are supplied, for example whether they are 24/7 — which is especially important for people wanting to get home at 2:30am on a wet Saturday morning.

The technology

This is an example of the mobile data technology known as ‘Location Based Services’ being used to turn a non-interactive campaign into an interactive one in a way only wireless could facilitate.

The service connects Incentivated’s cross-network ‘find my nearest’ solution to the PCO’s regularly updated database of licensed minicab companies. The service runs 24/7 and is monitored and supported round the clock.

When a user sends their request by text, their mobile network passes on the time of the request, the mobile number used and the location of the cell site in which the sender is located. The cell location is the grid reference of the mast that transmits the message from the handset. This information is then compared with the live database of licensed minicabs and in real time a 160-character text message is composed

Figure 3: Cards handed out to the public by promotional teams

and sent by reply. Updates to the PCO's database of licensed minicabs are replicated on the HOME service, making sure it remains correct.

This is a great example of a simple idea accessible to all mobile phone users, that is 97 per cent of Londoners aged 15–65 (source: Metro), wherever they are, coupled with a simple and memorable call to action, implemented seamlessly and invisibly by powerful technology.

The promotion

HOME was promoted extensively using traditional media channels, including press, outdoor, radio and cinema, a link-up with Heart 106.2 radio station and a viral email campaign. Promotional teams were used to hand out credit card-sized instructions in popular areas and washroom media was booked in bars and restaurants for the run-up to the busy Christmas and New Year period (Figure 3).

Budget/ROI

The GLA is a public sector organisation and therefore does not aim to make a profit. The GLA did not want the cost of the service to affect on the public purse through a need for general taxation to cover the costs of running the service.

Hence, the campaign was designed to cover costs and not to make a profit. More important than revenue were high levels of awareness and participation, leading — it was hoped — to fewer attacks. Therefore, a nominal sum of 35p is made for a successful look-up in order to cover the charges from the networks as well as Incentivated's costs. If details of licensed minicabs cannot be found close to the user, then they are not charged.

Table 1: Sexual assaults by year

	No. of sexual assaults
2001	212
2002	155
2003	140
2004	120
2005	*

*Confidential indicative figures — released by the Metropolitan Police to the GLA — show a reduction across the year in line with the past couple of years. The section 'Testimonials' back up the above claim.

Once formal numbers have been released, the Metropolitan Police estimates that each assault avoided will save them £192,000 in costs and be of immeasurable value to the women concerned. Although official results have yet to be released — assaults are not classified till a decision is made by a court — the Mayor has gone on record to say that the interactive effect has helped reduce sexual assaults and rapes specifically through the easily accessible supply of licensed minicabs away from a computer for the first time.

Usage

Within three weeks of launch, 4,000 people had participated, resulting in details of 252 different licensed minicab companies being returned. Since then another 144 minicab companies have registered and their details are all served to the public on request.

Between the launch in September 2005 and the end of January 2006, 17,000 different people used the service. A steady 3,000 new users participate each month. The number of SMS requests rose dramatically in the run-up to the festive period, prompted by street promotions. This resulted in over 600 SMS requests a day on the weekend before Christmas and on New Year's Eve.

Attacks

Table 1 shows the number of sexual assaults from 2001 to 2005.

Testimonials

'I am committed to improving the quality of peoples' lives in London and to enabling a 24-hour society with people able to get home safely after a night out in Central London. Adding the HOME mobile phone service to our Safer Travel at Night campaign has helped reduce the number of assaults and rapes by illegal minicab operators and has delivered, for the first time, a simple solution for people to access legal and licensed minicab firms across the Capital.'

Ken Livingstone, Mayor of London

'Within a few days of launch the minicab service had become the most popular of the Transport for London mobile services.'

Jon White, Senior Marketing Planner, Transport for London