HCL: #CoolestInterviewEver - World's first end-to-end recruitment campaign on Twitter

Source: DMA (US), Bronze, DMA International ECHO Awards, 2014

This case study explains how HCL created an end-to-end recruitment process using social media in India.

- This campaign focused on communicating HCL's differentiators as an employer to media-savvy jobseekers while also providing a cost-effective method for reaching applicants across multiple regions.
- The campaign kicked off with a microsite and teaser videos, display ads, and banners, and then added social media, influencer outreach, and email marketing.
- The campaign attracted participants from more than 60 countries, and total engagement was more than 250,000, which exceeded the target by 25 percent.
- By the end of the campaign, HCL had more Twitter followers than India's global corporations.

Advertiser/Client Name: HCL Technologies Limited

Agency: HCL Technologies Limited

Category: Business and Consumer Services (BCS)

Country Where Program Ran: India

Program Start Date: 12/16/13

Program End Date: 03/07/14

Product/Service Overview: HCL Technologies is a $6bn global IT services organization that believes in the power of ideas generated by great talent. #CoolestInterviewEver is a unique reach campaign by HCLT that leverages Twitter to create complete recruitment engagement while amplifying "Employer Value Proposition" reach.

Objective of the campaign

While organizations have been using social media as a platform for hiring through job postings and background checks, there has never been an end-to-end recruitment process on a single social media platform. #CoolestInterviewEver was a unique reach campaign launched by global IT major, HCL Technologies that leveraged Twitter to create a complete recruitment engagement while amplifying "Employer Value Proposition" reach.

Business Problem:

1. Post the global economic slowdown that originated in the US in the year 2009 several countries experienced rapid shrinkage in their GDP, rising unemployment levels and an overall slowdown. Indian economy being fuelled by the growth in the technology sector, is dependent on the "outsourcing" or "offshoring" of key business processes by large global organizations. the growth rate of IT sector halved in 2013 ever since the global recession (from 30% to 15%).A large slice of revenues for Indian IT sector being derived from the US based clients, the impact of the slowdown in the US had a deep impact on the Indian IT sector.
2. Changing economic conditions have adversely influenced the employer brand. Due to lesser vacancies, it becomes very important to explore new age channels for talent acquisition.
3. The targeted economies have well established local job platforms, while there was no channel that could go across the boundaries and was more economical at the same time.
4. IT sector has been losing its sheen because of factors like low promotions, low salary increments and uncertainty. Thus, an intervention was needed to build the recruitment brand for the company.
5. A big portion of the allocated budget for recruitment have always been leveraged for sourcing requirements, leaving substantially lower budget for recruitment marketing initiatives. The challenge was to create a world class recruitment campaign using the amount of the annual salary of an average employee.
6. The reach of the social media platforms using the traditional recruitment marketing interventions at HCL is 60k for Linkedin and 3k for Facebook which could not yield the targeted hiring numbers. The challenge was to increase the reach multifold.

Target Audience:

The objective of campaign was to create preferred employer brand among Gen "Y" (people belonging to age group of 19-

30 years) as Gen Y constitutes 65% of the total HCL workforce. Target audience was Gen Y population in 32 countries where HCL Technologies operates. Apart from Gen "Y" the campaign got extensive global media coverage as Influencers, Bloggers, HR leaders were targeted which helped the campaign Go Viral.

Objectives:

- Introducing HCL as a "Digital Disrupter" by creating a "First-In-Class" initiative which establishes HCL TECHNOLOGIES as progressive Gen Y organization utilizing new age media in recruitment process.
- Create a preferred employer brand for Gen Y amongst the 32 countries where HCL operates with spend not exceeding the average cost of hiring an on-site employee.
- Establish Leadership position in terms of reach & engagement on Twitter vis-à-vis competition.
- Achieve engagement of more than 200K through this campaign across digital channels.

Target audience

Business-to-Consumer

Size of target audience

1,000,000+

Enacted solution

#CoolestInterviewEver was supposed to position itself as the way to hire Best Gen Y talent across multiple geographies by spending minimum time and using limited budgets. The strategy around this campaign was, thus, designed keeping in mind following 3 pillars of the innovation:

1) Channel Selection:

The need was to select a channel which provides two-way conversation and allows multiple candidates to be interviewed at same time based on their comfort, availability. Thus, Twitter was selected whose 140 character mode increases the challenge to come up with precise & well thought response. Other reasons were:

- 6.7 Mn Tweeters planning to change their jobs in 12 months
- 5 Mn Tweeters had used career search service in 6 months
- More than 500,000 social job announcements are released on Twitter each month

2) Offer:

Post a thorough research on the maximum searched jobs on Google, we created 5 work profiles that ensured massive participation:

- Digital Trotter: Digital Marketing Consultant
- Big Data Guru: Data Analysis Consultant.
- Ideapreneurship Evangelist: Aligned with the company's culture of Ideapreneurship.
- Hacker-in-Chief: Champion software coder profile
- Womenspiration: Consultant in the field of diversity

One candidate was to be selected for one of these profiles who would be allowed to work for HCL Technologies as a consultant for 12 months and would receive a compensation of upto 75,000 US$.

3) Implementation Details:

The campaign process was divided into 3 phases based on the AIDA model -

Awareness Phase:

The campaign was kick-started in the second last week of December 2013 with the launch of a microsite and 3 Teaser videos. SEO, SEM, Display Ads and Banners on Job Portals were used.

Interest and Desire Phase:

Three weeks prior to the campaign launch, the full-fledged tabbed website was launched which reached search

rank 1st on Google within 7 days overtaking authoritative websites like **www.theguardian.com**, **www.inc.com**, **www.today.com**, etc. in the process.

The major promotion was done by using SEO, SEM, Display ads, Internal Employee Outreach (referrals), Promoted content on Social Media, Influencer Outreach and email marketing for reaching out to the Job Seekers (database from **hcltech.com**) and student email lists for colleges across India, US and UK.

Action Phase:

The campaign was launched on 10th of February with the team actively engaging with the participants.

- For reporting, best-in-class analytics tools, Simply Measured and Oracle SRM were used.
- HCL's world class social command center was leveraged where the team was present 24x7.

The tone used in engagement was extremely personal and the 3 tenets of HCL Brand – a) trust, transparency & flexibility b) value centricity c) employee first customer second(EFCS) where exemplified in every tweet. The rising excitement could be felt in the participant's tweets.

The campaign was executed in 3 Rounds: Round 1:

The selection was basis correct answers to 6 consecutive questions on IQ and OQ (operational quotient). There was no validation done which is similar to the practice being currently followed by recruiters for telephonic interviews. At the end of the first round, only 100 candidates were shortlisted- globally.

Round 2:

Tweet Chat: HCL Leaders interacted with shortlisted candidates to the answer their queries about HCL Technologies' culture & domain requirements.

Domain Specific Questions: Invited the short-listed candidates to submit their LinkedIn profiles and sign in a terms and conditions + authentication document which carried their digital signature. There were a set of Domain Specific Questions that was asked from these candidates.

Final Round:

In the final round, 5 short-listed participants were evaluated by HCL Leaders through an interaction on Twitter and 1 candidate was handpicked from amongst them.

Campaign Elements

Alternative/Insert Media:

The launch of the campaign was done with 3 teaser videos which, though didn't provide complete info about the campaign, just provided subtle hints about what this could be:

1. The Limit - talked about 140 word limit
2. The Fight - explained the need to using "texting muscles"
3. The Place - told that the interview can be taken from anywhere

Further, the 2 full length videos launched during Interest and Desire Phase explained the campaign clearly. The attached video stack has all the 5 videos compiled one after the other.

Banner Ads/Landing Pages:

During the campaign, banner ads were put on multiple job portals through HCL Technologies' account. Also multiple websites were targeted through Google Display Network. The major reason behind using banner ads initially was to promote the concept without telling that it is HCL Technologies' campaign. The idea was to create curiosity. Attached are the banner ads and the screenshot of the landing page that was used to obtain pre-registrations.

Collateral

Direct Mail:

Considering email marketing to be the best way to reach out given availability of email ids, the database of email ids of approximately 3 lakh job seekers was leveraged on. This database was generated by the form fills in career section of HCL Technologies' corporate website. Attached are 3 such mailers sent during #CoolestInterviewEver.

Print Advertising:

Printed Banners were used for Campus Outreach. Though the B-school students are widely available across social media networks, an internal survey of newly hired employees suggested that using Printed Banners can lead to a lot of awareness among them. Thus, banners were sent to 67 B-schools in India which ensured the maximum outreach among the students.

Search Marketing:

SEM was extensively used for promotion of the campaign. Since, the publisher of the ad was not shown to the viewer, it was extensively used during the awareness phase when just the concept was being publicized and curiosity was being built-up. Attached are the SEM ads which were used for approx. 75 job related keywords.

Social Media:

In order to bring clarity to the concept, the FAQs, JDs and the rules were made into banners for posts on Twitter and Facebook. The colour of the banner was as per its type. Attached are the post level creatives for Twitter. The same were replicated for Facebook.

Websites/Landing Pages:

There were 2 types of websites: Landing Page and the Full Website. While the motive behind creating a Landing page was to create curiosity, the Full Website was created with a motive of creating buzz around the campaign and informing the candidates about the campaign's process, rule and regulations, JDs and FAQs. Attached are screenshots from both the Landing Page and the Final Website. The Landing Page was launched during Awareness Phase and the Full Website was launched during Interest and Desire Phase.

Other:

In order to leverage 90000+ employee base that HCL has at their disposal, banners were created and put up on the internal online portals. These banners asked the employees to spread the word and refer #CoolestInterviewEver to their friends.

Results

#CoolestInterviewEver performed exceedingly well across all the parameters set for the success of the campaign:

1. Participants from more than 60 countries across the globe & media coverage from more than 50 international and national media worth USD 1 Million
2. The total engagement exceeded more than 250K, there was an overachievement by 25% in terms of engagement.

3. By the end of this campaign, HCL is leading the IT industry in reach on twitter with more than 201K followers ahead of global companies like IBM, Accenture and Indian Players like TCS, Infosys, and Wipro etc.
4. With trending across 19 cities & across the nation for 4 different days, the #CoolestInterviewEver campaign is an extension of HCL's employee-centric culture, designed to uncover new talent in the IT field while strengthening its position as a progressive organization utilizing new age media to refresh the recruitment process.
5. The total campaign cost did not exceed average spend on recruiting one full time employee by utilizing mix of organic & inorganic reach through different online & offline channels.
6. 25k+ increase in the number of followers in 2 months
7. 83% increase in follower rate in the last two months as compared to the last 10 months
8. Lowest Cost per engagement among the marketing channels.

Recognitions:

1. HCL Technologies was the best social brand in India from reach and engagement perspective in February 2014 according to an independent analytics report by the Social Bakers.
2. Awarded by AIMA during The Innovation Practitioners Summit.
3. Technology Business Research, Inc. (A leading independent technology market research and consulting firm) mentioned "HCL Technologies' #Coolestinterviewever Twitter campaign exemplifies the firm's strategy to move beyond traditional campus recruiting methods to attract creative problem solvers that can drive faster business value, either for clients or for HCL TECHNOLOGIES. The unconventional contest also demonstrates the firm's ability to leverage social media to reduce recruiting costs while maximizing brand exposure in the competitive IT hiring market."

Significance of campaign

#CoolestInterviewEver deserves an ECHO award as it resonates well with the philosophy of the same:

1. Originality of idea: World's first end-to-end recruitment campaign on Twitter that intrigued the Gen Y (Age group: 19-35) to participate.
2. Response Strategy: HCL Technologies' tone of engagement was so personal that the candidates felt as if interacting with a brand personified. HCL's philosophy of Employee first was exemplified in every tweet.
3. Interactivity: The interactive two way conversation with participants enabled it to Trend on Twitter across 19 cities in India for 4 days.
4. Impact: The results substantially exceeded the expectations making HCL the leading brand on Twitter.