WARC

Photoshop: Murder Mystery

Source: WARC Cases, 2015

This case study explores how Adobe Photoshop managed to reignite its fans' love for the brand through the launching of a Photoshop murder mystery challenge on Facebook.

- Adobe users did not receive well the Adobe Creative Cloud, seeing it as more of an impediment than a resource.
- Adobe noticed the Photoshop community was highly active on Facebook, and displayed a particular taste for the macabre, which led the company to devise a murder mystery challenge that would have simultaneously united the Photoshop community and raised positive sentiment towards the brand.
- The three-day challenge started with the dissecting of a Photoshop file (to be downloaded via the Creative Cloud) and continued with the possibility of interrogating suspects through Photoshop's Facebook page.
- Photoshop's Facebook community was completely engrossed in the challenge, not only were 1 million impressions made and 22,000 Photoshop files downloaded, but positive sentiment increased from 15% to 76%.

Campaign details

Client: Adobe

Agency: Edelman New York

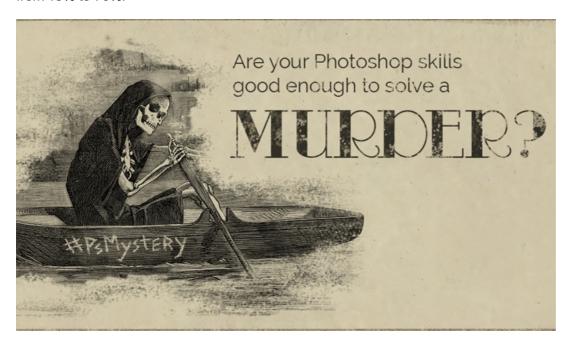**Industry:** Computer Software & Multimedia Productions

Media: Digital, Interactive & Mobile

Market: United States

Executive Summary

Last Halloween, American multinational software company Adobe launched a Facebook campaign aimed at

increasing positive sentiment and raising understanding of the Adobe Creative Cloud many users were still sceptical about. The campaign perfectly married Facebook – the most powerful community-forming platform of the world – with Photoshop – the most powerful design tool in the world. Posing the question 'Are your Photoshop skills good enough to solve a murder?' Adobe turned an unruly community of designers into a unified army of hard-nosed detectives. Over 3 days, the campaign made over 1 million impressions and 22,000 Photoshop file were downloaded (over half of those coming from the Creative Cloud). Via the game, fans finally understood the file-sharing benefits of the Creative Cloud, and, most importantly, positive sentiment increased from 15% to 76%.

Background

As of 2013, Adobe had ceased to offer its products on a perpetual software license and instead introduced the Creative Cloud, a monthly or annual subscription service that gave users access to the Adobe Suite. This change did not sit well with Adobe users, who rallied against the Creative Cloud claiming the superiority of what they saw as 'ownership' of a software to its 'rental'.

To increase positive sentiment among users of the Creative Cloud, Adobe decided to engage its Facebook audience for Halloween, launching a campaign that would primarily target Photoshop users and show them the endless file-sharing possibilities the Cloud opened up to them. Facebook, with its global reach, provided the perfect platform for Photoshop to unite and activate users around the world.

Strategy

The people making up the audience of Photoshop's Facebook page are mostly Photoshop users: graphic designers, photographers, students and other creatives. Like any group of artists, they love to share their work, and often post their creations on the page and comment sections. One particular trend we noticed was their taste for the macabre, with their work often featuring gothic, surreal, and gritty imagery. These insights led to our idea: a clues-based murder mystery in the form of a heavily-layered Photoshop file.

Execution

On day one of the campaign we released the scene of the crime, a file which users could download via the Creative Cloud. From there, fans would uncover a variety of clues – notes from a mistress, a love letter from a wife, a vile of poison, and more – through the use of Photoshop's design tools as forensic tools, allowing them to investigate through the layers of the file.

Fans were immediately hooked, sharing clues in the comments, proposing theories, and, when stuck, sharing Photoshop tips and tricks. The most skilled users went on to solve a puzzle that led to a hidden URL containing a secret Photoshop file.

On day two we released the suspects' police files, which contained the fingerprints and blood types of each suspect. Taking advantage of the platform Facebook provided, we let the suspects take over Photoshop's page, allowing our fans to interrogate them in real time in the comments: they asked questions – we responded back in character.

With all the clues released, our detectives made their cases using the elements we provided in our Photoshop files. They then created their own pieces of art, each unique and showing off the individual creativity of Photoshop users.

Results

In short, our fans loved the campaign. Many requested that we run one every year, one teacher gave the mystery to his design students to solve and, even after the mystery was solved, some fans continued to theorise about the backgrounds and motivations of the characters.

Over the three days of the challenge:

- The campaign made over 1 million impressions
- 22,000 Photoshop file downloads occurred, with over half of those coming from the Creative Cloud (the others from a traditional server)

- Fans finally understood the file-sharing benefits of the Creative Cloud offering and, most importantly, positive sentiment increased from 15% to 76%

The campaign succeeded in bringing together Photoshop users, sparking their imaginations while also reigniting their love for Photoshop and the Adobe Suite, all via Facebook.