

Adobe Systems: Photoshop live-street retouch prank

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This case study describes how Adobe Systems in Sweden promoted its Creative Cloud product by employing a Photoshop Live-Street Retouch Prank.

- Adobe arranges live-streamed online events called Create Now Creative Days for Nordic countries and was tasked with increasing attendance by 100% thus generating greater revenue.
- Using a hidden camera to photograph commuters at a bus stop, the images were immediately photoshopped showing people in amusing situations and relayed back to the stop where their reactions were recorded.
- These images were then transmitted on YouTube, amplified by bloggers who had been engaged to spread the message, and shared on Adobe's Facebook and Twitter channels.
- The small budget of 5,800 euros resulted in over 8.3 million views in 3 days and over 20 million views worldwide with a 613% increase in attendees.

Abby Norm

What were the objectives for the creative work?

Adobe is the global leader in digital marketing and digital media solutions. In order to create purchase intent for Creative Cloud and to strengthen Adobe's position as a creative brand, Adobe arranges live-streamed online events called Create Now Creative Days for the Nordic countries. An event where prospective and current users of Creative Cloud could see online sessions by creative speakers, such as the world-renowned Photoshop artist Erik Johansson.

Historically these events have proven to move customers from awareness to a purchase intent* so the objective for this campaign was to increase the number of attendees in order to increase the revenue outcome. Past events have attracted 6,000 potential customers , and it has never managed to exceed that figure despite several attempts and different ways to advertise for the event.

With a 40,000 EURO budget, Adobe asked us to use creativity to increase the number of attendees to the event by 100%, to 12 000 current and prospective customers. A real challenge for us as a agency.

What was the strategy behind the creative work?

Conventional event invitations are usually mailed and consist of some information about the speakers. With the ambitious goal of reaching 12,000 people rather than earlier target of 6000 people we had to think outside the box and use our creativity to achieve efficiency and use os of channels that gave us the opportunity to make it. The idea and implementation had to be something that stands out and creates a buzz. We had to create a whole new kind of invitation for this live-streamed online event. One that could spread virally in earned media and show off the talent of our speakers, as well as showcasing the creative potential of Adobe's products.

Our ambition was that this type of idea would help reach the objectives, but at the same time reaching the target group whom are creative web-savvy people. The thought behind our idea grew from an insight that the target group never misses when something fun, innovative and cool emerges on the web. If we would be able to make a piece of content that went viral, these people would be the first to see it.

The idea was to in a relevant way show Adobes product benefits and at the same time, in all simplicity, creating something that makes people smile. To demonstrate the simplicity and creative power of Photoshop we decided to bring it out into the real world and use it in a new, creative and surprising way. One of the best Photoshop artists Erik Johansson was given the tools to use Photoshop to surprise and inspire unsuspecting commuters at an ordinary bus stop.

What was the creative work?

How do you get the big internet mass to watch what's basically brand promotion, when they can see other stuff that's more fun or is more easily spread viral? The solution – a Photoshop prank.

Using custom built software, a hidden camera crew and the Photoshop artist Erik Johansson, we surprised unsuspecting commuters by secretly photographing them while they were waiting for the bus, and then photoshopped them into amusing situations and implied relationships, the whole process shown in real-time in the bus shelter ad space. We also captured the commuters priceless reactions which ranged from wonderment to sheer laughter.

To spread the film we chose an unconventional media plan; no traditional purchased media. Instead, we aimed for getting the video spread in earned media. Therefore was the film launched only on YouTube. To get a snowball effect, we used the scant media budget of 5.800 euro to engage bloggers to write about and spread the film. To keep the communication linked over different social media, we used the hashtag #CreativeDay.

The film featuring was posted on YouTube on June 7 2013 and shared on Adobe's different Facebook and Twitter channels, as well as on the Photoshop artist Erik Johansson's Facebook and Twitter channel. The event Creative Days went live on June 12 2013, and can still be seen streamed on demand.

What effect did it have in the market?

The creative work had a huge effect in the market and reached a lot more people than the originally target of 12,000 online visitors to Adobe's live-streamed event Creative Days. In total, the online event got 73,538 unique visitors, a 613 % increase over the 12,000 targets.

With more than 8.3 million views in 3 days Adobe's film became one of the biggest viral successes ever from a commercial operator in Sweden. More than 20 million viewers in 233 different countries saw the film of the prank on YouTube. It got world wide media coverage and it was featured on broadcast news media such as CNN, Al Jazeera, Discovery and Fox, as well as influential websites like Gizmodo, Mashable and the Huffington Post. It became number one on AdAge's Viral Video Chart over the world's most viral ads.¹ The film also got 756,338 Facebook shares. In total, the prank reached 180 million people and got a PR-value of over 12 million Euro.²

Please explain if there were any other factors that may have impacted on the effectiveness of your campaign.

There was not any type of other³ factors that impacted on the campaign as the film with its brand promotion only was spread in earned media.

What was the commercial gain for your Client as result of running the creative work?

The commercial gain for Adobe as a result of running this creative work was that AdobeNordics YouTube-channel grew from 27 to 27,290 subscribers.⁴ Which corresponds a 321 058% increase.

A survey made by Adobe after the event showed that people who had visited the event were 87% more likely to join the Adobe Creative Cloud, compared to non-visitors.

What do you think this case adds to our understanding of how creativity can be effective?

Creativity is a phenomenon that force people to think outside the established frameworks for creating something new, unique and effective. The questions are many on how effective creativity can be achieved, but the answer is as simple as - with the right creative tool, anything is possible.

The tool for this case is all about adapting to the target group and communicating with them in an interesting way in their type of media channels instead of communicating with them in purchased media. By doing that, one can achieve attraction and viral spread even on a brand promotion campaign. There are numerous of resistance against this type of brand promotion campaigns, but by looking into this case, one can learn that there is possible to weave in brand promotions if the creative solution is sufficiently astonishing. Lastly, this case adds to the understanding that there is no difference between a creative nor an effective solution.

Entry Composition

Type of Media	Date of Implementation	Budget / Media Spend	Percentage of overall budget
Adobe Nordic Youtube	June 7, 2013	0	0%
Engage bloggers to write about and spread the film	June 7, 2013	5,800 Euro	14,5%

Footnotes

1 Ad Age Viral Video Chart - <http://adage.com/article/the-viral-video-chart/adobe-photoshop-bus-shelter-stunt-tops-viral-chart/242053/>

2 PR-value calculated by Adobe's PR-agency

3 Adobe Nordics Youtube Channel - <https://www.youtube.com/user/AdobeNordic>

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