

Houston Museum of Natural Science Went Viral

The Houston Museum of Natural Science (HMNS) was one chosen to showcase the world-famous Exhibition for the Lord of the Rings Trilogy. HMNS quickly realized that while the exhibit was expected to generate a great deal of interest, it didn't have a lot of appeal for their core audience. The success of the exhibition, therefore, would rest in how it was marketed.

The Houston Museum of Natural Science quickly called in Spur Digital to help reach the targeted demographic audience and generate interest in the Exhibit. HMNS was, also, hoping to acquire new patrons and members to further their future revenue.

Spur digital worked with HMNS to identify the target market for the campaign and developed an integrated online media plan to reach those audiences. The campaign featured an online contest that was marketed through targeted online media outlets including relevant Web sites, Search Engines and third party E-mail lists. Viral marketing was an important component of the campaign, so Spur developed an innovative strategy to get people to refer their friends.

Spur identified the target audience as males 18 to 34 years old who were fans of action and fantasy films, frequent video game players and movie renters, tech-savvy who generally didn't hang out at museums. Based on this information, Spur chose search engine advertisements that would accompany specific search words, dedicated e-mail advertisements, sponsored e-mail advertisements, banner ads on web sites targeted toward the desired audience, and e-mails to the HMNS list.

Did it work? You bet! The results were excellent. The impact of the viral marketing effort was astounding - over 23% of registrants came originated from the Tell-A-Friend feature. The direct marketing efforts yielded impressive results as well. In total, the 12 week, locally-targeted online campaign yielded more than 2 million targeted impressions, 40,000 unique visits, almost 12,000 and 6,000 invitations sent by friends at a cost per action of less than \$3.00. These contributed to the record attendance of almost 100,000 over 3 months.

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336 words