Case Study:

NYC Health + Hospitals: Test & Trace Corps

Year: 2021

This case study was prepared for the client NYC Health + Hospitals for the service Test & Trace Corps to educate Latinos about COVID-19. It consisted of paid advertising reinforced with social media influencer outreach and trusted celebrity voices to connect with New York's Hispanic community. It was developed and designed by d exposito & Partners. In the Media Connections & Content Strategy category, it won silver.

Executive Summary:

New York City Health + Hospitals provides free COVID-19 testing throughout New York City and traces the contact of positive cases to prevent the spread through their Test & Trace (T2) team. Hispanics represent one quarter of the NYC population and were among the hardest hit communities in the country, so reaching them effectively was crucial to the success of the T2 program and the recovery of NYC.

Overcoming the sense of mistrust due to widespread misinformation and a strong degree of skepticism related to government initiatives, particularly from the immigrant community, was critical. To gain trust and motivate action, the message to the community had to come from the community. We developed a multiplatform campaign consisting of paid advertising reinforced with social media influencer outreach and trusted celebrity voices to connect with New York's Hispanic community. In less than three months, the campaign surpassed goals by over 30%, delivering 92 million impressions across multiple media and platforms. Results showed the campaign made a tangible difference in the fight against COVID-19, with a dramatic increase in COVID-19 testing. At the peak in December 2020, NYC reached a record 500,000 tests in one week.

Definition of your challenge:

New York City Health + Hospitals (NYCH+H) provides free COVID-19 testing throughout New York City and traces the contact of positive cases to prevent the spread through their Test & Trace (T2) team. In late August, NYCH+H wanted New Yorkers to get tested and to get tested often. Hispanics represented one quarter of the NYC population, and being one of the hardest hit communities in the country during the pandemic, reaching them effectively was crucial to the success of the T2 program, and the recovery of New York City.

The Key Insight & Strategy:

We identified two main hurdles for reaching Latinos. First, there was a widespread, general mistrust given the significant misinformation and disinformation that was pervasive, while there were very few in-language efforts to educate Latinos about COVID-19. Second, there was a strong degree of skepticism related to government initiatives at all levels (federal, state and city), particularly from the immigrant community. Given the anti-immigrant and anti-Latino sentiment that had been ramping up for years, many NYC Hispanics were hesitant to comply with any messages coming from government entities, like NYC Health + Hospitals.

Execution:

The solution was clear: to gain trust and motivate action, the message to the community had to come from the community. This was based on a longstanding insight that we as Latinos, while committed to being part of and contributing to broader society, feel a particular obligation and duty to help take care of our own; especially the relative newcomers. As such, we developed a multiplatform campaign consisting of paid and social media to reach and connect with New York's Hispanic community. Paid media consisted of Spanish-language television, radio and digital channels, and trusted on-air personalities helped lend their voices to provide longer form messaging to complement the ad units and inspire confidence in the Contact Tracers. Our bilingual social media initiative leveraged a diverse group of influencers that come from and are highly engaged with New York

City's Hispanic community, including four A-list celebrities: John Leguizamo, Luis Guzman, Angie Martinez and Fat Joe. Additionally, six local broadcast personalities and ten leading social influencers interacted with

Latino representatives from NYC H+H T2 team to inform and build trust to drive confidence, trust and action. They utilized tools and assets created by our agency team, combined with original posts capturing their own personality and flair, to ensure all content was genuine, believable and motivating.

Results:

In less than three months, the media campaign surpassed goals by over 30%, delivering 92 million impressions across multiple media and platforms. The one-month influencer campaign delivered 21 million impressions and garnered over 362,000 engagements. More importantly, we made a tangible difference in the fight against COVID-19 in our community.

The influencer campaign (combined with other advertising efforts and extensive community outreach) led to a dramatic increase in COVID-19 testing and helped the health system achieve 3.8M tests in 2020. At the peak of the campaign in December 2020, the NYC Test & Trace Corps reached a record of 500,000 tests in a single week. Micro-influencers have been key partners for community/city based COVID campaigns in NYC. Partnering with them ensured that +95% of the audience that engaged with our content was from NYC.

Industry Impact:

This case demonstrates the power of leveraging influencers of all classifications, particularly micro- and nano-influencers, when seeking to gain trust and participation of multicultural communities. Many broader messages, whether it be advertising from reputable public health authorities, like the CDC, or state and local government were not sufficient in motivating the Hispanic community on their own. NYC Health + Hospitals proved that broader advertising is critical but must be complemented with community outreach efforts; in this case through influencer outreach initiatives with trusted voices in the community. These results help increase the value of such efforts, and as a result, NYC H+H is seeking to do more campaigns with influencer strategies as part of an omnichannel approach to multicultural outreach efforts.