

NATIONAL LITERACY TRUST: WORDS FOR LIFE

Date	2012
Region	London
Advocacy area	Literacy
Annabel Jackson Associates Ltd role	We facilitated conceptualization and carried out a brief evaluation to capture what is special about the campaign and the National Literacy Trust
Methodology	Review of documentation, interviews with private sector sponsors

What happened

Words for Life is a campaign that targets the C2DE groups. Its objective is: “To encourage and empower parents from disadvantaged areas to actively and confidently engage in the development of their children’s language and literacy skills.” Words for Life built on NLT’s experience with Reading for Life, a legacy campaign from the National Year of Reading. Words for Life also integrated some of the learning and materials from NLT’s Talk to Your Baby programme. The first phase of Words for Life started in April 2010 and ended in March 2012. The three elements of the programme are:

- Partnerships with the private sector. The partners were Little Chef restaurants, Wimpy Restaurants, Toys R Us, Saga, Asda, and Haven Holidays. Projects were tailored to the business objectives and circumstances of partners. Activities included: reading corners, activity sheets/packs, competitions and free books.
- The Words for Life website which has hundreds of resources for children, parents and grand parents, structured by age, with sections for milestones, fun stuff and tips and info, themed activities and author interviews.
- Publicity and promotions with Take a Break magazine, Booked and Read It magazines, and partners own newsletters.

Reflections

Attractive branding

NLT worked with a design agency to create attractive and informal branding. This ensured that the campaign did not seem institutional.

The brand is flexible. It can encompass the individual private sector partnerships, the overall campaign, and the brand of the NLT.

It seems that NLT has created a positive and aspirational brand that private sector companies wish to be associated with.

Evidence-based design

The campaign draws on and reflects detailed research on:

- The barriers to parents engaging with literacy programmes, such as lack of time, lack on information on what to read, and negative attitudes such as the assumption that reading is not relaxing or associated with holidays.
- The drivers to improved child literacy including the importance of parental involvement and book ownership.
- The level and style of material appropriate for different groups.

Rooting the programme in knowledge ensured that the messaging was clear, consistent, and well-founded. The campaign was able to tackle parents' concerns step by step.

Style around influencing

The programme was based on social marketing theory and so explicitly designed in a form that would most influence the target group:

- The heart of the campaign was behaviour change. The actions were their own persuasion.
- NLT worked with partners that had contact with large numbers of the target group, had a strong trust relationship with customers and equally important, had strong understanding of the target group and a highly positive view of them.
- The campaign has positive views of the target group: that parents' motivation was to do the best for their children not just to keep them occupied or quiet.
- The tone of the campaign was positive and helpful, and therefore empowering. No part of it was patronising or judgemental.
- The projects included unexpected give-aways and activities that put the customer in a positive frame of mind.
- The hidden subtexts of the programme were consistent with its core messages: that books are fun, to be valued and useful for parents; that the target group was intelligent, well intentioned towards their children, and interested in practical advice.

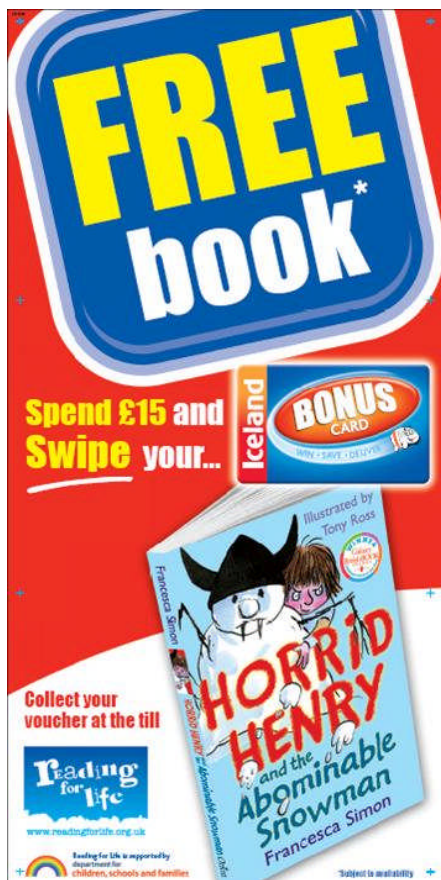
The campaign was generally consistent with the nine principles of the Institute of Government report on *MINDSPACE, Influencing Behaviour Through Public Policy* are: people are heavily influenced by who communicates the information, responses to incentives are shaped by perceptual heuristics such as avoiding loss, people are heavily influenced by group norms, people have difficulty breaking from pre-set behaviour, attention is drawn to novel and relevant information or experiences, reactions are affected by sub-conscious cues, emotional associations strongly affect actions, people seek to be consistent with their public promises, and people act in ways that make them feel better about themselves.

Agency

NLT has a central role in managing the brand and publishing partners. This agency role is necessary to reduce the time input from the partners, absorb any disagreement and provide an interpretation function. The agency role provides coherence to the individual projects.

Mutually reinforcing elements

The different elements of the campaign were mutually reinforcing. The projects delivered tactical projects and publicity customised to the business objectives of individual partners. The website provided practical resources to give the campaign longevity.



Mutually beneficial partnership

NLT understood and engaged with the partners' business objectives. The tactical nature of the individual projects allowed collaboration where objectives were broadly consistent. Business partners wanted to use books as a way of adding value and strengthening their association with quality; the subtext, that books are quality, is a positive message. Business partners wanted to encourage parents to spend more time in the spaces with their children; the subtext, that parents should spend more time together with their children, reading, is a positive message.

The team thought creatively about how to match the campaign to the customer values of each brand partner. The activity was designed to link to the company's brand story. Generally speaking, projects were about adding value to the customer offer, and thereby strengthening customer acquisition and retention.

Sustainability

NLT did not carry out follow up evaluation to see the impact of the campaign over time. The next stage of the programme will give higher priority to sustainability through seeking longer-term relationships with partners rather than tactical campaigns.

There is a general view that targeting C2DE groups is difficult. NLT found that targeting C2DE groups was not difficult, just different. They were helped by brands that have high opinions of, great understanding of, and a strong relationship with this group.

<http://www.wordsforlife.org.uk/>