

WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO SAY?



Case Study: exposure and Virgin Trains



□ exposure



In today's competitive markets companies are looking for new methods to increase brand awareness and create meaningful relationships with their customers. Digital technology and variable data printing can play a crucial role in developing brand identities and maintaining customer relations.

exposure, a leading communications agency, with offices in London, New York and San Francisco, took its first steps into using personalised print as part of a marketing campaign, for its client, Virgin Trains.

Campaign Objectives and Strategy

Virgin Trains wanted to encourage its customers to book tickets early for train journeys by purchasing Value Advance fares that are readily available but not fully utilised by Virgin Trains' users.

exposure decided the most effective way to demonstrate that train travel does not have to be expensive was to change Virgin Trains' customers' perception of the booking process and highlight the benefits of booking tickets in advance. In order to facilitate this Virgin Trains' customers were offered the opportunity to receive a personalised diary for 2008.

"We wanted to stress the importance of time management and to reward customers for their loyalty to Virgin Trains. We concluded that the best way to convey this message was to offer customers a complimentary diary," said Lynsey Fletcher, senior account manager, exposure.

"It was important that the diary represented the Virgin brand. Therefore it had to be an attractive, high-quality item that would be appreciated by the customer. We felt the best way to achieve these objectives and create an innovative product was to personalise the diaries," said Fletcher. "We did not use personalisation for its own sake but to add value to the diary."

Virgin Trains' customers were given the opportunity to customise the diaries in a way that would be meaningful and useful. exposure identified key customers who were emailed a unique URL providing access to a microsite – designed by glue London, specialists in digital creative work – that was used to generate the personalisation data and place orders for the diaries.

“The feedback we have received has indicated that the diaries have strengthened customer relationships and increased brand awareness. If it were appropriate we would definitely consider using variable data printing and personalisation in other campaigns.”

Lynsey Fletcher, senior account manager, exposure.

“This was a fantastic project for glue to be involved in,” explained Iestyn Keyes, account director, glue London. “We worked closely with exposure to ensure that the user interface we designed and built for the website matched the look and feel of the physical diary as much as possible. Our main contribution however, was using our expertise to create a user friendly interface that enabled us to capture a great deal of information whilst remaining intuitive and easy to use. We had some great user feedback suggesting we had done just that.”

Every diary had the possibility of containing thousands of combinations of data, with each page and date having the potential to include customised information.

“Hi there! I am so so excited about my 2008 Diary! Thank you so much! And can I just say how easy the application process was! It is such a good idea and the ease and speed of adding my personal info was a bonus!”

Sally, November 15th

The online form included options for inputting personal information, birthdays, anniversaries and forthcoming events. The diary was also personalised to reflect the recipient’s interests and lifestyle, giving each customer the option to pick three interests listed in order of preference. Options included Design Art and Fashion, Quaint and Quirky, Films and Performing Arts, Music, Sports and Family. Notable dates for these interests then appeared in the diary. The diaries were customised with reminders to buy train tickets in advance of a key date to encourage early bookings.



Production

exposure outsourced the production of the diaries to HP Indigo print service provider (PSP), Screaming Colour, who managed the substantial quantities of variable data, printed the diaries and coordinated all postal fulfilment.

“The most important part of the production procedure was processing and controlling the data,” explained Stuart Duncan, managing director, Screaming Colour. “For the project to be successful it was vital that each diary contained the correct information for its recipient. 70 hours of data processing were needed to write and test the complex rules needed to give the data the flexibility and accuracy required.”

Having processed the data, Screaming Colour then used personalisation software, HP Yours Truly Designer®, to generate the pages of the diaries, which were then printed on Screaming Colour’s two HP Indigo press 5000s.

15,000 diaries were produced over three batches.

Due to the high level of personalisation and the complexity of the job Screaming Colour implemented an in-house tracking system to ensure that the diaries contained the right pages in the correct order. Each diary was assigned a unique reference number (URN) and barcode, allowing the diary and its components to be tracked throughout the fulfilment process.

“The level of personalisation in the diaries and the inclusion of tailored interests ensured that the advantages of booking in advance were effectively communicated in a way that was really meaningful. We wanted the diary to be an inspirational gift and a nice surprise for our customers at Christmas that would be useful throughout 2008.”

Lucy Martin, sponsorship and promotions manager, Virgin Trains.



“Screaming Colour was excellent, the dedication and attention to detail was vital in ensuring the success of this project,” said Richard Tidman, production manager, exposure. “We had allowed a margin of five percent waste but Screaming Colour managed to complete the project with just 1.5 percent wastage, far exceeding our expectations.”

The diaries were perfect bound in-house before being outsourced to Aspinall of London – producer of specialist leather goods – where they were fitted with a hand-foiled leather cover. Screaming Colour then distributed the diaries in a bespoke box that was branded to match the highly distinctive Virgin red.

Personalised diary at a glance

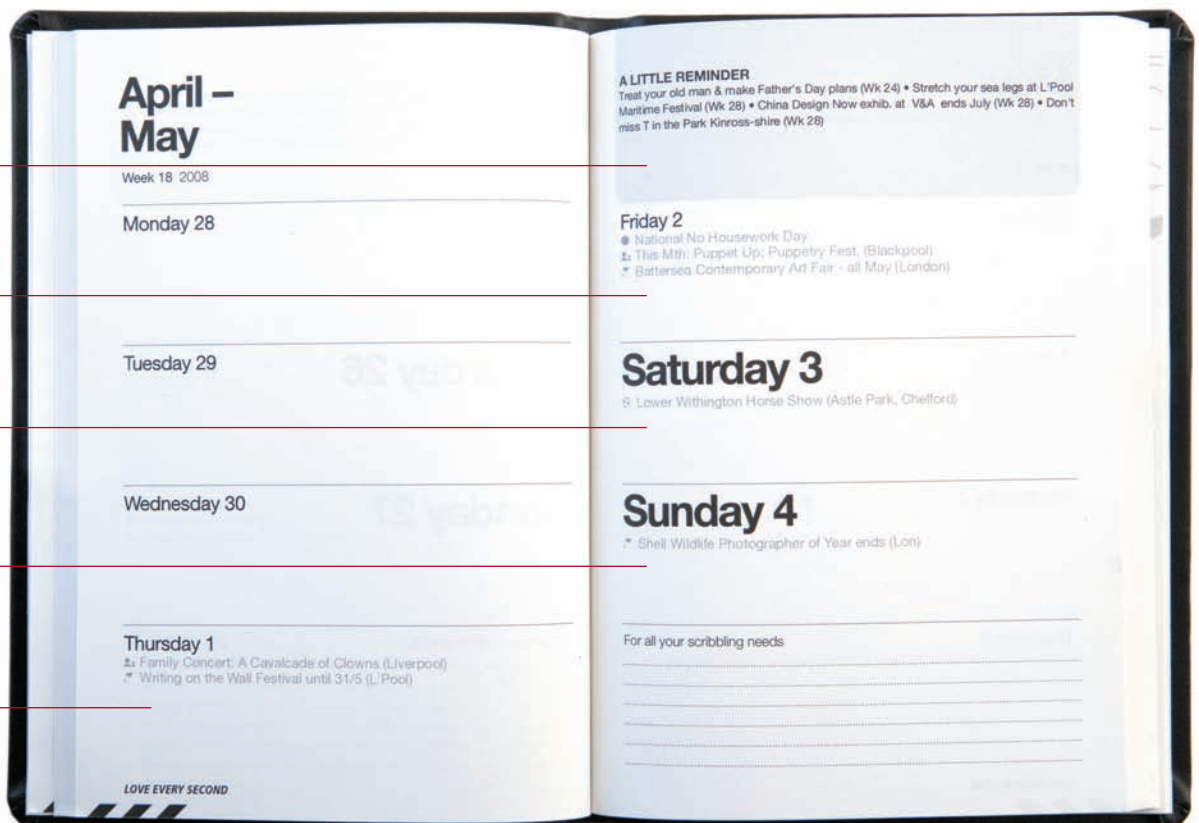
Every week reminder section personalised with the recipient’s upcoming memorable dates and interests.

Personalised to the recipient’s chosen interests including the categories Design Art and Fashion, Quaint and Family.

Personalised to the recipient’s interest.

Personalised to the recipient’s selected interest of Design Art and Fashion.

Personalised to include notable dates for interests including Design Art and Fashion and Family.



"Just to say a big thank you for my diary...I am thrilled with it and everyone I have shown it too is impressed (& jealous). No forgetting anyone's birthday next year as they are all printed in the diary! Once again thanks."

Janice, December 17th

"I have received my new diary and am absolutely thrilled – it is not often you get a freebie of such quality – thanks to all concerned and keep up the good work."

Kerry January 7th



Results

Emails sent out	82,921
Direct visits to the site	26,426
Visits from the homepage	30,248
Total Visits	77,568
Diaries claimed	15,000
Redemption rate	18 percent

Feedback

"We have been delighted by the response to the diaries and have had some very positive feedback from Virgin Trains and from the recipients of the diaries," added Fletcher.

Whilst it is hard to quantify the effect of the diaries on the sale of Value Advanced fares tickets yet, the feedback we have received has indicated that the diaries have strengthened customer relationships and increased brand awareness. If it were appropriate we would definitely consider using variable data printing and personalisation in other campaigns," concluded Fletcher.

Challenge:

- Virgin Trains asked communications agency exposure to raise awareness of its Value Advance fares. Virgin Trains wanted to increase customer loyalty and offer its customers a useful, high-quality, personal gift.

Solution:

- exposure decided to offer Virgin Trains' customers a complimentary diary, personalised with the recipient's interests and memorable dates, and also featuring reminders to pre-book train tickets for journeys.
- exposure outsourced the production of the diaries to HP Indigo PSP, Screaming Colour.
- Screaming Colour produced 15,000 diaries on its two HP Indigo press 5000s.

Results:

- 18 percent redemption rate on the diaries.
- The diaries have been very positively received by Virgin Trains' customers and have opened a channel of communication between Virgin Trains and its users.

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