

Bronze: New Product Launch

# McDonald's People Project - Your Passport to a Better Future.

A UNIQUE ADVERTISING APPROACH BY CAWLEY NEA/TBWA HAS TRANSFORMED THE PERCEPTION OF MCDONALD'S AS AN EMPLOYER ENSURING THAT MCDONALDS EMPLOYEES CAN BE PROUD OF THEIR WORK.

This AdFx submission is likely to be very different from any other entry you will receive in this competition. The primary objective was not about increasing sales, footfall, market share or the usual expected marketing performance metrics. Success for this campaign would be measured with the re-assessment by our audience of McDonald's as an employer creating the conditions whereby the McDonald's employees could be proud of where they work. This case study outlines the thorough strategic planning process that informed the campaign approach and highlights the potent results achieved by the campaign.

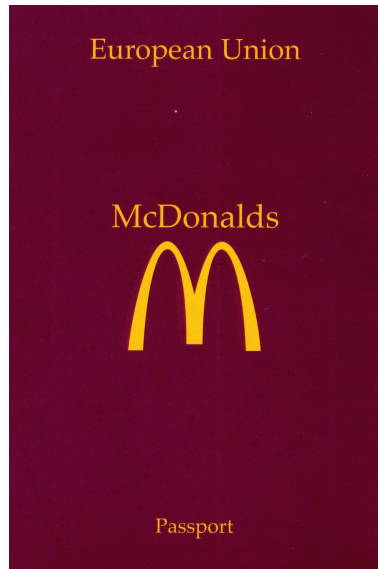
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## BACKGROUND:

There was a strong and general perception that McDonald's was a bad employer with restaurant positions seen as 'McJobs', being low-skilled and poorly paid. The 'last resort', dead-end job with zero prospects. Negative customer experiences with what they referred to as robotic-like service was also a factor that stigmatized those who wore the McDonald's uniform. Staff morale was, unsurprisingly, consequently affected – this de-motivating public opinion meant that it was difficult for employees to feel proud to work for McDonald's, to discuss the benefits of working there with their friends... or, for some, even to admit that they were McDonald's employees! No pressure then...

## OBJECTIVES:

Our early analysis showed that the reality was quite different from the perception. The fact is, McDonald's is a very good employer offering a fair wage, flexible hours, training for all, management opportunities, a chance to work abroad and a career for those who want it. Our objective for the McDonald's brand was to provoke a



total re-evaluation of McDonald's as an employer. It became clear to us that it would not be sufficient to simply state this case. So deeply entrenched were the prejudices, that we would be required to confront the firmly held perceptions in an honest and open way.

## THE STRATEGIC SOLUTION:

The Cawley Nea/TBWA planning team embarked on an in-depth strategic process to understand the perceptions of McDonald's as an employer from within the organisation, externally and from key opinion leaders. It meant getting out and talking to people about their perceptions and prejudices. Not surprisingly the task was soon christened: 'The People Project'.

## EXTERNAL SOURCES:

We spoke to young people to understand the essence of a first-time job and the influencing factors when deciding on where to work.

- We spoke to parents with teenagers working part-time jobs to understand their perspective on what is important.
- We reviewed best in class employer programmes and communications around the world.

## INTERNAL SOURCES:

- We spoke to McDonald's store managers to understand their view on what a part-time job can offer a candidate
  - We spoke to crew (McDonald's employees) to understand their perceptions and attitudes towards working at McDonald's.
  - We worked very closely with the McDonald's Human Resource and McDonald's Marketing departments throughout the process.
- ## KEY OPINION FORMERS:
- We interviewed Career Guidance Counsellors to understand the importance of a part-time job in the development of a teenager and the importance of the life-skills it can provide them.
  - We interviewed Human Resource professionals to understand the significance of candidates with part-time work experience on their CV.
  - We interviewed a University professor who is a key opinion leader on the health and obesity debate.

Then, we went to work! We gained first-hand work experience in McDonald's stores to really understand what it is like to be a McDonald's employee.

This initial understanding phase led to a strategic forum, whereby the 3 perspectives (and first-hand experience) were brought together to unearth insights that would lead us to an idea for the McDonald's employer brand.

#### STRATEGIC ANALYSIS:

Following our in-depth strategic planning phase, we developed a Maslow's hierarchy-style understanding of what is important (from the basic to the most rewarding) in choosing a part-time job. This was developed from the perspective of parents and influencers as well as young adults.

McDonald's in reality is nearing the top of the pyramid (in factual terms and also employee experience terms). However the public perception was such that McDonald's was not seen as meeting any of the basic needs. Our campaign would have to attack these mis-perceptions head-on.

The People Project would have to set the record straight and challenge the perceptions of the mis-informed. A softly softly approach would not work – the McDonald's employer brand approach would have to be bold.

#### THE IDEA:

The core target audience of teens seeking a part-time / first-time job informed our approach. This is perhaps the most cynical and most ad literate community - we knew they would decode our strategic intentions immediately and reject any gilded lily approach to the McDonald's employer brand.

The creative idea for The People Project was to confront rather than sugar coat the negative perceptions of McDonald's as an employer and expose the truth - that actually McDonald's can offer a lot in terms of training, flexibility and opportunity as a first time employer.

#### PROPOSITION: YOUR PASSPORT TO A BETTER FUTURE.

We understand that working for McDonald's is a stepping-stone for most people early in their working career. For others it can become a career with many options for advancement. Either way, McDonald's can provide you with experience and training to help you on your way.

#### THE CAMPAIGN:

The objective was to improve morale internally and to provoke re-evaluation of McDonald's employees and of McDonald's as an employer externally so naturally, we began with the employees.

We created a passport which records the experience of a crew member within a country and can enable them to travel and work in McDonald's abroad thus putting a greater value on their experience. This was the first manifestation of the 'your passport to a better future' idea.

We created a logo and identity for the employer brand. An identity that was youthful and representative of the diversity of experience and cultures.

We replaced the dated uniform with playful t-shirts more akin to what they are used to wearing outside of work.

We then took our McDonald's People message to the masses for the very first time. The tone of voice of this campaign was critical. We developed a

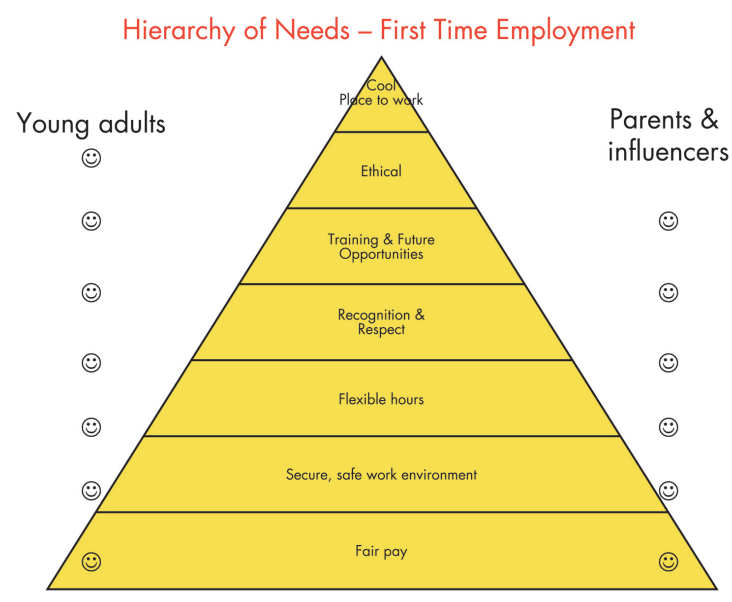
TV commercial designed to disarm the cynicism and negativity towards the crew. Instead of ignoring public perceptions, it was honest and upfront about them. Young adults don't like being preached to, sold to or lied to. We did none of these things.

The TV commercial depicted an employee being slagged by his mates for working in McDonald's. They taunted him as he calls for the soccer ball or orders a drink with the rejoinder: 'would you like fries with that?' This challenging approach took the problem head-on and ended with the line 'would you like a career with that?'.

We held a national casting session with crew members to select 30 cast members for the TV advertisement and create a sense of involvement, further engendering crew involvement and motivation.

We created DVDs for crew training rooms with the behind the scenes story and all cast received copies of the TVC before it aired.

We created a film credits poster to launch the campaign in-store nationally.



Source: Fastrack, Q2 2006

Staff turn-over is now at an all time low for McDonald's. (Source: McDonald's July 2006).

# McDonald's People Project

## THE RESULTS:

The impact has been phenomenal. The idea behind the 'McPassport' was to put a greater value on the transferable skills and training crew receive by enabling them to take their experience abroad. The European Commission has now selected our 'McPassport' idea as the lead programme to support the 'European Year of Mobility'. It will be launched in September 2006 jointly by McDonald's and the European Commission and rolled out to 25 countries.

Quantitative scores for 'Good Employer' jumped by an unprecedented 8 points, just 6 weeks after the campaign launched (**Source: Fast-track, Q2 2006**). This was a 30% jump after consistently poor scores over the years.

In recognition of the cutting edge employment strategy, McDonald's HR Director Michele Ryan presented the People campaign strategy on two nationally broadcast radio programmes. She has also been invited to teach a Masters in HR class about the development of Employer brands. The people strategy has been adopted by Irish HR Consultants as an example of Employer Brand best practice.

Qualitative research reports an incredibly positive response from our core target audience teens. Forum Research reports: "Recognising the stigma is 'refreshing' especially as it is done in a humorous and self deprecating way - 'McDonald's is prepared to laugh at itself.'" (**Forum Research, 2006**).

To augment the domestic qualitative research, McDonald's commissioned London-based international research consultancy (**H2 Research**) to conduct groups nationwide. H2 research reported that: "McDonald's advertising had high awareness and popularity in the groups. Respondents anecdotalised about the commercials. The new 'Fries with that' execution has entered popular culture". (H2 Research, 2006)

Cawley Nea/TBWA have presented the

McDonald's People strategy to the UK, French and Australian McDonald's teams so that they can apply the break-through strategy in their local environments.

The core target audience for the TV commercial was teens and the cut-through the communication has achieved with this group is remarkable. The language and jokes within the ad have become part of the teen vernacular and has "entered pop culture". It is a topic of debate around the country (Source: H2 Research).

The response from Crew, who are at the heart of the campaign, has also been remarkable. They have commented that their peers are discussing the TV commercial allowing them to speak positively about the benefits of working in McDonald's. Up until now, their peers have only had negative connotations and have not been open to hearing positive commentary. Crew are now wearing their uniform to work (ie publicly) for the first time.

## SUMMARY:

Increased sales, revenue, volume or value were not the intention of this campaign. This campaign was about getting our audience to re-evaluate the possibility of having a career (part-time or full time) in McDonald's. It was also to raise the status of McDonald's employees and have them respected as people just like us who were making career choices that would help them build a better future. The results since the campaign launched have been remarkable. Creating the conditions where crew can be proud to work is a long term objective. The People campaign has gone a long way towards achieving this goal. As there has been so much interest in the crew t-shirts with sums of money being offered to purchase them, the crew have requested permission to put them up on Ebay. Bidding for McDonald's crew t-shirts on Ebay? We've come a long way!

## BIOGRAPHIES

### Diane Tangney CV:

Having graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce degree Diane began her advertising career with a small, creatively acclaimed agency in the USA, working predominantly on the alcoholic beverage category. Her unique skill set quickly recognised, she was soon head-hunted by one of the top 10 ad agencies in the USA to work on their prestigious Volkswagen account.

Diane has won numerous creative excellence awards as well as a coveted advertising effectiveness award for acclaimed campaigns within the US and Canada.

Thankfully the lure of the old sod proved irresistible and Diane returned to Ireland and joined Cawley Nea/TBWA in June 2003. She is Head of Strategic Planning working across many major accounts including O2, McDonald's, Breeo Foods Ltd, Masterfoods and C&C.