



# Social Media Case Study: Yorkdale Shopping Mall

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# Background

- Yorkdale, one of the top shopping malls in the Greater Toronto Area, needed to drive sales in the wake of the 2009 recession.
- In the past, the Yorkdale marketing team relied on (expensive) traditional media.
- However, in the fall of 2009 they decided to try social media.

# Objectives

1. Boost sales (overall spend) from loyal customers. In malls, traffic = more spending.
2. 800 contest entries.
3. 500 new email addresses = strengthen shopping mall database. Yorkdale charges partners to access these names.

# “Yorkdale is Me”

- They created a competition to select 10 “unforgettable” people to be the faces of Yorkdale for a Spring 2010 campaign.
- Winners would receive
  - Free parking for a year
  - \$1000 gift certificate
  - Wardrobe consultation
  - VIP access at Toronto LG Fashion Week

# How it worked

1. A web site was set up to support campaign
2. Applicants uploaded a photo along with explanation:
  1. Why they loved Yorkdale
  2. Why \*they\* were Yorkdale
3. Applicants could be individuals or groups
4. 50 finalists selected for in-mall casting photo shoot
5. 9 winners chosen by a fashion panel and 1 by fan choice
6. Campaign was supported by press release, YouTube video, web site, Facebook fan page, 2 Twitter feeds, SMS (text) address and email blasts
7. Votes by text or through web site

# During the campaign

- Candidates were encouraged to use “whatever means necessary” to get people to vote. They took this seriously (e.g. waitress who hand-wrote “vote for me!” on each customer’s bill).
- Yorkdale shoppers who voted took receipts to guest services. They received a free coffee card in exchange for identifying for whom they voted.
- Yorkdale marketing team monitored and participated in the social media tools.

# Results

- Shoppers who submitted receipts (“influencers”) spent 49% more per visit than the average Yorkdale shopper.
- 1400 entrants.
- 1000 new email addresses.
- 47 new Facebook groups of 100+ fans.
- 2.7 million on-line votes, 130,000 by SMS text.
- Primary and secondary media exposure.

10 Lessons learned from Yorkdale's campaign, and how you can apply them.

# 1. Have a clear objective.

- Yorkdale knew that the best way to drive sales was to increase traffic - and thereby spending - from their best customers.
- Know your objective.
- Is it:
  - Increase sales from existing customers?
  - Find new customers?
  - Improve customer service?
  - Launch a specific product?
  - Something else?

## 2. Figure out what makes your target audience tick.

- Hard-core shoppers are passionate about where they shop - it's a reflection on them.
- Yorkdale correctly suspected their fans would want to publicly channel their shopping passion.
- Design a campaign that will connect with your target audience, something which builds on pre-existing behaviours or needs.
- Do preliminary market research to validate.

# 3. Make objectives clear, measurable and realistic.

- Yorkdale had specific targets for # of entries and email addresses, and had systems in place to measure.
- They also had a system and incentive to measure average spend per “influencer.”
- Their goals were achievable.
- Know what success looks like, in advance.
- Determine what metrics to use to evaluate success.
- Set up systems to measure and analyze results.

## 4. Set up social media outposts and be prepared to monitor.

- Yorkdale created an integrated campaign using
  - Web site
  - YouTube
  - Facebook
  - Twitter
  - SMS (text)
  - Email
  - Press releases
- Their team knew what they were monitoring.
- Use tools that your target market is comfortable using.
- Make sure efforts across platforms are integrated.
- Be prepared to monitor: know what you're looking for.
- Be prepared to respond - get help if necessary.

# 5. Borrow ideas from other campaigns.

- Remember Tourism Queensland's "Best Job in the World" competition from early 2009? It involved open applications, public voting, 50 semi-finalists, 9 panel-selected finalists + 1 crowd favourite. Sound familiar?
- Don't feel you need to reinvent the wheel.
- Research other success stories and don't be afraid to imitate.
- That said, make sure it's tailored for your audience and your objectives.

# 6. Make it easy for people to participate.

- Yorkdale made applying easy - upload a photo and answer a couple of short questions.
- Moreover, they recognized that shopping is often a social experience, so they allowed groups to apply. Smart!
- Voting was dead easy. SMS to clearly publicized numbers, or vote on web site.
- Don't overcomplicate.
- Weigh up registration requirements vs. word-of-mouth simplicity. Think beyond your front-line marketing needs.
- Put yourself in the customer's shoes. Would you want to participate in your campaign? Ask some friends, target audience.

# 7. Incent with something you already have.

- One of the plums Yorkdale gave away was free parking for a year.
- If you've ever tried to shop at Yorkdale on the weekend (or any other time), convenient parking comes at a premium. It's a huge privilege to have reserved spot!
- Cost to Yorkdale? Free.
- Look objectively at your resources. What would be interesting or valuable for someone on the outside?
- For example, an exclusive "behind the scenes" tour, or a one-on-one to discuss a customer's business issue, or free promotion on your web site, or...?

## 8. Let others do the promoting.

- Yorkdale permitted participants to use “whatever means necessary” to promote themselves, unleashing a storm of creative methods that would have been impossible for Yorkdale to predict or execute.
- Customers use social media too. Let them drive your campaign; don’t over-worry about maintaining control.

# 9. Leverage strategic partnerships.

- Yorkdale's panel of judges included Lisa Tant, Fashion Editor for Flare, and Amy Verner, Style Editor for Globe and Mail.
- Who else could benefit from and add to your campaign?
- Think adjacent industries.
- Think PR opportunities.

# 10. Share your results.

- Yorkdale candidly shared the results of their campaign, resulting in additional exposure and word of mouth.
- After all, you're reading this now.
- Why keep it a secret? It's another opportunity to promote, a chance to educate others.

# Recap of lessons

1. Have a clear objective.
2. Figure out what makes your audience tick.
3. Make objectives clear, measurable and realistic.
4. Set up social media outposts and be prepared to monitor.
5. Borrow ideas from other campaigns.
6. Make it easy for people to participate.
7. Incent with something you already have.
8. Let others do the promoting.
9. Leverage strategic partnerships.
10. Share your results.



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