



Case Study

2015 BRONZE EFFIE AWARD WINNER

"CLEAN OUR CLOUD"

Greenpeace's clean our cloud campaign raises the issue of how the decisions we make as consumer are having a negative impact on the environment. In a series of humorous videos, Greenpeace pokes fun at amazon, apple, and Microsoft while raising awareness of coal power data centers that power the "cloud". In just one month 215,000 people signed our clean our cloud petition, which then convinced apple to change their data centers to run off coal free, 100% renewable energy.

Competition:
Positive Change+ Effie Awards

Ran in:
U.S.

Category:
Positive Change North
America

Brand/Client:
Greenpeace/
Greenpeace Inc.

Lead Agency:
The VIA Agency

Contributing Company:
Humble

Product/Service:
Environmental

Classification:
Multinational

Dates Effort Ran:
4/17/12 – ongoing

Credits:
Kevin Phillips
Steve Street
Liz McLellan
Jennifer Klumas
John Budoin
Greg Smith
Teddy Stoecklein
Mary Hanifin



State of the Marketplace & Brand's Business

On April 17, 2012, Greenpeace published a report grading some of the largest Internet companies on how efficiently they powered their cloud services. While Google, Yahoo and Facebook were already moving in the direction of renewable energy, Amazon, Apple and Microsoft were not. As they continued to increase their cloud server capacity, 85% of their power was coming from coal. One of the biggest coal-powered data centers was in Maiden, North Carolina, run by Apple and powered by Duke Energy. This was just another example of the constant struggle Greenpeace was waging against dirty energy. (NPR, All Tech Considered, April 17, 2012) The overwhelming energy need to power these immense servers can equal that of a small city. In 2012, the NYT estimated that 30 billion watts of power were required to power cloud computing in a year — that is around the same amount of power produced by 39 nuclear power plants. (NPR, Turnstyle News, April 22, 2014)

Since Greenpeace had been focusing its efforts on converting dirty energy used in the Internet, IT and cloud sectors they'd had some success, but were still waiting for a couple of influencer companies to show some real commitment and help bring about change. As mentioned, Google, Yahoo and Facebook were already moving in the direction of renewable energy, while Amazon, Apple and Microsoft were not. Apple, especially, with its consumer loyalty to their products was a major influencer in an extremely innovative marketplace. They had a lot to lose if consumers turned against them for their dirty energy usage and lack of transparency.

Audience

Our campaign audience was internet-savvy, smart, educated and most likely had no idea the detrimental effect the cloud was having on the environment. They like using the cloud and the products/brands that gave them cloud access. They are defined as middle-class 'Prospectors' — people who define themselves by what they wear and own. We believe that by creating a global conversation between current and prospective consumers, especially in key markets (U.S., China) the companies would fear brand damage and respond to the initiative.

Beyond the initial campaign audience of cloud users, the cloud providers (Apple, Amazon and Microsoft) were the penultimate audience. We wanted them to see that their consumers cared about how they operated their businesses and that it was in their interest, as well as that of the planet, to change their energy sources to green energy.

Sustainability Objectives & KPIs

Greenpeace had seen Internet companies respond well to consumer or investor pressure, like Yahoo who was now getting most of their electricity from renewable or clean energy sources. By taking an assertive (but not attacking) approach, GP wanted to get more companies on board.

We decided to call out three of the world's biggest data center operators who use coal to power the "cloud" — Apple, Microsoft and Amazon — with a primary focus on Apple. The challenge was to raise awareness around the coal use without making them look like the bad guys. We didn't want to castigate them, just guide them in the right direction. After all, many of us love and use their products. In addition to raising awareness, we needed people to sign a petition demonstrating their support and use it to pressure these companies to change.

The ultimate goal was to get commitments and action from Apple, Amazon and Microsoft to change the way they powered their cloud data facilities.

Insight

Increased use of the cloud came with a magical component. Users didn't know how it worked, it just did. There was no clear tangible image of the cloud, it was this magical place that existed that stored our info and made it more accessible. One of the biggest challenges was to help users understand it as an entity that had a very tangible effect on our planet.

The Big Idea

Show consumers the direct correlation between their cloud usage and the usage of dirty energy.

Bringing the Idea to Life

For many Greenpeace campaigns, the budgets are production only and this was no exception. We developed three online videos with a lighthearted approach to this serious concern. All three scenarios start out grounded in daily life, showing common interactions with the cloud, then transition to the cloud itself, where three coal-shoveling workers slave away to power it. As they fill the burning furnace with coal, the workers philosophize over the cloud interaction they're helping to facilitate. Importantly, the videos sent viewers to CleanOurCloud.com, where they could sign the petition in support of a cleaner cloud.

The videos were released in the U.S. and around the world by local Greenpeace divisions. The videos supported the guerrilla approach typically used by Greenpeace, including worldwide protests and demonstrations targeting headquarters and stores. Mascots representing the companies were utilized in guerrilla campaigns and helped customize /specifically target them with a familiar entity. Greenpeace activists dressed as life-size iPhones and the Microsoft help paperclip "Clippy" outside of headquarters and stores to jumpstart the conversation with employees and consumers.

We utilized the Greenpeace social channels to help promote the campaign to current supporters. Press releases and subsequent media stories, as well as guerrilla-style demonstrations, helped generate more awareness outside of our existing supporter base.

Communication Touch Points

- Guerrilla
 - Street Teams
- Interactive/Online
 - Brand Website/Microsite
 - Digital Video
- Social Media
- Consumer Involvement/User Generated
 - WOM
 - Viral

Paid Media Expenditures

September 2012– October 2014:

- Under \$500 thousand
- Budget**
- **About the same** as prior year's budget.

Owned Media

The videos launched on the CleanOurCloud.com microsite. The site was linked to the Greenpeace website as well as their multiple social channels (Facebook, Twitter and YouTube). Integration between all of these resources created multiple points of contact with consumers and allowed us to collect the greatest number of petitioners without the benefit of paid media support.

Results

In the first three months of the campaign, more than 250,000 consumers signed the petition asking Apple, Amazon and Microsoft to power the cloud with cleaner, greener energy. (Greenpeace Press Release, July 12, 2012)

May 2013: Apple Hires Former EPA Chief Lisa Jackson as the head of environmental operations to focus on their environmental effort and help bring a level of transparency to their actions. (macrumors.com, 5/28/13)

11/3/13: Microsoft announced its first major commitment to green energy, by purchasing wind energy to power their Texas data center. They'd been relying on energy credits and carbon offsets to balance the dirty energy they were using, but now were also "promising to use revenue from its internal carbon tax to keep purchasing renewable energy." (greenpeaceblogs.org, 11/3/13) The 20-year agreement marks the first time the company will power a data center with clean energy. (ecowatch.com, 11/4/13)

11/15/13: The impact of the Clean Our Cloud campaign went even further that just the big three we targeted. Apple, Facebook and Google, along with the University of N. Carolina system, combined efforts to pressure Duke Energy to provide more than just the dirty energy it is known for. Duke announced a "Green Source Rider" program that allows its biggest customers to purchase renewable energy instead of Duke's standard "dirty" energy.

April 2014: Apple hires Bobby Hollis (former NV Energy VP) as the Sr. Renewable Energy Manager to lead renewable energy efforts and create energy supply contracts. (appleinsider.com, 4/30/14)

April 2014: Greenpeace's report "Clicking Clean: How Companies are Creating the Green Internet" is published.

"There is good news to report: since our last report, How Clean is Your Cloud? (April 2012), 3 leading data center operators have taken key steps toward building a green internet, particularly those companies that have committed to build a 100% renewably powered platform. These commitments are having a profound impact in the real world, shifting investment from legacy coal, gas and nuclear power plants to renewable energy technologies, and disrupting the status quo among major electric utilities."

The report also praises Apple as the most improved company since Greenpeace's last report in 2012, citing the company in 4 of its Key Findings.

- (1) Six major cloud brands — Apple, Box, Facebook, Google, Rackspace and Salesforce — have committed to a goal of powering data centers with 100 % renewable energy and are providing the early signs of the promise and potential impact of a renewably powered internet.
- (2) A number of leading brands, most notably Apple and Facebook, have made significant improvements in their energy transparency, discarding the previous dogma within the sector of withholding energy data due to competitiveness concerns. Transparency still remains weak overall among many brands, particularly co-location providers.
- (3) As a result of pressure by three major brands (Apple, Facebook and Google) located in North Carolina, Duke Energy, the largest utility in the US, adopted a Green Source Rider, opening the market to renewable electricity purchases for large customers in North Carolina.
- (4) Apple is the most improved company since our last full report, and has shown itself to be the most innovative and most aggressive in pursuing its commitment to be 100% renewably powered.

4/21/14: Apple published video on youtube.com highlighting their green initiatives, promising, "Now more than ever, we will work to leave the world better than we found it." (youtube.com, Apple channel)

July 2014: Apple publishes their Environmental Responsibility Report highlighting its progress in FY2013.

"For starters, every one of our data centers is powered entirely by clean sources such as solar, wind, and geothermal energy. So whenever you download a song, update an app, or ask Siri a question, the energy Apple uses is provided by nature."

They proudly tout, "We're still the only company in our industry whose data centers are powered by 100 percent renewable energy and whose entire product line not only meets but far exceeds strict ENERGY STAR guidelines."

Goals for 2014:

- Reduce our impact on climate change by using renewable energy sources and driving energy efficiency in our products.
- Pioneer the use of greener materials in our products and processes.
- Conserve precious resources so we all can thrive.

7/9/14: Apple announces third solar installation at the Maiden, N.C. data center, to be completed by 2020. (Renewableenergyworld.com, 7/9/14)

7/15/14: Microsoft announces deal to purchase 175 megawatts of wind energy from the Pilot Hill Wind Project. This will be Microsoft's largest wind project and will provide enough energy to power their Chicago datacenter and more. Brian Janous, Microsoft's director of energy strategy emphasizes that "Microsoft is focused on transforming the energy supply chain for cloud services from the power plant to the chip. Commitments like Pilot Hill ensure a cleaner grid to supply energy to our datacenters." (blogs.microsoft.com, 7/15/14)

Other Contributing Factors

This campaign is always ongoing and Greenpeace has brought the message to life in numerous ways throughout the years. Other campaigns that GP had run prior to the Clean Our Cloud campaign were CoolIT, US Coal Campaign and the Unfriend Coal Facebook campaign. The campaigns complement each other in an effort to have the biggest impact and bring about change.



Effie® Worldwide, Inc.
148 Madison Avenue, 4th Floor
New York, NY 10016
Email: info@effie.org
Tel: 212-913-9772
Fax: 212-656-1523
www.effie.org
www.effieindex.com



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