2012 Bronze Effie Winner

“How Microsoft Created a Search Engine for a New Generation”

Category: Brand Experience
Brand/Client: Bing
Lead Agency: Droga5

Strategic Challenge

The rivalry between Microsoft and Google has become one of the fiercest competitions between companies ever, unfolding across an increasingly vast set of products and services. There has not been such a rivalry in the technology sector since Steve Jobs faced off with Bill Gates and ushered in the personal computer era in the 1970s and 80s. The outcome of Microsoft’s challenge to Google’s dominance will define the next era of the Internet and our connected lives. In June 2009, Microsoft opened a major new front in their rapidly escalating war with Google by launching their biggest web property ever, the search engine Bing.

Despite a large, mass media advertising campaign after its launch, Bing’s share was below 10%, while Google maintained a dominant position over 70% (Source: Hitwise July 2010). Microsoft’s online efforts had been handicapped by Google’s ubiquity across the Internet, which was built up over the last decade across many products ranging from search, to mail, to advertising, to mobile, and many partnerships that extended their reach, such as search and maps on iPhone.
The growth opportunity for Bing was in “informed searchers” and “connected socializers,” which together account for 20% of all users and 47% of all searches. Furthermore, they are mostly secondary users of Bing, who if converted to primary users could result in significant share increase. We identified two micro-segments within these groups to target: teens and African Americans. They were chosen due to their size, openness to switching and heavy search habits (Source: Microsoft FY11 Audience Strategy Research Report).

Microsoft needed to shrink the Google market share chasm by becoming more relevant with youth generally and African Americans specifically. Even a fractional increase in share accounts for millions of search queries. And in the search business, more search queries = more advertising revenue.

**Objectives**

Our objective was to shift perception of Bing and drive usage of the core search product among a younger target and African American’s in particular.

*We had a set of key performance indicators to achieve our objective:*
- Increase Intent to use scores for Jay-Z Marcom recognizers with a goal of +10Δ
- Drive sustained online buzz with at least 1600 positive mentions and a positive sentiment score of 10%
- Migrate users from light usage to medium and heavy usage, with baselines of 8% and 3% respectively

*We used specific tools to measure this, including:*

We worked closely with Microsoft’s Bing and MSN Marketing Analytics Group to use a suite of tools to measure the program that was proven and used throughout Microsoft Marketing. We used Nielsen BuzzMetrics Tracking for social media and online mentions. ComScore Site Survey was used to measure the shift in intent to use and perception of people who went through the experience, and we measured it against a control group. We used a combination of tools from our media team and our PR partner to measure impressions in paid and unpaid media. We used a combination of Experian Hitwise and ComScore to measure market share, and Omniture Tracking to assess site traffic metrics.

**Insight**

To succeed, we had to challenge conventional strategic approaches that typically rely on identifying a singular insight that serves as the spark for a creative message and campaign. While we needed to get to a truth, this would only be a small part of the strategic journey.

Bing technology works differently than any other search engine or maps product. It’s designed to be a visual experience that helps people get what they need without overloading them with information. This is a difficult message to convey in advertising, and an even more difficult medium to persuade consumers of this truth. Primary research fielded by Microsoft concluded that only after trying Bing and experiencing the difference firsthand, would this target be more likely to switch.

Driving trial is no easy task. We uncovered several barriers:

1. Young people aged 18-25 have grown up with Google as the only real choice, embedded
everywhere on the Internet, from their browser to their phones. Google is a 12-year-old product. Teenagers especially have never known the Internet without Google as the biggest player.

2. Young people’s attachment to Google is habitual, not emotional. If there was a better search engine, they would consider it. But they cannot simply be told something is better. They have to experience it.

These barriers also helped us spot the weakness of Google, and identify the cultural opportunity for Bing. Google has captured attention for technology innovation, but it lacks cultural capital. It has no equity in entertainment or music or art. Instead, it’s seen as a techie, cold, engineering-led company that is talked about in media—less for its innovations than for privacy concerns and fears about its size.

Thus, our task became to overcome these barriers. We needed to combine the product truths of Bing with a relevant demonstration in culture. We laid out the brief to create a non-traditional experience with Bing, which this target would seek out, powered by and demonstrated Bing technology.

We needed to leverage the right canvas to give our demonstration strategy a strong cultural impact. This canvas had to be something that could be amplified and made better with Bing products. We identified the upcoming launch of Jay-Z’s autobiography, Decoded, as the perfect opportunity to create a compelling experience that would demonstrate the power of Bing Search and Bing Maps on a very large scale for our target. Jay-Z resonates with youth like no other entertainer. He wanted to launch his book in a way different from every other book in history, and we wanted technology to be at the heart of that.

The Big Idea

Over the course of a month, we created an interactive game experience that played out all over the world by putting every page from Jay-Z’s autobiography in a different location based on the content of the page, and connected them all together with Bing Search & Maps.

Bringing the Idea to Life

We built a digital gaming experience, built directly on Bing Search and Bing Maps, that allowed fans to discover each and every page of Jay-Z. These unique placements were accessible to everyone, regardless of their physical location.

We put every single page of Jay-Z’s book into media spaces around the world. The pages weren’t randomly placed. All 350 actual pages were strategically put in locations relevant to each individual page’s content. Strategy guided which pages would be placed based on content and relevance, and how and when they would get distributed throughout the program to sustain engagement.
The campaign used a variety of outdoor media all over the world, including high-profile placements in Times Square, the Vegas Strip and London’s Covent Garden. And if the media didn’t exist, we created our own. Everything from pizza boxes, plates, burger wrappers, jigsaw puzzles and T-shirts, to name a few. Fans sought out, discovered and interacted with this collection of unique, small-scale pieces.

The campaign came to life in places that money just can’t buy... Such as printing a page of lyrics from Jay-Z’s track “Big Pimpin’” on the bottom of the pool at Miami’s exclusive Delano Hotel, featuring a page on the stage curtain of the Apollo Theater, and a page as a bronze plaque in the Marcy Projects, where Jay-Z grew up. We even collaborated with Gucci to create an exclusive jacket with a page stitched in as the lining, which was featured in the window of their flagship Fifth Avenue store.

Strategy’s role was woven and extended into both the creative and production phases of the process by architecting the right kind of team together to execute it. There was never a handoff from one group to the next. Strategy helped cast the right set of skills across all disciplines.

We assembled a 50-person team, which included content strategists, art directors and writers, game designers, media negotiators, community managers, graphic designers, mobile developers, silverlight programmers, print and digital producers, photographers, clue writers, interaction architects and user experience designers.

Strategy also identified within Microsoft the right technical product team and within Jay-Z’s label, Roc Nation, the right music experts to be embedded with our diverse team. Jay-Z himself was part of our creative ensemble, helping to write many of the 600 different clues.

We even designed a nerve center so that we could execute and manage the program and quickly react to things happening to the people participating in Decoded. As this community engaged and reacted to the game, we would quickly identify a strategic approach and creative output to keep the communications constant and in real time.

We architected a highly interactive experience that blended together strategic thinking and creativity throughout. The campaign demonstrated the power of Bing technology by integrating the product experience credibly into a major canvas in culture.
### Communications Touch Points

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### Media Expenditures

The specific paid media investment for Decoded was $591,610, with a bonus media value of $468,117 (Bing Marketing Analytics Campaign Debrief January 2011 and Ikon3 Media Analysis).

#### Owned Media Sponsorship

**Sept 2010 – Aug 2011**

- ☐ Under $500 thousand
- $500 - 999 thousand
- ☐ $1 - 2 million
- ☐ $2 - 5 million
- ☐ $5 - 10 million
- ☐ $10 - 20 million
- ☐ $20 - 40 million
- ☐ $40 - 60 million
- ☐ $60 - 80 million
- ☐ $80 million and over

**YEAR PRIOR: Sept 2009 – Aug 2010**

- ☐ Not Applicable

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### Additional Marketing Components:

The owned media components came in the form of a few special locations used to page places that were either owned by Jay-Z, such as the Spotted Pig Restaurant and 40/40 Nightclub, or existing sponsorships or buys by Roc Nation, such as a NY area billboard. We also leveraged Microsoft (Bing and MSN) and Roc Nation (Roc Nation, Roc4Life, Jay-Z) online properties such as their blogs, websites, email lists, Twitter accounts and Facebook pages to distribute clues to the book page locations.
Reach:
Regional

Results
How do you know it worked?
☐ None
☐ Pricing Changes
☐ Couponing
☐ Leveraging Distribution
X Other (Please Explain)

Outside of Decoded, Microsoft continued Search Advertising, TV Advertising and Online Display Advertising, plus branded integrations on ESPN, CBS and E! networks.

Why are these results significant?
Our challenge was to grow preference and usage of Bing amongst a younger target, and in doing so shrink the market share chasm with Google. We measured the impact of Decoded in several ways:

Market Share:
Market share in search the month our campaign was in market went up to 11.8%, its highest point since its launch in 2009 (Source: ComScore November 2010 Search Engine Rankings). Bing entered the Top 10 Most Visited U.S. Websites list for the first time. (Source: Experian Hitwise November 2010).

Intent to Use Bing:
The campaign exceeded expected performance in driving intent to use, and perceptions of Bing.
- Among Marcom recognizers, there were significant increases in A&P for favorability (+12), Intent to Use Bing (+15) and perceptions (+13) compared with non-Jay-Z recognizers. These outperformed norms for increases typically seen for Marcom recognizers.
- We also shifted behavior directly with Bing’s current user base, as 25% of people who went to Decoded migrated from light usage of Bing to medium usage, and 9% migrated to heavy usage.
- The majority of site visitors (75%) fell into the targeted segments: 71% of site visitors were between the ages of 15-34 and 32% were African American—important microtargets for Bing.
- 71% of visitors to the Decoded site who were Jay-Z fans expected their usage to increase.
(Source: Bing Marketing Analytics Campaign Debrief January 2011, ComScore Site Survey, ICE Report)

Engagement:
Over 1 million people visited our site and spent an average of 11 minutes exploring Decoded.
(Source: Omniture Tracking November 2010)

Social Impact:
Decoded had six-times the expected buzz, with a total of 8,983 social media mentions with aggregate positive sentiment at 9%, above the Bing average. The campaign’s posts and tweets across Jay-Z’s Facebook and Twitter properties earned 500MM+ impressions. (Sources: Bing Marketing Analytics)
Media Value:
We used existing media in a new way and by traditional measures we also created an immense value in those channels. Decoded created a media value two-times the investment and resulted in 178.6MM campaign impressions from purchased and bonus media. PR drove over 500 unique placements in broadcast, online and print news outlets earning 683MM media impressions.
(Source: Bing Marketing Analytics Campaign Debrief January 2011 and Ikon3 Media Analysis)

Decoded helped make Bing relevant to a young audience, drive intent to use the products and contributed to steeling share from Google.

Our Intent to Use results show a genuine shift among our target audience’s interest, perception and preference for Bing, which performed notably better than other prior traditional Bing marketing efforts.

Our Engagement results show that more than just exposing people to a message, we created an experience that demonstrated the product and kept users involved over time.

Our Social Impact results show that we positively tapped into a cultural moment that benefited our brand experience.

Our Media Value results show two key things: 1) That an idea that people become part of and join into is more effective and efficient than traditional approaches of buying eyeballs, and 2) We can use old media formats in a new way very effectively, without having to create new technologies just for the sake of it.

Anything else going on that might have helped drive results?

There are no other notable factors we are aware of. Google is under antitrust investigation and has had a change in CEO leadership, but these events occurred well after our program completed.