



## Disarming Britain



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# ICROSSING MEASURES SOCIAL IMPACT OF CHANNEL 4'S DISARMING BRITAIN SEASON

Channel 4's recent Disarming Britain season was a groundbreaking approach to programming, taking an unflinching look at the increasing use of violence and weapons by young people on our nation's streets. The season featured a number of TV programmes and special online features dealing with the issue of gun and knife crime in the UK, to help raise public awareness.

### OVERVIEW

iCrossing, a global digital marketing company, was commissioned to measure audience engagement levels to discover whether the multi-platform programme content had a meaningful impact on viewers. The iCrossing study followed on from its recently successful Measuring Engagement project for Channel 4 Education, around the online game Bow Street Runner.

The Disarming Britain season was a major undertaking for Channel 4 and the iCrossing project was a radical approach to measuring the value of a multi-platform season of programming content. Channel 4 was keen to evaluate the impact of the season as its level of success could have major implications for planning and programme making, particularly in the areas of news and current affairs.

### OBJECTIVES

The project started at the beginning of June and ran for 3 months to the end of August. In the early part of the project the digital landscape around issues addressed in the Disarming Britain was mapped and monitored to provide a benchmark, and audience attitudes toward street crime in Britain were monitored across all major social media environments – including blogs, content communities, wikis, social networks and forums.

The digital landscape and levels of conversation and activity were monitored alongside Channel 4's TV and online programming output in order to assess how successfully audiences engaged with the content, helping the broadcaster to understand how to better connect with its viewers online in the future.

The specific objectives were:

- Benchmarking the digital landscape around the issues raised in the Disarming Britain season

- Measuring and evaluating the depth, effectiveness and impact of the season online

- Assessing the extent to which awareness of issues related to gun and knife crime have been raised by the programming content

- Looking for evidence of changes in attitude, perception and behaviour as a result of programming and online activities

- Measuring and assessing the impact of off-site activities: the Disarming Britain blog and Bebo profile

### STRATEGY

iCrossing identified that the development of a user-centric framework was necessary to combine qualitative and quantitative evaluation techniques with data from both onsite and offsite (conversations, mentions, links on third-party sites etc) into a single process and metric.

A calibrated engagement scorecard was created by iCrossing in line with Channel 4's objectives and identified measures of success. This was an evolution of the scorecard that iCrossing developed for a pilot project with Channel 4 Education earlier in the year for its online game, Bow Street Runner. The scorecard is based on a model for measuring engagement outlined by Forrester in their August 2007 paper entitled 'Marketing's New Key Metric: Engagement'. The scorecard broke metrics down into four key areas: involvement, interaction, intimacy and influence.

Active listening was a key component of the research, to understand the qualitative elements of user behaviour that cannot be tracked simply. Intelligence was gathered

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using iCrossing's proprietary web mapping platform, NetworkSense Mapping, which was used to draw a visual map of Channel 4's online communities, providing an illustrative representation of what its audience looks like around the Disarming Britain season.

In addition, iCrossing set-up a shared internal blog with Channel 4, which was used as a collaborative workspace where both teams can record examples, insights and links to related content.

## SOLUTION

The solution that iCrossing developed incorporated a large number of activities including:

- advanced web analytics
- social media monitoring
- sentiment analysis
- linguistic analysis (what search terms people were using and language used on blogs, forums and social networks)
- ethnography – analysis of behaviours in social spaces such as Bebo
- strategic analysis and recommendations

## KEY FINDINGS

iCrossing's connected approach to research into user engagement across multiple platforms and diverse media delivered a number of strategically important findings, including:

- Communities engaging in conversations were diverse, from hip-hop and grime networks through to fashion, lifestyle, and swingers' sites
- In general, conversations focused on social issues rather than the series or individual programmes
- The trailer was 'the star' of the season and generated a high volume of conversation and opinion online, highlighting the differences between approaches to online media and content and context of TV
- The Bebo profile proved a success, but as a result of a sustained community interest in issues relating to street violence, as opposed to peaking around programme activity
- "Cherie" and the strength of anti-Blair sentiment eclipsed discussion of wider issues in relation to The Street Weapons Commission, but raised its profile in news reports
- Peak in traffic to Channel 4 site properties was around June 30th, shortly after the second episode of the Street Weapons Commission and 'Kids, Knives and Broken Lives' aired
- In general, discussion sentiment around the season was mixed, but largely neutral or positive. The high proportion of neutral sentiment can be accounted for as much discussion focussed not on the season or
- The season itself was discussed in niche forums, most often in 'off-topic' threads. Typically, this constituted an open question as to whether other community members had watched any of the programmes

## WORKING TOGETHER

Jason Ryan, head of user experience at iCrossing, comments: "This was a fascinating project to be involved in, as it brought together so many measurement techniques across multi-channel programming content. We developed a deep understanding of the on and offline networks and communities affected by gun and knife crime, and provided information which we feel will be invaluable for programme planners and developers in the future. It was a truly innovative project which will hopefully pave the way for many others."

Sue Gray, head of corporate research of Channel 4, adds: "This pioneering project involved a team from across the channel (programming, new media, marketing and research) and aimed to explore the impact of a multi-platform public service initiative. It has provided much food for thought, particularly highlighting the power of this methodology for mapping the diverse communities which are engaging with major social issues online.

"iCrossing's engagement model lays the groundwork for understanding, articulating and capturing the different layers that comprise online engagement. The complexity of researching multi-platform activity was thoughtfully explored and has given us a solid base from which to move forward."