

BOW STREET RUNNER



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ICROSSING HELPS CHANNEL 4 RE-ENGAGE WITH ITS TEENAGE AUDIENCE

At the start of 2008, Channel 4 Education took the unprecedented step of shifting its entire £6m commissioning budget from TV to online and cross-platform projects, in a bid to re-connect with its teenage audience. This ground-breaking content strategy, spearheaded by Channel 4's new Commissioning Editor Matt Locke, came about after research revealed that its education content was largely unseen by its target audience.

OVERVIEW

Taking a measurements-focused approach, Locke wanted to accurately understand how target users are engaging with education content outside of Channel 4 online properties, to assess the impact of different types of content. He took the forward-thinking step of collaborating with digital marketing agency iCrossing for the launch of its pilot Measuring Engagement service, to assess how users engage with Channel 4 Education's new online game Bow Street Runner.

OBJECTIVES

- Evaluate the success of the Bow Street Runner game, to learn what 'viewer' numbers and results Channel 4 Education can expect from similar online gaming projects, delivered within a social media framework.
- Understand the kind of gaming content that teenagers can get passionate about and advocate.
- Have visibility on how users are engaging with Channel 4 content outside of the broadcaster's online properties.
- Develop a working model to ensure that future social media planning, from content creation through to game seeding, is based on more considered learning.

STRATEGY

For the pilot project, iCrossing developed a bespoke method of measuring and evaluating user engagement, both qualitatively and quantitatively, to evaluate what is driving user attention and influence around Bow Street Runner.

The strategy consisted of two key components:

- An engagement scorecard, to bring together on and off-site data, to show levels of engagement with the Bow Street Runner game, and associated Channel 4 Education brand.
- Active listening to understand elements of user behaviour that cannot be tracked simply, presented as a narrative on how the Bow Street Runner game is being discussed and engaged with.

SOLUTION

iCrossing developed a bespoke Measuring Engagement scorecard, based on a model outlined by Forrester in their August 2007 paper by Brian Haven entitled 'Marketing's New Key Metric: Engagement. In line with the Forrester model, the scorecard broke down into four key areas:

- Involvement – Are people coming to the site and playing the game?
- Interaction – How far do users get in the game? Do they come back, do they interact with other users and Channel 4?
- Intimacy – what do users feel about the game? Do they bookmark it?
- Influence – how far do users spread knowledge of the game through associated networks?

KEY FINDINGS

The results of the project were not focused on demonstrating the success of Bow Street Runner, but rather on using the game as validation for the measurement framework, and as a benchmark to show how target audiences are currently engaging with online Channel 4 Education content, to inform future output.

- Overall, engagement increased from the beta release benchmark, with users continuing to engage with the game as new episodes were released.
- Initially 30 per cent of user-generated content was positive, however there were similar levels of dissatisfaction over difficulty and bugs in the game. As these technical issues were ironed out, positive sentiment outscored negative.
- Engagement with the game was high within gaming networks. There was less engagement with other communities, indicating further potential to identify and engage within education communities for example.
- Geo-segmentation findings revealed that the Bow Street Runner audience was different to that of Channel 4 as a whole.

WORKING TOGETHER

Matt Locke, commissioning editor of Channel 4 Education, adds: "Working with iCrossing has allowed us to understand the appetite for more related content, which shows not only that we're doing something right with our gaming content, but more importantly that there's an opportunity to direct our audience to other sections of the Channel 4 website, as well as build relationships in social networks where we're being discussed and advocated."

ABOUT CHANNEL 4 EDUCATION

In 2008 we embarked on a new strategy to reach and engage with 14 – 19 year olds on their own terms.

We have shifted the focus of our commissioning approach from solely linear TV programmes, to innovative cross-platform projects that encourage a two-way participation, and offer the chance to stimulate conversation around learning experiences, rather than to simply dictate learning.

We are not putting 'TV on the web' but rather want to employ creative and distinctive ways of offering educative content to teens, focusing on issues derived from their needs and desires that may be outside the more formal education curriculum.