

How to reach your audience with content: Go native



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In a vast and evolving digital landscape, where competition is intense and change is sudden, brands face the increasing challenge of how to connect and engage with their audience. How can your message cut through the noise and hit its target? The answer: Go native. If you want people to engage with you online, don't expect them to come to you. Seek out your audience, win their trust and speak their language, honestly.

Lessons from a President: How Obama's message hit the target

Brands can learn a lot about communication from Barack Obama.

In March 2014, his administration was struggling to encourage Americans to sign up to ObamaCare, the subsidised US national health insurance scheme introduced by Obama's Affordable Care Act.

After a slow rollout dogged by technical problems, ObamaCare had only 4.2 million enrolments and was set to miss Obama's target of seven million by the end of March. With three weeks to go, Obama found a radical solution to connect with his core target of younger Americans - he appeared on comedian Zach Galifianakis' web series 'Between Two Ferns'. It was a stroke of genius.

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After two days, the short video had 11 million views and helped boost traffic to the sign-up website by 40%. By deadline day, ObamaCare had achieved 7.1 million enrolments.



Here are the lessons brands can learn from Obama's successful strategy:

Go where your audience is

Obama reached out to his target audience where they spend most of their spare time - online. In the US, 18 to 34-year-olds spend 3.8 hours on social networks every day. But his aim was specific. By focusing on a popular online series hosted on the 'Funny Or Die' website, he found his younger audience in a medium they call their own - comedy.

Partner with entities that your target audience trusts

Obama could have played safe and partnered with a trusted source in the healthcare industry, and then thrown huge amounts of bought media against it. But would this have reached his target? Instead he partnered with 'Funny or Die' and Zach Galifianakis, two sources trusted by his audience.

Speak to your audience in a language they understand, honestly

To engage with his audience in their native environment, Obama had to speak their language. He embraced the ethos of the show, exchanging banter with Galifianakis and allowing himself to be mocked in a way most political leaders would never do.

But it wasn't about Obama proving he was funny. His appeal on behalf of ObamaCare was direct and honest. By 'going native', he got across all his key messages in an authentic style that suited the tastes of his audience.