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Alaska Airlines North of Expected Campaign Leverages Social Media to Boost Conversion by 50%

Working with Meteor Solutions, leading airline encourages viral sharing of engaging campaign content – and finds 61% of people who arrive at the www.northofexpected.com website via word-of-mouth convert, compared to just 40% of those who arrive via other channels.

CHALLENGE

Since 1932, **ALASKA AIRLINES** has been known by its customers as the airline company that “goes the extra mile” to offer friendly service and accessibility. The company wanted to launch a wide-reaching, multi-channel brand marketing campaign to highlight the unique ways it strives to offer services that surpass expectations. Working with two creative agencies, Alaska Airlines decided to launch a branding campaign under the tagline “North of Expected” – showcasing the different ways the company makes life easier for passengers. This being Alaska Airline’s first major branding campaign in over 10 years, the company

wanted to do more than just spread the word about what made its services “North of Expected”. They also wanted to use social media in innovative ways to engage consumers more deeply with the Alaska Airlines brand.

SOLUTION

Alaska Airlines launched the North of Expected campaign in April 2009. The wide-reaching consumer campaign included billboards, print ads, online ads, television commercials, and Internet video, as well as an important social component centered on the North of Expected website (www.northofexpected.com). The main draw of the site was an interactive game where players voted on whether certain things – including night swimming, bears, and cold spaghetti – were truly “north of expected”, for a chance to win free flights, vacation packages, travel gear, and other



“The call to action of this campaign was not to buy a ticket, it was to engage with our brand, so we needed the right tool to precisely measure engagement and find out with precision the impact word-of-mouth was having on the campaign. We turned to Meteor because their tool is the only one on the market that enabled us to see exactly how many people forwarded our campaign links via email, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and other social means – and to measure how many people came to the North of Expected site after receiving a shared link.”

–Andrea Schwarzenbach, Manager of Interactive Marketing at Alaska Airlines

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fun prizes. Visitors were also invited to share their real-life stories about a “north of expected” experience. In addition, the site included all of the campaign’s television commercials and radio clips,

“The impact that sharing had on campaign traffic and conversion was really eye opening for us. A large part of the success of the North of Expected campaign came from people sharing links with others – and we never would have known just how critical this sharing was to our overall branding impact without Meteor Solutions.”

–Andrea Schwarzenbach

Manager of Interactive Marketing at Alaska Airlines

as well as link allowing people to share the site with a friend via email, Twitter, Facebook, or another social networking sites. Alaska Airlines publicized the North of Expected website via print, television, radio, and online ads, seeded the TV commercials to YouTube, and promoted the site via its official Twitter and Facebook accounts.

With such an important viral and social media component to the campaign, Alaska Airlines turned to **METEOR SOLUTIONS** to monitor the effectiveness of its word-of-mouth initiatives. Alaska Airlines used Meteor Tracker to precisely measure how many people passed along campaign content via email, Twitter, blogs, Facebook, and other social networks – so it could see exactly what percentage of traffic was coming to the site as a result of viral sharing. What’s more, Alaska

Airlines used Meteor Tracker to accurately measure and compare the conversion rates (signing up for the game or to receive a newsletter) of visitors to the site via sharing, versus those who arrived by other channels, such as typing in the URL, via a search ad, or clicking on a banner ad.

RESULTS

The positive impact of Alaska Airlines’ word-of-mouth initiatives on the North of Expected campaign surpassed all expectations; through sharing of campaign content, Alaska Airlines customers deeply

engaged with the brand. Using Meteor Tracker, Alaska Airlines found out that:

- » Nearly 25% of all visitors to www.NorthofExpected.com arrived at the site after clicking on a link shared with them.
- » Every day, between 400-500 new visitors came to North of Expected site via a shared link received from a friend.
- » On average, 50% of all conversions on the site were from people who arrived via a shared link.
- » Of the visitors who arrived at the site via a shared link, 61% ultimately converted, while just 40% of the people who arrived via another channel converted.

In the future, Alaska Airlines hopes to use Meteor Solutions technology to not only track the impact word-of-mouth has on campaign traffic, but to analyze the blogs, social networks, and sites where its brand is receiving the most buzz – so that it can target paid media buys to those sites.