



Case Study 12

T-MOBILE & YOUTH

PRESENTED BY MILLHAUS GMBH

Introduction

In 2006 T-Mobile Germany recognised the importance of introducing measures to improve its image and strengthen its brand awareness among the country's youth segment (target audience 14 to 25-year-olds). The brand's previous sponsorship commitments had struggled to meet this younger, thrill-seeking target audience both in the long run and on an ongoing basis.

Millhaus GmbH was asked to develop a new concept, which would complement aspects of the existing areas of sponsorship, essentially cycling and music, combining the two.

SPONSORSHIP OBJECTIVES

Given that the primary core target group, the BMX community (cycle sport + youth = BMX) appeared to be quite reticent when it came to sponsors unfamiliar to the sport, Millhaus GmbH decided to involve and interview cyclists, event organisers and other experts within the BMX culture about the needs in their area of interest.

What became apparent from these discussions was that they were strongly in favour of improving their infrastructures (facilities and competitions), as well as introducing measures to encourage young talent. It was also confirmed that we were dealing with an extremely discerning target audience in a volatile playing field, so a BMX campaign simply associated with Team T-Mobile's cycle race commitments was rejected right at the start.

From this valuable background information, the basic cornerstones of the T-Mobile Local Support programme were established and gradually introduced as an innovative project for BMX sport. In 2007, based on extremely positive feedback on how well the programme was received in its first year, T-Mobile Local Support was extended to other action sports disciplines, namely Mountain biking (MTB), Skateboarding and Wakeboarding and into the neighbouring country of Austria.

HOW THE SPONSORSHIP PLAYED OUT

To this day, the basic cornerstone of this grassroots marketing concept is the support of selected BMX, MTB, Skateboard and Wakeboard sports disciplines with various measures:

Local Support Spots

To improve the infrastructure, T-Mobile put financial support at the disposal of select facilities for the construction of new ramps and obstacles. For the first year of the programme, the recipients were selected, but from the second year onwards, each and every individual participant and every participating team in the T-Mobile Local Support Challenges has had the opportunity to win sponsorship for his/her home facility. As a result, thanks to Local Support, there are numerous BMX, MTB, wakeboard and skateboard spots that have received new ramps for the improvement of their facilities. These ramps display exclusive T-Mobile Local Support branding for an agreed period of time.

Local Support Challenges

While there were numerous local competitions, there was no existing national event format in Germany for BMX, so T-Mobile introduced a new series called the Local Support Challenges, for both professional and amateurs. Within a year the Local Support Events had developed into the most active and popular

contests in Germany. Thanks to their appealing format, the Local Support events now are considered a benchmark for the action sports sector. Participants compete both as a team, to obtain sponsorship for their local training facilities, but also as individuals, as they are evaluated individually to obtain qualifying positions for T-Mobile Extreme Playgrounds, an Action-Sport and Music event series. This sport and music synergy has also helped gain further acclaim.

Local Support Encouraging Young Talent

To provide support for young talent the Local Support Workshops were established. The workshops give the young participants the opportunity to learn tricks, to expand their repertoire and/or spend an eventful day with the heroes of their sports scene (for example the reigning European skateboard champion Alex Mizurov).

Local Support Service Van

A vehicle that had formerly been used to escort the T-Mobile cycling race team was converted into a mobile workshop, the Local Support Service Van, providing a free repairs service, spare part supply, soft drinks, and helmet and protective gear service on site. Since 2008, the Local Support Service Van has been touring Germany, from May to October, with its experienced crew, hosted by numerous action-sports events. Its presence, at no cost, can be requested by simply calling a hotline. This measure ensures a Local Support presence at a multitude of regional events and encourages direct interaction and the exchange of ideas at grassroots level.

Local Support Musik-Förderung (Promotion)

It is not only in the action sports community that T-Mobile Local Support is seen as a fixed component. In 2008, Millhaus' ongoing market research and discussions with music experts revealed the lack of a performance platform and support for young emerging bands. So, the project was extended and the Local Support Music Boost was introduced and became another cornerstone for the Local Support concept.

Local Support Band Contest

The Local Support Band Contest provides young emerging bands (Under 21 years old), across all styles of music, with the opportunity to win prizes up to a total monetary value of over €20,000. Bands can choose to use the money for new equipment, recording in a professional sound studio, to rent rehearsal rooms, merchandise etc. And in addition to the prize fund, high end equipment was made available by collaboration partners *Gibson* and *Sennheiser*.

The young bands have their own web presence for their projects (www.t-mobile-localsupport.de), giving them the opportunity to get extensive public exposure with their own profile and song/video. The public rate them and a shortlist of ten finalists is determined via online voting. A specialist judging panel of music experts such as popular German artists (E.g. Max Herre, Sepalot, Bosse, among others), music managers (for example Marc Liebscher / "Sportfreunde Stiller", Eric Landmann / "Beatsteaks", Gern Poets / "Madsen") and music presenters (Markus Kavka and Joko from *MTV*) then decide the five winning bands.

This new measure attracted more than 450 bands in 2009. The online voting system on the Local Support website received a impressive 351,287 votes within just a few weeks and 10,249 new online

community members registered during the first round of the 2009 band contest.

Local Support Music Workshop

In 2009, based on the positive response to the professional Workshops for young Action Sports talents, the Local Support Musik-Förderung was expanded to also offer an exclusive workshop. Even artists who had not been able to benefit from the Local Support Band Contest previously, now has the chance to get their music promoted. Countrywide, limited places for a total of three workshops were raffled off. These were a DJing and Production Workshop with DJ Sepalot (Blumentopf) at the German Pop Academy in Munich, a Song Writing and Business Workshop in collaboration with *BMG Rights Management* in Berlin and a Sound and Business Coaching opportunity with the Mannheim-based *Pop-Akademie Baden Württemberg*.

Industry Co-operation

T-Mobile's commitment has been strengthened and boosted by collaboration with several other powerful and respected brands in both the sports and music scenes. From the sports scene, T-Mobile Local Support is working with protection gear manufacturer Pro-tec, which offers helmets to participants of the workshops and challenges for free. Other industry partners such as *Titus Skateboards* and *CountryBikes BMX* ensure that the absence of sports equipment does not constitute a barrier to participation in the Workshops. From the music scene, renowned industry partners such as *Gibson*, *Marshall*, *Sennheiser* and the *Pop-Akademie Baden-Württemberg* provide support for the projects.

Communication

On a communications level, T-Mobile Local Support was and is accompanied by intensive target audience orientated PR work, whose focus lies in special interest and youth media. This public relations work is complemented with the collaboration of various magazines covering the different sports scenes, as well with the German school internet community 'Spickmich'. Since 2008, Local Support has also become a component of the T-Mobile ATL communications campaign 'Young' that is currently enforced intensively.

THE RESULTS OF THE SPONSORSHIP

Since qualitative positioning, as well as improving brand image and differentiation are the decisive aims for the sponsorship, the targeted communities are surveyed at regular intervals for feedback on the quality of the programme and the resultant awareness and image of the brand.

This occurs in addition to an annual media analysis. An ongoing improvement in T-Mobile's image is noted, reflected in the following comments from the core opinion leaders:

"Both cyclists and spectators fully embrace T-Mobile Local Support. Everybody who is recognised in the scene comes to the challenges and plenty is also done for young talent. Loads of cyclists wear the Local Support T-shirts. Absolutely unbelievable." (Simon Stevens, BMX expert).

"We thoroughly enjoyed the band contest. It was such an achievement to make it to selection by the jury and to be heard and judged by professionals. The jury was perfectly represented and encouraged everyone to take part in the contest. In any case, a contest in which nearly 500 bands take part is a superb opportunity for all bands"



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to get exposure and draw attention to them. The contest helped us to get ahead. Once again we would like to thank you profusely for such great support!! ”

‘Hey Joe!’ who took third place in the T-Mobile Local Support Band Contest 2009

T-Mobile’s marketing mix is optimised via close collaboration with the two communication platforms Local Support and Extreme Playgrounds that complement each other.

While T-Mobile Local Support looks after the authenticity and acceptance of the brand amongst participants and opinion leaders, the upcoming action-sports disciplines gain the publicity they deserve, thanks to the T-Mobile Extreme Playgrounds Events.

With the synergy of all of the platforms, the national sports and music scene is offered a strong incentive for active participation.

Within the framework of the T-Mobile Local Support Challenges and its team-prizes, both professional athletes and local amateurs are given the opportunity to secure themselves a position at the start in the T-Mobile Extreme Playgrounds event, where they can ultimately compete against athletes established as world leaders. The same goes for the winner of Local Support Band Contest, whose live gig rounds off the Riders Night at the T-Mobile Extreme Playgrounds.

In a short space of time, Millhaus GmbH has succeeded in placing the T-Mobile brand as a credible sponsor in the sensitive environment of a critical target audience, thereby enhancing the brand’s image.

T-Mobile Local Support is the first sponsor programme to have consciously banked on the idea of encouraging young talent and the creation of infrastructure for sports outside of the mainstream.

Not only does T-Mobile Local Support send out suggestions, wishes and criticism to its audience, but it also accepts them, making it one of the few - if not the only - truly interactive youth communication project. It is accessible to all and any interested party can actively participate in the events and in shaping future events.

Due to the range of areas covered there are numerous possibilities for T-Mobile to genuinely reach the desired target audience all year round.

“Thanks to consistent groundwork across the different sports and music scenes and through providing events on a world class level, we have developed an innovative approach, combining broad impact experience platforms and focused target audience marketing, into a successful concept. Our commitment over three years now, ensures that the sports and music scenes - from emerging young talent to superstars - recognise T-Mobile as an authentic partner. This has allowed T-Mobile to find acceptance in the complex youth target audience sector.”

Sven Ochman, Head of Sponsoring and Events, T-Mobile Deutschland GmbH

In early 2009 Millhaus and T-Mobile were awarded with the ‘Prize of Innovation’ at the International Sponsorship Awards.

Jan Mikes, Millhaus GmbH's Managing Director elaborates: *“The innovation award is a great honour for our strategic approach and authentic communication efforts. It is a clear indication that this sincere commitment to the action sports world is the correct choice for T-Mobile and also proves the growing significance of these sports disciplines. The trend toward individualisation in the young target audience will continue and it is precisely this kind of ‘relaxed attitude’ that makes these action sports and music platforms highly attractive on participating and therefore a great platform for companies to interact. And finally it is all about the right tonality of the activation and most important the open-minded dialogue with the target groups that contribute to a successful project.”*

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