



**Commercial
Communications
Council**

Comms Council Beacon Awards 2018

Case Study

Agency Name: PHD
Advertiser Name: MediaWorks
Gold Beacon Award Category: Best Use of Technology

Helping Newshub Win the Election

Up against major online news players, Newshub wanted to grow its traffic. With unique and innovative use of mobile technology, PHD deployed a smart content strategy around a major national news event, helped Newshub boost its numbers and won Gold in the Best Use of Technology category in the Beacon Awards.

Background

Most New Zealanders' online news habits are predominantly served by the big two players: NZ Herald and Stuff. Both these sites had been receiving significantly more page views than MediaWorks' Newshub site in an average week.

With page views linked directly to revenue, Newshub wanted to boost its figures, but a limited budget meant it couldn't simply 'buy' its way to page view growth.

Campaign Objective

Newshub needed PHD to help it realise a substantial increase in traffic for 2017, with a budget of just \$12k.

Campaign Overview

PHD's research into news search data led to its insight that at times of major events, people's relationship to news changes. Instead of a non-search related, habitual glance through the headlines, they actively search for additional information and opinion; and the more important the event, the more they search.

PHD identified that a big news event would be key to the campaign's success. The New Zealand election was just a few months away and the agency's strategy was to bias the organic search results in Newshub's favour around this event to drive traffic and increase page views.

It chose to focus solely on mobile news (which accounts for 70% of digital news) and used the budget to learn about Google's algorithms for organic search – information not shared outside Google – essentially reverse engineering organic search algorithms.

PHD identified four key algorithm processes that defined its strategy. These included the prioritising of speed of content load; use of the Google carousel; understanding how 'quality' content metrics work for news as opposed to other content; and using Google News sitemaps for immediate content pick-up.

Media Strategy

Implementing the strategy required PHD to work closely with the Newshub development team to ensure the back-end technology was in place to take advantage of what it had learnt about the algorithm processes that would influence search results and boost page views.

As part of this, PHD used a new, open-source mobile technology called AMP (Accelerated Mobile Pages) that no other local publisher was using, to ensure Newshub articles would load faster than others.

It also offset Newshub's issue of less content (due to fewer journalists) by ensuring the site answered more relevant questions. By examining the top search terms for previous elections in New Zealand and internationally, PHD could anticipate what people were likely to ask and created a framework of answers linked with relevant content, to ensure topical authority and higher organic search rankings.

Results

PHD exceeded its growth objective by 180% – achieving substantial YOY increases in post-campaign traffic and organic search. Searches for 'Newshub' are still up from pre-election levels.

On election night, Newshub was in the first 18 positions for almost all relevant tracked keywords - such as "Election", "Election Results", "Labour Party", "National", etc.

On the night of the coalition announcement, Newshub was in the first 17 positions for almost all relevant tracked keywords such as "Election Results", "Winston Peters" "NZ First" Coalition announcement", etc.

The 44 million impressions the strategy drove would have cost around \$240k in display, essentially turning every \$1 spent into \$20.

While it cannot be proven that all growth was directly from the campaign, there was no other marketing aside from the search strategy.