

lastminute.com

lastminute.com

employee engagement case study

our brief

“to engage 1800 lastminute.com employees across Europe in the most creative way possible”

a bit of background

On the back of customer and employee research, the lastminute.com group had been working hard to bring the sparkle back to their brands. To do this they had involved employees in focus groups from across the organisation to have conversations around the questions ‘who we are’ and ‘what we do’. This process drove the change. Now, the freshly revived brands, in conjunction with the business strategy story, needed to be communicated back to the people.

The requirement was to engage employees in such a way that they would be clear about the company’s strategy and brands, and start to love the brands again. They wanted employees to feel empowered to take personal to take personal responsibility for breathing new life into the brands.

Ultimately, the programme needed to be a ‘landmark’ in the history of the company.



a bit of background continued

From an employee perspective

From quantitative employee research carried out, we knew that employees wanted to feel more involved, have their opinions and ideas listened to more, and have the opportunity to be creative.

From a senior management perspective

Simon Thompson, Chief Marketing Officer, wanted a landmark event that would act as a catalyst for cultural transformation. Amanda Cumine, Director of Corporate Communications, wanted to ensure that the communication wasn't simply 'telling' employees about the brands and strategy. She was passionate about genuinely listening and giving employees the chance to be creative and involved.

From a customer perspective

Market research showed that although awareness of the lastminute.com group was high, there was brand apathy among customers.

From our perspective

lastminute.com came to us to design, build and run a landmark brand event in the history of their organisation. We felt that the way employees think, speak and act about the brands was key. We saw our role as coaching the whole organisation to think, speak and act about the brands in the most inspirational and creative way possible.

the target audience(s) and how that influenced our planning

Ten different regions, nine different languages and a range of functions from customer-facing teams in contact centres to support function such as technology and finance. Also attending were a number of outsource partners in different regions. A complex mix of audience needs and wants.

As the events needed to reach out and touch every single person within the organisation as well as understanding the differences, we felt it was important to search for the common denominator across this diverse culture.

After studying the last 12 months of employee research available, we decided it was time to really get to know the teams. We visited their offices and met with employees, checked out their chill-out rooms, their notice boards and their intranet sites. We even chatted with employees through Facebook. This told us that the audience was youthful, non-corporate and overwhelmingly wanted to be much more creative. They wanted to have the opportunity to chat with senior leadership in an informal environment and have their ideas and opinions listened to.

the communications objectives

1

To create a landmark event in the history of the company that engages 1800 people in the most inspiring and creative way.

2

To increase overall understanding of the company strategy to above 70% across the whole organisation.

3

To increase overall understanding of the brands to above 50% across the whole organisation.

4

To increase the percentage of employees who access and use the intranet to 35%.

5

To generate 10 big ideas during the events that would have a significant business impact.

what did we do

We brought together our team of workshop facilitators, creative coaches, filmmakers, artist and event organisers, to create an amazing experience that would unleash the creativity of 1800 people. 20 brand events across Europe - London x 5, Woking x 5, Paris x 2, Stockholm x 2, Munich x 2, Milan x 1, Barcelona x 2 and Thessaloniki x 1.

We planned, designed and delivered 21 highly interactive workshops to stretch the creative muscles of each and every employee, to give them the opportunity to take ownership of their brands and to create their own interpretation of what the brands mean to them. We called these events 'The Brand Gyms'.

The Brand Gyms

Each of the 21 'brand gym' workshops, involved up to 100 employees getting totally immersed in the new brands and coming out the other end having generated their own 'amazing' brand content. At each Brand Gym, local leaders presented the new brands and strategy that had been created 'for the people, by the people.' Executive leaders also attended each Brand Gym - and when we say attended we mean they rolled up their sleeves and at moments literally rolled around the floor with their local colleagues (we have photographic evidence!).

what did we do continued

10/90

The presenting rule we implemented was 10/90: 10% content input from personal presentations by the leader team. We kept it clear, concise and relevant to each local region and employee. The 90% was all about interaction and participants generating their own brand content. This meant that employees were listened to and had loads of opportunity to explore, discuss and debate the content. This was to ensure that we made it meaningful and relevant for them and their roles.

Employee-generated content

Facilitated by the artgym Creative Facilitation Team, during each Brand Gym, employees were transformed into advertising agencies. Working in teams, they generated their own advertising campaigns to express the newly invigorated brands. Some teams made TV ads, some made YouTube videos and some made giant art pieces. All the digital ad campaigns were edited in real time, and each team presented their brand masterpieces back to the whole group. This was then uploaded onto the company's intranet site where everyone could see and share the creative output from all the Brand Gyms across Europe.

Action-planning

During each event, we coached teams to think about concrete actions that they could take back to the office and implement straight away - ideas that would bring the brands to life in their offices. At each Brand Gym, each employee generated three ideas that they could personally implement to bring the brands to life. Then working in teams, each Brand Gym generated 10 'big ideas' that they wanted to work on together. As a team they then agreed on one big idea to champion. This was a joint decision between employees and the local leaders. As a business, they now have 21 big ideas they are championing.

what happened after each brand gym?

Employee-generated content spread like wildfire

The ad campaigns were broadcast across the whole company via their intranet site. A cross-section of these brand campaigns has now been integrated into the new joiner's e-learning system, creating a very powerful peer-to-peer based learning system. A number of the ad campaigns were broadcast outside the company on YouTube - employees really had generated their own ad campaigns direct to the customer.

During each Brand Gym, participants were facilitated in creating the content for a corporate strategy video. Using high definition camera, participants interviewed each other as well as senior executives about their experience and understanding of the company vision and strategy. After the Brand Gyms, these interviews were mixed with animations using images from the Brand Gyms and customer vox pops the participants collected from different countries. This video is now being used throughout the organisation to 'spread the news'. Employees' feedback on the video has been phenomenal. When it was last shown at an executive road show, the whole audience stood up and cheered and commented back to internal communications that they loved it and it made them proud to be part of the lastminute.com group.

Big ideas make a big difference

In each market, the 'big ideas' were championed by employees with the support of the local leader. In the UK for example, an employee from each Brand Gym (across three offices) nominated himself or herself to become part of 'The Bakery.' The objective, to deliver the 'big ideas' on behalf of all employees. The Bakery team meets on a regular basis and reports to management and the rest of the organisation on the status of each big idea. A company-wide update is issued on a quarterly basis.

Unexpected issues

In several offices across Europe they are using the 'brand artwork' created by employees during the Brand Gyms to brand the inside of their offices. Some offices have created wall murals using the artworks and other offices have framed their favourite pieces and displayed them on their walls. The theme for the events is being used throughout internal communications and the leadership team has said that they want to do it all over again.

the challenges we faced?

Pots of glitter paint exploding in facilitators' suitcases at airports!

Timings, budget challenges and cultural differences were the main ones. Cultural differences in terms of customs and styles but also in each country the brands are different i.e. Germany has additional brands unique to that market. Here Simon Thompson, Chief Marketing Officer, comments on how we addressed the cultural differences: "It has worked across multi cultures because there's something about dealing at the most basic human level so things like language and formality of certain cultures seemed to go out the window." Another challenge was sourcing international venues that were happy for us to use coloured paint and materials throughout the day... basically, to make a mess!

how we measured success in meeting the original goals and objectives

1

Employee feedback forms completed at the end of each Brand Gym

2

Qualitative feedback from Executive Team and employees

3

Deployment of new ideas

4

Ongoing employee engagement survey

Objective 1

To create a landmark event in the history of the company that engages 1800 people in the most inspiring and creative way.

The average satisfaction score by employees across all 21 events was 8.9 out of 10.

how we measured success in meeting the original goals and objectives
continued

We also have a report full of quotes from employees saying how much they loved the events. So here's just one that seems to sum them up:

“i think today has been awesome – i loved it. it's been great to understand the brands, it enables me to have a clear understanding of where the company wants to go and i feel very excited to be part of it!”

We interviewed the management team after the events and here is some of their feedback:

“i wanted our people to understand our customers and they do. i wanted our people to understand our brands and they do. i'm really confident that it's going to make the difference i dreamed it would. i was terrified before we started. i couldn't decide if i was brave or stupid and i think i was both, but exactly what i hoped would happen, happened. my real hope was that the people would start to love the company again, and they are.”

Simon Thompson, Chief Marketing Officer.

“it's been an epiphany to me in terms of all the ideas and the astonishing creativity of our people. it was the emotion, the energy, the passion, the enthusiasm, the creativity; you don't get people as engaged emotionally with a set of brands as you do in this organisation. the place is buzzing and awash with energy and that you can't plan for, you can't bottle it up, i wish you could. it just exists and it's here, in spades.”

Ian McCaig, CEO.

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how we measured success in meeting the original goals and objectives
continued

Objective 2

To increase overall understanding of the company strategy to above 70% across the whole organisation.

Across all events there was a 30% shift in employee's understanding of the organisation's strategy to an overall understanding of 89%.

Objective 3

To increase overall understanding of the brands to above 50% across the whole organisation.

Across all events there was a 31% shift in employee's understanding of the lastminute.com brand family to an overall understanding of 89%.

Objective 4

To increase the percentage of employee's who access and use the intranet to 35%.

After the events 85% of employees accessed the dedicated Brand Gym intranet site to view the content they generated and to interact with their colleagues.

Objective 5

To generate 10 big ideas during the events that would have a significant business impact.

At each Brand Gym one big idea was put forward by the employees and supported by the local leader. 21 big ideas were generated in total and all 21 have now been taken forward and championed by the leadership team through a series of strategic initiatives.

how we measured success in meeting the original goals and objectives continued

By designing and delivering an innovative, inspirational experience that addressed both the needs of the business and the needs of all employees, the Brand Gyms were a catalytic experience for lastminute.com. The results speak for themselves and above and beyond that, the Brand Gyms have created outcomes that no-one could have predicted. Who'd have thought that the ads made by employees during the Gyms would be downloaded and appreciated by customers on YouTube - this really was giving employees a voice!

The marketing department has now decided to use employee-generated content for external marketing campaigns. Teams across the whole business have used the artwork they created at the Gyms to bring their brands to life in their local offices. And 21 strategic business initiatives that came from the employees 21 big ideas are now helping the organisation become closer to its vision. And as Simon Thompson, Chief Marketing Officer, said:

“people have started to love the company again.”

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