



Newspapers across the globe were losing subscribers and advertisers at an alarming rate as consumers relied more and more on online sources for their news. Daily paper newspapers were seen as unnecessary by an exponentially increasing number of younger adults. All the data foretells an uncertain future for those in the newspaper business.

SITUATION

The Tulsa World, who had not conducted an advertising campaign outside its own medium in more than ten years, recognized the potential ramifications. While the situation was not nearly as dire as some other newspapers at the time, Tulsa World's numbers were still headed in the wrong direction.

Even online visitors to the free site tulsaworld.com were low, as most residents believed the website still required a subscription to access, which had been the case a few years earlier.

The Tulsa World hired us to achieve these specific results:

1. Improve engagement.
2. Increase traffic to tulsaworld.com.
3. Reduce subscription attrition.

INTELLIGENCE

Assessment: We studied the problem. We applied normal planning techniques: interviews, deprivation, journals, interactive groups. We took the Tulsa World away from the daily paper junkies and made them write about life without their fix. We forced web-crazed 20-somethings to read "the paper" for a few days.

When we brought them in to share their experiences with each other, the predictable happened. The zealous readers sounded like addicts who had quit cold turkey for a week. They waxed poetic about their beloved daily newspaper. The avowed nonreaders had softened. They found they had more to talk about with their friends when they read the paper, even though they still believed they were well informed without it. No real surprises in either set.

But then we put the groups together. The nonreaders, who had been brave and animated when they were with their kind, became submissive while readers dominated the conversation. In fact, the nonreaders were so quiet that we were frustrated and concerned that we weren't getting the insights we needed. We watched the tapes again and began to understand the dynamic that was unfolding.

In one revealing exchange, a group of women discussed a recent news story. A newspaper reader brought up the story and stated her point of view. A couple of nonreaders challenged her facts. She insisted. One of the nonreaders dropped out. One debated. The reader shot back by quoting the paper. Game over.

The Game:

We saw this little game played over and over in the groups. Some games lasted only seconds and involved just two players. Others lasted several minutes and the whole group played. We even started to see this happen in our hallways, at the water cooler, at bars, in line for the movies. We started seeing it everywhere, involving every imaginable topic.

We realized that we all play a game of one-upmanship with information. One person starts the game with another. Others within earshot quickly join. And the best source of local news in this city is the Tulsa World, bar none. A quoted fact from the paper trumps all.

THE ONE THING

Engagement with Tulsa World arms you with information to be a dominant force in conversation and foster human connections.



INFLUENCE

Know Your World:

Elements included TV, outdoor and print, each designed to have a slightly different impact, all related under the umbrella strategy.

- Brand TV spots began running in the Tulsa DMA in January 2008.
- Outdoor boards designed to drive traffic to tulsaworld.com went up in summer 2008.
- “Be a 7” print campaign began in fall 2008.

IMPACT

Not only was the account planning work honored with a 2008 Jay Chiat Planning Award Bronze, it has produced measurable results for the Tulsa World.

Goal 1: Improve engagement.

During “The Game” television campaign, traffic to tulsaworld.com from the Tulsa DMA increased 6.9% (from January 2008 through June 2008). Month-to-month gains in DMA visits were highest in February (1%), March (3.7%), and April (5.2%) during and immediately following simultaneous radio flights. DMA visits were essentially flat during flighted television in May and June.

Goal 2: Increase traffic to tulsaworld.com.

In July, DMA visits to tulsaworld.com increased dramatically (20% in June) because of a significant local event. During this time period, an outdoor campaign was initiated emphasizing the open (free) access to tulsaworld.com and driving consumers to the website. The campaign continued and the growth benefit from the combination of a local event and outdoor boards increased DMA visits by 29.8% since June with month-to-month gains of 5% in September and 5.6% in October of that year.

Goal 3: Reduce subscription attrition.

The “Be a 7” campaign launched in September 2008 and anecdotally resulted in stopping attrition in subscribers according to the Tulsa World. This is notably better than the 4.6% loss in daily subscriptions across the industry and a greater than 5% drop in daily circulation at 16 of the 25 largest newspapers.

DMA visits have increased 50% since November 2007 and monthly unique visits have increased 27% since December 2007, higher than the industry annual increase of 16%. We have found that significant local events such as the December 2007 ice storm and the bankruptcy of SemGroup dramatically increases traffic to and time on tulsaworld.com and that the combination of advertising with these events pushes the website engagement to higher-than-normal growth.

