

Toyota Heya: Connecting with Snowboarder Culture

How do you form a lasting brand connection with a logo-overloaded, hard-to-reach crowd like expert snowboarders? And then how do you extend beyond this niche crowd to reach a larger community of enthusiasts? By giving up top-down communication tactics and giving snowboarders the tools to connect, show their stuff, and entertain!

How did we do it?

First, define the goals for the community you want to reach:

Our goal was to build a relationship with pro and experienced snowboarders who inspire a larger community of casual snowboarders. Our ultimate aim was to start a conversation that would earn respect among the expert riders, which then in turn would reach to a larger community.

Next, find authentic partners:

Through Heya (www.toyota.hey.com), Toyota's youth-centered collaboration community managed by Drillteam, we partnered with Quiksilver to sponsor the Natural Selection Event in Jackson Hole, WY, organized by professional rider Travis Rice. Designed by snowboarders, for snowboarders, the event removed the false constructs of snow parks and half pipes, and used a natural-terrain course to bring out the best in riders' style and technique. We also worked with Rich Goodwin (<http://www.youtube.com/richiebeats69>), a prominent Jackson-based snowboard video creator, to develop ideas that would be celebrated within snowboarding culture.

Give up control and hand over the communication tools:

With Rich, we developed the idea of giving expert snowboarders the opportunity to create their own "behind the scenes" video of the Natural Selection event. Stunt and expert videos have been a huge part of the snowboarding culture since the days of VHS tapes, so we were building on a natural element of this community. Over the course of three days, Rich Goodwin and his team of expert and pro Jackson riders hit the slopes to gather footage from 20 different riders to create "You Shot This!" an 8-minute, high energy highlight reel featured on HEYA's site and on quiksilver.com.

Leverage the opportunity to learn:

While on the mountain, our brand ambassadors conversed directly with more than half of the 13,000 participants through giveaways, vehicle interactions, and other events. We conducted qualitative interviews with participants and

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organizers to develop insights on the board rider community in order to better understand how to connect and engage.

Celebrate the creation with the community:

According to the Jackson Hole Snowboarder Magazine, the screening event we hosted at the Jackson Hole Playhouse was a star-studded mix of professional snowboarders, industry legends, visiting media and local rippers gathered for a post-competition screening 'You Shot This!' ... which provides some rare glimpses into the on-mountain exploits and "shred shenanigans of local legends."

Finally, on their own terms, community participants tell their friends:

While professional media sources such as Fuel.TV, CW Now, Fox News and NBC delivered over 4 MM+ impressions for the event, we're impressed with online coverage given by the snowboarding community itself. Through well-respected snowboarder blogs and other media sources like EXPN.com and Transworld Snowboarding, the overall experience received over 1.2 MM online earned media impressions, and 8 MM PR impressions. The "You Shot This!" video extended the event beyond the one-week experience, and exposed a larger crowd of snowboarders to the behind-the-scenes fun.

"The best way for a brand to approach this community is by doing exactly what HEYA is doing... finding out what we're all about first."

-Jeff Moran, lifelong rider and one of the camera crew for "You Shot This!"

Client: Toyota

Agency: Drillteam Marketing

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