

Cassies 2006 Cases

Brand/Case: D.E.S.S. Recruitment Campaign

Winner: Events, Seasonal & Short Term—Bronze

Client Credits: AAPQ and HEC Montréal

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Agency Credits: TAXI Montréal

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Crossover Notes: All winning cases contain lessons that cross over from one case to another. David Rutherford has been identifying these as Crossover Notes since Cassies 1997. The full set for Cassies 2006 can be downloaded from the Case Library section at www.cassies.ca

- Crossover Note 6. Should the Product be Improved?
- Crossover Note 16. When a campaign stumbles.
- Crossover Note 18. Keeping it Simple.
- Crossover Note 22. Humour in a Serious Category.

To see creative, go to the Case Library Index and click on the additional links beside the case.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Business Results Period:	March 2006 to May 2006
Start of Advertising/Communication Effort:	March 2006
Base period for comparison:	March 2006 to May 2005

Note:

DESSCM is the *Diplôme d'études supérieures spécialisées en Communication Marketing* offered by HEC Montréal.

HEC Montréal is the *École des Hautes Etudes Commerciales*— the business school affiliated with the University of Montreal.

AAPQ is the Association of Quebec Advertising Agencies.

The DESSCM course had rave reviews and an excellent reputation. However, the AAPQ and HEC Montréal noticed a certain flattening in the number of candidates proposed by member agencies. [Crossover Note 6](#).

This case tells how an animated character called Flo helped convince students that the time, effort and cost to complete the two-year DESSCM course was justified.

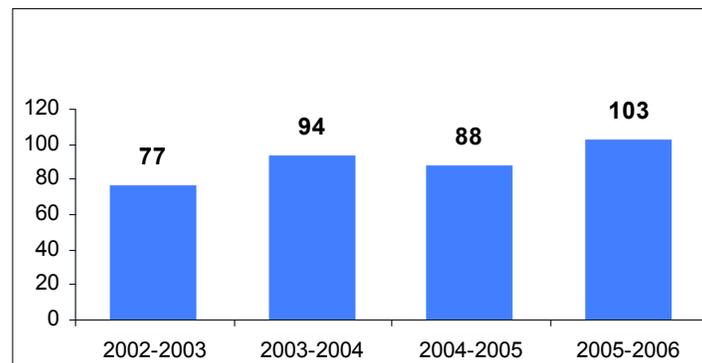
The number of people attending the pre-application information session doubled from 2005 to 2006. This was followed by an unprecedented 48% increase in applications.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

Six years ago, in conjunction with the AAPQ, HEC Montréal established the DESSCM – an accredited graduate diploma program, taught by professionals, to improve marketing communication skills for young professionals in the field. Sessions were on alternate Fridays and Saturdays over a two-year period on a part-time basis.

Since its inception, the DESSCM has had 159 students, 40 from agencies. HEC gets nearly 90 applications a year, but because of stringent selection criteria, only 30 or 35 people are admitted. The DESSCM enjoys a good deal of awareness and an excellent reputation. But there were signs that demand may be flattening: [Crossover Note 16](#).

Figure 1. Admission Requests 2002 - 2006



Source : HEC Montréal

In addressing this, we were faced with the following constraints:

- A very limited budget
- Competition in the field (conferences, workshops and other academic courses)
- Employers often reticent to lose employees every other Friday for two years
- The program itself, in that it represented an enormous investment in time, effort and money for prospective students

For the Fall 2006 session, we had to broaden the pool of viable candidates, and emphasize the benefits of the program. The principal objectives were:

- To increase participation in the program's evening information session
- Increase the number of quality applications
- Enhance the value of the program in the eyes of agencies

STRATEGY AND INSIGHT

This was defined by a number of group discussions with program graduates. One very clear viewpoint was that "DESSCM is not just something you hang on the wall – it's something that commands attention." DESS gives credibility and confidence that engenders respect from peers and clients. This in turn allows graduates to move their careers forward.

The primary target was young professionals working in agencies or clients or media. Our secondary target was employers and program graduates.

We decided that we needed a fresh new creative platform that would make going to school seem exciting, convincing the audience that the investment necessary to earn the DESSCM diploma is indeed justified.

We also needed a media plan that would get the most out of the limited budget.

EXECUTION

From a media point of view *Infopresse* was the obvious partner. This electronic daily goes Monday through Friday to nearly 19,000 subscribers in marketing communication and related industries. On average, 70% of subscribers consult the service. The daily edition is also supported by a magazine that features contests, conferences and workshops directed to the industry.

This concentration on *Infopresse* allowed us to direct visitors to a dynamic microsite designed for the 2006 recruitment campaign. Added to this we had a targeted e-marketing campaign aimed at *Infopresse* subscribers, program graduates and their employers. We also had a direct marketing piece for graduates.

Creatively, everything was designed around a fresh new animated character called Flo. She was not only the spokesperson; she also personified the target audience. Flo made going to school exciting, and she also delighted industry people, thus creating a synergy which maximized impact. **Crossover Notes 18 and 22.** These are the specifics of the plan:

1. On-Line campaign on the Infopresse Portal

It was essential to differentiate ourselves from the usual banner ads. To do this, we chose redirected visitors to www.faitesvotredesscm.com (rather than the official HEC site, www.hec.ca which focused more on information than recruitment.)

2. Faitesvotredesscm .com (Getyourdesscm.com)

This served as a leitmotif in the campaign, surprising visitors and softening the sometimes severe image of the HEC. The site had two short animated films featuring Flo in various situations, highlighting the benefits of the program. We also asked visitors to sign up for the information evening. This got us e-mail addresses for later follow up.

3. Attendance at Infopresse days

At every information day during the campaign, we had a kiosk near the conference hall where it was possible to sign up for the information session and pick up handouts on DESSCM. The kiosk was covered with cut-outs of Flo, and a laptop computer continuously showed the animated films from the microsite. We also had information brochures supplied by HEC, complete with Flo stickers.

4. Several flights of e-marketing

These maintained continuous interest right up to the deadline for submission of candidate applications.

5. Direct marketing aimed at program graduates

A group discussion with program graduates allowed us to test their loyalty to the program, and get a feeling for just how persuasive they would be as goodwill ambassadors. The results moved us to get their participation for the Fall 2006 recruitment effort.

The objective of this direct marketing piece was to alert graduates to the campaign launch, and the importance of their role in recruiting students for the Fall 2006 session.

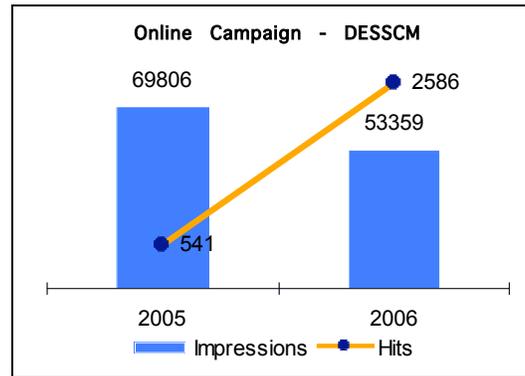
To accomplish this, we mailed a package to every graduate who had ever been in the program. This package contained a Flo pin, a flip book, and a brochure containing information which they were to pass on to potential candidates.

BUSINESS RESULTS

1. Web Campaign:

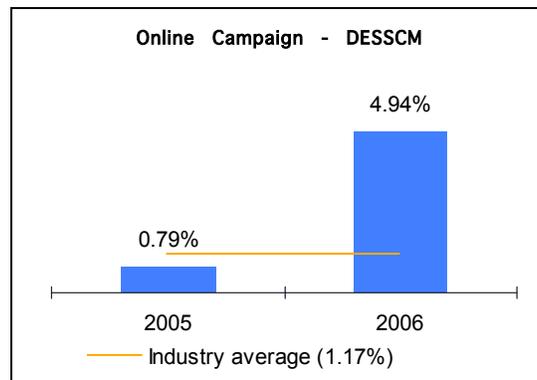
The hits generated by the campaign were five times higher in 2006 than in 2005.

Figure 2. Change in impressions and number of hits



The rate of hits, taking the number of impressions into account, was well above the industry average:

Figure 3. Comparing the rate of hits



Sources: 2005 by AAPQ, 2006 data by les Editions Infopresse, Industry average, DART Q3, 2004

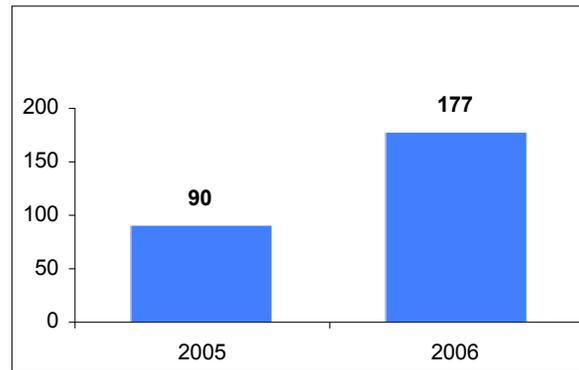
2. Web Site Traffic:

The *Infopresse* portal drew 6,152 unique visitors in March 06 to the DESSCM site (hec.ca/programmes/desscm) and 5,041 to the microsite (faitesvotredesscm). These excellent results increased the number of visitors to the information evening and considerably increased the number of applications for the Fall 2006 session.

3. Attendance at the Information Evening

Of the 237 enrolments through the dess.cm@hec.ca and aapq@appq.ca web sites, 177 people attended. This is twice the number of people who generally attend this type of evening hosted by DESSCM.

Figure 4. Attendance at the Information Session

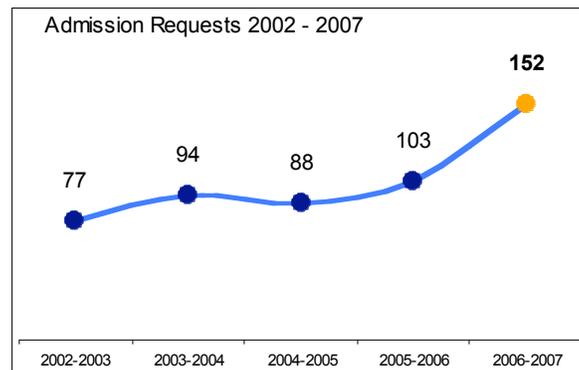


Source: HEC Montréal

4. Number of Candidate Applications

This year, there were 152 candidate applications, compared to 103 last year. This is an increase of 48 %.

Figure 5. Applications



Source: HEC Montréal

CAUSE & EFFECT BETWEEN ADVERTISING AND RESULTS

Since its inception in 2000 neither the contribution of the DESSCM nor the budget allocated to the development of the campaign has changed. And there were no larger external factors that would have caused these results.

We have to conclude, then, that they came from the fresh new creative approach, and the concentrated and focused *Infopresse* strategy.