

Virgin Atlantic and MSN.CO.UK

Virgin Atlantic Airways is Britain's second largest long haul airline, serving the world's major cities. On 15th September 2003, Virgin Atlantic launched a '5 day seat sale' to drive sales of Virgin Atlantic flights and encourage customer acquisition to the Virgin Atlantic email database and frequent flyer program.

THE MARKETING CHALLENGE:

Virgin Atlantic wanted to achieve maximum flight sales during their five day promotional period. It was also important that they generated a high level of consumer awareness around the airline and the cities its flights serve.

With this combined aim, it was vital that Virgin teamed with a partner that could offer them the largest possible engaged audience.

Flexibility and immediacy in the short-term marketing campaign was also essential.

THE MARKETING SOLUTION:

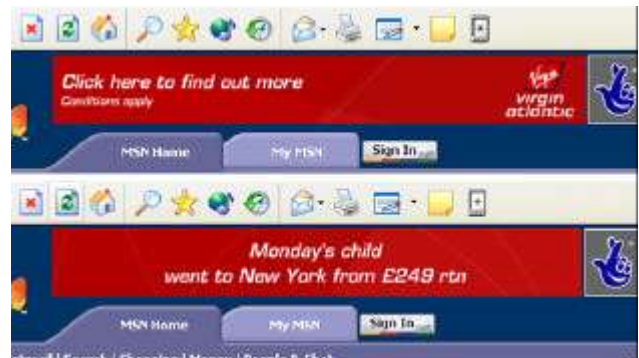
Tara Topliff, Virgin Atlantic Advertising Executive, explained, "the mechanics of the promotion meant that the offers had to change daily. Online was the vehicle of choice because it could offer the quickest response time to our promotion's progression".

The reach objective was fulfilled by working with MSN. MSN is the UK's largest portal attracting over 16.2 million visitors per month in the UK (Nielsen November 2003).

In addition to this, MSN's Hotmail is the UK's most popular free web-based e-mail service with over 8.4 million users in the UK (MSN Internal Data Nov 03); MSN Messenger is the

UK's number one instant messaging service on the internet with over 7.6 million monthly users (Nielsen Nov 03); and MSN Search is the UK's number one search site with just under 7 million users.

(Nielsen Nov 03)



But it wasn't just the impressive size of MSN's various audiences that impressed Virgin Atlantic.

THE CREATIVE EXECUTION:

In order to maximise exposure to the five-day promotion, it was decided that the best option was to run high volume large ad formats across key parts of the MSN network. This was complimented with targeted activity and supported with a competition driven by the MSN editorial team.

TEASER CAMPAIGN:

In order to generate excitement, Virgin Atlantic opted to run a teaser campaign from the 10th – 14th September. For maximum impact to the right audience, the teaser campaign used MSN Hotmail and MSN Messenger. Creatives included Hotmail showcase ads, Hotmail featured offers and mini banners on MSN Messenger.

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Tara Topliff,
Virgin Atlantic
Advertising Executive

PROMOTIONAL CAMPAIGN:

The activity on MSN Hotmail and MSN Messenger was continued for the five-day Seat Sale which ran from 15th – 19th September.



In addition, MSN Messenger's "MSN Today" page, which is viewed by users with version 5 or above of MSN Messenger, included a half banner advertising the flight sale.

Presence spread to the MSN homepage and included the use of hockey sticks, skyscrapers and expanding banners.

COMPETITION:

To increase acquisition Virgin Atlantic ran a competition for free flights from 10th – 30th September, again using skyscrapers and expanding banners on the MSN Homepage, the MSN Hotmail Showcase and a half banner on MSN Messenger's Today page.

Plus MSN provided additional support by promoting the competition in the Hotmail monthly newsletter, which is distributed to all 7.9m UK accounts.



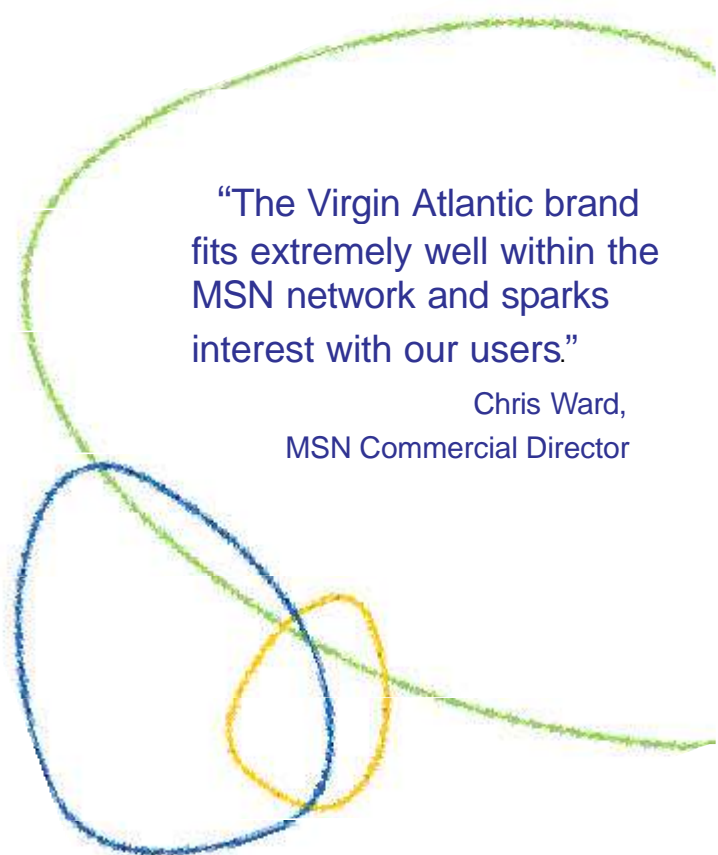
THE CAMPAIGN SUCCESS:

- Total competition entries numbered 65,536
- The competition target page views was 80,000.
- It actually delivered 152,497 – over-delivering by 52%
- Virgin Atlantic anticipated receiving a maximum of 150,000 registrations via Hotmail Featured Offers, but actually generated 260,611 (a 58% increase)
- Free inclusion in the MSN Hotmail monthly newsletter alone generated 51,177 clicks
- The MSN homepage hockey stick saw 5,242,783 impressions and 18,554 click-throughs



Commenting on the success of the campaign, Topliff said, The MSN team were flexible in adapting creatives daily, and making adjustments to ensure maximum exposure. We were very pleased with the response that the MSN campaign generated.

Chris Ward, MSN Commercial Director commented, "The Virgin Atlantic brand fits extremely well within the MSN network and sparks interest with our users. The combination of our broad reach, targeted ads and the competition ignited a frenzy of interest – the number of hockey stick clicks and competition entries is a testament to the incredible response this promotion received.



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Chris Ward,
MSN Commercial Director

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