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How Catch built its biggest ever brand campaign 100% remotely

Chief marketing officer shares the experience of building the retailer's brand campaign and creative with agencies virtually

NADIA CAMERON (CMO) 27 AUGUST, 2020 16:46

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A very robust brief, empathy, collaboration and a willingness to pivot and adapt to new ways of working proved vital elements in creating Catch Group's first major brand building campaign, the company's chief marketing officer says.

The online retailer, which was recently acquired by Wesfarmers, went live with its biggest ever brand campaign this month based around the tagline, 'Checkout Catch'. The work, produced in partnership with AJF GrowthOps, kicked off in March and has been created and executed completely remotely. It features a number of happy Australians finding items on the site while making humorous puns on a range of celebrity names, such as 'Brad's pit', 'Mick's joggers' and 'Reese's wooden spoon'.

Having built up a team primarily focused on performance and digital marketing, Catch needed to find fresh agency partners in order to embark on its brand building efforts. CMO, Ryan Gracie said. The company collaborated with Trinity P3 on this task.

The first brainstorming meeting with five agency potentials was on 17 March, right as the pandemic hit and lockdown ensued. This meant all meetings all strategy and presentation sessions came down to video conferencing. Gracie said agencies had to pivot quickly to a way of working that had never been done before.

"From my point of view, I had to be very empathetic - they were trying to win over clients, sitting in a room 1000kms away, shifting to video calls and trying to present creative ideas in a format they've never done so before," Gracie told CMO. "What they also couldn't see was my face or reactions - generally you can sit in a room and read the temperature. With a camera in front of the room or a screen blacked out as you're presenting, they couldn't get the signals and signs of it being positively or negatively received."

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"I had to almost elevate emotions, give them more frank views, and provide more audio cues. I know myself, presenting to a sea of silence is frustrating. I have to congratulate them on the way they got through it."

Steps included pulling back the number of people in a room, rehearsing presentations to ensure staff didn't talk over the top of each other, and sending video productions prior to meetings to avoid any "jarring" moments during video playback. Relying on the strength of voice and the presenter was also apparent. But in saying all that, Gracie said it ultimately came down to the strength of creative.

"The banter sometimes links the ideas... But building things out was harder to achieve, so we had to do more Q&A," he continued. "It became very binary and had to be strategically sound," he said.

The other aspect was agencies relying more heavily on the brief. "We had to go back to that often, so the brief I submitted was very robust, and we saw that in the creative," Gracie said.

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With Victoria in lockdown for a second time, the campaign was shot in Queensland while the agency's creative team and Catch, both based in Melbourne, provided real-time feedback to the live footage for three full days.

Gracie noted he'd not worked with any of the agencies before, arguably presenting a less biased view of their work or what they could bring to the table.

"In our strategic sessions, I'm fairly blunt and I ten to want to cut out a lot of fluff, so I was very interactive and giving constructive feedback, if something wasn't right, we just said we don't think that's right, go back to the drawing board and start again. And because of that we got to a great place," he said.

"I know I can build a relationship with those I work with. We were also looking at great agencies with the run rates and runs on the board and we knew they'd done great work elsewhere. Really, choosing an agency comes down to strategy, the creative and the longevity of the campaign - these are the reasons you go with an agency."

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As for the creative ambition, Gracie said Catch Group hasn't put something centred around the COVID-19 environment. The creative was fuelled by building trust and credibility, highlighting Catch Group as a trusted place to start your shopping journey.

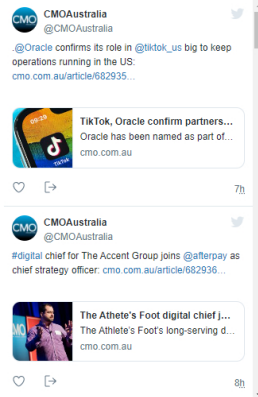
"The brand campaign we're building is a long play and to get on the right foot, we need to build the brand during COVID, post-COVID and beyond," he said.



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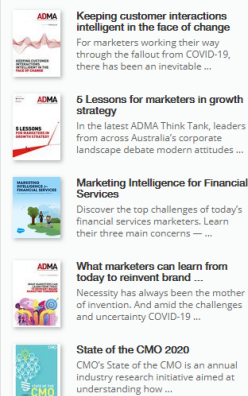
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"We need to build that trust. We also want to celebrate great prices, so we talk to the value you find when you come to Catch. We also wanted to drive awareness of the quality of our brands and the depth of our range. There are a lot of people who don't know what we sell, which is a legacy of being a daily deals site. We wanted to talk about the experience, the ease of shopping, and for people to see us as a destination for everything they want and need."

Emphasising Catch Group's Australian heritage was another must for Gracie. "We are Australian like our customers, and against our big international competitors was something we knew we could leverage," he said.



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"It was about creating something distinctive and very memorable and that's what this campaign does – it cuts through with great humour, it's very Australian and it's memorable. It ticks a lot of boxes."

The brand work is also the result of two ideas from two agencies. Cummins & Partners came up with 'Checkout Catch' line and Gracie negotiated to secure that as part of the final creative.

"AJF nailed the campaign. Cummins & Partners nailed the line. We had that conversation and got that mix to happen," he said.

As well as being Catch Group's largest brand campaign, the work is its biggest in terms of TV advertising spend. Gracie said it's also had to pivot on other channels because of the changing COVID-19 lockdown situations across Australian states. An out-of-home execution due to rollout in Melbourne in July, for example, was abandoned in favour of executions in Sydney and Brisbane where people are more active.



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Catch also has a heavy radio schedule in metro and regional areas, and is integrated into *The Block* TV show on Channel Nine. There are additional digital and social amplifications including YouTube.

To date, Catch Group has built its reputation on giving customers an ability to find the products they really need, and getting them delivered seamlessly, Gracie said.

"We have built our brand based purely on how good the experience is," he said. "We have never had this time of investment into brand before - it's something I've known for the four years I've been there was remiss of us."

"The power of brand is vital and I'm super excited to have this investment to go hard on it."

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