



ICCA BEST MARKETING AWARD 2010
The Launch of London's First International Convention Centre



GEORGE P. JOHNSON
experience marketing

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I INTRODUCTION

ExCeL London opened the doors to London's first International Convention Centre in May 2010, working in partnership with Boris Johnson, Mayor of London, and the business arm of Visit London, the capital's convention bureau.

To celebrate the new phase two spaces, including the ICC and more than 30,000sqm of exhibition space, ExCeL enlisted experience marketing agency George P Johnson (GPJ) to manage an exclusive launch event on 24th June 2010 for 500 VIPs including executives from exhibition organisers, meeting and conference planners, corporate clients, London tourism and infrastructure agencies and the media.

II CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVES

- Position ICC London ExCeL as the world's premier events destination
- Showcase the new ICC facilities and services
- Establish ICC London ExCeL as a venue with fully integrated, high specification technology
- Drive sales enquiries and referrals from business leaders, event organisers and key influencers
- Position ExCeL as a thought leader in the conference, exhibitions & events market place

III MARKETING CHALLENGES

Whilst London has much that appeals to business travellers, without competitive ICC facilities offered by many global rivals, the city has for many years been unable to bid for the thousands of conventions and meetings that take place across the world every year.

The challenge for the ICC London ExCeL was to demonstrate to the market that London now offers a world leading International Convention Centre, capable of hosting a wide range of events for groups from 50 to 50,000, all set against the backdrop of most exciting city on the planet.



ExCeL London appointed George P Johnson to create a launch campaign that would meet the objectives above, develop a creative and exciting programme able to generate press attention and deliver valuable content and networking opportunities to VIP attendees, whilst working within a limited budget of £150,000 and a planning cycle of just three months.

IV MARKETING CAMPAIGN

Awareness & Viral Campaign

To build awareness pre-launch GPJ developed a bold and comical viral marketing campaign, working alongside the Office of the Mayor of London and Visit London. 'Take Me There Boris' featured Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, as a London taxi driver taking passengers from various London landmarks to the new ICC London ExCeL, demonstrating the ease of transfer from the city to the venue.

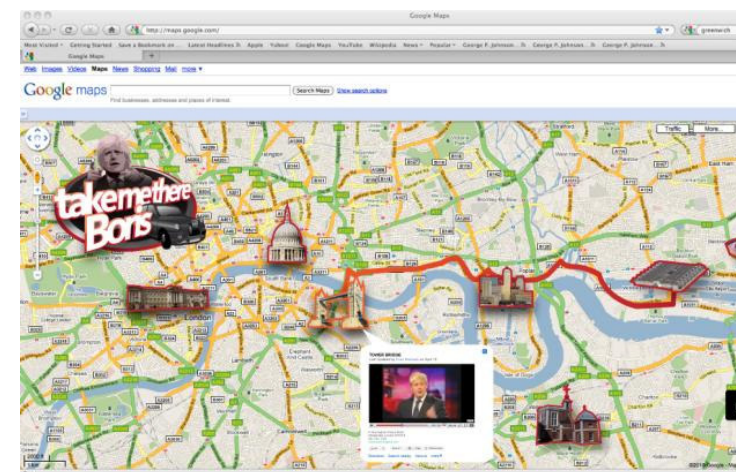
The piece was a huge hit, making headline news on BBC London Tonight, the Evening Standard and generating media coverage around the globe. The viral linked back to the ICC London ExCeL microsite with a map of London landmarks that received over 5,000 hits on You Tube and had a huge amount of Twitter interaction, giving it mass market coverage. www.takemethereboris.co.uk

Event Microsite & Webcasting

From the very first point of contact, delegates were given the VIP brand experience via a customised microsite. In line with the new branding, the site provided details to attendees about the launch event itself, as well as linking to full specifications of the new facilities and contact details for the sales teams.

The microsite was the key host for the guest registration, running on GPJ's Global Links registration software. During registration, guests were asked of any special requirements for the day, and also asked to respond to a short set of questions linked to the objectives designed to measure pre-event perceptions.

The microsite recognised all event partners, showcasing the scale of the services required, and recognising the contribution made by these vendors. It also attracted customers who were unable to attend the event and providing a link to the live webcast.



London Future Forum

The gathering of the leading industry executives also provided an ideal time for the inaugural 'London Future Forum', hosted by the ICC London ExCeL.

Chaired by the International Special Events Society (ISES) and supported by the Mayor of London's Office, the forum was designed to engage event industry leaders in a discussion regarding key London business tourism issues. It was attended by 67 high profile guests, representing leading agencies, event owners and corporate clients.

Guests were invited to join an evening event, with a BBQ and networking party, and an exclusive sneak preview of the ICC. Complimentary overnight accommodation was provided by the Novotel London ExCeL.

The following morning, guests were invited to join the discussion featuring an expert panel including Dan Ritterband, Director of Marketing for the Mayor of London; Bill Morris, Director of Culture, Ceremonies and Education, London 2012 Olympic Games; Amanda Jobbins, Vice President, European Marketing, Cisco; Sarah Wright, Head of Events, Barclays; Kim Myhre, Senior Vice President, GPJ and Board adviser to ISES and Richard Foulkes, Director, Imagination and President Elect of ISES.

Event Experience

Overall

Whilst the viral video campaign and London Future Forum focused on thought leadership and the positioning of London as a business destination, the aim for the launch event was to showcase the new facilities at ExCeL London and leave a lasting positive impression of the scale and flexibility of the space and its critical importance to the events industry and the UK economy in general.

The event was designed to support the positioning of the new ICC as London's new centre of event excellence, meeting the needs of the industry with new state of the art facilities and technology combined with the existing and highly experienced ExCeL team and the support of the local government and tourism agencies.



A compelling agenda was key to ensuring key industry influencers and event clients attended the event, and the team worked hard to design the day's activities, secure high profile speakers that would attract media and audience attention, and capture lasting video content that could continue to support sales activity post launch.

Discussions with the Office of the Mayor of London were critical to securing the support of Mayor Boris Johnson, who agreed to participate in the viral video, the press conference and the keynote presentations. ExCeL worked closely with parent company ADNEC to manage the involvement of His Highness Sheikh Sultan Bin Tahnoon Al Nahyan, Chairman of ADNEC.

To achieve such ambitious plans with limited funds required careful negotiation with in-house and external vendors – the £150,000 budget was used to deliver an event that would usually have cost in excess of £1 million. Many vendors provided services at substantial discounts or free of charge, and all partners were recognised across event signage and branding and during the keynote presentations. Vendor partners were also invited to join the networking lunch to promote their services as part of the ExCeL package.

Post-event, attendees responding to a survey scored the overall event at 4.6 out of 5, where 5 represents excellent.

Registration and Welcome

As the launch was designed to showcase the new facilities, the attendee journey was critical to the overall event experience. Arrival planning was a key consideration for the journey and the team worked closely with the Docklands Light Railway (DLR), London City Airport and the parking marshals at ExCeL to ensure this ran smoothly.

Event branding and direction staff were deployed at the dedicated DLR station, Prince Regent, and carried through to poster sites and branded windows at the ICC level 1 entrance and using display architecture and signage in the registration area. Event branding was designed to reflect the building architecture, with the rich red stripes carried to all signage, and a red carpet drawing guests from the main entrance to the welcome reception.

Self check-in registration terminals were situated in the level 1 foyer to enable guests to collect badges for the day quickly before moving upstairs to the Capital Suite for the welcome breakfast service. The



rooms in the Capital Suite were set up in a selection of styles to demonstrate the flexibility of the space as well as the investment in new furniture and AV equipment, and the team from the Aloft Hotel were on-hand to promote the new onsite hotel venue that is currently under construction.

Launch Keynote and Press Conference

Kicking off the day was a media briefing with CEO Kevin Murphy and Mayor of London, Boris Johnson. Over 30 media attended and it was streamed live via the microsite.

The grand opening ceremony took place in the ICC's main auditorium and was hosted by His Highness Sheikh Sultan Bin Tahnoon Al Nahyan, Chairman of Abu Dhabi National Exhibitions Company (ADNEC); Boris Johnson, Mayor of London, and Kevin Murphy, CEO, ExCeL London.

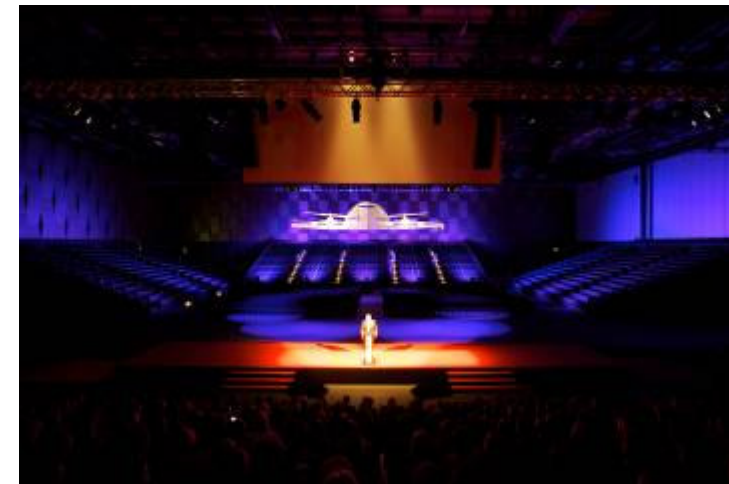
In the new ICC Auditorium, a 500 seat theatre was created with tiered seats, a huge retractable 16:9 full HD screen, the venue's own state of the art line array and a stunning lighting design to provide the perfect backdrop to launch the new facility. A dramatic kabuki drop provided the finale to Kevin Murphy's presentation; the huge floor to ceiling silk fell to the ground to reveal the spectacular new auditorium space capable of holding 742 double decker buses, 2047 minis or 7,000 delegates.

All of the delegates responding to the post event survey agreed that the event was a unique and valuable experience.

Networking

Following the opening ceremony, guests at the launch enjoyed a celebratory drinks reception followed by a four course networking lunch. On display in the reception were examples of the latest in event technology, including Fish Software's revolutionary RFID technology, a phenomenal live Telepresence demo linking ExCeL to Cisco's European Headquarters and a glimpse into Starwood Hotels' latest concept hotel ALOFT, which is currently under construction and will link directly to the ICC London ExCeL.

London's largest banqueting hall capable of feeding 3,000 at a single sitting was converted for the day into an intimate, cool and contemporary reception bar and a beautiful 5 star dining experience for the 500 VIP guests. The reception area carried a huge projection cube showing the day's play from Wimbledon, and the dining tables were decorated with London landmarks and a menu created in conjunction with Leith's which highlighted the 'Best of British' cuisine.



V RESULTS

Public Relations

ExCeL and GPJ worked with PR agency Davies Tanner to ensure widespread media coverage across the UK and Europe. A press release time line was produced and releases issued weekly in the month leading up to the event, focusing on different elements of the launch, the viral email campaign and the follow up on the success of the event.

The total value of the press coverage to date has been in excess of £260,000 and still continues. So far, over 26 million people across the globe have read or seen information regarding the launch.

Research

A detailed survey was conducted before and after the event to track changes in guest perception. The results were superb:

- 100% of attendees said they were likely to recommend the ICC to colleagues
- 98% of delegates consider the ICC London as a likely destination for premier business events, as a result of attending the launch
- 84% of delegates to the event said they were very likely to hold a future event in ICC London - an increase from 58% pre-event
- 71% of delegates said they were likely or very likely to hold an event in the ICC – an increase from 51% pre-event
- As a result of attending the event, 45% of delegates said they intended to increase the number of events they held in East London
- With 5 being excellent, delegates scored the unique experience of the ICC space as 4.54 and 4.77 on the ICC venue and facilities
- The overall score for the keynote speech was 4.67 and the overall satisfaction score of the launch event was 4.61, against a target of 4 or an 80% satisfaction level



Sales Leads

Following the launch event, site visits and enquiries have increased threefold. The ICC has already confirmed conference contracts worth over £66 million in economic impact to London.

At the event, the research results:

- 43% attended the launch to meet the sales team to discuss an upcoming event
- 50% planned to contact the ICC after the event to discuss future events
- 100% of attendees were quite likely or very likely to recommend the ICC to colleagues

Since the announcement in October and the event in June, ExCeL has confirmed the following conferences and their economic impact to London:

European Conference on Optical Communications, Sept 2013	£8.82m
European Fed of Orthopaedics and Traumatology, June 2014	£14.12m
IOSH (Inst of Safety and Health), March 2011	£1.77m
British Crop Production Council	£0.79m
Aviation Week, Sept 2010	£2.65m
Alzheimer's Disease International 2012	£2.65m
EBMT (Blood and Marrow Transplantation), April 2013	£8.82m
Nokia, Sept 2010	£4.54m
EAGE (Geo-scientists & Engineers), June 2013	£10.6m
Cisco Live, Feb 2011	£12.12m



Guest Feedback

“I think the additional space makes ExCeL a much more viable London destination for larger events producing a mix of conference and exhibition outputs.” **Clare Ruby, Director of Operations, International Broadcast Convention.**

“The whole thing was excellent. Congratulations to all concerned.” **John Standley, Travel Services Manager, World Travel Market.**

“The event was really good, not a fancy exaggerated show, but instead a classy opening event of very good taste. It was also very interesting to talk to your partners (Cisco, Fish etc), and I am so glad Boris took me there.” **Michel Ballieu, CEO, ECCO – The European Cancer Organisation.**

“It was a great showcase for the new space, however, by having lunch there was space for some valuable networking. I also found the companies showcasing their abilities really useful in terms of ideas for events in future. Many thanks.” **Sally Blackeney, Head of Events (company not to be disclosed).**

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