

PROJECT DISKI

SANDTON CONVENTION CENTRE

ICCA

BEST MARKETING AWARD



**SANDTON
CONVENTION CENTRE**

Johannesburg | South Africa

WHAT WHERE THE MARKETING ISSUES ADDRESSED?

The major marketing challenges for a World which is inhabited by three generations in the marketplace need not be a complex, intricately researched and analyzed strategy. Perhaps the answer is as simple as merely using the platforms which are presenting themselves to us on a daily basis, being intuitive and emotive and embracing innovation. In an ever changing world filled with marketing channels which are being revolutionized on a daily basis, a unique opportunity presented itself. As South Africans we express ourselves through song and dance, we do so when we are happy or sad, and this was the essence of bringing the Diski Dance to life.

South Africa was given a once in a lifetime opportunity to be showcased on the worlds stage for all to see when we recently hosted the FIFA Football World Cup in June 2010. With a bombardment of International and local marketing campaigns, as a centre we had to ensure that we had a campaign second to none. The question that we asked ourselves was how do we come up with an innovative way to been seen and heard amongst the excitement of the FIFA Football World Cup.

On the outset we wanted to get our staff excited about the soccer coming to South Africa. Along with this we set out to bring this excitement into our corporate environment, companies in our vicinity and to showcase our conference centre on a global stage. We created an environment of teambuilding amongst our staff and the general public for this incredible event.

As a Convention Centre in times of a recession we faced the very same challenges as many others did. Our budgets were smaller and expectations larger. We needed to find a solution which would not be costly however that would deliver an overwhelming return on any investment that we laid out. As far as Convention Centers go, the general perception is one of a large building – very seldom does one associate a convention centre with a personality. What we achieved through this campaign was bringing together our community, embracing our neighbours and showcasing our diverse product of service excellence to International and local guests.

As mentioned before, our challenges were not unusual. We needed to use an unmistakably immense platform to capitalize on our offering as an International Convention Centre.

WHAT WAS INNOVATIVE ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN/PROJECT; WHAT LESSONS CAN OTHER ICCA MEMBERS LEARN FROM OUR IDEAS?

Our campaign was not an original idea, it was an adaptation of a concept that our National Tourism body, South African Tourism, developed to get the general public into the soccer vibe. We took a National idea, put a twist on it and made ourselves the champions. South African Tourism developed the Diski Dance and encouraged residents to learn the moves ahead of the 2010 FIFA World Cup. The dance is based on the unique way in which South Africans play soccer, "rhythmically, somewhat showy, but never boring". Spearheaded by SA Tourism, the dance was initially devised for an international advert aimed at highlighting South Africa's readiness to host the World Cup.

Innovation distinguishes between being a leader and being a follower, we set out to lead. Acknowledging that this was a platform for us to thrive on, we decided to construct our initial thought process around the campaign. Although we had literally no budget to work with, we had spirit and determination. Over a period of six weeks we had taught 120 of our staff to do the Diski Dance, the first corporate company in the country who took the steps, literally. The innovation was not teaching our staff to do the dance at the precipice where the country was still unfamiliar with it, innovation is what followed.

We have always firmly believed that destination marketing does not fall solely on the shoulders of the tourism bodies but that each of us are stakeholders within a global playground. We called our campaign 'Project Diski' and in November 2009 we started our journey to promote not only our centre but also our Precinct, the City of Johannesburg and our Country. Our campaign was simple, we wanted to show the World that as a Convention Centre, we were ready to host our International clients. We did this by literally dancing in the streets. Not only did we set out to create an awareness and camaraderie, we set out to ensure that by the time the first match ball left the midfield each and every individual and surrounding business would be able to join in with the festivities.

The most valuable lesson that we have learnt from our campaign was that one always has to be on the lookout for opportunities that present themselves. The recession has given us a reason to review our standard approach and to be innovative with our marketing budgets. With this campaign we decided to push all of the predetermined boundaries and understood that we do not necessarily need an original idea only that we needed to make it our own. With all that has been said, we created an environment of learning and fun. Our success came from the unbelievable response we received from those around us.

HOW WAS THE CAMPAIGN/PROJECT UNDERTAKEN?

Once we had conceptualized the idea behind 'Project Diski' we set aside various initiatives over a period of 8 months to ensure that the campaign was a widespread success. After we established our objectives as a company, the campaign had a life of its own and grew from strength to strength.

Campaign roll out activations:

- **Initial launch and video recording**

For six weeks our staff were diligently taught, in their free time, how to do the Diski Dance by our two appointed Diski teachers. After the first few lessons the atmosphere was electric and staff started to request more lessons!

On a Wednesday morning in November 2009, a plan was coming together which turned into a show stopper. Our staff were all given bright red soccer shirts with "Sandton Convention Centre" on the front and "Ready 4 2010" on the back of each shirt. As simple as this may seem, once these shirts started popping up on local television stations, International travel programs, CNN and BBC, these shirts were going to remain memorable for quite some time.

As a memento and an example of our efforts and hard work over 6 weeks we decided that we needed to make an impact, and above this that we needed to make a video out of it. On this ordinary Wednesday morning, 120 of our staff ranging from waiters and cleaning staff to Executive Director and management hit the streets of Sandton to showcase their new campaign. Within mere minutes of dancing the streets were filled with onlookers, corporate companies had sent their staff out to see what the commotion was about and television crews lined the streets to catch a glimpse of the phenomenon. What they saw was a company who had embraced the essence and the magnitude of the mega event which was about to hit their shores, a company that was united, but most of all they saw a sea of red shirts which were clearly branded – Sandton Convention Centre was ready 4 2010.

As part of this initial activation, we offered all Corporate Companies in the area free Diski Dance lessons with the knowledge that we would be busy over the next few months. We did however not anticipate how busy we would be.

- **Teaching Africa's leading hotel brand**

Sandton Convention Centre is managed by the Southern Sun group, Africa's leading hotel chain. Southern sun has in excess of 90 hotels across the Country and offshore and due to the excitement and energy that the convention centre created, we took on the challenge to teach all 90 hotels how to dance. Our Executive Director was the Champion of the project and started planning this initiative well before any other corporate company had even thought of it. Each hotel received starter packs which included our DVD along with a step by step guide on how to do the Diski Dance. With email reminders and a very strong drive to get everyone dancing, over 7500 employees knew the dance within two months. Soon the various brands were arranging Diski Dance-offs to showcase their expertise! A feature on the Diski dance was done in a magazine called Equinox which is placed in all of the hotel rooms, showing our Executive Director dancing in the streets. This feature was seen by thousands of visitors.

- **Entertaining our guests**

Our first launch dance to guests attending events at our venue was for Soccerex. The venue was filled with enthused International and local delegates and as the music started the entire building came to a standstill. From here onwards, the next few months at the centre were filled with the disk music and impromptu dances were done for events of all nature. Our guests reveled in the excitement and many a time joined in!

- **Teaching companies:**

Due to an overwhelming response from the public we set up a team of SCC Diski dancers who were literally out on the road three times a week for over 7 months. As an added initiative we used many of our waiting staff on their down times which gave them an opportunity to earn an extra income. Donned in their red shirts, clearly branded, the team would travel to Corporate companies across Johannesburg where hundreds of eager individuals were taught how to dance. We taught our current clients, re-introduced ourselves to lost clients and built relationships with our new clients.

- **Public Participation:**

Although we had a team of SCC Diski Dancers showing the corporate market how to dance, we saw an opportunity for further publicity and interaction with the public. In conjunction with Sandton City, one of the premier shopping experiences in South Africa, we decided to host a weekly dance session which was held every Friday on Nelson Mandela Square. Each Friday without fail we had our stage set out, our office staff donned in their red branded shirts and our Marketing Manager enchanting a crowd of up to 200 people. The scene was magnificent as each and every week we taught more and more people how to Diski Dance, ensuring that Sandton Convention Centre was at the forefront of their minds.

The publicity from this 6 week public campaign was immense. Each week we were interviewed by at least 3 International and Local television crews who were filming for various documentaries and interest shows. Over a period of 6 weeks the SCC Diski Dancer were featured a multitude of times, again with a clear message, Sandton Convention Centre – Ready 4 2010.

- **Performing at events**

As the hype of the campaign began to spread, so did the opportunities. Below are a few of the major achievements which formulated part of the campaign:

- Teaching 3000 FIFA volunteers how to dance on National and International Television
- Entertaining the crowds at Soccerex
- Dancing for the Mayor at the Opening of Soccer City, the newly renovated soccer stadium in Johannesburg covered by journalists from around the World
- Showing the Dance to 22000 spectators at the '100 days to football' street party which was televised across 24 countries
- Teaching 7500 employees of Southern Sun how to Diski Dance

All of the above was done, clad in our red shirts with our clear message, Sandton Convention Centre – Ready 4 2010. Baring in mind that all of us were the dancers, no money was spent on additional staff. Each person at the Convention Centre became an ambassador for this campaign.

DETAILED OBJECTIVES/TARGETS AND EXPLAIN HOW THESE WERE MET

Our objectives were simple:

- Relationship building
 - We set out to ensure that we reconnected with old clients and to ensure that we established new relationships with potential clients.
- Maximum exposure in print / radio / television for the duration of the 8 month campaign
- Build goodwill and a friendly, fun image for Sandton Convention Centre
- Raise the profile of the Sandton Convention Centre in the community

Measurements:

- 15 major companies were taught how to do the 'Diski dance' on their premises. This allowed us to deal with the decision makers of each company and relationships were formed.
- Southern Sun Group – 7500 employees and suppliers
- From these 15 companies, we have obtained new clients who are now conferencing with us on a regular basis
- We were able to solidify relationships with the LOC and obtained several events to the run up of the World Cup

In closing, our objectives were clearly met and exceeded in abundance. We have not yet quantified the coverage in terms of monetary value however we were featured around the World on various marketing platforms. With regards to the money spent for the campaign, we relied on our strong relationships with suppliers and our campaign was fully sponsored.

