

What's Your Wild Rabbit - Hennessy Fans Go Wild for the Pursuit of Success

Cohn & Wolfe and Hennessy, Jan 1,2013

Summary: 2013 Silver Anvil Award Winner — Marketing Consumer Products — Beverages

When Hennessy selected a “Wild Rabbit” as the icon for its new marketing campaign to symbolize the brand’s commitment to producing the world’s best cognac, Cohn & Wolfe set out to invigorate the brand for a younger audience and bring the “Wild Rabbit” to life linking it to the notion of a never-ending inner drive to succeed. Through innovative events, influencer seeding, strategic media relations and social engagement and talent promotion, C&W accomplished this feat like few could have imagined. Today, Hennessy sales are up with more than two billion people answering the question, “What’s Your Wild Rabbit?”

Marketing consumer products includes programs designed to introduce new products or promote existing products to a consumer audience.

Full Text: SITUATION ANALYSIS

Smooth. Best-tasting. Award-winning. These are superlatives typically found in spirit brand communications. Those attributes are part of what’s kept Hennessy on top of the cognac category throughout its 250-year history. But when Hennessy selected a “Wild Rabbit” as the icon for its new marketing campaign to symbolize the brand’s relentless commitment to producing the world’s best cognac, Cohn & Wolfe faced the challenge of communicating something much deeper.

C&W set out to invigorate the brand for a younger audience who are not loyal cognac drinkers and bring the “Wild Rabbit” to life in a fresh and meaningful way, linking it to the notion of a never-ending inner drive to succeed. “What’s Your Wild Rabbit?” became the calling card at every communications touch point, from innovative events and influencer seeding to strategic media relations, talent promotion, and steady social outreach, to raise awareness and spur business momentum.

Today, Hennessy sales are up and the brand is back in a big way with more than two billion people answering the question, “What’s Your Wild Rabbit?”

RESEARCH / PLANNING

Objectives

To reach a younger consumer and create excitement for a brand that’s pushing 250, we needed a bold approach. Our efforts would be measured by the ability to connect Hennessy to the notion of the never-ending pursuit of success via earned media impressions, social engagement and exclusive events.

- **Connect with a new generation:** Create brand heat among a multicultural audience and secure marquee media coverage in top-tier Hispanic and African American outlets.
- **Drive awareness to keep Hennessy top of mind and in the glass:** Increase brand awareness, trial and purchase by achieving 1.74 billion impressions and 1% sales

increase.

- **Create online brand engagement:** Introduce media and consumers to the mysterious “Wild Rabbit” and drive organic conversations about Hennessy online.

Target Audience Analysis

Hennessy has two target audiences: longstanding brand supporters (African-American men, ages 35-54) and a growth target of African-American/Hispanic men, ages 21-34 who are in the process of establishing their values. Our mission was to connect with a new audience without alienating the core target.

The team conducted extensive brand analysis via Iconoculture and Brand Asset Valuator, C&W’s proprietary tool measuring the value of brands through various aspects of brand-to-customer interactions.

Through focus groups, we found that realizing one’s “potential” is a core value of our target. They see themselves as being on a continuous quest for success...and are confident they can achieve it. Regardless of age, race, or level of education, 94% of young adults see their future as being bright and better than their current circumstances.

A message centered on “never stop, never settle” had remarkable personal appeal and relevance on an aspirational level for the target. To reach them, the communications platform needed to align itself with this message in a way that naturally fit the target’s lifestyle.

C&W was part of an integrated agency team that came together with Hennessy at the initial stages of the campaign. From focus groups to proprietary tools, below are key takeaways that led to our communications platform:

- Despite being on top, the brand was in need of a revitalizing makeover. Research revealed the younger consumer we are trying to attract did not currently have perceptions of Hennessy being a preferred, more premium brand that people aspire to.
- Spokesperson selection was subject to specific PR criteria to ensure their appeal and ability to credibly deliver a message of endless pursuit of success.
- Through focus groups we learned our target’s greatest aspirations are in sports, film, music, and art, and our communications platform focused on those areas to communicate the Wild Rabbit notion of potential and will to succeed.
- Target markets selected were based on media, sales and concentration of multicultural audiences.

Strategy

In order to differentiate Hennessy from other spirit brands, we offered consumers never-before-seen glimpses of those who push the limits of their potential, and access to digital and in-market experiences to give them more exposure to like-minded individuals. Our strategy was to take consumers down the rabbit hole to reveal personal quests that drive major success.

- **Seeding the Message:** Enlist the right influencers to build intrigue right out of the gate.
- **Star Power:** Create multichannel communication plans around key talent: Manny Pacquiao (sports); Martin Scorsese (film); Erykah Badu (music); and Futura (art) to bring their “Wild Rabbit” to life for audiences.
- **Stopping Traffic:** Conceptualize visual stunts to intercept our target en route to a night out with friends.
- **Down the Rabbit Hole:** Create local launch experiences that reflect the spirit of the “Wild Rabbit.”

EXECUTION/TACTICS

Setting our Sights, Spotting the “Wild Rabbit”: Create intrigue to generate media coverage to coincide with launch.

- Seeded influencers with limited-edition creative mailers conceptualizing “Wild Rabbit” narrative and showcasing Hennessy portfolio.
- Leveraged moments in time to celebrate those who push the limits of potential (Super Bowl, Grammys, NBA All Star).

Fueling the Chase: Generate groundswell of buzz as the “Wild Rabbit” swept across on- and off-line channels.

- *Chase Stunts:* Took over prominent street corners with live interactive projections that provided passers-by a chance to shadow box or sing with a virtual Manny or Erykah and share the experience immediately via social media.
- *Talent Media Days:* Facilitated intimate conversations between Erykah, Martin, and top-tier media where they weaved in their personal “Wild Rabbit.”
- *National Launch Event:* Coordinated massive party in NYC featuring live performances.
- *Media Trip:* Hosted art-focused trip to Cognac for top-tier media and Futura.

Never Stop, Never Settle: Roll out new “Wild Rabbit” experiences to sustain consumer interest and media coverage throughout the year.

- Unveiled the “Wild Rabbit” market by market via special events.
- Developed and promoted traveling art event featuring Futura’s custom work.

EVALUATION OF SUCCESS / MEASUREMENT

“Hennessy Goes Wild for the Pursuit of Achievement”
- *The New York Times*

In just under 10 months, almost 3 billion people have seen, heard, typed, tweeted, read, filmed, and shared their “Wild Rabbit.” And in the bar when asked, “What are you having?” more people than ever request Hennessy. Additionally the recent IMPACT report shows Hennessy was #1 in growth for any brand that wasn’t a vodka.

Connect:

- Marquee placements in top urban outlets, including ***Ebony, Essence, Vibe, Hombre, Complex, Latina, Terra and Uptown.***
- **More than 10000 influencers** attended exclusive launch events in five markets.
- Interactive stunts in three markets **reached over 80000 consumers.**

Drive:

- **2.850 billion media impressions in 2,278 outlets:** *The New York Times, E! News, Marie Claire, Wine Enthusiast, Chicago Sun Times, ESPN.com, GQ.com, Details.com, Wall Street Journal, Vibe.*
- **Sales increased 6% (vs. +1% year prior);** a major increase for the largest cognac brand in the world.
- Awareness, purchase intent, and preference increased via digital channels by 15%, 33%, and 40%.
- Post-campaign focus group respondents described the Hennessy image as “sophisticated,” “classy,” “accomplished,” and “successful.”

Create:

- **1.2 million Facebook Likes**; 5.2% interaction rate, 160% higher than goal.
- **4,159 Twitter followers**; 8.1% interaction rate, 131% higher than goal.
- 222000 digital hub visits and 292,768 video views.

Vendors Involved in Campaign

Cohn & Wolfe worked closely with Hennessy's communications team to conceptualize, coordinate and drive execution for the consumer public relations plan. Key strategic partner agencies included Droga5 (creative); Odopod (digital); Morpheus (digital and social media); Strategic Experiential Group (event marketing); MPG (media buying and planning); Manhattan Marketing Ensemble (promotions); Mercury Mambo (multicultural marketing); Team Epiphany (influencer seeding); and Optimist LA (installation activation).

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