

Denver Zoo

Problem

How do you increase attendance at a local zoo and create awareness about fundraising efforts?

Solution

Target community leaders and families where people in the area already gather.

Background

Denver Zoo is an internationally respected leader in animal care and exhibition, conservation programs, scientific study, environment education and public service. Their mission is to provide wildlife conservancy that offers high-quality experiences in an urban recreational setting.

However, entering into 2007, the Zoo was experiencing declining attendance and needed to find ways to rebound back to target levels. The challenge was to not only effectively reach the traditional moms and kids target in the Denver market, but key community influencers as well. As a result, the media strategy was largely based on connecting with these audience segments at the most relevant touch points during their daily routines. Lifestyle and leisure activity trigger points served as a compass for media selection.

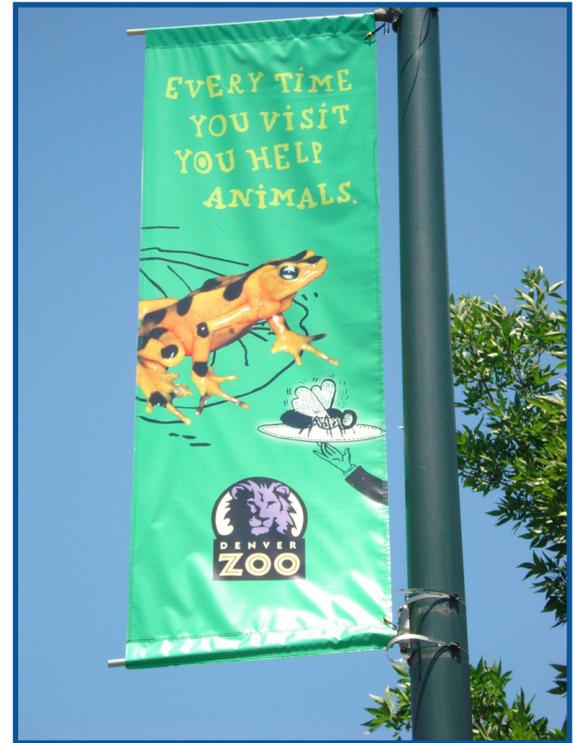
Historically, more traditional media types like TV, radio and print served as the foundation to create high visibility. However, in 2007, a new media-mix strategy also integrated grassroots tactics to create stronger awareness and recall by interacting and educating on a more intimate level. These tactics were focused around out-of-home locations that were fun and educational to heighten relevance with the target, while breaking through clutter with unique creative placements.

Objective

The advertising objective was to communicate that every visit to the Denver Zoo promises a fun educational experience and helps Denver Zoo in its worldwide wildlife preservation efforts.

Specific marketing objectives were to:

- Increase attendance to achieve goal of 1.4 million visitors
- Raise awareness of preservation and fundraising efforts with key influencers and community leaders



Strategy

Zoo awareness was already at relatively high levels in the Denver Metro, so the campaign needed engage with potential visitors at key interception points when moms and kids were in the mindset of exploring family activities in order to motivate spontaneous visits. To effectively reach the “influencer” target, we identified their relevant lifestyle/behavioral characteristics like serving on boards and committees, engaging in fundraising, constantly learning, and being socially responsible and concerned about environment.

The plan integrated grassroots out-of-home tactics, in addition to traditional media to create stronger awareness and recall. High-profile outdoor and non-traditional media were used to showcase the Denver Zoo’s campaign and hone in on areas with high concentrations of parents and children within the community.



Plan Details

The plan was focused in the greater Denver metro area and was scheduled from June through December 2007. Various tactics included:

- Traditional bulletin signage (14' x 48'), King and Queen-sized bus posters as well as curbside posters on Bus Shelters
- Downtown window signage as part of the Downtown Denver “BID” programs (Business-In-Dvelopment) which allows non-profit advertisers to display ads while buildings are being restored or renovated
- Rickshaw signage created visibility at popular summer locations downtown including Rockies baseball games at Coors Field, Elitch Gardens Amusement Park and the 16th Street Outdoor Mall. The non-motorized rickshaws drew attention to Denver Zoo’s preservation/“green” efforts.
- Denver Zoo Animal Chalk Drawings were created by local artists at festivals such as Larimer Square La Piazza dell’ Arte.
- Barricades and Backlit Kiosks in malls provided extra touch points and targeted locations near family-focused retail stores.
- School Bus advertising allowed the Denver Zoo to show their support of education.
- Light Post Banners in cultural areas increased Denver Zoo’s visibility among both families and community leaders.
- Coffee Sleeves advertising was placed in select cafes/community based businesses to educate influencers about Denver Zoo’s preservation efforts.

Results

Based on 2007 year end attendance numbers, Denver Zoo’s annual goals were exceeded with 1,672,018 visitors recorded during the year – a 20% increase over goal.

In addition, the Zoo membership direct mail effort saw the highest response rate in Denver Zoo’s history and donations to preservation efforts increased 10-15%. Overall, the 2007 campaign was deemed a success and Denver Zoo continued their efforts in 2008.