

IKEA SUPERSTORE LANDS IN CHICAGO, ROCKS COMMUNITY

IKEA with Jericho Communications

Category 18: Media Relations -- Local

OVERVIEW:

It's big, it's yellow, it's blue...it's larger than seven football fields! When IKEA (the Swedish home furnishings superstore) landed in Chicago, the news rocked the local community and sent shock waves out to the national media. Just last summer, if you had asked a citizen of the great Windy City what "IKEA" was, they might have guessed a new car, a fish or even some kind of exotic food. It was in this environment of virtually no brand awareness (complicated by the fact that several home furnishings retail competitors had already established a strong presence in the market), that IKEA decided to launch one of its largest stores in the world. Jericho created a multi-faceted publicity program that introduced IKEA to one of Chicago's wealthiest suburban neighborhoods (Schaumburg)...delivering exciting promotions, a community outreach campaign and a grand opening bash. A buzz about IKEA surged through the media, and sales reached record highs. Chicagoans welcomed the giant retailer with open arms and pocketbooks!

PLANNING:

The objectives of the program were to:

- * Generate awareness and a "buzz" about IKEA entering the Chicago marketplace as a major retail force
- * Drive store traffic to IKEA on opening day and beyond
- * Communicate IKEA's "Helping People Live Better" philosophy to Chicagoans

To do this, the following strategies were employed:

- * Develop a multi-tiered media outreach program highlighting IKEA's pre-opening, opening day and post-opening day activities
- * Saturate potential customers with exciting news about the new superstore through a series of clever events and promotions culminating in a grand opening day bash
- * Create a community-oriented campaign involving Chicago's youngsters, and underscoring IKEA's commitment to "Helping People Live Better"

IKEA's target audiences were:

- * Potential home furnishings retail customers, of all ages, in the Chicago area
- * Chicago's business and community leaders
- * Local print and broadcast media, as conduits to above audiences

EXECUTION:

* "Sneak Peek" Press Party – Two weeks prior to the grand opening, IKEA hosted a standing-room-only press party offering a "sneak peek" at the new store. Save-the-date teasers and press party invitations were distributed to a select list of business, home furnishings and general interest print and broadcast media. Thirty-five local and national press representatives attended the event, an exclusive party featuring speeches by IKEA executives, store tours, gourmet Swedish food, and one-on-one interviews. Media kits -- including a photo of the superstore, press release, and background materials-- were tailored to the various media segments. Press representatives also received goody bags filled with, you guessed it, IKEA goodies. All press contact communicated details about the unique design and architectural approach of the store; IKEA's philosophy; and the key message that IKEA "helps people live better" by providing affordable, innovative, quality home furnishings for consumers of all ages.

* Grand Opening Bash – IKEA kicked-off its grand opening with an acknowledgment breakfast honoring everyone who helped bring the new store to life. Attended by nearly 200 people, the event strengthened IKEA's ties with local business and community leaders and showed the support of local dignitaries. Meanwhile, Chicagoans lined up in droves outside the superstore, awaiting the hoopla of the grand opening bash. In fact, the line began forming at 2 a.m. the night before -- maybe because the first one hundred customers to walk through IKEA's entranceway received a free POANG chair worth \$150! The "Live Better Team" of IKEA employees kept consumers entertained (by offering first-time visitors practical and quirky product giveaways), and managed the massive flow of traffic into the building. Once inside, shoppers entered sweepstakes to win a new Volvo, a trip for two to Sweden and an IKEA Shopping Spree. And, Swedish dancers, clowns, face painters and balloon designers kept everyone smiling. A good time was had by all. A media alert again drew scores of press representatives to the event, and upbeat news stories appeared showcasing IKEA's products and spirit.

* "Helping Hands" Ceremony – Demonstrating its commitment to the local community and its intention to always be a good neighbor, IKEA hosted a "Helping Hands" Ceremony as part of the grand opening. The event honored the elementary school class that showed exemplary behavior in helping Chicagoans "live better" through volunteer service. An irresistible photo opportunity was staged, with the 28 winning students christening the building by making little helping handprints in wet cement at the store's entrance. Oohs and ahs arose from shoppers and journalists alike.

* Final Hour Crisis Management – On opening day, Jericho turned a potential news nightmare into a dream-come-true media opportunity. A printing error in the IKEA catalogue mistakenly listed the telephone number of a private residence as the information line for bus transportation to the store -- and the catalogue was distributed to 750,000 consumers. But IKEA became a hero (at the PR team's prompting) when it provided the young newlywed couple whose number was incorrectly listed with a generous solution (even though the

company was not responsible for the error). IKEA agreed to furnish the couple with a "dream room of their choice" worth \$5,000, plus the expert advice of an IKEA design consultant. Jericho quickly and deftly responded to incoming calls, directing the message toward a positive final outcome. The story was so compelling that two local news stations returned to the store that evening to cover the IKEA story for the second time that day. As an ABC-TV NEWS anchor said, "A pesky wrong number problem turned into a windfall for a local family." And, a win for IKEA, as it again demonstrated its message of caring about people and helping them live better.

EVALUATION:

1. Local Media Blitz. IKEA's carefully planned entrance into the Chicago market caused a local media blitz, blanketing the Chicago airwaves and news pages, and even extending beyond expectations to include coverage in the national media. Creating a buzz about the superstore, 35 million media impressions were generated, including 29 broadcast segments and 85 print articles, with placements in such outlets as: CHICAGO TRIBUNE, CHICAGO SUN-TIMES, DAILY HERALD, ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH, CRAIN'S CHICAGO BUSINESS, REUTERS, WLS-TV/ABC "NEWS," WGN-TV/WB "MIDDAY NEWS," WBBM-TV/CBS "NEWS 2 AT SIX," FOX NEWS CHICAGO, WMAQ-TV/NBC "FIRST THING THIS MORNING" and WNYW-TV/FOX "GOOD DAY NY." IKEA spokespeople participated in more than 80 in-person and telephone interviews. News stories covered a broad scope of topics, from the store's number of weekly visitors, to forecasts of its local economic impact, to its on-site dining fare...and more. Publicity generated for the grand Chicago opening was worth more than one million dollars in advertising equivalencies.

2. Record Sales and Store Traffic. One headline read "Hordes of Shoppers Mob IKEA," while another wrote "IKEA Storms into Chicagoland," and a news anchor reported, "A giant new store opens with thousands arriving." The DAILY HERALD said: "By midday, the three-floor octagonal store was on pace to draw nearly 20,000 people, making it the largest store opening in Schaumburg anyone can remember." FURNITURE TODAY noted: "IKEA's North American President Jan Kjellman estimated the store attracted more than 25,000 people the Saturday following the opening, and had to close for half-hour increments both Saturday and Sunday to let crowds thin before they allowed more consumers to enter." Many of IKEA's grand opening goals were, in fact, surpassed as employees and executives celebrated record high sales and visitors on opening day.

3. Helping People Live Better. During its grand opening festivities, IKEA firmly established itself as a major player and caring business partner in the Chicago retail market. Consumers and the press, alike, embraced IKEA's "Helping People Live Better" philosophy.