

Bacardi Limited – Celebrating 150 Years of Bringing People Together

Division A / Category 8: Internal Communications

Overview

Bacardi, the world's largest privately-held spirits company, celebrated its 150th anniversary on February 4, 2012. The milestone presented an extraordinary opportunity to engage employees and raise awareness about the Company's rich history. The successful execution of the 150th anniversary became one of the Company's global priorities and was the first company-wide activation involving all regions, functions, and reaching all 6,000 employees. Bacardi is a family-owned company with an incredible heritage that has served as a unique differentiator. Over the past years, Bacardi has evolved into a global operation with more than 200 brands and labels—this growth and vast portfolio did impact the understanding of its story by employees. Many, dedicated to other brands (Grey Goose, Dewar's etc), did not know the Bacardi story—one that begins in Cuba with a man called Don Facundo Bacardi Masso, one that revolutionized the spirits industry, and one filled with tragedy, innovation and a perseverance resulting in the success it is today. The anniversary was the perfect time to create brand ambassadors—employees who could talk not just about their own brands, but about the Bacardi family and company story. On the business side, Bacardi rum sales were on a decline in many key markets, including the U.S., so a renewed focus on the namesake, one of the two largest brands within the portfolio, was established. Bacardi rum is a priority product in every single country—the only brand within the portfolio to have this status. Internal communications surrounding the anniversary helped establish a renewed pride and excitement for Bacardi, the company and the rum brand.

Objectives for internal communications were to create brand ambassadors; educate employees on rich heritage; create assets for local market activation; establish a one-stop shop for all anniversary information across countries and functions (brand, travel retail, public relations, human resources, etc); and instill pride and generate excitement for anniversary milestone.

Stakeholder Analysis

Bacardi employs approximately 6,000 people across nearly 80 offices and sells products in more than 150 countries and territories. One-third of employees are in production or bottling facilities without computer access. Another 2,000 are in sales visiting customers throughout the (limited time in front of a computer). It was important to deliver tactics and assets that could work for both online and offline employees. It was just as important to use language that could be easily translated into the 13 core languages of the business, and in some cases, limited use of text with a greater focus on graphics to tell a story.

A focus was placed on engaging brand teams responsible for sharing the Bacardi story externally. Participation by Global Corporate Communications in monthly brand calls established a regular process to showcase the latest assets. Global Corporate Communications regularly communicated with the brand teams to ensure awareness of assets, provide a “heads up” of upcoming activations, and to review heritage materials and consistency of stories. It was also critical to educate brand teams on the ONE Bacardi global intranet as a communications tool—one separate from existing brand sites. Participation from brand teams on ONE Bacardi was low as a result of them leveraging their own sites—sites that pushed content as a data repository, or library of assets. ONE Bacardi allows for conversations and for users to upload their own materials and updates. The brand teams are also influencers that have an effect on the general employee base.

Another target audience was Human Resources. As one of the first faces of the company to new hires, it was important that they embed heritage information into recruiting and training materials. It was also critical that they too learn the right company story.

Nearly 10 percent of employees have been with the Company for more than 20 years. These long-term Bacardi employees served as “historians” capturing stories from the past and fond memories of a long-time tradition of caring for others. As a family-owned business, members of the Bacardi family were also among the key stakeholders and were reached through shareholder communications, special gifts and a family celebration in Puerto Rico (event not managed by Corporate Communications).

Goals and Objectives

Internal communications objectives were set: **create passionate brand ambassadors; educate employees about the company's rich heritage; create anniversary assets for local activation; instill pride and generate excitement; and establish a one-stop shop for all anniversary information across countries and functions.** Success would be achieved through **participation in anniversary events by all offices**, creation of a **database of facts and images** for all markets to use internally and externally, **best-in-class results in the employee survey** section related to engagement levels (best-in-class as a score of 4), **increased use of global intranet by 10 percent**, and **delivery of assets that could be repurposed** regardless of country or language.

Planning & Research

In summer 2011, Global Corporate Communications worked with local markets to better grasp anniversary communications needs. An audit of existing training and education materials unveiled limited historic facts which hindered the ability to teach employees about the 150-year history and the important role the company played within the spirits industry. It also identified decentralized sources of heritage information. Primary research via a global survey and focus groups regarding perceptions of the year-old intranet, ONE Bacardi, revealed an opportunity to better leverage this tool. While 85 percent of respondents of the survey viewed the intranet as “both a business resource and a way to connect with employees,” only 42 percent indicated using the site to support daily business activities. Leveraging the global intranet as a central repository of anniversary assets presented an opportunity to increase number of users and online engagement while streamlining the information-sharing process.

The team worked closely with The Bacardi Archive to conduct secondary research of company history. This research identified compelling stories, available images and graphics, and helped verify historic facts that could be used to tell our unique story. A database of 150 facts was developed to serve as the foundation for materials created by countries and by the brand team. A database of images approved for internal and external use was also developed and these would serve as a source for brand teams developing social media posts and videos.

The team also addressed the challenge of an inconsistent communications structure. With no regional or in-country internal communicators, it was important to create the right support team. A global network of anniversary contacts was created in the summer of 2011 with nearly 100 members ranging from a variety of functions (sales, HR, country managers, marketing, etc) and covered all offices spanning 80 markets.

With an internal communications budget of less than \$300k (CONFIDENTIAL), a strategy was devised to engage employees in a clear, corporate story presented via events, timelines, videos, imagery, key messages, contests, infographics, and more. It was important to use a variety of tools and assets in order to reach the diverse employee population. A final step in planning was the development of an online archive, available 24/7, with access to heritage images, videos and graphics pre-approved by legal and corporate communications for both internal and external use. A calendar was developed to cover 16 months of content in order to build excitement and education prior to the actual anniversary in February, and later, to sustain engagement.

Execution

In September 2011, the internal celebrations officially started – marking 150 days until the 150th anniversary. Global Corporate Communications launched the Anniversary Hub, a group on the ONE Bacardi intranet, open to all employees. The Anniversary Hub merged all relevant anniversary-related activities, materials and information in a central place. It was the most efficient way to cascade information to all employees as it broke down silos and increased transparency. The social media-based intranet platform allowed for discussion, file sharing, and self-uploading of content.

By the time the anniversary rolled around, more than 20 preview meetings (via audio, web conferencing, webcast or in person) were hosted to motivate teams, review available assets, and encourage local activations of programs. In total, more than 4,700 participants joined one of the preview sessions to learn the multifaceted rollout plan that would continue over a 16-month period, through the end of 2012. Local teams activated the internal kick off with onsite celebrations using materials provided by Global Corporate Communications and adding touches tailored to their markets. Among the kick-off events were happy hours, delivery of rum cakes, decorations and special themed lunches— all organized and paid for by local teams.

For offline teams, oversized countdown calendars were printed and delivered to the 27 production facilities around the world. On or around the 150-day countdown, every single employee received a printed timeline so begin education on the most important historic milestones. Local offline contests were coordinated for production teams while videos and animations were uploaded on plasma screens to ensure these locations, without computer access, were engaged in the campaign.

Over the next months, Global Corporate Communications developed more than 200 assets— all available via the Anniversary Hub and available for both internal and external use. Many markets used the assets in employee trainings, media events, and programs with bartenders and other key audiences. A clear, corporate story was crafted and assets such as timelines, videos, imagery, the first-ever global screensaver, infographics and more helped tell the story. From September 2011 through March 2012, weekly online content ranged from videos featuring long-standing employees (25+ years) representing a combined 1,000 years of service, executives narrating some of the Company’s most iconic stories, and family Master Blenders shared their passion for art of rum-making. An “Ask the Archivist” series was launched where employees could submit questions to the company archivist. Animations were introduced to highlight history and facts in a modern, fun way. Local activations were featured via photos and videos posted by local teams and monthly contests rewarded employees learning the company history.

For sales teams, templates to share highlights with distributors, customers and partners were created in Microsoft Word and PowerPoint formats. These included graphics and copy so that sales teams simply had to customize introductions. Within just five months, more than 2,000 documents and videos were posted online.

The culmination of activities took place in February with local employee and consumer celebrations – all which leveraged the assets developed. While February was the most active month for anniversary programs, new content was delivered throughout 2012, in collaboration with the Public Relations (PR) team. Each month, PR issued a multi-media news release related to the anniversary. Internally, campaigns and contests reflected the PR campaign. For example, when a multi-media news release announced the limited-edition family blend, a rum retailing for US\$2,000, internal editorial features included interviews with family blenders responsible for crafting this unique product and a video feature on the process of making the hand-crafted decanter holding the liquid. Global Corporate Communications promoted the use of the hash tag #Bacardi150 among employees and brand teams to help drive trending via Twitter and encouraged them to share news releases and photos online. Among the PR activities was the announcement that Bacardi Rum exceeded 500 awards transforming the accolade of “world’s most awarded rum” to “world’s most awarded SPIRIT”. No other brand has won more awards than Bacardi rum for quality, taste and innovation – this provided another reason to celebrate. A new logo, animation, fact sheets and videos helped promoted this new milestone.

In December 2012, the final anniversary event took place with the installation of the Bacardi Time Capsule at the Global Headquarters in Bermuda and led by Facundo L. Bacardi, Chairman and great great-grandson of the company’s founder. It contains more than 100 items submitted by employees across regions and will be opened in 2062 to mark the 200th anniversary. The installation is at the Bacardi offices—a tourist stop in Bermuda—where visitors can learn about this special dedication.

Results

The 150th Anniversary resulted in a new benchmark for global employee activations, delivered record-breaking participation, and exceeded program objectives:

- **Creation of 200+ anniversary assets** to share our story consistently- availability resulted in local market **production savings valued at more than US\$1M**. Local teams repurposed assets for use in training, media events, employee celebrations, distributor and partner meetings and more. Assets created by Global Corporate Communications ensured an accurate and consistent Bacardi story, allowing teams to focus on execution, not creative development.
- **All locations hosted an employee party and 90% posted photos/videos online** - the highest global engagement for one program and the highest ever contribution to the ONE Bacardi global intranet content.
- **Within six months, 60% of the company visited the Anniversary Hub on ONE Bacardi and by Jan. 2013, the Hub exceeded 140k views** – four times more than the previously most visited space. The Hub was so successful that it became the **model for the Martini brand** (also owned by Bacardi Limited) which set up a similar site to support its own 150th anniversary in 2013.
- **One month before the anniversary, ONE Bacardi usage rose by more than 120%– significantly exceeding its target of a 10% annual increase**. Anniversary communications helped change behavior as employees began adopting the global intranet as a business resource and everyday work tool. For the first-time ever, more than half the company were on ONE Bacardi - a significant feat considering only one third of employees are in offices, in front of computers. Year-over-year comparisons were impressive—showing a 187% increase in March (2011 vs. 2012) alone.
- Results of the first-ever global **Employee Engagement Survey resulted in 92% participation with overall engagement of 3.76** (4 considered “Best in Class”). Favorable results indicated pride and employee passion drummed up by the anniversary. “I feel proud to work for Bacardi” was 85% favorable, five points higher than high-performing companies (The HAY Group, 2011).
- **Partnered with External Communications** to promote media activities and create Company ambassadors by encouraging promotion of external activities and content via email signatures, customer communications, special events and social media. The Bacardi brand team adopted “#Bacardi150” in social media—an effort launched by Global Corporate Communications.
- **Partnered with Human Resources to update onboarding and recruitment materials** to showcase consistent heritage stories and train new hires on company history as soon as they join.
- **Online archive reached 3,800+ registered users, and more than 8,800 downloads of assets. Martini is now leveraging the site** by uploading assets to support its own anniversary program.