How to reach out to resellers and stay in front of mind
HGST produces industry-leading storage devices for enterprises, SMBs and creative individuals. Following its recent acquisition by Western Digital, HGST needed to re-engage with the channel and maintain trust in its high quality G-Technology drives.

With resellers constantly bombarded with brand and product information, HGST asked DirectionGroup to formulate a new approach that would communicate the acquisition story and develop a better understanding of its product range. Crucially, we needed to ensure that the method we used was highly engaging and talked the channel's language by focusing on how G-Technology drives would mean more revenue opportunities.
THE GAME

Using the ‘G’ in G-Technology as our main character, players would navigate through a maze and try to consume as many types of data that stood in their path. Icons representing video, music and photos were there to be gobbled up by G. Extra points were awarded for consuming additional facts about G-Technology capabilities, which in turn helped to educate players on the USPs of the products.

The speed of the drives was conveyed through the intensity of the game itself, while the consumption of the icons represented just how much data G-Technology drives could hold.

THE RATIONALE

The compulsive, compelling and competitive nature of video gaming is particularly pertinent when applied to the fast-paced world of sales. Even the most basic computer games have these three elements at heart.

We planned to tap into that obsessive, ‘all-consuming’ interaction with gaming using a design of our own. Modelled on the legendary Pac Man screens, we devised, developed, built and tested our very own online game for HGST G-Technology.

With an increasingly short window of opportunity to grab the interest of busy sales partners, our aim was to go beyond the clichéd sales pack. We wanted resellers to talk about our campaign with their colleagues, to battle it out with competitors and to build a relationship with HGST that lasted longer than the time it takes to read an email.

With high-profile competitors, it was imperative that the HGST G-Technology campaign was fresh and cut through the usual industry messages. We did this by ‘gamifying’ the sales process.

THE SOLUTION

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THE PLAYERS

The game was designed with a company-specific passcode activation so that only selected resellers could play it. Using HGST’s database of contacts, we targeted the key sales partners and hyped up the game with chance to win personal prizes.

Our teaser emails introduced our ‘all-consuming’ G-Technology microsite and encouraged recipients to invite members of their own sales teams to get involved. The website not only hosted the game but also included product information and key details on the recent acquisition by Western Digital. With all the information in one place and an excuse to keep on coming back to the site to play the game, there was less pressure on HGST to get across lots of different messages in a single hit.

THE PRIZES

The game was live on the site for a promotional period of two months. In that time, players had the chance to top the leader board and win the main prize – a retro gaming table for their home or office. As an added incentive, we created second and third prizes of iTunes vouchers and a Go PRO HD camera respectively. These had an added benefit – they conveyed the type of data (music and video) that G-Technology end users could expect to find more space for when they bought these drives from resellers.

To make sure we didn’t alienate those who were not quite as obsessive about the game as others, we also offered the next ten highest scorers a prize each of a GConnect drive.
THE MICROSITE

With the game a key focus, it was easier to get sales partners to return to the site time and time again. The live leader board kept participants up to date on who was the stand out player – offering even more incentive to try to better their score. But there was also lots of useful information – news, product reviews, videos – that were updated on a regular basis. These assets gave visitors yet more reasons to sell G-Technology drives to their customers.

DIRECT COMMUNICATIONS

Following the initial teaser email, a launch email was distributed to the key contacts, which contained their unique company pin code. Several weeks into the campaign, those who had not activated their code were sent a reminder email that also highlighted the top-scoring individuals in case resellers were then tempted to beat their market competitors.

With the game well underway, resellers were also sent relevant details about G-Technology product details and an update on the acquisition process. The penultimate email was a quick reminder that there were only a few weeks left to play the game and top the leader board. Once the promotional period had ended a final email was sent to all recipients with details of the winners and the prizes.

This level of communication struck a delicate balance between the need to convey HGST key messages and the likelihood of resellers actually reading the information. Emails were sent out by named HGST account managers and each stage was carefully planned to be relevant and informative, rather than the usual long-winded and impersonal emails. To reach the widest possible audience, the game and communications were translated into German and French as well as being sent to UK recipients.
In a highly competitive industry, characterised by a wide range of products and brands, grabbing and holding the attention of salespeople is a challenge in itself. Our campaign demonstrated that with a good understanding of the motivations of these individuals, brands like HGST can grab, and then hold, the attention of time-poor sales partners.

We did this simply by thinking differently about what salespeople would respond to and how the gamification of the sales-enablement process could help the brand stand out from its competitors. Instead of a standard series of emails, this innovative to-channel campaign not only delivered the brand message and product details but also provided a useful source of information for the salespeople who got involved. The game itself became, for some sales partners, an all-consuming passion for the brief period of time it was available, with many keen to maintain their position at the top of the leader board.
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