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A case study and testament to *What's Your Why?*

There is nothing new about the concept of brand-building. But it has undergone a major update over the last few years. And when I started at the Missouri Lottery nearly 10 years ago, the Missouri Lottery did not focus at all on “brand messaging” with our advertising. Brand-messaging was not even a part of the dialogue. Our focus was more on advertising that promoted the product to drive short-term sales in a “one off” product-oriented way. We realized even then that there is more to building a business than focusing solely on short-term sales, and that we needed to pay more attention to brand-building for long-term sustainability. We knew even that we had a pivotal gap to fill. We knew we were missing the solid brand statement that supports the emotional connection with all of our stakeholders, both internal and external.

We tried a few short-lived campaigns like “Where the Magic Happens,” but we were unable to measure the impacts. We felt that they just weren’t getting much traction, but did not see a pathway forward for developing a well-conceived brand-building strategy. In search of answers, we enlisted Barkley to conduct player intercepts and soon discovered that players and non-players alike felt there was a certain negative stigma attached to playing the lottery. We knew we needed to change that if we wanted to grow our player base and increase profits for our beneficiary. We needed to reduce that stigma and help our core players feel good about their recreational lottery gaming; and we needed to provide our casual and non-players more and better reasons to participate than just fun and entertainment.

Barkley Advertising and Jeff Fromm literally wrote the book on marketing to millennials. Barkley has a strong reputation and a proven track record for helping their clients

answer the Simon Sinek question “What’s your why?”, translate that answer into an action plan that connect their “why” with customers and grow their businesses.

The Missouri Lottery’s beneficiary is public education, so Barkley creatively recommended we implement a “Play it Forward” campaign with a branding statement of “Every ticket makes a difference for Missouri students.” Education is something that everyone can support, regardless of your opinion of gaming. Supporting education puts everyone on the same team. With that campaign, our brand was purposefully speaking to why we exist.

Barkley shared Sinek’s view “that people make decisions based on emotion more than anything else.” They emphasized that nowhere is this more true than with millennials, who support brands that do good work. Millennials prefer organizations that seek positive social change. They believe that every profit-oriented enterprise can at some level improve society. And what mission can do that more effectively than the beneficiary of Lottery funding - education?

Furthermore, millennials seek companies who involve their customers more directly in their good works, whether that be time or money. Playing it forward with Lottery purchases meets that goal. “Play it Forward” is now thoroughly entrenched in all our corporate and sports sponsorships, communications and organizational culture. Understanding our “why” impacts the way we make decisions, recruit employees, etc. We track the impacts that “Play It Forward” advertising and focusing on our “why” have had on our organization and our brand.

It is difficult to get a precise measure of the causal relationship between messaging and

outcomes. But we do quantify significant increases in sales, employee and retailer engagement, and lottery relevance with our players. More citizens today know that Missouri Lottery players “play it forward” for education, and today our brand is nearly as relevant as McDonalds and more brand relevant than the NFL and beer in our state. That is impressive considering Missouri has an NFL team, and we are the home of Anheuser-Busch. Our loyalty program membership includes a significant share of millennials and that segment continues to grow. In addition, our “Play it Forward” advertising has won numerous industry awards.

All lotteries have a built-in “why” that can help them grow in many ways. Most enterprises that dive into the process of clarifying that “why” find that it galvanizes the energy, focus, and effectiveness of the internal team and that in itself is a powerful and rewarding result. Turning that “why” into an effective message and communications campaign that connects with the external audience - the players, political constituents, corporate sponsors, and the general public - is the big ROI.

Lastly, the “why” is a living testament that evolves over time. Marty Zuniga, the Missouri Lottery’s fabulous Community Relations Manager, is constantly refreshing it so we can keep it front-and-center in the hearts and minds of all Missouri lottery stakeholders. He manages a constant flow of communiques to ensure that nobody ever loses sight of our underlying mission and purpose, our “why”. And Barkley has been instrumental in helping the Missouri Lottery tell our story about making a difference for others. To put it simply, “Play it Forward” has helped us improve as an organization, as well as increase net funds transferred to education. ■