Case Insight 11.1: Adnams

Emma Hibbert, Marketing Director

Hi, my name’s Paul Baines, I'm Professor of Political Marketing at Cranfield University and co-author of Marketing Fifth Edition by Oxford University Press.

In this next clip, we talk to Emma Hibbert, the Marketing Director at Adnams, the brewery and distiller, about how to take a brand from a regional base to a national one.

Hi, my name’s Emma Hibbert and I am the Marketing Director at Adnams.

Let me tell you a bit about the history of Adnams, so we’ve been brewing in Southwold since 19872, that’s when the Adnams brothers came over from Berkshire and bought the brewery. We can trace brewing back on this site since 1345, we know there was brewing then because there was an ale wife called Joanne de Corby who was actually in court for selling the wrong size of beer, so we know that that’s where we can trace beer back to.

The brothers took on the, the brewery and then since then, we’ve been brewing and more recently, we bought, we added a distillery into the brewery in 2010, so today we’re much more of a modern brewery but we have this heritage going back as far as 1872.

Our marketing communications at Adnams have changed hugely throughout the years, I won’t take you back to right at the start since 1872 but I know that things have evolved hugely. Up until the 1990s, Adnams didn’t have a marketing department, since then the, the board has really put the brand at the heart and centre of everything that we do.

We invested in a above the line campaign, we had TV advertising in the early 2000s along with a poster campaign. What we do more recently is much more about getting the brand in-hand so we, we go to events, we have much more experiential and we also want to share our stories, create content and build our fan base so digital marketing is a huge part of that.

The marketing problem that we faced was that we were really strong in our heartlands, so in Suffolk and Norfolk, we were really well known. Outside of that, those counties, we were a little bit less so and as we were getting listings so our beer was being sold in pubs and in supermarkets, increasingly nationwide, we needed to really heighten our brand awareness so that people understood us, knew who we were and chose our products.

So what we wanted to do is really take our brand awareness that we have created in the heartland, to a more national level and particularly in London. So we looked for some key sponsorships that we could get involved, so the university boat races between Oxford and Cambridge in London, which takes place in April every year and also the Tour of Britain cycling event, which is a nationwide cycling event, which attracts the elite level of cyclists.

The reason we chose the university boat race is because in London, it really is the first day out after winter, when people come out, they want to have a party, you know, they want, they’re full of the spring but also there’s this world class sporting event taking place along the Thames, which has national TV coverage and international TV coverage, so to become the beer of the boat race really did align ourselves with a great event which got PR, there was a great reason that we could start talking about it on social media and it was a way that we could engage with existing fans but also attract it to new Adnams’ consumers.

The cycling, there’s a really strong link between the Adnams’ brand and cycling, both at the elite level and people who want to spend thousands of pounds on a shiny new bike, but also more leisure, I like to talk about cycling from leisure to Lycra and that’s really where we see, particularly in Suffolk where the roads are quite flat, that lots of people like to get out on their bikes, so there’s a really strong connection between the Adnams’ brand and cycling, so we saw those two events as key to get our brand awareness up, both in London and nationally.

So the tactics that we undertook really were to have an integrated campaign because of course, our marketing spend is, is much about that B2B, business to business, our customers are the people running the pubs or in the supermarkets, we also want to get to the buyers as well as to their consumers and customers, so the B2B was really about trying to get the pub landlords to buy more Go Ship from us and so by linking it to the Go Ship promotion around the boat race or the Tour of Britain, it really just gave us a chance [a] to talk to them but [b] to have a, a promotion that linked to that sponsorship.

We then gave them the tools to communicate to their customers so it became much more of a B2C and we were really then having a competition to try and get people to enter a competition on our own website, which we could then collect that data and start that dialogue, start the communication and try and draw people in as Adnams’ fans.

Let me give you a bit of insight into the beer market, so as every industry, the beer market is changing hugely and rapidly. No longer do we have just a few breweries but we have well, over 2000 of them, last year alone, 300 breweries set up in business. Now the share of voice or the share of throat is then getting really competitive because the beer market is actually in decline so there are, we as a nation are drinking less beer but there are more people producing it.

The future of marketing at Adnams is really exciting, we have been involved in so much over the last few years, we have put a distillery into our brewery, we were the first brewery to put our own distillery in, we have new hotels and pubs and shops, we have a great conversation happening online and I think that’s the real difference, is no longer do we just broadcast to our fans and our customers but we have a really engaging conversation with them and I think that’s what we do, is to try and get all of those stories so we’re doing a huge amount to reduce our impact on the environment, we’re doing a huge amount to engage with our communities so it’s really how do we get those stories across and make sure that people are buying our products over here over other people’s. This is why marketing at Adnams is so exciting, the future is bright.

I studied Politics and Geography at university and then became president of the students union. I then wanted to continue my career as a student and so went onto do a postgraduate degree in Industrial Relations. When I finished that, a job came up in the marketing department of my university, just as a temporary post, so I was asked to fill that and I did that and really loved it and that’s what gave me the real appetite for marketing and so I got involved in marketing at a university, so I was trying to encourage people to come and study their courses at our university rather than go to somebody else’s.

After I’d done that for about seven years, I then decided that I wanted to move back to Suffolk, I’d come away from Suffolk when I was a teenager, hating it and then realised that it was a really great county and I wanted to come back. I saw the job at Adnams and thought what a dream job that is, I started as PR and Community Projects Manger within the marketing department and over the last 16 years, has really worked my way up and became Marketing Director two and a half years ago.

My advice for students who are looking for their first job is really to research the company that they’re applying for. When I get CVs through and I realise that people haven't had work experience, then I want to know that they understand what Adnams is about, what do we want to achieve and how are you gonna make us achieve that?