Discover Clackmannanshire Growth Fund Case Study

Discover Clackmannanshire Campaign
Discover Clackmannanshire Ltd (DCL) originated as a voluntary group founded in 2012 and later incorporated as a private company limited by guarantee in 2016, with its main aim being to promote the visitor offer in Clackmannanshire. This £20,000 campaign comprised a £10,000 Growth Fund grant with match funding from DCL and a number of private sector companies. The campaign was designed to promote the unique experience of a short break in and around the Ochil Hills including stunning landscapes, great walking & cycling country, and unique historic attractions.

The rationale for the project came from the recent reinvigoration of DCL which provided the opportunity to implement a campaign to improve the promotion of the local area. Marketing campaign activity undertaken included social media marketing, video production, photo competition, walking & cycling digital itineraries, interactive asset map and events calendar.

The key economic aim was to encourage increased visitor numbers and associated expenditure to a relatively undiscovered area of Scotland. Being a short break destination, the target market was visitors from a maximum of two hours away. This reflected excellent transport links via road and rail to the cities of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Dundee and their surrounding areas.

The project has performed well against its key performance indicators (KPIs) with reach of 2.64m on Facebook (target: 1.5m), 3,294 Facebook likes (target: 2,000), 640 Instagram followers (target: 500), 89,942 clicks (target: 27,500), 8,718 website visits (target: 1,000), 747,471 video views (target: 50,000), 512 interactive asset map click throughs (target: 300), 1,289 itinerary views (target: 200). A photography competition achieved 103,000 reach, 10,100 post clicks, 56 entries and 1,100 votes (targets: 100,000 reach, 3,000 clicks, 50 entries and 500 votes).

The Growth Fund has helped in the reinvigoration of DCL as the campaign provided a clear focus. It also enabled the introduction of social media which had not previously been used by the Group and this has been very successful. Facebook and Instagram have been above target (as set out above). They also launched a Twitter page that has 2,497 followers and a YouTube account with 1,600 views. It took time to work out what people were looking for on social media, but they now have a much clearer idea and this has been reflected in the increase in numbers. For example, Instagram started later than planned but when they realised that people wanted images of the countryside it took off.

The content creation has been a particular strength and the Group have managed to achieve more than initially envisaged. Savings were made which enabled them to create 10 films which was considerably more than the three initially anticipated. They were also able to commission a photographer who has provided over 200 images. They have also created an event calendar which already has 80 events promoted on it.

The campaign has increased the profile of the Group and the local area which has attracted a lot of interest from bloggers, resulting in a number of well written blogs about visiting Clackmannanshire together with good visuals.

A key learning point for future projects is the need to carefully plan what the Group wish to achieve, who is going to carry out each task and what time is involved in this. This is particularly important when people are volunteering their time.

Initially engagement with the Group and campaign by some local businesses was slow but picked up pace as the campaign progressed. There is now a much stronger level of engagement with Discover Clackmannanshire.
The Group is much stronger as a result of undertaking the campaign. They now have a greater level of engagement with the private sector and a lot more people are aware of the Group. They have 30 companies directly involved with the Group and over 100 business and attraction listings on the website (up from 20). Businesses have been approaching them to discuss collaborative opportunities and the offer in the local area has improved as result of this. The local MP, MSP and several Local Councillors have also contacted DCL to find out more about their future plans.

The Group have had very good results from their social media and digital activity. A considerable portion of the campaign took place in the last six months of 2017 so they are starting to see the effects now and expect further impacts throughout 2018. The local area showed an upward trend in turnover, visitor numbers and tourism sector employment on the previous year and a high degree of confidence throughout the industry (68% very optimistic / optimistic).

The Growth Fund grant enabled them to make investment in a concerted campaign that has provided the Group with greater focus and direction. It allowed for innovation through the introduction of social media to the Group’s activities. It has also been inclusive with stronger links with the Clackmannanshire Third Sector Initiative (CTSI) who, in turn, have arranged tours, attracted exhibitions and engaged with events.

The level of additionality is high as it has considerably accelerated the development process and facilitated activity of a much larger scale and enhanced quality. In the absence of Growth Fund support, the Group would still have launched its social media activity but estimate that it would have taken three years to get to the same stage. The support has also allowed development of a more professional look and whilst they would have been able to attract local interest, the Growth Fund support has attracted interest from a much wider area.

The Group implemented a monitoring plan to report back on the KPIs set out in their Growth Fund application. However, it has also been beneficial in demonstrating to the Group what the campaign has achieved. Tracking and analysis of the digital data has allowed them to amend their approach, where appropriate. Targets have also been set for the coming year to provide a further focus and something to aim for. They are also tracking the wider performance of the tourism sector in the local area through the Industry Barometer.

Progress with the campaign was reported to the Group at their quarterly meetings. A monthly email is also sent out that raises awareness of what has been happening, and planned activities and events. They also released a number of press releases during the year to make people aware of activities taking place and to raise the profile of DCL.

They have a good working relationship with VisitScotland (VS) who attend their quarterly meetings, and provide advice and support. At the outset of the project, VS provided assistance for an industry seminar for local tourism businesses to raise awareness of the Group and increase networking opportunities. VS has also been flexible in the reallocation of funds, where appropriate. In order to make best use of the monitoring data, VS provided some training on gathering information, particularly accessing digital analytics.
The campaign has given the Group significant momentum on which to build. They now have a lot more people within the Group that are volunteering their time to undertake tasks and have filled three vacant committee posts. They have received funding from Clacksfirst for the coming year, and have started a process to look at the longer-term viability of the Group and different ways of generating funds. For example, they recently developed a Tourism Map and are selling advertising space to pay for its production.

The campaign has created videos, maps, pictures and other content which can be used in the future and has allowed them to establish a social media marketing base. Due to the success of the photography competition they will be holding another in 2018.

The enhanced reputation of the Group has enabled them to participate in the Stirling University Internship Project. This has allowed them to secure two interns to undertake administrative and marketing tasks.

They are also discussing with the National Trust for Scotland, Historic Environment Scotland and the RSPB opportunities for stronger links with the Group. They are also keen to develop other opportunities including those with local food and drink providers.
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