



ONLINE MASTER'S DEGREE IN STRATEGIC PUBLIC RELATIONS

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY WASHINGTON DC

Click to Learn more >>



Print This Article

<< Return to [MJKL goes on a hometown tour](#)

MJKL goes on a hometown tour

[Craig McGuire](#)

September 23 2008

When MJKL Enterprises bought a 60-store chunk of the Hardee's restaurant chain this May, members of the family-owned fast-food group wanted to introduce themselves to their new employees – in person.

Eschewing the type of digital town-hall meetings so common following such acquisitions, new management was intent on hitting the road and pressing the flesh – even though the new stores spanned five states: Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri, and Tennessee.

Strategy

In July, MJKL approached Gordon C. James PR (GCJ) to plan a nine-day, five-state, and 60-store tour and community outreach campaign.

“We wanted to use [GCJ] to not only manage the trip... but to help introduce ourselves,” says Margaret LeVecke, CMO of MJKL.

GCJ peeled a page from its political playbook by deploying an advance team to each town ahead of the tour.

“First, we wanted to establish there were new leaders and they would be... revitalizing each store,” says Gordon James, president of GCJ. “Second, we wanted to show the communities that the new leadership wanted to be involved.”

Tactics

The centerpiece of the tour was a flashy, decaled Hardee's SUV, James says. GCJ planned the route to hit six to eight stores a day, with an hour and a half at each stop for a presentation by one of the franchisees, a sampling of food, a check presentation, and community photo. MJKL chose a local children's or veterans charity at each stop to receive a \$500 to \$2,000 check.

In the weeks preceding the trip, GCJ compiled a large database of selected local charities, chambers of commerce, mayors, and media.

In addition, the team sent media advisories to each town it visited.

Results

“The advance team was critical to our success,” James explains. “They met with all of the media, chambers, and mayors. This political campaign-style meet-and-greet ensured we would have a good crowd at each stop.”

One or more media outlets at almost every stop published at least one photo of the events.

“We're tremendously pleased with the support by the community,” LeVecke says. “[GCJ] really allowed us to get in contact with the communities around our stores – something that is a key to our success.”

Future

“Because of our success, after only two days into the tour, MJKL Enterprises announced that they will conduct the tour every year, and added their 50 Carl's Jr. locations in Arizona to a following tour,” James says.

That tour is scheduled to launch by mid-October.

PRWeek's view

A publicity tour can be fraught with disaster. This tour was distinctive because GCJ recognized that it could apply the tactics of political brainstorming.

Touring five states throughout the Midwest and South, GCJ's advanced team learned about each area's distinct characteristics.

By doing so, GCJ maximized its potential at each stop and established a framework that MJKL will now leverage regularly to better connect to its far-flung base.

PR team: MJKL Enterprises (Guadalupe, AZ) and Gordon C. James Public Relations (Phoenix)

Campaign: The Hardee's Hometown Tour

Duration: August 2008

Budget: \$90,000