



## Patron Responsibility Campaigns: Edmonton, AB

### Peer Engagement and Targeted Messaging to Change Behaviors

Early work with community in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada identified many quality of life challenges (e.g. noise, urination, vandalism, alcohol-related violence) were the result of patrons' deviation from normative behavior in the nightlife, dining and entertainment zone known as Whyte Avenue. There was a need to foster patrons' awareness, and to promote discussion, of alcohol associated behaviors. The question was how to connect with young adults engaged in a vibrant social scene so they would examine the impact of their behaviors on individuals, the social scene and the community. The answer was to become part of it!

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### Problem Statement

A pressing issue for the City in late 2006 was alcohol-related violence among young men. The goal was to influence the behavior of young male patrons of entertainment zones by increasing both young men and women's awareness and opening dialogue about the impact of violence on their nightlife.

### Stakeholders

- Responsible Hospitality Edmonton – Funding and Liaison to all stakeholders involved
- City Manager – Approval
- Whyte Avenue Hospitality Industry – Access to establishments, allowed posting of material
- U of A Students Union/Toybox Media – Production and execution
- Campaign Events Team – Students trained to engage patrons in discussion about violence and nightlife on streets and in pubs/clubs 11 pm to 2 am. Between 6 and 10 people were on the team each evening.

### Process

In February 2007, rather than hiring a conventional marketing firm, Responsible Hospitality Edmonton chose the University of Alberta Students' Union Marketing Department to develop and implement the Patron Awareness Campaign due to their extensive experience in communicating with the demographic of 18 to 24 year olds.

The messaging developed for the campaign was “Be a Lover, Not a Fighter.” This was intended to communicate the personally relevant social consequences of engaging in violent behavior. Specifically, this messaging was designed to communicate to 18 to 24 year old males that “violence is not attractive to women.”

A variety of traditional and non-traditional mediums all focused on the late-night venues and environs of Whyte Avenue were used to deliver the campaign. The traditional mediums, such as washroom posters, table tents and banners, were designed to give the campaign messaging a strong foundation and establish a level of credibility among the primary audience. The non-traditional mediums (e.g. meter heads, photo boards and the events team with hand-outs) were designed to spark discussions on the campaign and the issue of violence within patron peer groups whom would potentially have the greatest impact on changing the behavior of the primary intended audience.

The goals of the program were explained to managers of Whyte Ave. pubs/clubs that catered to the primary audience (18-24 year olds) in advance. All twenty-one venues requested posters, table tents and permitted walk-in access to the events team.

On Friday and Saturday nights, the events team would visit about 6 venues plus talk with the line-ups outside. They engaged individuals or groups in discussion and gave them the Band-Aid/condom pack afterwards. The meter heads were put out at 1 am and collected as the team left the street. The photo board was operated with staff along the sidewalk. This was done for five weekends in the summer and two in December.

This event was highly targeted and few people outside of the 18 to 24 year old bar scene were aware of it, which gave it an appeal and power that did not exist for other ‘government’ campaigns. There were no ‘City’ identifiers on the material, which lent the campaign the advantage of being perceived as a peer initiative. In fact, event personnel often heard comments such as, “It is so good you guys are doing this, it’s time we talked, quit ignoring it.”

## Outcome

Response to the campaign was overwhelmingly positive, and over the course of the initial five weeks in 2007, we were able to achieve significant engagement with the community of patrons. In summary, a post-campaign survey conducted on Whyte Avenue by the Campaign Events Team indicated a 42.5% level of awareness among the primary audience of 18 to 24 year old males. Furthermore, this survey indicated the primary audience had a favourable reaction by rating the campaign with an average score of 4.1 / 5. Approximately 7,000 personal contacts were made by the Events team with 1/10 people furthering their discussion on the Facebook site.

Even with the high awareness of this campaign and proof that the discussion moved by word of mouth from the street to the internet, it was difficult to measure impact, as any decrease in recorded violence may be due to a variety of contributing factors.

## Recommendations

- Have the young adults who create the material present it for approval at all levels.
- Test with the hospitality industry as they know their clientele.
- Show the material to 'topic' related groups as needed (i.e. Planned Parenthood).
- Know who your allies are up-front.
- Adaptation and flexibility (e.g. removed one poster to save the campaign)

A prolonged campaign is required as there are new young adults joining the nightlife scene every year and education and attitude change take time.

We would recommend developing a complementary campaign targeting High School and first year Post Secondary students as future patrons.

## Challenges and Lessons Learned

Approval within City was the first challenge, as the 'decency factor' is significantly different between the 20's crowd in pubs and clubs and the approving body who could be their parents and are accountable for expenditure of City funds.

## Jurisdiction

This work was completed in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada (legal age 18) in the entertainment zone known as Whyte Avenue.

## Funding

The City of Edmonton provided a total budget of \$50,000 through Responsible Hospitality Edmonton.

## Spin-off Projects

A positive outcome has been the increase in open discussions among the City and the University of Alberta to address the impacts Whyte Avenue has on the student community and the impacts of student behavior on the wider community.

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