



APG Planning Idol 2007- Winning Entry

Background:

Ice (crystalline methamphetamine) is the most potent meth/amphetamine to ever hit Australian streets – and it's reaching epidemic proportions. Impacting the user physically and mentally, it often leads towards violence and crime, making it dangerous to both users and nonusers alike.

The Brief: Address the growing threat of ice in Australia

Client: Inspire Foundation

APG PLANNING IDOL **Mollie Hill, H&T Sydney.**

SETTING THE SCENE

ICE - PART OF AUSTRALIA'S DRUG-SCAPE

The APG brief reported 1 in 10 Australians have *tried* ice and that 73,000 Australians are currently *addicted* to the drug. Breaking this data down using the total national population (as of July 2007), it's revealed that only 3.57% of those who have *tried* ice are actually *addicted*. Supporting this, Australian Government research reveals the most common frequency of ice usage is actually once or twice a year. Clearly, ice users are not ice addicts per se - which challenges conventional understandings that 'ice is addictive therefore ice users are ice addicts'.

KEY INSIGHT

***Representing 4% of the total user group
ice addicts are the exception - not the rule.***

This strategy targets the 96% of ice users who are not addicted - and who have different attitudes, behaviors, and motivations to addicts.

UNDERSTANDING THE ICE USER

Originating as a cheap drug for hardcore addicts, ice also now exists within mainstream culture. A 2007 Government Report found the majority of ice users were Gen Ys with slightly lower socioeconomic status. This audience has grown up in an age of increasingly disarming anti-drug, anti-speeding, anti-skin cancer (etc.!) campaigns.

THE INSIGHT

***This is a fatigued audience, and any engagement
must overcome significant skepticism.***

CONSIDERING 'THE CAUSE'

'Why we use drugs' is ironically overlooked in many anti-drug campaigns. This paper pulls on research by the Drug Policy Review Group for an honest reconsideration of the two typical theories - 'Addiction' and 'peer pressure'. 'Addiction' does not account for the 96% of non-addicted user's central to this strategy – nor does it explain initiation. And 'peer pressure' is not supported by recent self-esteem research coming out of the UK and USA.

This strategy employs the Theory of Reasoned Action that proposes drug-related behavior is based on the affective value of the perceived negative consequences relative to benefits of use. 77% of Australians first try an illicit drug out of curiosity. The primary benefit this group expects is *pleasure*. A secondary benefit is *status* (a result of our sampling culture where bold choices serve as a measure of social status).

KEY INSIGHT

People are curious to try ice – and they continue to use because of the associated benefits – pleasure and status.

WHAT'S OUT THERE ALREADY?

Over time, anti-drug campaigns have gravitated towards increasingly graphic shock tactics that rely on top-down, fear-based messages. While these have been successful in the short term, repeating this strategy is likely to result in 'just another anti-drug message'. Furthermore, these strategies rely on the experiences of ice addicts that are unlikely to engage our non-addicted audience.

KEY INSIGHT

Fear based messages and shock tactics have become generic.

A NEW STRATEGIC DIRECTION

BEYOND THE CONVENTIONAL

This strategy treats ice as a consumer product, rather than an illicit substance and puts forward a positive proposition for the brand:

“How bad can ice be?”

It is about asking 'Ice, so what?' and allowing people to make up their own mind.

The brand idea centers on the creation of a 'Pro-Ice' political party, with spokespeople representative of all parts of Australian society. Their provocative messages serve as an invitation for engagement:

“Ice isn't that bad! It should be made legal for everyone to enjoy – sure it often leads to unsafe sex and dramatically increases the risk of contracting HIV – but so what?!”
(Heather Jones, Lawyer, member of Pro-Ice Party)

Critically, through the Pro-Ice Party, the campaign provides people with the tools to create and share opinions about ice.

BOTTOMS UP

Given the media's prevailing hunger for controversy and learnings from the marijuana legalization debate, this campaign is likely to stimulate heated public discussion. It is predicted that as ice is widely talked about, users will share the (positive and negative) affect the drug has had on them/their lives/those around them.

This approach allows the brand to reach its audience 'bottom up' rather than 'top down' – involving rather than 'talking at' people. This strategy harnesses the power of our audience to bring ice into the open – to demystify it (debunking the status benefit) and desexify it (debunking the pleasure benefit).

NOT AS SILLY AS IT SOUNDS

This strategic direction aligns with Inspire's vision of "moving away from traditional models where young people are passive recipients of messages and towards meaningful youth participation". The essence of the strategy being put forward is echoed by a comment from a young participant in Inspire's 2001 Education Report: "Education is about guiding, questioning, stimulating and nurturing a person's mind and providing the resources to help them find answers".

At the most basic level, this strategy employs a behavioral change model: providing new news to provoke interest; encouraging reconsideration through emotional arousal; providing information to build awareness; and finally engaging the audience in a conversation in order to earn their commitment.

BRINGING IT TO LIFE

MEDIA CHANNELS & PR

Critically, the media strategy for this campaign is not about reach, it is about engagement. Central to the campaign is a media platform with multiple touch points where connections and conversations can be made and had. Once launched through a viral ad, the Party website will play a large role, as will drive-time radio, billboards, and guerrilla tactics taking the Party to the people.

The controversial nature of the campaign renders PR a vital component – through which reach will be achieved. A diverse group of KOLs will be trained to lead media coverage with facts and figures about the devastating impact of on any type of user.

SUMMARY

This strategy is incited by insights into the true problem at hand – rather than conventional or comfortable opinions. Delving beyond traditional understandings of who the ice user is, and why they use ice allows communication to move away from generic fear-based messages and cut through consumer-fatigue - engaging non-addicted ice users in a conversation likely to involve the wider community.