

Case Study:

Las Cruces Symphony Orchestra

Challenge

By their nature, nonprofit orchestras must rely heavily on ticket sales to balance their expenses. Like those in most cities across the country, the Las Cruces Symphony Orchestra (LCSO) was facing rising costs and declining attendance. At the same time, the LCSO was forced to compete with the many other entertainment options available to Las Cruces residents.

The LCSO performs in the Atkinson Recital Hall on the New Mexico State University campus, which has helped cultivate a loyal yet hyper-local following. To boost sales, the orchestra recognized the need to draw audiences from the entire city of Las Cruces. Online ticket sales had only recently become available to patrons and was not being widely used, and few people were visiting the website.

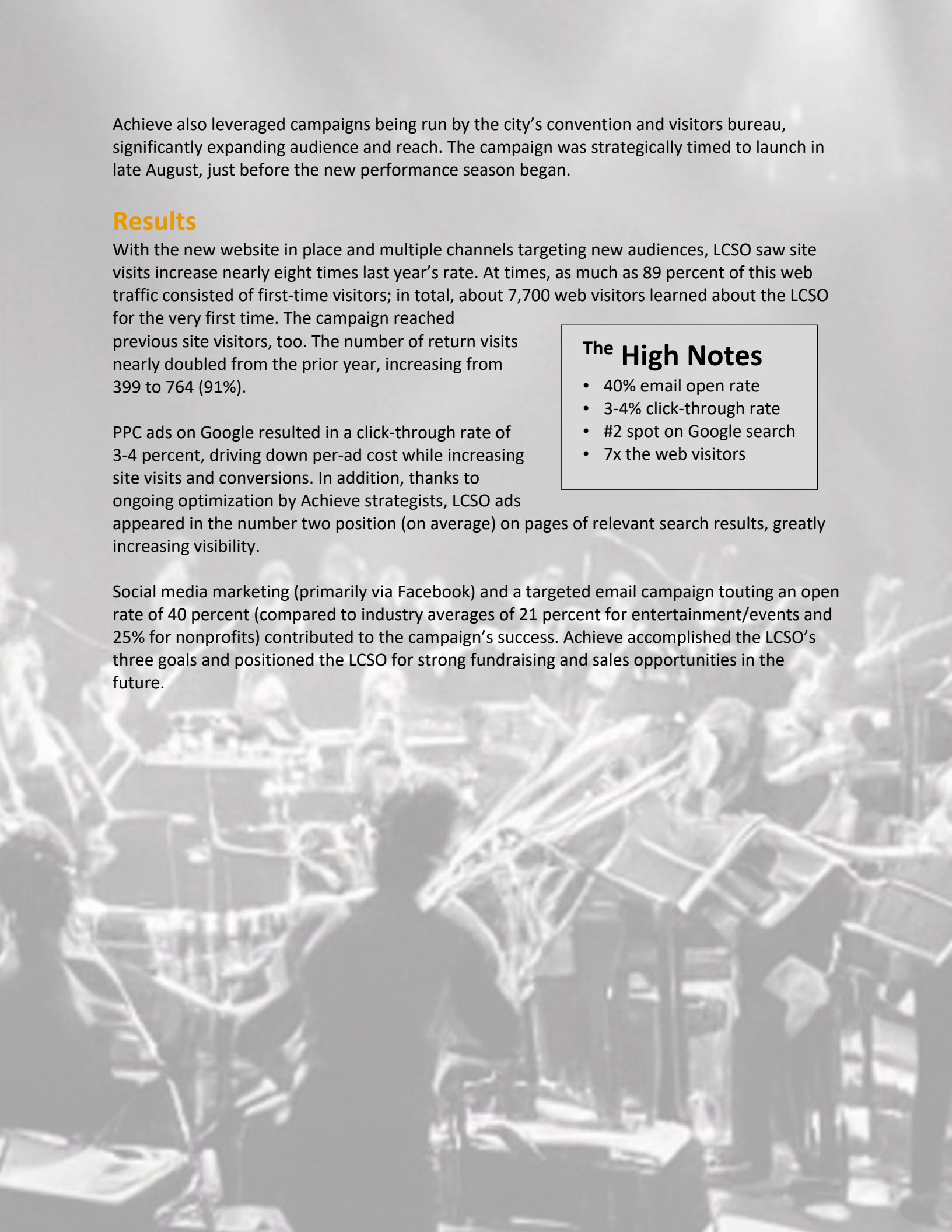
The organization had three goals:

- to raise the public's awareness of LCSO offerings,
- to increase individual and season ticket sales with a new method designed to help convert them to higher levels of engagement, and
- to identify opportunities for increased financial support by individuals and corporations.

Solution

Because raising awareness would naturally drive website visitation, Achieve analyzed LCSO's existing site and determined that a new site should be created based on best practices for design and navigation. The new site was optimized to convert passive website visitors into engaged users and incorporated a ticket-buying platform that minimizes the chance ticket buyers will abandon the site before the purchase. Its mobile friendliness – vital for a positive experience by today's consumer – combined with ongoing SEO (search engine optimization) has boosted LCSO's visibility online; the site now ranks on 252 Google keywords.

Achieve then crafted a digital campaign focused primarily on pay-per-click (PPC) ads. The campaign strategically targeted people most likely to engage with the LCSO. Securing Google Grant funding on the symphony's behalf, Achieve was able to place free Google ads equating to \$10,000 per month alongside relevant Google search results. Using PPC data, social media activity and website visits, Achieve could identify what was working best during the campaign and make real-time adjustments.



Achieve also leveraged campaigns being run by the city's convention and visitors bureau, significantly expanding audience and reach. The campaign was strategically timed to launch in late August, just before the new performance season began.

Results

With the new website in place and multiple channels targeting new audiences, LCSO saw site visits increase nearly eight times last year's rate. At times, as much as 89 percent of this web traffic consisted of first-time visitors; in total, about 7,700 web visitors learned about the LCSO for the very first time. The campaign reached previous site visitors, too. The number of return visits nearly doubled from the prior year, increasing from 399 to 764 (91%).

PPC ads on Google resulted in a click-through rate of 3-4 percent, driving down per-ad cost while increasing site visits and conversions. In addition, thanks to ongoing optimization by Achieve strategists, LCSO ads appeared in the number two position (on average) on pages of relevant search results, greatly increasing visibility.

Social media marketing (primarily via Facebook) and a targeted email campaign touting an open rate of 40 percent (compared to industry averages of 21 percent for entertainment/events and 25% for nonprofits) contributed to the campaign's success. Achieve accomplished the LCSO's three goals and positioned the LCSO for strong fundraising and sales opportunities in the future.

The High Notes

- 40% email open rate
- 3-4% click-through rate
- #2 spot on Google search
- 7x the web visitors