



2016 OC PRSA PROTOS AWARD ENTRY

Name of Entry: LA Kings Science of Hockey Exhibition Opening Celebration
Entrant: Dan Nasitka
Organization: Discovery Science Foundation
Category: A5 – Media Relations Programs

SUMMARY

Discovery Cube in Los Angeles (DCLA), a nonprofit science museum for children, had just opened to the public and was about to unveil its newest permanent exhibition in partnership with the Los Angeles Kings hockey team and their Kings Care Foundation. The exhibition, which brings to life the science concepts behind the world's fastest game on ice, was already behind schedule and time was running out before the public opening set for March of 2015. The Discovery Science Foundation (DSF) communications team was tasked with implementing an awareness-building, integrated media relations campaign in just eight weeks. Additionally, the exhibition debuted only four months after the grand opening of DCLA, presenting a unique public relations challenge of garnering media coverage in a market that was recently dominated by news of LA's newest attraction. The campaign not only brought awareness and publicity to both nonprofit organizations (Discovery Cube and Kings Care Foundation) and to the new exhibition, but also resulted in an 84% increase of in-person attendance on-site at the science center. The media exposure generated included coverage from Fox Sports West, ABC 7, Good Day LA, NBC 4, Associated Press, Los Angeles Daily News, Where Magazine and more.

BACKGROUND

The Discovery Science Foundation (DSF) communications team was tasked to implement a comprehensive media relations campaign surrounding the partnership of Discovery Cube, the Kings Care Foundation and the new "LA Kings Science of Hockey" exhibition. The exhibition was one of multiple permanent hands-on exhibitions on display at the newly opened Discovery Cube science center in Los Angeles. The science center had opened to great fanfare in November of 2014, but was missing its marquee exhibit – the "LA Kings Science of Hockey."

The opening of the exhibition was significant in a few ways:

- This was the first project for the newly formed partnership between Discovery Science Foundation, AEG / LA Kings and Kings Care Foundation
- The newly opened science center was depending on this final exhibit to open and be successful in order to help attract a larger audience to the location
- The opening event was the last public appearance by the Stanley Cup, which the LA Kings had won in the previous NHL season

RESEARCH

Even though the partnership between the Discovery Science Foundation and AEG / LA Kings and Kings Care Foundation was finalized five months prior to the opening of the exhibit, the communications team had a short window of time once the exhibit was completed to finalize the elements of the opening event. In order to announce the partnership, the DSF team first conducted a media audit to identify key media audiences to help get the message of the partnership and exhibition out to the public. The DSF communications team then conducted an analysis on the coverage received from Discovery Cube Orange County's Science of Hockey opening in 2009 to further understand what garnered coverage and how to leverage the unique partnership. The qualitative data allowed the DSF communications team to design a communications plan that utilized the timeliness of DCLA's opening and likeness of the LA Kings, who had recently won the Stanley Cup championship, to promote this marquee exhibit.

PLANNING

The research helped us form critical key messages and develop a plan to achieve our objectives of capturing the attention of local broadcast, radio, print and online media and influencers. We worked to accomplish specific, measurable outcomes:

Objectives:

- Raise awareness of the new partnership and exhibition opening by garnering media attention leading up to the grand opening event on March 19, 2015.
- Reinforce the newly opened Discovery Cube LA as a great nonprofit for families to visit
- Drive attendance to the Cube in the four weeks following the opening of the LA Kings Science of Hockey exhibition
- Raise local and regional awareness about the Kings Care Foundation and the Discovery Science Foundation as two important nonprofit organizations in the region.

Target Audiences:

- Southern California families with kids ages 3 – 14 (boys and girls)
- LA Kings hockey fans of all ages
- General market and sports media outlets and personalities

Strategy:

- Communicate the partnership of DSF and Kings Care Foundation with aligned missions
- Host opening celebration of exhibition with executives, players, mascots, science industry representatives, and Stanley Cup
- Leverage traditional and online media platforms to spread the news regionally

Budget:

- All activities were covered under an allocated amount of \$10,000.

IMPLEMENTATION

The DSF and AEG/LA Kings and Kings Care Foundation partnership was initially announced in October 2014 to help promote the opening of DCLA. As details of the exhibition were finalized in January of 2015 the DSF communications team worked to generate a comprehensive media plan that included media-worthy key messages and a grand opening event to overcome the previously mentioned challenges and generate awareness of DCLA's newest exhibition. Media relations included the development and distribution of news releases, photo releases, and media advisories to both sports and general interest media covering the announcement of the partnership and the opening event. Key tactics such as solicitation and coordination of print and broadcast feature stories; submission of event details to online calendars and forums; and invitations to a large list of key media to attend the grand opening event were crucial in generating media coverage and community engagement focused on the exhibit and partnership. The LA Kings Science of Hockey exhibit has since set a new standard in the industry, demonstrating a successful partnership between science centers and sport entities.

EVALUATION

The DSF communications team exceeded its goals with the following results:

- Live broadcast was scheduled before the grand opening event with Good Day LA and NBC4.
- Pre-event radio interviews also took place on KROQ.
- Day-of media coverage included Fox Sports West, ABC 7 and Associated Press.
- Attendance increased 84% in the four weeks following the exhibition grand opening.
- The grand opening garnered over 60 media placements.
- Received nearly 30 positive media placements.