



# Discovery Cube OC Expansion



DiscoveryCube  
ORANGE COUNTY

## **Project: Discovery Cube Orange County Expansion – A4 Total Program – Nonprofit Programs**

As one of the most densely packed science centers in America, DCOC welcomes 500,000+ visitors annually and educates 200,000+ in classroom-based outreach programs. Its expansion in June 2015 doubled its exhibit space and provided opportunities to offer even more hands-on educational programming in support of four core initiatives: STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) proficiency, environmental stewardship, early learning and healthy living. Another plus: The expansion added 96 full-time jobs and 140 permanent part-time jobs to the Orange County, California economy.

The expansion of the Orange County campus of Discovery Cube followed on the heels of the introduction of Discovery Cube Los Angeles (DCLA). With a grand opening held in November 2014, the two-story, indoor/outdoor 71,000- square-foot DCLA became the first major science museum in the history of L.A.'s San Fernando Valley. The timing of the DCLA grand opening and DCOC expansion presented a formidable public relations challenge. Orange County is part of the mega Los Angeles media market; the story of DCLA's historic opening dominated the news cycle just seven months before DCOC's expansion. Discovery Cube recognized that target media – especially broadcast media – may see the expansion as a “me, too” story and gloss over its significance or simply skip covering it.

Given this potential media conflict and DCOC's goal to boost attendance by 20 percent, DCOC tapped Reville Inc. to develop a strategic communications program. Reville embarked on a multipronged approach to draw media attention as well as drive awareness among the general public, emphasizing the [708,000+ families](#) who call Orange County home.

### **RESEARCH**

Immediately after coming on board, Reville immersed itself in the culture of Discovery Cube to not only understand its vision but also glean the “voice of the customer” to decode answers to two of DCOC's most-pressing questions: What will entice families to choose to visit DCOC, and how can DCOC convey the significance of its long-term core initiatives while generating immediate buzz to promote its expansion and grand re-opening? Given that DCLA opened just seven months earlier – in the same crowded media market as DCOC – Reville conducted a media audit to pinpoint what triggered coverage and measured sentiment. This primary, qualitative research enabled Reville to align a total communications program with DCOC's strategic objectives quickly. By going through archives, Reville learned that LA media preferred to cover the opening of new exhibits – especially broadcast media, which our client valued as the top priority for our media relations efforts. Our analysis also revealed that hyperlocal media accounted for the majority of hits, signaling to us the importance of planning a comprehensive campaign to reach Orange County's more than 25 community news outlets. Further, our research exposed the power of scoping and sustaining relations with respected and well-followed parenting bloggers to aid DCOC in reaching local families and reaching its attendance projections.

### **PLANNING**

With only two months between client engagement in April 2015 and the big reveal in June 2015 of the newly expanded center, Reville focused on two priorities: finding the right hook to engage LA's vast shared media market, especially coveted broadcast media, and reaching local families by engaging Orange County community news outlets and parenting bloggers. We tackled the first priority by packaging expansion news with the opening of The International Exhibition of Sherlock Holmes. This traveling, interactive experience combined science with history and culture to bring to life the historic underpinnings of author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's rich and vibrant stories. The timing also was ideal because “Sherlock fever” was spreading, helping to fuel media interest and drive coverage; the mystery/crime film, “Mr. Sherlock” was set to debut in U.S. theaters in July 2015. We also identified more than 26 family bloggers. We sought to create opportunities for ongoing dialogue with them and, through their eyes, show families the wonders of the world.

### **OBJECTIVES**

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; engaging community news outlets and parenting bloggers. We worked to accomplish specific, measurable outcomes:

- Drive awareness leading up to the official June 11, 2015, public opening by garnering media attention about expansion efforts
- Generate buzz to boost media and public attention by landing same-day placement in the county's largest newspaper, The Orange County Register (1.1 million readers)
- Secure at least three broadcast television news placements for broader awareness, including an early

morning show with at least three segments for a powerful boost.

- Identify and secure relationships with parenting bloggers by providing meaningful opportunities for engagement achieving at least a dozen placements that included photography and video.
- Overcome formidable challenges:
  - **Distinguish DCOC expansion from recent DCLA opening.** We had to create a compelling reason for media to cover the expansion; many were weary of the Discovery Cube story after just covering the opening of its LA campus.
  - **Create value for parenting bloggers.** DCOC had sporadic engagements with local mom bloggers. We counseled our client on how to work with these key influencers and develop opportunities unique to them.
  - **Give broadcast media an exhibit opening to cover** – without diminishing value of expansion.
  - **Launch healthy living initiative.** Before the expansion, DCOC was sponsored by Taco Bell. The expansion provided DCOC the opportunity to segue its message toward sustainability and healthy living. We had to gracefully divorce DCOC from its Taco Bell affiliation in the media and present ways the science center would aid families in making healthy choices

We used the following strategies to communicate messages while staying within budget:

- Position expansion as DCOC's evolving commitment to expand STEM proficiency by keeping up with trends, events and news capturing kids' attention – and creating an entertaining way to approach education through a day of family bonding
- Weave into messaging DCOC's innovative history as one of the first among science centers in the country
- Brand DCOC as an ever-changing destination for family entertainment and education, thanks to new amenities such as the new 10,000 square-foot Julianne Argyros Showcase Theater and Exhibition Hall; Bean Sprouts Café, a kid-friendly café and cooking school; six exhibits help guests understand their roles in environmental stewardship and importance of developing habits for health and wellness
- Piggyback on national hype surrounding Sherlock Holmes

**Budget:** We were given a budget of \$20,000 to include the agency fees for planning, strategy and execution for the expansion activities.

## IMPLEMENTATION

We kicked off implementation in May 2015 by carving out media-worthy key messages to overcome the challenges listed and engaging our client to incorporate these strategies into its overall expansion marketing and communications plan. We negotiated an embargoed story with The Orange County Register, which appeared on the front page, above the fold, on the day of the grand opening. This strategic placement proved the undeniable significance of DCOC's expansion to broader Southern California audiences, which allowed us to entice LA broadcast media to conduct live remotes from the center. We catapulted DCOC's healthy living initiative into high gear by staging a special event for 150+ parenting bloggers. We invited them to bring their families to DCOC, where we set up video stations so they could interview DCOC experts, give a behind-the-scenes look at the center, and share DCOC's key messages with their audiences. We also debuted the new healthy living initiative by showcasing food from the new healthy eatery Bean Sprouts located in the center, which was a huge hit among parenting media.

## EVALUATION

Reveille exceeded its goals with the following results measured against objectives:

- Picked up **front-cover, day-of coverage The Orange County Register** – the county's largest newspaper with a circulation of 1.1 million readers
- Earned **at least 53 positive media placements** within 30 days of the expansion grand opening
- Secured **four broadcast morning show previews and secured an additional two broadcast placements for the ceremony** (KTLA, NBC4 and Fox 11)
- Secured ongoing brand ambassador relationship with 12 mom bloggers; engaged 150+ parenting bloggers and their families to attend pre-event and reached an estimated audience of more than 3.3 million
- Helped grow the centers' total membership base 40% year over year.
- Helped boost the center's overall year-over-year attendance by 12% percent.
- Came in under budget under budget by \$2,582.61.