

# Marketing on a Bikespoke: Getting People to Wear Cycle Helmets



**Marketing Society Awards for Excellence 2012**

**Category F:** Marketing on a Shoestring

**Client:** Headway/James Cracknell

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## **Introduction & Summary (296 words)**

When a cycle helmet saved James Cracknell's life, getting other cyclists to wear helmets became his biggest and most important challenge yet. Although doctors had no doubts about the role of the helmet in James' case, the helmet wearing cause has suffered from spurious statistics, overzealous would-be legislators and a good degree of misrepresentation. James just wanted more cyclists to make the choice to wear a helmet. Calling on the expertise of likeminded friends within the world of marketing, his testimony became a carefully crafted piece to camera. This film was released via James' own twitter account, and rapidly spread among his followers, their followers and so on, resulting in enviable PR opportunities. Done on a shoestring, but with great attention paid to the planning and creative detail, we have been able to quantify the value of the earned media James' film created for his cause – and be confident of having saved lives.

In creating the campaign, we knew that we were making something that would be hard hitting, and was unlikely to achieve millions of views. But for us, this wasn't about big numbers. We would be happy if we just saved one life. As it happened, the numbers still surprised us, eclipsing the performance of comparable not for profit content, and the tweets suggest James' film changed the habits of hundreds if not thousands of cyclists, a decision that may one day save their lives. As we will explain, the story of the campaign shows not just how much can be achieved for very little, but how much good causes need good content. All the more so in a new and more austere world of slimmed down budgets for public safety announcements. In this respect, we believe the campaign can be held up as a model of cause related marketing in a downturn.

## The marketing plan

This project was done without a budget. James had come to us with a mission – to get more people wearing cycle helmets – but no financial backing or sponsorship of any kind. So we were obliged not just to call in favours from agency staff and production partners, but to be creative and original in our approach. Quite simply, we didn't have the money to be anything else.

From talking to James, we were convinced that his story of his experience would be the most powerful tool for achieving our objective. So rather than draw analogies or frighten viewers with dramatic sequences, we felt our role as communications experts was to find a way to get James and his story to as many as people as possible, on a negligible budget.

We avoided entering into a debate about legislature, as this wasn't the real issue – this was about convincing individual cyclists to make choices for themselves. But we knew from our research that the issue of helmet wearing was a contentious one. If we were to avoid these arguments, the content would have to be personal and heartfelt – one cyclist appealing to another by simply presenting his story and his choice, not a man from the ministry instructing the public. The foundation of the campaign would be a piece to camera, in which James simply but eloquently told his story.

*Figure 1: The opening of James' piece to camera*



However, we also realised early on that the quality of the production would be paramount. Yes James' celebrity would help, but this wouldn't be enough to carry an inferior film. We had to keep the viewer engaged in what could never be an easy or comfortable watch, while simultaneously maximising the impact of the details James explained. With this in mind, the film was deliberately kept raw in feel, with sound design and post production used very discretely to bring to life the nature of James' injuries in a way only special effects could. The juxtaposition of James – a fighting fit, former Olympian – and the fragility of his skull and brain this allowed us not just to describe but to visualise, we felt would lend the film unbeatable potency, and make his case even clearer.

Figure 2: A still showing post production effects



The film's quality was also important from a media budget perspective. Breaking with the grand traditions of public safety announcements, we would be relying almost exclusively on free, social media, using our viewers to spread the message themselves. Without a compelling, visually engaging bit of content, this would never happen. To push the point home, James ended with "I make the choice to wear a helmet. If you do too, please send this on to a friend". Our media plan was written into the film.

We chose the date of 20th July for James to tweet the link – the anniversary of his accident. This would maximise opportunities for PR, and help create momentum for the views, favourites and retweets of his friends and followers. We also partnered with Headway - the brain injury association – in order to help spread the message. With this kind of support, we were even able to secure free TV spots around Eurosport cycling programming. This was ideal – we knew that the watchers of these kind of programmes could be powerful advocates, given their presence on cycling forums and blogs. James further promoted the film through appearances we secured on mass market TV and radio programmes including This Morning, Lorraine and The Wright Stuff with Gabby Logan.

Figure 3: James and his video appearing on Lorraine

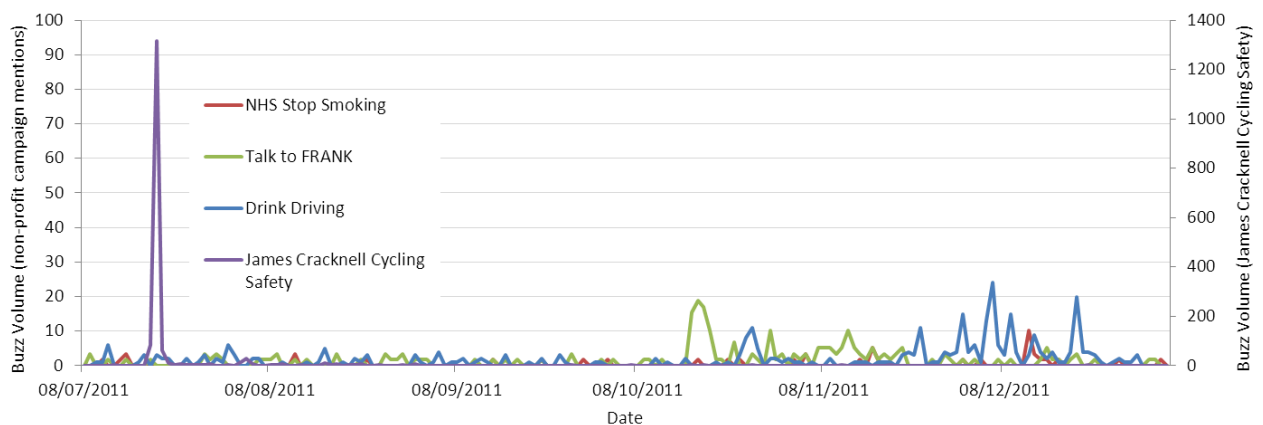


## The scale of achievement

When content is this hard hitting, and about a subject many would prefer not to think about, we are at a disadvantage if success is simply judged as a number of clicks. As it happened, the video is in the top 2.69% of all YouTube videos, having been watched over 70,000 times<sup>1</sup>. This is way ahead of any comparable cycle safety videos, the nearest being TFL with 4,425 over the same period – barely a 15th of our views.

However, the story becomes even more impressive when we look beyond views, especially relative to other campaigns. The Government's drink driving campaign generated 863 mentions within social media throughout 2011. Our film generated 1627 mentions over a three month period (Jul-Sept 2011). 88% more mentions in 75% of the time. And this almost entirely through earned media. A similar comparison can be made with Talk to Frank and the NHS Stop Smoking campaign. Despite these campaigns' owned media, in the 3 months since our launch, neither ever received more than 11 tweets a day. Our daily peak capped out at 1316.

Figure 4: Buzz volume for Cycling Safety campaign relative to comparable public service campaigns



And people didn't just watch and forward on, behaviour changed. A selection of tweets and facebook posts that demonstrate this is shown below.

**spoc5** Steven O'Connor  
@JamesCracknell read your older tweet about wearing a helmet...got hit by a trailer today, all ok but helmet is knackered, cheers dude!  
1 Aug  
Retweeted by JamesCracknell

**Debg155** Debbie Gibbs  
@JamesCracknell your youtube video finally swung it with my boys in my battle to get them to wear their helmets, thank you! x  
1 Aug

**David Rottweiler** I've NEVER worn a helmet when riding my bike on road , off road etc.After watching this I'm going out later to buy a helmet. Thank you.  
20 July 2011 at 10:40 · Like · 3

<sup>1</sup> Source – TubeMogul

We have also looked at how we might understand the results of the campaign on a larger, less anecdotal scale. If we take mortality rates for cycling as 11.1 per 100,000 cyclists per km per year<sup>2</sup>, the fact that we have reached over 70,000 views, not counting word of mouth among the cycling community, eyes on our TV spots and PR, allows us to infer that we may save up to 6 lives in the first year alone. Given Department of Transport calculations of the cost of a life saved of £936,380<sup>3</sup>, this could have saved nearly £6,000,000. And given that a helmet need only be bought once, this number will only increase as the years and kilometres tick by.

## Conclusions

With public safety budgets slimmer than they have ever been, and likely to remain so, it would be easy to conclude that media money should be protected at the expense of that spent on production. Our campaign shows that quite the reverse is true. By providing a piece of truly compelling content – Ad Age’s ad of the day, in fact, who described it as ‘A stunning public safety announcement’ – see figure 6, below – we engaged our viewers to spread our message for us, through their own personal media. Organisations were inspired too. The Bikeradar blog sent the link to their 21,000 fans. The East Midlands Ambulance Service even contacted James’ PR agent to ask to host the film on their website, and advised that other regional ambulance services would like to do the same. In fact, we have been able to calculate that the equivalent value of digital response would have been £37,100<sup>4</sup>. And as described, we can project savings of 6 lives and £6,000,000.

Small budgets are never easy, but for marketers prepared to make bold creative moves, social media can create the opportunities that used to be the preserve of those with money to spare.

Figure 5: Adweek, August 4<sup>th</sup> 2011



<sup>2</sup> Morgan et al 2010

<sup>3</sup> Department of Transport, Highways Economic Note No 1, 2005, ‘cost of a life saved’ analysis

<sup>4</sup> You Tube Views: £18,216.50 based on a cost per view of £0.25, You Tube Likes: £376.50 based on a cost per like of £0.50. Tweets: £1,369.50 based on a cost per tweet of £0.50. Mentions (across blogs and social media based on one mention worth 100 digital media impressions as they’re proactive, lean-in actions): £17,137.50 based on a digital display media CPM of £12.50 (CPM of a typical website with high engagement/interactivity) Total: £37,100.00. All figures are based on estimated CPV, CPT, CPM and CPL