



Tactics Magazine

Big Boy's Toys' event at The Chimes, Uxbridge

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In the Company of Men

Health activities and Father's Day competitions haven't brought The Chimes any closer to its male audience. In fact, that old promotional pitch has fallen on dead ears and, over the past two years, the UK shopping center's research has revealed a distinct drop in the number of male visitors. But after the success of its latest marketing strategy, The Chimes is hoping that it can become a choice destination for male shoppers.

"Having previously tried to target male shoppers through specialized activities, we realized that we were no longer getting through to them. We decided it was time to pound the pavement and actually ask our male shoppers what would appeal to them," said Sophie Love of Primal PR. "The answer was simple, 'Give us a TV and a couch so we can watch, [be entertained] and wait for our partners.' So that's precisely what we did."



The Chimes searched everywhere, even beyond its own industry, for new ideas. It eventually found the perfect one in Australasia: Big Boys Toys, a testosterone-charged lifestyle event that takes place annually in Auckland, New Zealand and sees thousands of men congregating in a big arena to share their common passion for high-powered motorized vehicles, electronics, extreme sports, gaming and food.

Taken individually, none of these elements exactly scream marketing innovation. However, the event planners' skill was in packaging them together into a highly successful event that is really a metaphor for something else, something bigger.

Big Boy's Toys takes the average male's cravings for things that excite him and are sometimes beyond his reach, and then satisfies them in a setting that is essentially his dream basement. It's the place where he and his buddies would want to spend hours together. It's fully kitted out, but not too styled. It's as familiar as his home makeover reveries, yet real and therefore exciting. With these male parameters in mind, The Chimes marketing team worked with **CloudTEN Events and Management (CloudTEN)** to scale down that New Zealand Big Boys Toys concept and adapt it to fit the center's audience, space and budget.

Held in the heart of The Chimes from July 20 through August 2, Big Boy's Toys focused on a Manzone, in which only male visitors were allowed and where themed areas delivered a range of experiences.

The Big Boy's Toys Lounge was made for men to relax in and was equipped with beanbag seating, giant TV screens broadcasting sports, free copies of Men's Health and Zoo magazines, as well as McCoys "Man" crisps as the featured snack.

The Fashion Zone was the place to go for a style update, courtesy of mall department stores and apparel retailers. As for the Gadget Zone, it had the best new finds from MenKind, a center tenant and retailer of gifts and accessories for men.

These various zones were open throughout the Big Boys Toys event, but additional activities were presented on rotation daily to both extend the center's reach and give previous visitors a reason to come back—activities included Moto GP simulators, free barbers' cuts, fitness tests and pub games.

Coming up with male bait was straightforward enough for The Chimes marketers, but staying within the center's limited budget was more challenging.

"We had to make a big impact but on a low budget, so we came up with the idea of selling commercial space in the center to relevant partners to help us drive revenue, hence reducing the cost of the event," Love noted.

"This gave us maximum coverage and activities for a limited cost. We almost matched revenue to spend and, if you add in all the radio advertising, we came out on top with next to no spend."

Once the Manzone opened up, shoppers descended upon The Chimes. The center had originally planned to give out 2,500 man passes for the Big Boy's Toys event, but it quickly ran out and therefore had to let men in without them. The event's competition, whose prizes ranged from store gift cards to a Supercar driving experience, was just as popular, with The Chimes collecting 3,370 entries, experiencing one of its highest participation rates ever.

"We've been having a really tough time and almost every week has been down. However, we managed to be up 3.6 percent (in center traffic) for Big Boy's Toys," Love said. "[That] is fantastic for us."

That traffic turned into extra sales for several center retailers. Per Lui sold out of the watches that it had displayed in the Fashion Zone cabinets, and total sales were up 27 percent during the second week of the Big Boy's Toys event, the first increase for the

store in four months. Burtons recorded two of its best weeks ever and also sold out of the merchandise it had displayed at the event. And, according to manager Steve Jackson, HMV sales shot up as well.

“This is great news for the center, especially in the current climate,” said Michelle Moffitt, marketing manager for The Chimes.

“It’s also nice to have a positive event to talk about amidst all the doom and gloom of the credit crunch.”

A post-event survey of male shoppers also confirmed that The Chimes was on the right track, which is why Big Boy’s Toys will become an annual event.

“We already have had interest from Fosters and Yorkies bars for next year, along with a motorbike company. And King of Shave will present its Gillette men’s experience for us. Brilliant!” Love said.

“From the positive feedback from retailers on sales and the interest from companies wanting to take part, revenue could well outstrip expenses next year, drive male traffic and increase sales for our specialist retailers.”

The Bottom Line

The Chimes was able to break even on its Big Boy’s Toys event by seeking the help of center retailers, corporate sponsors and media partners, as well as selling promotional space.

Here’s an overview of that budgeting plan:

RETAILERS

- Burtons presented its latest style trends in the Fashion Zone
- Debenhams contributed prizes, product shots for the event’s promotional booklet and had a stand in the Manzone.
- MenKind provided equipment for the Gadget Zone
- Per Lui presented its latest style trends in the Fashion Zone

CORPORATE PARTNERS

- Bucks Jet Ski brought in one of its most high-tech models to display
- Fitness First conducted free male fitness tests
- McCoys offered free packs of its “Man” crisps for the Big Boy’s Toys Lounge
- Mercedes brought in one of its new E-Class coupes to display
- Nintendo set up two Wii gaming stations
- Virgin Experience Days supported giant four-lane Scalextric track and half-size Formula One simulator car racing activities, created a promotional page with discounted rates for The Chimes shoppers and offered a free track day as a contest prize

MEDIA PARTNERS

- Men’s Health magazine: Provided free issues for the Big Boy’s Toys Lounge
- Westside Radio: Broadcast live on the weekends during the event

Gave The Chimes free advertising for two weeks before the campaign was launched and a further two weeks during the event

- Zoo magazine provided free issues for the Big Boys Toys Lounge

REVENUE DRIVERS

The following corporate clients purchased commercial space in the center:

- Fitness First
- Go Kart
- McCoys Crisps
- Mercedes
- Ministry of Paint
- Uxbridge Rugby Club
- Watersports.co.uk
- Zoo Magazine

Media Mix

The Chimes used the following vehicles to promote its Big Boy's Toys event:

Print

Advertisement in the local newspaper

Direct Mail

Promotional material delivered to 80,000 homes with a high propensity of target male audience

Onsite

Large format banners, posters, flyers and 16-page Big Boy's Toys Guide

Guerrilla

The Chimes promotional team dropped off Big Boy's Toys literature at local businesses in the area, enticing male office workers to come out to the event. The team hit three local gyms and Fitness First sent a memo to its members. The Chimes troops also handed out flyers all around the city and, together with Zoo magazine, created a commotion in the town center.

Web

Did two e-shots to all the men in The Chimes database, as well as bought in lists for additional shots.

Outdoor

Buy comprised of broad sheets in the region

Big Boy Literature

The Chimes made its case to male shoppers in terms and images they would understand with this Big Boy's Toys Guide. 

