

**Benadryl**

**WHO NEEDS ANOTHER  
F\*\*\*\*\* POLLEN COUNT?**

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JWT

JWT

A photograph of yellow lilies in bloom against a light blue sky with a sunburst effect and falling pollen particles. The lilies are in the foreground, with some in full bloom and others as buds. The sky is a soft, pale blue, and there are numerous small, bright yellow particles falling from the top right, suggesting pollen. The overall mood is bright and airy.

## SUMMARY: WHO NEEDS ANOTHER F\*\*\*\*\* POLLEN COUNT?

We didn't think so at first. But this was just one of the preconceptions and challenges planning overturned when faced with a pitch, multiple channels, no "new news", mobile platforms, tight timings, and even terrible weather.

But from "blitz spirit" insight, to go-live and continuous optimisation, Planning helped create a better pollen count - one that people trust because it's very local and very live and therefore the most accurate Pollen Count available on desktop and mobile. A socially-designed, useful and usable Pollen Count that added value to both hay fever sufferers' lives and the Benadryl brand.

And during the journey of its creation we learned that Planning's remit had broadened from telling brand stories to building and navigating users through branded journeys. We also learned that if agencies want to present their products and services as socially-designed brands then you need socially-designed planners who can do and cover more: part-brand planner, part-social strategist, part-ux and data analyst, planners now need a broader mix of skills and a willingness to look at problems in new ways.

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## INTRODUCTION

This paper is about how planning can be brave, and useful, and make a real difference – even in the most apparently constrained situations.

There are tricky strategic situations that seem to cry out for planning. This was not one of those - or at least, not on the face of it. A mature, commoditised market without 'new news' for years; a 'new' product launch without any real change in core functionality; a campaign idea already decided upon; tight timings. This is not the sort of situation in which you expect planning to shine.

And yet in 'the war against allergies,' planning identified and supported sufferers' 'Blitz Spirit' for the first time. Using traditional skills with new social tools, and new skills with traditional rigour we helped sufferers take control of an 'official' pollen-count source, make it better and shape it to their own needs.

## THE TASK

In 2012, J&J invited agencies to pitch for the launch of Benadryl Liquid Release Capsules, a new variant of the popular over-the-counter anti-allergy medication.

The brief was for a launch that would drive differentiation and value by building brand favourability and motivating sufferers to buy the new product. In so doing, the aim was to contribute to aggressively increased total sales targets of NTS (Net Total Sales) £5.8m (+15%).

## THE PROBLEM

J&J had big ambitions for this launch, but there were four big challenges to be overcome if these ambitions were to be realised:

1. **No 'real' product news.** In a commoditised market where there has been no new news for a very long time, the only new news about this product was the delivery format. Otherwise it was the same Benadryl that people been treating their hayfever with for years. There was no change to either the composition or the concentration of the active ingredient, Acravistine.
2. **Not a new campaign.** This new launch was to sit within JWT's existing campaign ("Win the war against allergies"), built around the insight that hayfever sufferers feel like they are under constant attack from unseen enemies.
3. **Digital as an extension.** Just display banners and a potential sponsorship of the Met Office pollen count website were to be used to integrate with a new TV execution.

4. **A sceptical, jaded consumer.** Sufferers think hayfever medicines are all the same. They also think that they're too expensive (61% 18-34 vs. 39% total – JWT Anxiety Index October 2011). The result is that value is driven out of the market as brands and retailers are forced into epic discounting at the start of the season.

## THE COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENT

In the absence of a compelling 'breakthrough efficacy' story, most brands in the market coalesce around a limited range of strategies. They dramatise the problem, by showing people sneezing; they dramatise the solution, by showing stopwatches to signify speedy recovery; or they reinforce their reliability and trust credentials by sponsoring one of the many 'official' pollen count websites.

And along with display advertising, The Met Office Pollen Count was to be one of the main channels available for the digital launch of the new Benadryl product. This gave us two challenges: people are blind to banners (even when they're not the 33% of impressions that aren't even visible on screen) and, as one of the team tactfully put it, "The last thing the world needs is another f\*\*\*\*\* pollen count!"

Yet despite the nature of the market, and the challenges, the launch of Benadryl Liquid Release Capsules would need to make a big splash if it were to achieve the targets set down for it. It was planning's job to find a way.

## THE PLANNING PROCESS

The pitch was three weeks away, before the Christmas break. The work had to be ready for the Pollen season and in-store activity in the first week of March.

Planning formed a small team with a creative and a developer to rapidly develop and test concepts.

The first part of the process was to conduct interviews with hayfever sufferers - *in the middle of winter!*

But there were insights to be found, even then.

During one interview, a sufferer told of an afternoon walking across London when the tube was down. Her journey was punctuated by certain streets, which were almost impassable due to the pollen, dust or pollution in the air, only to be fine a few streets later. Yet the Met Office pollen count in the morning had been "Low" for the whole of London. So sufferers talk about pollen in a different, more localised way than that of the 'official sources'.

We also used Social Listening. There, again, we found that what consumers talked about was more specific, more localised and more granular than the 'blunt instrument' of official pollen counts. They talked about grass v tree pollen, swapped treatment advice and warned each other to avoid specific locations.

**We're talking to younger, digitally connected sufferers who are ready to listen and talking about hay fever socially**



## THE INSIGHT

Hayfever sufferers use pollen counts, and antihistamine brands sponsor pollen counts. These pollen counts give the hayfever risk for towns and cities and regions. But in the lived experience of hayfever sufferers, hayfever risk is not a matter of 'the South-East' or 'London, for the next twenty-four hours': *it goes right down to particular streets, and even particular parts of streets, right now.*

Which led us to this realisation: sufferers don't need Benadryl, or anyone else, to sponsor yet another official pollen count. What they need is a better pollen count, the like of which has never been seen before. They need a pollen count that is **Very Local and Very Live.**

But how to do it? It was not practical, or possible, to build a vast new network of real-time mechanical pollen sensors. So how?

Our social listening had given us the answer: sufferers were frequently warning to avoid specific areas. They were the best 'sensors' we could have. Planning could now give the team a green light.

## THE BENADRYL SOCIAL POLLEN COUNT

We created a pollen count.

But it was a pollen count with a difference. In addition to official Met Office data, it was to be a pollen count enabled by social media technology. In it, the sufferers themselves would be our sensors, our eyes and ears and our voice to alert others to the lived experience of high and low pollen on a super-local, super-live level.

It is worth pausing here for a moment to look at how this social pollen count relates to the overall Benadryl campaign. The master campaign's message is that allergens like pollen create 'an intensity of suffering that feels like a war!' If that is so, then the Social Pollen Count offers a form of 'Blitz Spirit' – the mutual help and support of sufferers working together to defeat their common enemy.

Our new pollen count brought together three streams of information and combined them into a single map:

1. Official Met office data
2. Hay-fever tweets, geolocated from Twitter
3. Active posting of contributions via website and mobile

The Social Pollen Count brief was written, slides done, creative designed, idea presented and the pitch was won. But planning's work was not yet done...

## BRINGING THE IDEA TO LIFE AND MARKET

We believed the SPC had the potential to be more long-term than a traditional communications campaign; it could build consumer relationships to drive repeat purchase and even build loyalty between seasons.

The client was a great partner with real belief in an idea with a channel plan that shouted Mobile Apps, a web site, rich display advertising, Digital Posters and many other possible opportunities.

But an only slightly increased budget and close deadline meant we had to be smarter with what we set out to deliver. We needed to plan to start up, and learn in Year 1 then scale in Year 2 if we were successful.

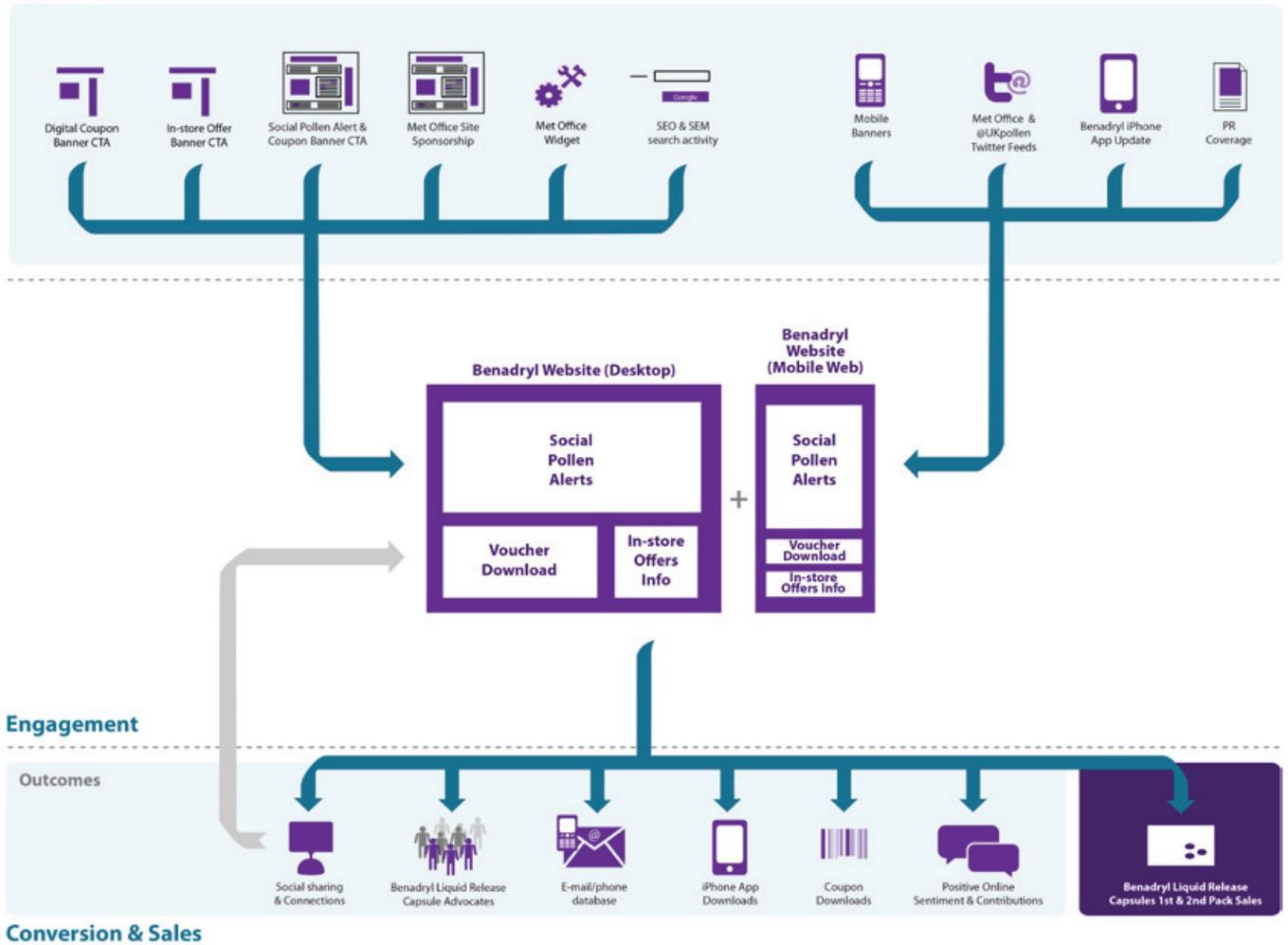
To create the SPC itself, Planning led collaborative User Experience workshops to turn the team's sketch ideas rapidly into real prototypes.

Unfortunately, prototyping showed that even if we stripped out features, building iPhone and Android Apps and getting them through legal, medical and App Store approvals on time and on budget plus all the other media requirements was risky. The risk of not being ready was too high.

We reworked the channel plan and embraced HTML5 – a technology that let us display the SPC in desktop and mobile websites, embed it in the Met Office website and online advertising. Our media could now also work more efficiently with links driving directly to the SPC itself rather than an App Store. This meant we were ready for the pollen season with advertising, a desktop and mobile service, Met Office sponsorship and Twitter activity.



## Exposure



Exposure in Paid, Owned and Earned media increased. The Social Pollen Count even featured in the national press, including the front page of the Telegraph. Engagement on the desktop and mobile sites increased along with Hotspots, tweets and mentions. Positive feedback in social spaces increased.



## LEARNING AS WE WENT

But Planning's job wasn't over.

The majority of traffic – as expected – was mobile and to bring the SPC to mobile web we had pushed HTML5 as far as we could.

When we looked at user behaviour it was clear some phones were being overwhelmed with too much data.

Planning went back to the sketchpad and helped developers push interface enhancements daily. We saw the results in the analytics and continued optimizing. The number of Hotspots added on mobiles rose.

While HTML5 had got us to market, the technology was not ideal. If the 2012 SPC proved successful, we decided we would build Apps in future. Again, learning from the real behaviour of real people and what they were doing had helped us to improve and support their "blitz spirit".

## AND THEN THE RAINS CAME....

In the UK, in 2012, summer was "bloody terrible". With pollen linked to good weather, and our key action of adding Hotspots linked to the pollen, this posed a new challenge. There was no point driving people to the SPC with "nothing to report".

Instead Planning used SPC data to geographically optimise media placements to higher pollen locations and up-weight a "be prepared for pollen" purchase message in our advertising. This way paid media was used to drive sales, while earned media and engaged sufferers on the Met Office site and Twitter were used to drive participation.

Eventually the sun came out and the pollen season came to a more predictable end.

But had the Social Pollen Count had an impact on differentiation, brand favourability and sales? Planning looked to validate the former via depth interviews and groups. Feedback from sufferers was positive:



The SPC meant Benadryl was seen as a different, credible source of information and a leading, premium product. Research gave a green light (and pointers) to start iterating a scaled Year 2 service, concluding that it “will build awareness and goodwill towards the brand”.

And an effect on sales? Econometrics confirmed it...

- **The Social Pollen Count campaign delivered 3.1% Volume Uplift (of a total 9%) despite the worst pollen season on record**
- **A positive £1.31 Short-term ROI**
- **A high average of 4.16m time spent on the SPC (2.14m av mobile)**
- **355,000 website visitors, up on all previous campaigns**
- **209,000 visitors to the SPC service (total desktop & mobile)**
- **75% of visits via mobile**
- **9.25% goal conversion to Adding a Hotspot**
- **22,000 hotspots added around the country, not just in towns and cities covered by official pollen counts**

## SUMMARY

Planning is no longer about telling a story or conveying a message, but about building and navigating users through branded journeys. We wanted to increase the value of the Benadryl brand by adding socially-designed value to sufferer’s lives. This meant Planning’s remit needed to change. Part-brand planner, part-social strategist, part-ux and data analyst, agencies and brands need socially-designed planners if they want to present their products and services as socially-designed brands.

(Word count 1981)

## APPENDIX

The Social Pollen Count  
<http://youtu.be/2AXMeiZFSbl>