



New Balance Sets New Record With Fresh Foam Running Shoe Launch on YouTube and Google

Goals

- Introduce the New Balance brand to a new audience
- Acquire new consumers by conveying the authenticity of the New Balance brand through real runners' reviews
- Use digital content to leverage offline awareness of Fresh Foam

Approach

- Built content specifically for digital—with Lightbox Ads and TrueView Ads leveraging user-generated content and social engagement with the product
- Told a sequential story about the features of this product and its technology using TrueView and Lightbox ads
- Drove users to purchase directly from the Lightbox Ad with a custom shoppable experience

Results

- 50% of sales on newbalance.com from new customers
- 3X its goal of pre-orders
- 3X the social media engagement over previous campaigns

Converting new customers to loyalists

New Balance Athletic Shoe is a 108-year-old company based in Boston serving key markets in the U.S., U.K., Germany, and China. A global leader in athletics, particularly in the sport of running, its goal is to be the number-one shoe on runners crossing the finish line worldwide—whether that's a high-school runner at a cross-country meet, a professional athlete winning a marathon, or anything in between. "Our ethos," says Jim McKenzie, Global Running marketing manager, New Balance, "is that we want people choosing our products (footwear and apparel) to better themselves through the sport of running."

As New Balance moves toward improving its position in the running market, the company is focused on acquiring a new consumer type—metropolitan runners—and getting them to become loyalists. These consumers, who live in or very close to metropolitan areas, don't define themselves by running, but running is a part of what they do. Technology is key to this audience—both in devices and in the way they interact with products such as Google and YouTube.

The campaign: introducing a technology-driven running shoe

New Balance had this metropolitan runner in mind when it launched a new product in February 2014: a technology-driven, high-end performance running shoe called Fresh Foam that's designed to work for a wide spectrum of runners. As part of the campaign, the company conducted 400 global surveys from actual runners who logged over 20,000 miles to get authentic reviews and testimonials both on camera and in OLA banners. "If we say it's a real runner review, then it actually has to be a real runner review," says McKenzie. "We're not going to ... stage people, pay people, anything like that. It's got to be real users. That authenticity is so core to the New Balance brand that it has to carry through."

The survey results delivered: 92% would highly recommend the product. Says Jim, "It let us know that we were on the right track, and was a great feather in our cap. We looked to launch and were able to share with retailers that we've got something special happening."

With the help of PGR Media, New Balance developed a threefold media campaign to introduce Fresh Foam. It involved using YouTube TrueView to promote a video that showed runners' real reactions, an interactive Lightbox Ad informing consumers about product features and why those features were important, and a custom shoppable section of the Lightbox Ad displaying the shoes and styles available, driving users to purchase directly.

New Balance had been waiting for the right product to test Lightbox Ads. "We decided that the Fresh Foam launch would be a great time to do the Lightbox Ad," says Cecilia Jamieson, New Balance acquisition manager, "to show that we have this new top-of-the-line shoe with all its new features and the technology that was used to create it and is embedded in the shoe."

Marketing to the always-on consumer

Although some brands attempt to recycle their offline content online, New Balance did the opposite. The company used its digital content to leverage awareness of Fresh Foam. And by focusing on promoting the content through the use of TrueView, rather than through TV, New Balance was able to offer its consumers continuous, always-on marketing and deeper, richer storytelling. “You cannot deliver content and stories in this day and age without YouTube being a part of the mix,” says McKenzie. “You don’t go to battle without it.”

Achieving success with new users

The campaign was an unprecedented success. Half of Fresh Foam sales on newbalance.com were from new customers, while 80% of purchasers on dickssportinggoods.com and 70% in China were new. The company also reached 3X its goal of pre-orders on newbalance.com.

New Balance attained an exceptional CTR of 11% for YouTube, a CTR of 0.22% on the campaign, and 0.44% overall for media. The social media engagement rate overall for the campaign was 4.53%, exceeding its previous high-water mark by 3X.

The brand also adjusted existing campaigns in order to capture the audience interested in its new product. New Balance optimized Google Search, reaching people who were searching for generic running terms as well as running shoe terms affiliated with the brand. It directed search ads to the Fresh Foam webpage to increase awareness of New Balance when they’re looking for running shoes.

Noting that the results validated the company’s strategy, McKenzie says, “We can deliver more impactful content and more engagement to the right person at the right time. We had better results than we anticipated.”

Speaking about future plans, McKenzie notes, “We are planning to take the success and continue to build it out into additional Lightbox units where it makes sense with the rest of our programs as well ... We’re using the experience with Fresh Foam as the springboard for how we can use it elsewhere in our business.”