GOING VIRAL: CDC’s Zombie Apocalypse

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Zombie Preparedness:

A CASE STUDY
Campaign Objectives

- Raise awareness about emergency preparedness
- Attract new audiences
- Use pre-existing content and channels to keep costs low
Why Zombies?

- @CDCEmergency: “What are you prepared for?”
  - zombies!
  - hurricanes!
  - zombies!
If you’re prepared for a zombie apocalypse, you’re prepared for any emergency.
Getting the Word Out

- Twitter
- GovDelivery
- Website (flash banner)
- Facebook
- RSS feed
- Mainstream media

- @CDCemergency
  CDC Emergency
  Prepared for a #zombie apocalypse? If so, ur prepared for any emergency. Learn how: CDC PH Matters blog go.usa.gov/jmo

- CDC Emergency Preparedness and Response
  Preparedness 101: Zombie Apocalypse - CDC Public Health Matters Blog
  There are all kinds of emergencies out there that we can prepare for. Take a zombie apocalypse for example. That's right, I said zombie apocalypse. You may laugh now, but when it happens you'll be happy you read this, and hey, maybe you'll even learn a thing or two about how to prepare...

- 1.2 million followers
- 7,000 fans
May 16
Blog Posted; Marketed via Email Updates, RSS, Emergency homepage

May 17 (evening)
Light media attention begins

May 18
Traffic increases from <80 page views/hour to >30,000. Blog servers crash.

May 18 (10am)
Social Media push; Marketed via Twitter, Facebook, Widget, Badges, Content Syndication, CDC Homepage News item, CDC Homepage Feature. Heavy media attention began and continued though May 20.

May 19
Most mainstream media coverage begins

May 19 (3am)
Traffic exceeds 60,000 views per hour
2 worldwide trends (top tweet terms):

- “CDC”
- “Zombie Apocalypse”

1 tweet → 70,426 clicks → 34,714 unique tweets → 1,164,057 views
Facebook

- **Approx. 867 interactions* by 5/22**
  - Majority are positive responses
  - Conversations between users about preparedness
- **More than 7,000 fans in 3 weeks**

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*Approximate value.
Web

- **CDC Emergency website**
  - Page views = 140,000 (5/16-6/7)
    - 1,143% increase over traffic in 2010

- **Blog**
  - Over 800k page views in one day (more than peak day of any emergency other than H1N1)
  - Typical post 1k – 3k per month

- **Badges/Widget**
  - 36,578 clicks to badges
  - 56 website hosting (widget)
Based on qualitative analysis of 1085 comments, categories are non-exclusive.

*Knowledge: 600
*Behavior: 700
*New Audience: 700
*Zombie: 300
*Other: 200

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*Based on qualitative analysis of 1085 comments, categories are non-exclusive*
Media

- Over 3,000 articles and news broadcasts published within first week
  - Reached an estimated 3.6 billion viewers
  - Marketing value $3.4 million
  - Cost $87
More Zombies

- Posters
- T-shirts
- Graphic novel
- Video contest
- Partnerships
Why Did it Work?

- Listening to the audience
- Combined relevance
- Sense of humor
- Brand identity
- Timing

"That was quite possibly the only way you could have gotten me to visit the CDC website and actually read an emergency preparedness blog!"

- Blog comment

"Absolutely brilliant approach! Humor with an important preparedness message inside. Plays against the notion that a government agency can't display humor. Really well done."

- Dr. Richard Besser, ABC News

"I have already forwarded it to several friends and will do so to several more! I think this was an excellent idea and a way to make people listen to the things you need during any emergency (not just zombies)."

- Blog Comment
Your turn…

WHAT CAN YOU DO?
Engage Your Audience

- Create a social media presence
  - Two-way communication
  - Find out what your audience is interested in

- Identify influencers
  - Partners
  - Media
  - Communities

- Be innovative
  - Don’t be afraid to take chances
  - Create content people want to share
  - Have a sense of humor, but be consistent in your message
Be Sticky

* Data gathered through Adobe Cite Catalyst, go.usa.gov, Twitter and Facebook
Examples

- Look at campaigns you like...
  - Federal Reserve Valentines tweets
  - #SpotTheShuttle
  - Planned Parenthood + Vampires
  - APHA LOLcats
For more information please contact Maggie Silver at: msilver@cdc.gov

The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.