

Excellence Awards - 2024 Entry
85 Tottenham Court Road
London. W1T 4TQ
020 7631 6900

Entry ID: 15088

Third Party Authorization

Are you entering on behalf of, or in association with, any third party?: No

Basic Information

Category: 19. Best Long-term Campaign

Entry Information

Entrant company name (To be used in all awards materials/ presentation): Northumbrian Water

Entry title:

Bin the Wipe

Entry Text:

Brief, objectives and budget

Our research found that over 60% of sewer blockages in the North East are caused by wipes being flushed down the toilet. These blockages cause sewer flooding that can have devastating consequences for our environment, so to protect it, we created Bin the Wipe (BTW).

BTW is bedded in behavioural science and through an integrated marketing communication campaign, it directly tackles customer behaviours around flushing wipes.

Data shows that BTW has positively changed customer behaviour and is responsible for reducing wipe numbers in hotspot areas by up to 91%.

The primary purpose of BTW is to stop 'unflushables', namely wipes, being incorrectly disposed of down the toilet and ending up in the sewer network, which can result in sewer flooding which causes damage to homes and the environment. Objectives included:

- Changing customer behaviour by stopping the flushing of wipes
- Reducing sewer blockages by 40%
- Reduce sewer flooding by 40%
- Engage with customers, stakeholders, regulators, partners, and suppliers and get their support
- A national BTW campaign to protect the environment.

The marketing budget was £220k.

The idea, research and planning

Wipes have a universal appeal, therefore we do not have a typical target audience. People from all walks of life use wipes for cleaning, make-up removal and hygiene reasons, therefore they are too useful to expect customers to completely stop using them, instead, we focus on the use of reusables to avoid the wipes ending up in landfill, but also changing customer behaviour by using a bin instead of the toilet to avoid flooding which causes the environmental damage.

We segmented our market and focused on each segment, using influencers, direct marketing and direct customer engagement, supported by the mass-marketing activity:

- Young people who were more likely to use wipes for make-up removal, were taught about the importance of using reusable products, and the positive impact they have on the environment.
- Parents with young family members were more likely to use wipes in the bathroom and put them down the toilet. This information and the fact that less than half of customers own a bathroom bin taught us that we need to push the importance of a bathroom bin.
- Hygiene and cleaning wipes are other frequently used wipes. For these customers, we again focused on reusable alternatives.
- We also looked at our top 50 postcode sectors for flooding caused by wipes.
- All customers in the North East are targeted with advertisements as it is a nationwide issue.

Strategy, creativity and innovation

The campaign imagery for BTW is propaganda style, to make the key message stand out. The social media activity supports this with engaging content to really draw people in, using images to show the devastating consequences wrongful flushing can have on both the environment and customers' homes.

In 2022, we created a new 'Wipes Pollute Seas' piece of artwork, aimed to show the direct impact wipes have on the environment around them. We distributed posters and beer mats with this artwork, around our coastal hotspots to really hammer home the message about the journey of wipes. The Wipes Pollute Seas artwork was so impactful, that we have created a new TV advertisement for 2023, to demonstrate the damage they are causing to the sea and animals, which will be used on social media, TV and cinema, across the North East.

Delivery/implementation of tactics

We target the younger audience (15-24 year olds), via Getting into Good Make-up Habits. This involves using influencers to explain the impact of using wipes, and how much better reusable soft cloths and pads are on your skin, but also the environment. We also attend events, with a pledge tree, asking students to pledge to 'Bin the Wipe', but also giving them the opportunity to use reusables on their skin at the event to understand the difference.

The Big Bin Giveaway involves door-to-door customer engagement, discussing the wipe issues, and asking customers to bin the wipe. We also offer these customers a free bathroom bin. so they always have the option to bin the wipes they use.

We target the top 50 postcode sectors through direct marketing, face-to-face customer engagement, and mass marketing. Using innovative techniques to find the culprit who is flushing wipes and engaging with customers to educate them about the damage wipes are causing, we work closely with our customers to combat the issue together.

The stakeholders we engage with regularly include local MPs and Councillors who actively work and support us throughout the campaign via social media, visits, and events.

Measurement, evaluation and impact

Through a strategic integrated marketing campaign, including mass and target marketing, which has delivered messaging to and engaged support from customers, stakeholders, regulators, partners and suppliers, BTW has been extremely effective in changing customer behaviour in a sustained way, delivering extensive benefits to our customers and the environment, and meeting all our objectives, including:

We exceeded the ambitious target of reducing sewer blockages and flooding by 40%, instead reducing the number of blockages by 54%*, internal flooding by 80%* and external flooding by 53%*. Results show that this behaviour has been sustained for up to 4 years.

*Results as of the end of December 2023.

Achieving universal awareness in our operational area. Research shows that 96% of customers are now aware that wipes cause sewer blockages, 95% agree that flushing wipes can be damaging to the environment, and 93% agree that they could be harmful to wildlife.

The success of the campaign and the support it has generated from customers, regulators and stakeholders including members of parliament has led to it being adopted by the water and wastewater industry as a whole, and the industry body, WaterUK. This has resulted in a national Bin the Wipe campaign launch in 2023 to change customer behaviour and stop blockages, and ultimately damage to the environment, with significant investment.

Supporting Information

Additional supporting information (images, artwork, clippings and other media):

Provided

Campaign image (if entering individual/team awards, upload headshot/team photo here):

Provided

Company logo:

Provided

Please write a 30 word entry summary in the third person:

Bin the Wipe is bedded in behavioural science and through an integrated marketing communication campaign, it directly tackles customer behaviours around flushing wipes.
