

Entrant company name: **MHP Group**

Entry title: **Coca-Cola: The Bosses**

Category: **Corporate and Business Communications Campaign**

Coca-Cola was marking 125 years in Great Britain at a time when its brand image was still predominantly perceived as all-American. Despite its long-standing influence on British culture and commerce - including five UK bottling plants that produce 97% of its products that are sold here - consumers still saw Coca-Cola as a global brand with minimal ties to local communities. To mark the anniversary, Coca-Cola wanted to showcase its positive impact on the UK and champion its long-term, locally embedded success.

The objectives were three-fold:

1. Reframe Coca-Cola from an “American icon” to a locally embedded business at the heart of Britain
2. Generate distinctive earned media assets that would reset how Coca-Cola appears in UK cultural conversations
3. Celebrate and strengthen relationships with local retail partners, positioning them as community figureheads rather than just stockists

Budget:

- £725k (content creation, campaign assets, agency fees and donations for charities)
- £750k (paid social and OOH media)

IDEA, RESEARCH AND PLANNING

Our planning began with a deep dive into the evolution of the British high street. Research revealed that post-pandemic, corner shops had shifted from convenience outlets to essential community lifelines. Cultural mapping also highlighted the

“Bossman” phenomenon - a term of respect and endearment central to Gen Z identity and belonging. This revealed a powerful insight: the “Boss” is not just a retailer, but a local hero.

The strategy was to move Coca-Cola to the background and place these local legends in the spotlight. We planned an earned-first campaign built around high-spec creative assets designed to command media attention, including a portrait series by renowned photographer Serena Brown and micro-documentaries by Earthling Films. By elevating shop owners to cultural icon status, we created a story that resonated with both traditional and younger audiences, ensuring every touchpoint - from national press to social media - championed retail partners as the heartbeat of Coca-Cola’s UK heritage.

STRATEGY

Our strategy was simple but deliberate: demonstrate Coca-Cola’s impact in Britain by putting local communities at the heart of the story. To achieve credibility, we needed third-party voices rather than brand claims. Corner shop owners offered both cultural legitimacy and national scale, sitting at the intersection of commerce, community and everyday British life.

By making Coca-Cola’s convenience store partners famous through an earned-first approach, we could authentically tell a British story while creating culturally relevant assets designed to travel across national, broadcast and culture media.

To deliver at pace and scale, we assembled a specialist team across Mischief (earned-first creative), MHP (corporate storytelling) and Studio La Plage (production), ensuring assets were optimised through-the-line.

CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION

At a time when global brands often centre campaigns on celebrities or influencers, we did the opposite - handing Coca-Cola’s 125-year spotlight to six people who would rarely appear in campaigns of this scale.

We wanted to show corner shop owners as they had never been seen before, elevating six ordinary retailers into campaign stars. The campaign was titled The Bosses - signalling both respect and authority. To reinforce this reappraisal, we contrasted stereotypical imagery of corner shops with high-production films and striking portrait photography. The creative treatment reflected the ambition and resilience these entrepreneurs bring to their communities, reframing how both they - and Coca-Cola - are seen in British culture.

DELIVERY AND IMPLEMENTATION

We delivered an asset-rich campaign exploring the role of convenience stores in local communities, perceptions of store owners and the challenges they face. This provided cultural and data-led hooks. We identified six retail partners across the UK, chosen for community impact and their brand relationship.

We captured their stories and the communities they serve. These insights shaped six micro-documentary films directed by Ross Bolidai, forming the centrepiece of The Bosses series. Alongside this, we commissioned a bold photography series by Serena Brown, shot to disrupt traditional perceptions of corner shop owners.

Each film uncovered a deeper truth about community leadership: Kaual preserving local identity in Catford, the Tomes family serving their community from the same store in Swanage for more than a century, Sophie in Edinburgh blending TikTok culture with family tradition, Bay, Ellis and Max in Middlesbrough carrying a family legacy, Bobby in Pontefract weaving Punjabi heritage into Yorkshire life and Sunita in Wigston channelling personal loss into community action.

The films and imagery ran across national, broadcast and culture titles. Coca-Cola's product and values appeared subtly throughout, reinforcing its British credentials without dominating the narrative. Long-form assets were also optimised into 15- and 30-second edits shared across Meta, LinkedIn and YouTube.

Beyond earned and owned channels, Coca-Cola amplified the campaign through paid OOH billboards in each Boss's local area to drive fame. Each Boss received a five-figure bursary to donate to a local charity, embedding tangible community benefit into the campaign.

MEASUREMENT, EVALUATION AND IMPACT

Media and Paid Impact

Despite originating as a corporate brief, the campaign delivered high-quality coverage across top-tier consumer press. Highlights include:

- Over 100 media titles covered The Bosses, including The Evening Standard, Metro, ShortList and Hypebeast, achieving 100 million earned reach
- 96% message inclusion reinforcing Coca-Cola's local production, retail partnerships and 125 year anniversary in the UK
- 98% positive media sentiment across all media verticals
- An exceptional performance rate, with a 72% YouTube view rate surpassing the 60% target, 167 million Meta impressions exceeding the 108 million benchmark, and a 0.27% view rate compared to the 0.14% target.

- PRWeek said: “Coca-Cola has made its products secondary to the people who actually sell them, creating a campaign that resonates and sticks with you.”
- Aman Uppal, owner of One Stop Mount Nod and IIA ambassador said: “As someone from a family that ran a convenience store for 30+ years... Coca-Cola finally got it right.”

Brand Impact

- 70% brand linkage to the assets (vs target 56%)
- 75% persuasion score among Gen Z/millennials (vs benchmark 58%)
- 76% brand interest score (vs benchmark 59%)
- The negative impact as a result of the ‘American Effect’ reduced by 9% from H1 to H2 (when the campaign launched). Compared to an average across Europe of +2%

Coverage consistently reframed Coca-Cola as a British business embedded in local communities, directly meeting the campaign’s core objective.

Community Impact

- Hyper-local OOH placements ran near retailer shops over several months, delivering opportunities[RS2.1][AP2.2]-to-see and driving store footfall
- Retail partners described the campaign as “career-defining”, with one calling it “the proudest moment of my life”
- The campaign’s success resonated internally and globally, with Coca-Cola’s Senior European Comms Lead calling it “one of my favourite campaigns we’ve ever done.” The concept has since been approved for international rollout