Category number: 11

Category name: Best Limited Budget Campaign

Programme name: Networks First 'Dinoverts'

Agency: Marketing Options International

Brand or client: Networks First

URL or microsite: http://www.youtube.com/user/NetworksFirstUK

Word count: 1,029 words (including headlines)



Summary

Networks First is a provider of managed network services. In 2011 it embarked on a growth programme, evolving the business, its services and its go-to-market strategy. Building brand awareness, almost from scratch, was a key objective.

Networks First commissioned Marketing Options International (MOI) to develop a memorable campaign that could cut through marketplace noise and quickly raise awareness. With less than £30k available for a six-month campaign, MOI had to deliver a very creative solution.

A major sales opportunity for Networks First is helping companies upgrade their networks to accommodate new trends like cloud computing and mobile devices.

MOI developed a new strapline: "Evolve your network with Networks First", then built on the "evolution" theme to create a multi-channel PR and marketing campaign around three humorous, ultra-low-budget videos featuring a trio of plastic dinosaurs.

The three 'dinoverts' have been viewed over 1,300 times, and have been featured in Computer Weekly, Computer Reseller News and Information Age – online publications with a combined readership of 900,000 monthly unique visitors.

The campaign delivered a **37% increase in unique visits to the Networks First website** over the previous year. A fourth, specially-produced dinovert won Information Age's Innovation Award for Communications and Networking in April 2012.

[200 words]

About the client company

Networks First is a UK provider of managed network services. In 2011 it embarked on a growth programme, evolving the business, its services and its go-to-market strategy.

Strategy – broader business issues the company is facing

Networks First's brand presence was low. The challenge was to deliver a multi-touch PR and marketing campaign to raise awareness prior to lead generation. With limited budget, our strategy was to break the mould with a humourous campaign to cut through the noise in the managed network services marketplace and spread awareness quickly.

Objectives of the campaign

The campaign had to raise awareness of Networks First's expertise in solving network-related issues including the shift to cloud computing, network convergence, mobility and the rise in employee use of personal devices in the workplace.

The target audience

The campaign targeted CEOs, CIOs, Network Managers and IT Managers in small, midsize and large organisations. Challenges with targeting this community included:

1. Getting a cynical and over-targeted audience to pay attention to an unknown brand.

2. Differentiating Networks First from the mass of UK-based managed network service providers.

Media, channels or techniques used

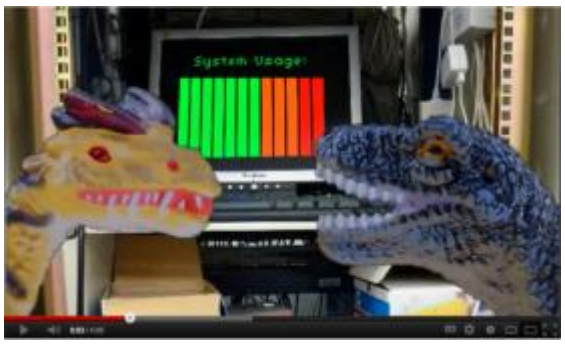
MOI had to come up with a creative concept that could be extended across as many channels as possible for as long as possible, to maximise reach within a budget of under £30k.

MOI had already developed a new strapline for Networks First: "Evolve Your Network with Networks First". MOI's digital team built on the word 'Evolve' to develop a campaign theme involving three dinosaur characters: aggressive "Mr Rex", CEO of fictional company Rex Investments; "Simmons", the company's perennially-anxious Head of IT; and "Lewis", the suave network manager.

Together, the dinosaurs would explore key network-related issues facing today's businesses, always with the punch line that organisations can "evolve their networks" with Networks First.

The campaign needed to be **memorable**, so MOI decided it should employ humour designed to appeal to the target audience. Budget was limited, but MOI turned this into an advantage by creating a deliberately low-budget yet warm and funny campaign.





The campaign had to appeal to a **cynical, over-targeted audience**, so video was chosen as the medium most likely to create an immediate, impactful and emotional connection.

Three short, humorous videos ('dinoverts') were scripted and filmed on an ultra-low budget (£3k per video). A fourth dinovert was later produced for submission to Information Age's Innovation Awards.

MOI made maximum use of the budget available in the following ways:

- Using plastic toy dinosaurs as the 'characters', rather than expensive animation
- Using royalty-free library footage of explosions (to illustrate disastrous IT decisions)
- Using MOI employees and their families to voice the characters, instead of actors
- Filming with an iPhone rather than using professional equipment

To ensure the audience understood Networks First's value proposition, MOI developed supporting materials to link the issues highlighted in the videos with Networks First services:

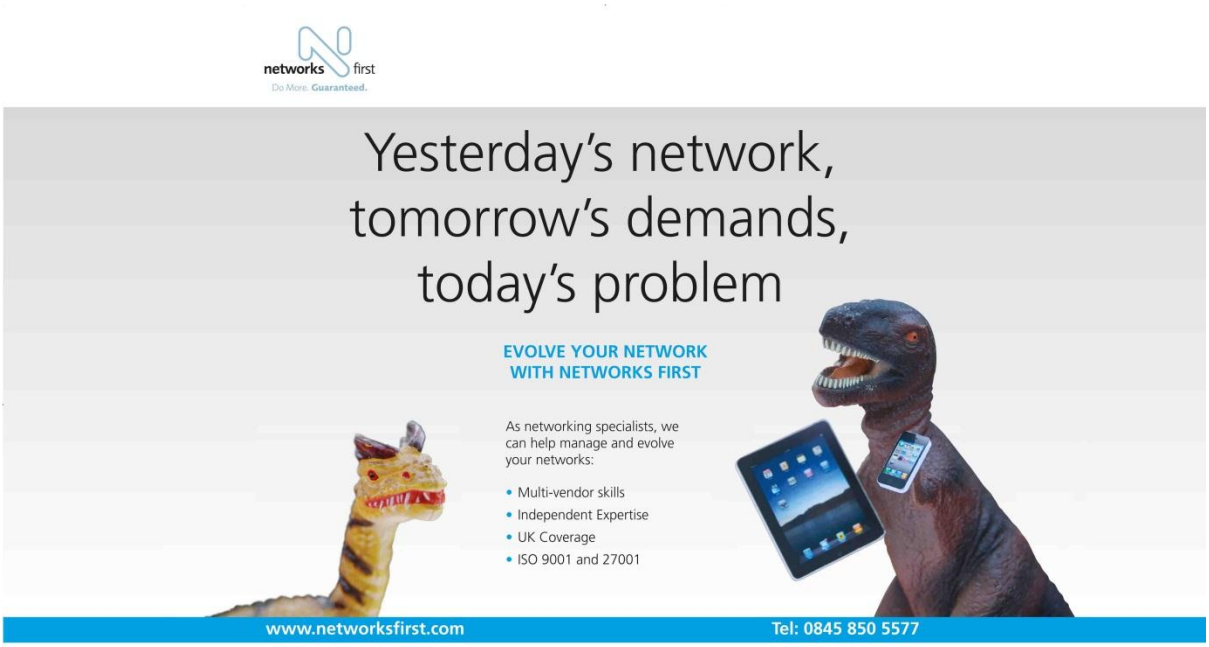
Direct mail postcards to the Networks First marketing database plus a purchased list: a series of three postcards featuring the dinosaurs and evolution-themed copy, each promoting one of the videos.



HTML emails to the same database: a series of three HTML and plaintext emails featuring the dinosaurs and evolution-themed copy, each promoting a Networks First service.

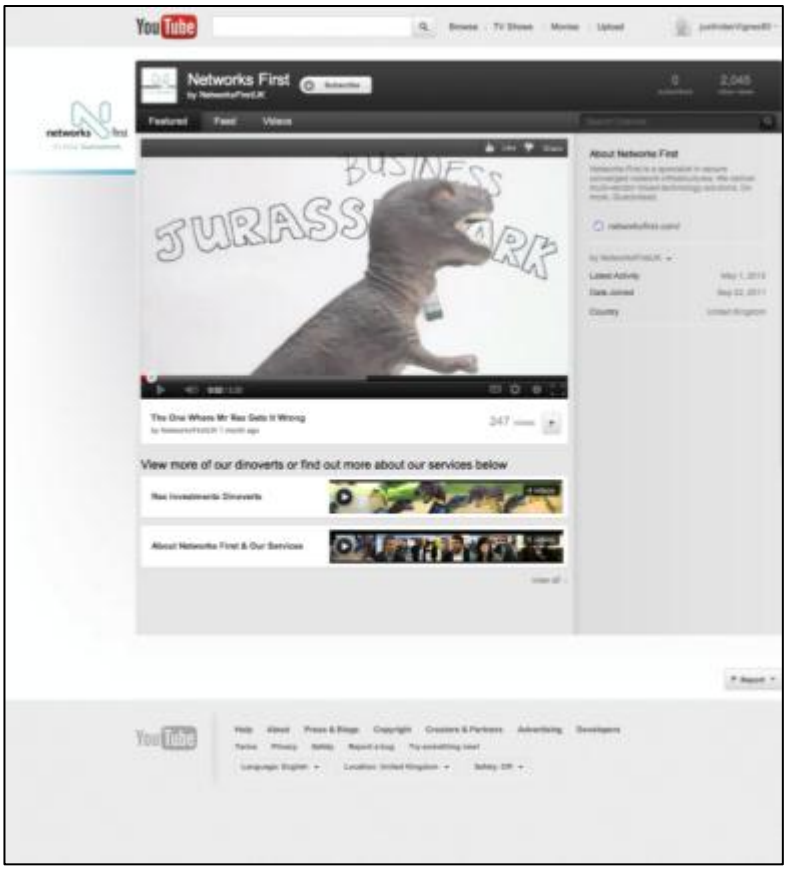


Pull-up banners featuring the dinosaurs and "Evolve your network" strapline to support Networks First's presence at two key industry events



Press release promoting the first video, to selected IT publications read by the target audience, including Computer Weekly, Computer Reseller News and Information Age.

Social media presence including rebranding Networks First's YouTube channel, and Twitter accounts for each of the dinosaur characters.











Website banners on the Networks First website and print advertisements in Information Age.

Timescales of the campaign

09/2011 – Dinosaur print advertisements

10/2011 – First dinovert launched

10/2011 – Social media profiles launched

01/2011 – Second dinovert launched

01/2012 – Postcard #1 sent

02/2011 – Information Age entry dinovert launched

02/2011 – Third dinovert launched

02/2012 – Postcard #2 sent

02/2012 – Pull-up banners created

03/2012 – Postcard #3 sent

Budgets

These details were provided to judges in the original submission but are commercially sensitive and therefore confidential.

Results

The metrics used to evaluate the resulting increase in brand awareness were:

Video views: To date, the three original 'dinoverts' have achieved 1,322 views since the first one was posted on October 18th, 2011. Significantly, 60% of viewers have watched to the end, demonstrating the campaign's 'stickiness' and target audience appeal.

Website traffic: Unique traffic to www.networksfirst.com increased by 37% compared to the same period the year before.

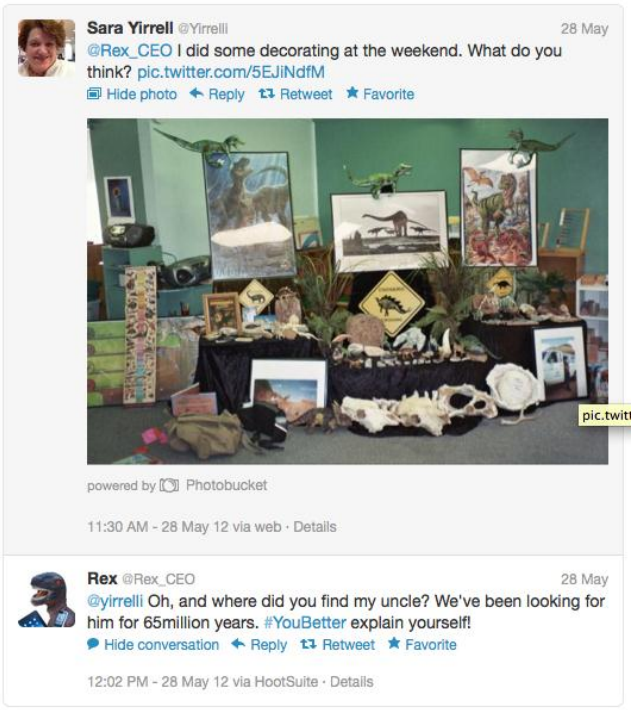
Press coverage: The campaign gained editorial coverage in publications read by the target audience:

- **Computer Weekly's** 'Downtime' blog cheekily described the first video as "*one man, one camera, one voice and three plastic dinosaurs – not exactly Avatar*," before going on to say… *"If only RIM had seen this a week ago the BlackBerry service outage may well have been avoided"*. Computer Weekly has 350,000 monthly unique visitors.

- **Computer Reseller News** editor Sara Yirrell wrote: "*Networks First have produced a hilarious video starring plastic dinosaurs. However the video has a serious message to highlight the pressures being faced by IT departments.*" CRN has 500,000 monthly unique visitors.

- **Information Age:** A fourth dinovert was produced by "mashing up" footage of the dinosaurs with talking heads of Networks First spokespeople. The video won Information Age's Award for Innovation in Marketing and Communications in April 2012, gaining high-profile coverage on the Information Age website (monthly unique visitors: 50,000).

- **Social media:** Rex's Twitter account has a regular dialogue with CRN editor Sara Yirrell. Together, the dinosaurs have built up a community of over 200 followers.



Client testimonial

"Standing out from the crowd in a noisy market is a challenge for smaller businesses. A 'typical/standard' campaign approach wasn't going to help us achieve this – we needed something less conventional. I'm delighted with the way MOI used creativity to make budget go a long way."

Maria Goggin, Interim Head of Marketing, Networks First

[1,028 words including headlines]

Supporting material supplied

Two A2 creative boards.