

**MARKETING SOCIETY AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE
2013**

Entrant: Midlands Co-operative Society
Class: M) Employee Engagement
Campaign name: Mission Firefly

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Midlands Co-operative Society's Mission to Success

Midlands Co-operative Society's 'Mission Firefly' employee engagement campaign breathed new life into a tired initiative, 'Helping Hands', with outstanding outcomes. The voluntary scheme involved colleagues from the Society's Business Support Centre being deployed around the Society's stores during the busy pre-Christmas trading period.

With colleague interest in the scheme at an all time low, a new approach was required to re-ignite interest and engagement. Mission Firefly was born and the project team became 'Team Firefly'.

Two complimentary tactical strands were employed; 'Leading Lights' to inspire colleagues and 'Firefiles' to engage them in the volunteering process. Using this approach the team managed to implement an employee engagement programme that has brought the head office closer to the frontline, engaged employees in the Society's core businesses and demonstrated measurable improvements in business performance.

Taking an integrated approach, the campaign drew in expertise from across the Society and used a wide range of activities, events and communication routes to fire colleagues' enthusiasm. The first phase of Mission Firefly started with a series of hands on management led initiatives to help stores increase performance at key trading times whilst inspiring colleagues and creating engagement. Phase two focussed on the sign up and deployment of colleagues into the Society's food, fashion and home and floristry stores. The tone was light hearted and fun and the Society's full suite of internal communications routes were utilised to great effect.

The result was a campaign which delivered impressively against all of the set objectives. The results speak for themselves – massive increase in participation and employee engagement, a clear articulation of the learning points for future success plus a clearly demonstrable link between the internal communications activity and a dramatic rise in sales.

SUBMISSION

BACKGROUND

Midlands Co-operative Society is one of the largest independent retail societies in the UK. It is a modern forward looking organisation which employs over 7,000 staff and has gross annual sales of more than £900 million.

The Society's principal areas of activity are food, funeral services, floral, fashion & home and transport. It operates more than 300 trading outlets across 11 counties including; West Midlands, Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, Northamptonshire and Staffordshire. The Society's central business operations are carried out from its Business Support Centre (BSC) in Lichfield where 346 employees are based.

CAMPAIGN GOALS

Midlands Co-operative Society has operated a scheme called 'Helping Hands' for a number of years. This is a voluntary scheme in which Business Support Centre (BSC) staff are encouraged to spend time away from their day job to support those in the stores during the busy pre-Christmas trading period. The scheme objectives are:

- Offer practical help to store colleagues by being another pair of hands
- Develop relationships between support staff and retail stores
- Foster better understanding of the challenges faced by retail staff during one of the busiest trading periods
- Make people at the frontline of the Society's businesses feel valued by senior management and support colleagues
- Help the Society to deliver great service and performance at a key time

At the end of 2010 the Society reviewed the initiative, in light of a new five year strategy, concluding that it continued to be of real value as it supported a number of the Society's core strategic objectives:

- Developing synergy between trading businesses
- Engaging with and developing employees
- Maximising core businesses
- Adding value to the Co-operative brand

Employee interest in the scheme had been dropping off for a number of years and engagement was at an all time low in 2010. Focus groups indicated that the format was tired and that employees viewed the scheme as old fashioned. The goal would therefore be to increase employee engagement, particularly across the BSC, from senior management down.

CAMPAIGN PLANNING

A team, including representatives from across the Society's businesses based both at the BSC and in-store, was formed to breathe new life into the scheme.

A new creative campaign theme was required which would re-ignite interest by allowing some theatre and fun to be injected into activities and communications. Mission Firefly was born and the project team became 'Team Firefly', with a mission to 'light up' the Society's stores.

It was quickly decided that the Society's senior management needed to lead by example and so the project developed two separate strands working side by side:

Leading lights – a series of hands-on management led initiatives to help stores increase performance at a key trading time and inspire employees.

Light up our stores – focussed on signing staff up to become 'Fireflies' for a day by helping out in a Society food store, fashion & home store or floristry shop.

The 'Mission Firefly' theme allowed the Society to develop a cohesive campaign, which fired colleagues' enthusiasm without distracting them from the day job.

Criteria for judging the success of the campaign were established as:

- Significant increase in numbers volunteering to take part
- Significant increase in the proportion of stores supported
- Significant number of senior management taking part
- Increase in business performance
- Positive experiences reported by those taking part

EXECUTION

Mission Firefly consisted of two complimentary campaign strands working alongside each other. The 'leading lights' activity involved a series of initiatives spearheaded by senior management. These showcased their commitment to the principles of the campaign and were designed to inspire and motivate colleagues at the BSC and in the stores to engage with the initiative. The 'light up our stores' activity ran alongside this and aimed to encourage colleagues to volunteer to take part in the store support element of the campaign.

Leading lights activity

Mission Firefly kicked off in September 2011 with a store based sales race between teams of 'Fireflies', one led by the Society's Head of Retail and the other by the Head of Fashion & Home. The two teams battled it out to see who could sell the most Fairtrade chocolate bars across a number of stores on a designated day. The activity was supported with the Society's full suite of internal communications and the tone was playful and light-hearted in order to draw the interest of colleagues.

Having seen how it should be done, members of the Society's executive team, including the Chief Executive, took part in a series of themed product sales races from October to December in a bid to be crowned king of retail sales. The competition consisted of a series of heats in which members of the executive team led a group of stores in a competition to sell the most of a specified product. Leaders of the top performing store groups then went forward to the next round until only two remained. The final took place over two weeks in December and involved a sales showdown between the Society's Deputy Chief Executive and Head of Human Resources. Each headed up a regional group of food stores with the aim of producing the greatest uplift in sales of Coca Cola. The Deputy Chief Executive's team was ultimate winner.

Another initiative which enlisted senior management to lead by example was 'Bid for the Boss'. For this activity, senior staff spent time in store, sharing their expertise and helping out in exactly the same way that their colleagues were being asked to. The Mission Firefly theme allowed the Society to give this activity higher visibility with colleagues by making it fun and giving it a theme which complimented with the overall campaign. Team Firefly sent out descriptions of James Bond themed agents (MCS colleagues, but incognito) who were to be deployed to retail outlets as part of a secret mission. Retail colleagues were asked to submit bids explaining which secret agent they wanted a visit from and why. Team Firefly had an overwhelming response from retail stores, fashion & home stores and florists and colleagues really entered into the spirit of the campaign. Entries were witty, clever and even poetic making it difficult to choose the winning bids. A big reveal, supported by a variety of internal communications strands, disclosed the true identity of the agents and the winning stores which would receive their help. The crack squad of agents was then deployed into the retail world in order to be put through their paces during the week before Christmas.

Light up our stores

From October colleagues at the BSC were asked to sign up to become one of five different types of Firefly (depending on their skill set) and light up the Society's retail stores by helping out at the front line of the business. Newsletters and posters were produced in advance of the sign-up which created interest and explained all about the campaign.

On the first sign-up day a series of huddles were arranged in which senior management briefed colleagues on Mission Firefly. Colleagues then had an opportunity to volunteer their support at one of the Society's food, fashion & home or floristry stores. Up to six places per store were available, depending on store size. A huge registration board was produced and put on display outside the Society's colleague café and volunteers were logged against the store they had signed up to support. Volunteers were given a themed sign up record card on which to note their store and the date of their visit. Fireflies helped stores with a variety of tasks to improve business performance, including capturing customer data on the in-store experience which was fed back to relevant teams and used to improve the in-store experience. Fireflies were presented with a Mission Firefly certificate by the store manager at the end of their day in store.

Campaign Creative and Communication

Mission Firefly was supported by the Society's full suite of internal communications (see appendix for examples):

- Onenews – biannual magazine
- Onebrief – monthly e-zine/newsletter
- Oneweekly – weekly e-zine
- Mission Firefly film updates – used across colleague and stakeholder meetings
- One.net – dedicated Firefly intranet page
- Teaser campaign including posters and desk drops
- Ongoing Poster/desk drop campaign to communicate key results and activities
- Briefing meetings – held regularly across the retail businesses and the BSC

In order to bring the campaign to life a creative look was developed which was used across all communications, as well as a suite of branded merchandise, including t-shirts, badges, certificates. All of this helped to give the campaign stand out, keep it front of mind with colleagues and create a real buzz.

RESULTS/EVALUTION

Measured against criteria for success outlined in campaign planning:

Increase volunteers – 336 BSC colleagues volunteered, 97% of those targeted, an increase of more than eight times on the previous year when 40 took part. In total 378 days/shifts were carried out by volunteers.

Increase stores supported – across the retail businesses 187 stores were supported, up from six in the previous year, representing a 3,100% increase.

Increase senior management involvement – All of the Executive team and general managers engaged with the campaign, plus other senior managers. In total 47 senior personnel were actively involved, up from two the previous year.

Increase in business performance – The sales race activity resulted in an uplift of 284,000 units sold, equating to £289,000 of additional sales. Store feedback indicates that the volunteers added real value and enhanced the in-store customer experience as well as capturing valuable data which store planning teams used to improve customer service.

Positive experiences of colleagues – A feedback questionnaire sent to all volunteers resulted in an 11% return rate. Respondents gave an average rating of 7 out of 10 (10 = excellent) for their experience with over 80% saying that it had increased their understanding of the retail business and 90% or more saying that:

- Firefly was a good idea
- Their help was appreciated by store colleagues
- Stores were well prepared

Focus groups at a store employing 82 colleagues showed:

- Mission Firefly succeeded in making colleagues feel genuinely valued. It boosted morale, a feeling of pride and strengthened team spirit both in-store and between store and BSC – “With Helping Hands only the lucky few got help. This time I feel really valued and part of the bigger picture.”
- The excitement and theatre created by the campaign succeeded in engaging colleagues and customers with the business and strengthened links with the local community.
- Colleagues really entered into the campaign spirit and felt they gained a lot.

A focus group with 17 store managers confirmed these findings were representative. One manager said: “Everyone was thrilled to have someone new in store and it created a real buzz. The extra pair of hands made a big difference and our Firefly got a true appreciation of what it takes to run a successful store.”

Overall the campaign delivered what it set out to achieve with the potential to improve in the future.

Key Learnings

Key learnings and ideas for improvement were gathered via a questionnaire, telephone and face to face interviews with colleagues:

1. Involvement of senior managers is vital to the campaign's success as it sets an example to other colleagues
2. New ideas are needed to keep the campaign fresh and interesting - a new Team Firefly is recommended for 2012/13
3. The option of operating a year round scheme should be considered
4. The option of developing a two way exchange element should be explored
5. Additional training would allow colleagues to help with roles which require a higher skill set
6. More extensive feedback to be gained from food store based colleagues

These key learnings helped shape a new campaign for 2012/13 which is currently being implemented.

BUDGET

Only half of the £6,000 budget was spent.

Submission word Count: 1,980

APPENDIX

Midlands Co-operative

Mission Firefly

Leading Lights



- Bid for the boss

BID FOR THE BOSS

NAME: THE DOUBLE O'S

These experienced field agents are primed and ready to go. Unleash these bad boys on your shop floor and watch these missions unfold. Staff stacking, facing up, meeting and greeting, there is nothing these double O's can't do. Test them on age restricted sales or see how they fair in the extremes of the diluted sections. This is your chance to turn the tables and turn up the heat.

Email **001_002** or **003** to missionfirefly@mcsc.co.uk

BID FOR THE BOSS

NAME: M

Tough and forthright this lady makes it a joy to shape up procedures. Do yourself to target office paperwork or Firefly issues, this sharp shooter can be all your disposal. Put M through her paces on the shop floor and make sure this boss gets to develop a true understanding of the retail back end.

Email **M** and your reason to missionfirefly@mcsc.co.uk

NAME: MISS MONEYPENNY

Good with people Miss Money Penny can help you engage with customers, making and generating, or bag packing, or an alternative to your 'bad' group to add a new recruit and director to the store of a store. This money bagger is all about sales, accuracy and is used to working under pressure to ensure you meet your targets. Bid now to secure your appointment with Miss Money Penny.

Email **MP** and your reason to missionfirefly@mcsc.co.uk

- Badges



Society buzzes with Fireflies

The new Midlands Society of science and what a brilliant success it was. The new Midlands Society of science and what a brilliant success it was. The new Midlands Society of science and what a brilliant success it was.

Great work all in cooperation with a state of the art... (text continues)

More Firefly sales events are following, all of which have been designed to help you sell as many great items as possible.

- One news magazine article



- Sales race video



Midlands Co-operative Society Limited

Midlands Co-operative

Mission Firefly

Light up our stores



- Firefly newsletter and what Firefly are you?

- Firefly has landed Pop up stand

EVENT 1 - Light-up Our Stores

Meet the Family

Sparkle Firefly

Petal Firefly

Marigold Firefly

Rambo Firefly

Brains Firefly

Remember... Sign-up days are the 12th, 13th and 14th October

Firefly has landed

All colleagues at the Business Support Centre are being invited to become Fireflies for a day to light up our stores.

A number of Firefly events will be taking place between now and Christmas, which have been designed to help our retail stores and florists drive sales during our busiest time of the year.

Sign up on
12th, 13th and 14th October

- Congratulations certificate

Congratulations!

for being a Firefly on

Midlands Co-operative Society Limited



- Firefly sign up day

Midlands Co-operative Society Limited

Midlands Co-operative

Firefly is hovering



Introduction to firefly

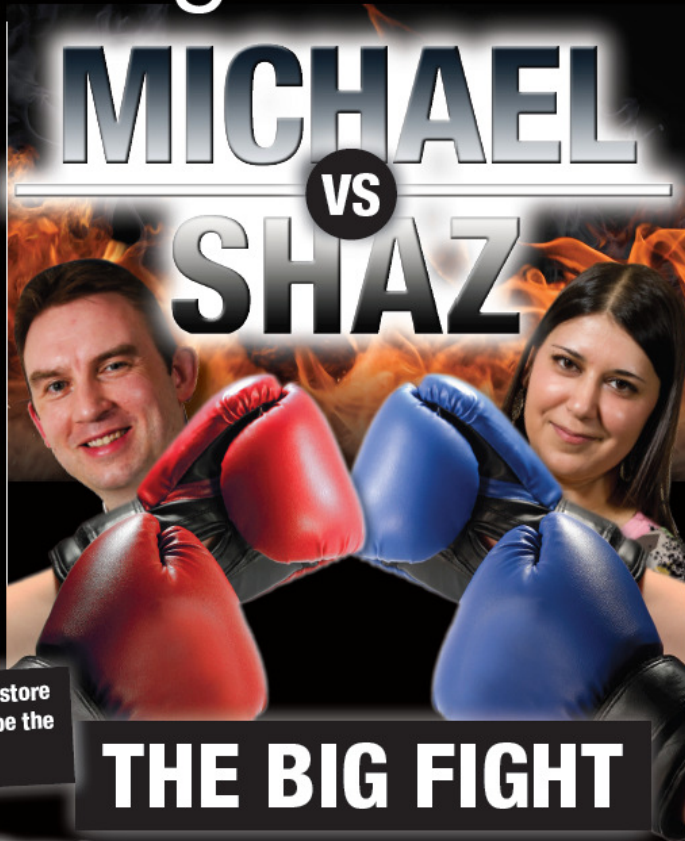
**Firefly (Photinus Pyralis) –
a small beetle that emits light**

All colleagues at the Business Support
Centre are being invited to become Fireflies
for a day* to light up our stores.

A number of Firefly events will be
taking place between now and Christmas,
which have been designed to help our retail
stores and florists drive sales during our
busiest time of the year.

We will shortly be sending you details of
how you can get involved, but in the
meantime here's a taster of how members
of the Leadership Group and Team Firefly
will be working together to increase sales.

*A day, or part-day, depending on your normal working hours.



**"My team will lead the way in our store
on the day and we will definitely 'be the
best' - Can't wait!" MICHAEL**

**"Watch out Michael, the sales from
my store are going to be so hot
there's a danger that the sales smoke
will set the fire alarms off!" SHAZ**

Friday 30 September



See more overleaf

The **co-operative**
good for everyone

Let battle commence!

Taking place on Friday 30th September. Taking place on Friday 30 September Michael and Shaz, backed by a team of eager fireflies, will be 'racing' to sell the most of a selected product in separate stores on the same day. Both Michael and Shaz have **one vision** - to drive sales, they will be actively talking to customers to sell as many of the line as possible; encouraging colleagues to sell to customers from bulk stacks at the checkouts; ensuring the product is adequately merchandised around the store and clearly priced so that as many customers as possible pick up the line; taking part in the team huddle to ensure that all colleagues are aware of the product price, features and benefits; driving awareness through tannoy announcements etc. In short, doing everything they can to sell, sell, sell.



Product Race

From October, Martyn Cheatle and his super eager Executive Team, will be taking part in races to sell products in the run up to Christmas. The four 'best selling managers' will then be given a new product to promote in November, with the two 'star selling managers' going forward to a head to head sales race in December.

Contenders Readyyy!

SHAZ 'The Lightning' UMBREEN



"I can't wait to get my food store uniform on and start selling. In a bid to out-sell Michael I will be wearing flat shoes and having a Berocca moment to make sure that I'm fully powered up for the day. The tills are going to be ringing loud and clear in my shop! I know that Michael will be doing his best to charm the customers shopping in his base store. I'm not worried by that though."

MICHAEL 'The Wasp' SPENCER



"To be honest I am a bit concerned about racing with Shaz! Some say she is actually the Stig from Top Gear, however I have ignored this rumour as the car, helmet and outfit would match and be 'hot pink' and there would be a huge 'mega' spoiler on the back!"

Coming Soon

Would you like one of our Managers to work for you on one of our busiest day of the year? Are you looking forward to helping our stores and florists in the build up to Christmas? Watch out for the next Firefly update and find out how you can get involved.

Want to find out more?

You will shortly be receiving further information about Firefly, but if you can't wait simply contact one of your colleagues below who will be happy to help.



TEAM FIREFLY

Back row (l-r) Steve Brown, Ian Spencer, Darren Byrne, Jennifer Dukes and Vipon Madhar
Front row (l-r) Shirley Arnold, Helen Gobran, Ruth Preston, Gill Davies, Hazel Hood and Mark Jones. **Not pictured:** Gordon Collins, Josh Reed, Joy Welch and Vicky Bryan.