



**Commercial  
Communications  
Council**

## **Comms Council Beacon Awards 2018**

### **Case Study**

**Agency Name:** FCB Media  
**Advertiser Name:** Water Safety New Zealand  
**Gold Beacon Award Category:** Social Marketing/Public Service

#### *The Swim Reaper*

*With young men (15-24) making up more than a third of preventable drownings in New Zealand, Water Safety NZ needed to reach this audience more effectively. By creating an 'anti-influencer' social media character, FCB Media drove behaviour change and won Gold in the Social Marketing/Public Service category in the Beacon Awards.*

#### **Background**

Young men (aged 15-24) make up more than a third of preventable drownings in New Zealand. Previous water safety advertising telling this audience to make smarter decisions had struggled to make a significant impact: the prior summer (2015/16) 10 young men had died prematurely by preventable drowning. The year before it was 16.

With their resistance to listening to authority and use of social media to showcase their antics in the water, Water Safety New Zealand was struggling to communicate its water safety message to this group.

#### **Campaign Objective**

Heading into summer (2016/17), FCB Media's objective from Water Safety NZ was to halve the number of preventable drownings amongst males 15-24, compared with the previous summer, when 10 young men had died.

#### **Campaign Overview**

Young males' constant desire to impress mates with their bravado and antics in the water (made easy to share on social media thanks to ever present smartphones) gave FCB Media its insight: While young men ignore authority, they care deeply about what their inner circle thinks.

The agency sought to earn an influential place in the inner circle, by combining this group's aversion to being told what to do, with their love of sharing surprising humour.

FCB Media created The Swim Reaper, a darkly comedic social media "anti-influencer" whose sole purpose was to claim as many lives as possible by encouraging the dumb behaviours that caused preventable drownings. Through the social capital of comedy and shock factor to infiltrate inner circles, this character could ironically tackle the specific causes of drowning head-on and get the audience to reflect on the consequences of dumb behaviour around the water. The Swim Reaper needed to be salient at the moment of every bad decision around water, and able to influence "inner circles" across New Zealand.

The media strategy would need to create the sense The Swim Reaper was real, omni-present and ready to engage.

## Media Strategy

Crucially, The Swim Reaper needed to behave as a real member of the social media "inner circle", by being discovered and not appearing like an ad – especially not from the government, which required FCB Media persuading Water Safety NZ to launch without branding.

The first step was a discovery phase over summer in which FCB Media:

- created Swim Reaper social media profiles across Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat, allowing him to infiltrate the audience's newsfeeds organically
- created 50+ video / image posts from the Swim Reaper encouraging the different bad choices that lead to fatalities and reinforcing the need to respect water.

As engagement and followers grew, The Swim Reaper began to participate:

- posting encouraging comments on actual posts of dumb behaviour in the water
- appearing in top local and global influencers' content
- coverage on radio and public appearances for 'beach selfies'

FCB Media ensured the engagement translated into behaviour change with strategic use of data to identify the most dangerous drowning spots for geo-targeted social posts and programmatic, coinciding with the reveal of Water Safety NZ branding. It also placed ambient Swim Reaper "prompts" at 15 of the most dangerous waterfalls, rivers, wharves and beaches to be present at the moment young men were making fatal decisions.

It retargeted everyone who engaged with The Swim Reaper's content to ensure key messages were reinforced, applying behavioural and geographical filters for maximum relevance.

## Results

The number of preventable drownings amongst males 15-24 totalled zero for the summer of 2016/2017 (the target was a reduction from 10 to 5) and total drownings - of all people -

decreased by 20%. The spend was no more than the previous year and potentially influencing factors like weather or beach attendance were relatively stable.

The Swim Reaper directly reached 65% of the New Zealand audience across Facebook and Instagram alone, with huge Instagram engagement in particular – comments and likes totalled more than 70,000. His cameos in social influencers' videos were viewed more than four million times and he received coverage on radio shows, news media and attracted global attention.