



GOLD Case Study

Agency Name: MBM
Advertiser Name: J.H. Whittaker & Sons
Beacon Awards Category: Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG)
Entry Title: Owing Secret Santa to become a Christmas gifting player

This is a story of NZ's Most Loved and Trusted Brand starting from scratch again, taking on a new category made up of global giants and looking to establish themselves in gifting. Lofty targets, the usual story. Our strategy took us micro and allowed us to find our part to own, to get macro results. So naturally we set up a Hotline! It was media without a media plan. Part call centre, part social experience, part fulfilment and distribution centre. All rolled into a seamless and simple consumer experience.

We broke phone lines, broke record media and sales results, and broke out as a Christmas player, making it into the Christmas gifting consideration set.

INSIGHT

Whittaker's can take on the big boys, sure that has been proven. But in gifting we were pretty much starting from scratch in a sizeable category. We'd launched these a year earlier and only made a small dent.

Our challenge - Establish Whittaker's as a Christmas player and get into the Christmas gifting consideration set.

NZ's humble chocolate brand had a lot standing in its way. It felt like the old days of Whittaker's Creamy Milk taking on the Cadbury Dairy Milk giant. This time, standing in our way was:

- History. A category made up of historical products embedded in people's existing memory structures. Cadbury Roses had 81 years of history.
- Growth in gifting comes from numerous SKU's. We had 2. Cadbury had 25, Ferrero 26 and Lindt 45.
- We'd be outspent. Projections showed we'd be outspent 2.5:1 by both Cadbury and Ferrero. Whittaker's brand clout wouldn't outweigh this SOV differential.
- Price. We were more expensive than the competition.

Regardless we had a business challenge focused on sales that we needed to hit.

Our biggest challenge became our guiding insight:

For years people had been shopping for gifting chocolate on autopilot. Just being present on shelf couldn't change behaviour. We needed to shake consumers out of their inertia and create a role for Whittaker's at Christmas time.

STRATEGY

Taking on the gifting giants meant we couldn't be all things to all people, and we couldn't outshout them in the biggest retail moment of the year.

Google trends revealed an untapped opportunity, searches for Secret Santa presents had increased +163% in the last 10 years (Google Trends), yet no one was owning this space.

Our strategy –

Find clear air within the Christmas clutter and focus on a micro gifting occasion in the lead up to Christmas – OWN SECRET SANTA.

The intent of this strategy meant we could:

Unlock the Christmas season to extend beyond a day, which mimicked chocolate buying behaviour.

Live beyond just the family gifting moment. Secret Santa isn't limited to families and Christmas Day, and nor would this be.

Conveying gifting without enabling gifting didn't seem very genuine to us! Central to delivering on this strategy would be setting up our own Secret Santa event as a gifting moment for NZ. Build it and they will come!

EXECUTION

Think of this as media without a media plan, it was media without borders. For our strategy to work, our goal was to gift to as many Chocolate Lovers as possible.

Secret Santa is often a grudge purchase, so we wanted to make it easy for consumers. From engaging through to receiving it pre-wrapped and labelled. We needed to create a moment of emotional connection at scale that was compatible with enabling an everyday Secret Santa micro gifting moment, so we called it the **Whittaker's Secret Santa Hotline. Part call centre, part social experience, part fulfilment and distribution centre. All rolled into a seamless and simple consumer experience.**

The execution centred around a two-step process.

1. Set up our hotline
2. Dial up the demand

Set up the hotline

This was focused on building a 90's hotline as a distribution channel, and powering this with new media (social).

This meant the media people must morph into IT – just call us geeks on wheels! We moved into the IT realm, took ourselves back to the 90's and set up a call centre for this all to hang off. Working with Vodafone, SIETEC (business phone systems) and internal IT we set up a call centre for one night only. It wasn't all 90's, we collided this with today's world, building the call centre and set through the perspective of a mobile phone. Making it fit for LIVE social content.

A media team without borders. IT, show runners, call centre operations staff, packaging and fulfilment logistics specialists, videographers... 1 night, 2 hours, 10 phone operators, 5 fulfilment team personnel + the Whittaker's team as LIVE social talent (dual role as phone operators) and the media team as the filming crew (dual roles in fulfilment and phone operators).

The talent was the marketing team. All led by the show runner – the media Business Director. We're making the technicalities sound too simple, we had to (but not limited to):

- Purchase the 0800 number and link it to handsets.
- Talk simultaneous connections – that's IT speak for how many calls the phone line can accept at any given time.
- Estimate call volumes/gift fulfilment.
- Upload time targeted hold music.
- Test, test and test again.

Dial up the demand

The day arrived! We took to social to launch this, as well as 250 bespoke influencer packs announcing the Hotline.

Chocolate Lovers received an EDM, and the masses were warned a day prior via social. They were prepped and ready to call in and tell us their Secret Santa.

7PM hit, the phone lines rang. They came!

We filmed two LIVE's (Instagram and Facebook) on mobile and injected these into the feed as ads. 1 hour in we knew something was up. The engineers were on it and the show couldn't stop. We filmed another two LIVE's, keeping Chocolate Lovers in the know.

And then...the phone lines crashed. They couldn't be fixed; the lines were overwhelmed, and the protection setting couldn't activate quick enough. People certainly did come, in droves in fact.

After 1-hour Chocolate Lovers saw through Facebook and Instagram LIVE's we'd shifted to social engaging, to work through the back log and get back to the heart of what it was about – enabling Secret Santa gifting with Assortments, for as many Chocolate Lovers as we could manage.

RESULTS

We broke the phone lines! We found out success comes in many forms. NZ found relevance in Secret Santa, and thus our communications objective cut through. All down to the fame generated from the Secret Santa Hotline.

Media Results

Summary: A raging success.

1,000 Secret Santa sorted gifts delivered, more simultaneous calls than the 111-phone line gets in a day and a reach of over 1M New Zealanders (paid & organic).

Communications Objective

Summary: The silver lining of broken phone lines - confidence we achieved this.

Engagement levels tell us people connected Assortments with Christmas through this micro gifting moment fit. Said better from a Chocolate Lover:

- "Got through!!! Sitting on hold!!! 😊😊😊" - Stace Mills, FB

A new communication objective hit part way through - brand reputation. We needed to turnaround social sentiment, by replying to every single person. What'd we get back?

- "Thanks so much Whittaker's, so excited that I got a message back. Lovely to win something for my husband, it's been a tough year." - Karen Mackenzie, FB

Business Objectives

Summary: Exceeded.

We made our mark on gifting, exceeding unit sales objectives and demonstrating a clear connection between media activity and sales.

A micro moment made Assortments macro.