

Small business-themed Web series helps drive extra sales



Client

Hiscox USA (New York)

PR agency

Prosek Partners (New York)

Campaign

Leap Year season two

Duration

February-September 2012

Budget

\$400,000

In summer 2011, Hiscox and its long-time agency Prosek Partners (formerly CJP Communications), launched an original Web series called *Leap Year* as part of a larger marketing campaign to drive awareness of the company's new small business insurance products.

The series explored challenges facing first-time entrepreneurs – issues Hiscox's insurance products can help with. Following on its success, a 10-episode second season premiered this year.

"With season one we reached goals in terms of awareness and building our social networks," says Hiscox's head of US communications Hunter Hoffmann.

"The second season gave us an opportunity to build on that momentum and insert more Hiscox branding through media relations."

STRATEGY

The season two plot follows five main characters, who received startup funding in the first season, as they work to bring a product to market.



The second season of Web series *Leap Year* attracted 2.3 million viewers during its initial 10-week run from June 18 to August 20

"The storyline grows in the same way many of our target audience's businesses grow," explains Hoffmann.

Strategic partnerships, social media engagement, media relations, and attendance at the Mashable Connect conference helped promote the new season.

TACTICS

Season two was announced on Leap Day (February 29) to entertainment, small business, and tech media, as well as bloggers and the general media.

The trailer premiered May 4 at Mashable Connect during a panel discussion with Mashable executive Adam Ostrow. Conference gift bags included branded T-shirts with a QR code linking to the trailer video.

Episodes aired online weekly June 18 to August 20 on outlets including YouTube, Hulu, Vimeo, Hiscox's Facebook page, and a *Leap Year* microsite.

Hoffmann wrote regular posts on Hiscox's blog that connected season two plot points to real

business scenarios and mentioned general types of insurance that could help.

Various entrepreneurs and startup experts, including Reddit cofounder Alexis Ohanian and TechCrunch reporter Ryan Lawler, appeared in episodes and promoted the show on their social networks.

Seven high-profile entrepreneurs, such as Klout's Joe Fernandez, participated in My Startup Story video interviews that were posted to YouTube and the *Leap Year* microsite.

Actors Steven Weber and Eliza Dushku – who appear in the series – promoted it on their



social networks. Marketing and PR trades and general consumer outlets were also pitched.

RESULTS

Hoffmann says general consumer surveys conducted in Q3 2011 and Q3 2012 revealed aided brand awareness nearly doubled. The campaign also contributed to a 35% increase in product quotes viewed and products purchased online during the same time period.

Brand impressions across social media, traditional media, and all video channels hit 321 million, up from 105 million for season one. Comparing seasons one and two, Twitter impressions skyrocketed from 6 million to 24 million, and Facebook impressions more than doubled to 5.3 million.

Season two also netted 25,000 new followers across Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, GetGlue, Chill, and Pinterest for a total of 55,000. Total views of both seasons to date exceed 8 million.

During its original 10-week run, season two pulled in 2.3 million views, up from 2.2 million from the first season.

A total of 56 stories ran, up from 35 last year, in outlets such as VentureBeat, *The New York Observer*, and *USA Today*.

FUTURE

Hiscox and Prosek Partners will continue working together. A third season of *Leap Year* is under consideration.

Tanya Lewis

On social networks, actress Eliza Dushku plugged the show