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10 STEPS TO CREATE A DIGITAL MARKETING CAMPAIGN

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While seven states were able to implement their digital marketing campaigns in the summer of 2020, COVID concerns caused the [Michigan Department of Natural Resources \(MI DNR\)](#) to postpone their campaign until 2021. The results and learnings from this delayed campaign are below.

Results

MI DNR Fisheries Division implemented a digital marketing campaign from May to September 2021. They used display, paid search, Facebook and Instagram to recruit new anglers, retain current anglers and reactive former anglers by encouraging them to purchase a Michigan fishing license.

During the campaign, MI DNR spent just over \$47,000 on ads and generated a total revenue over **\$840,000!**

Due to the large increase in license sales in 2020 with more outdoor recreation in response to the pandemic, they compared their 2021 sales to 2019 sales for a more realistic benchmark. Comparing the two years they saw the following:

- New customers - 8.3% increase
- Repeat customers - 5.7% increase
- One-to-three-day license holders - 5.3% increase
- Non-resident customers - 11.7% increase
- Female customers - 11.4% increase



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Creating a Campaign:

1. Determine Overall Budget and Timeline for Campaign

MI DNR used the \$65,000 funding from AFWA, RBFF and their match to create and implement their campaign.

MI DNR planned to launch their campaign in early Spring 2020. Due to COVID, they pushed the start date back since numerous bodies of water were closed and the state put a freeze on spending. With continued uncertainty around COVID, MI DNR launched their campaign from May through September 2021.

2. Find a Marketing Agency

MI DNR had a contract with Brogan & Partners Marketing Agency (Lansing, MI). Per State of Michigan procurement, Brogan & Partners was awarded the bid and was their sole vendor to be used for marketing efforts.

3. Analyze Current Anglers

MI DNR looked at their database to determine age group of consumers to target based on the average age of current license holders. They then tailored their messaging to their target audience.

4. Determine Campaign Goals

MI DNR's goals were to recruit new anglers, retain current anglers and reactive former anglers by encouraging them to purchase a Michigan fishing license.

They wanted to increase 2021 license sales compared to 2019 sales. They also wanted to increase number of new customers, repeat customers, non-resident customers, etc. compared to 2019.

5. Ensure Tracking is Set Up and Ready

MI DNR experienced issues properly tracking consumers. Consumers were sent to a landing page first (on Michigan.gov) and then to the E-License page (on a separate website). Unfortunately, the tracking code from the source did not follow the consumer all the way through the landing page to the E-license page. Thus, MI DNR was able to track how many people went to the landing page from the different sources and how many license sales came from the landing page, but were unable to attribute license sales to specific sources.



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6. Determine Target Audience

MI DNR targeted consumers between the minimum age requirement for a fishing license (17) and the maximum age (54) was selected as the average age of a license holder in Michigan.

7. Determine Marketing Tactics

This campaign utilized display, paid search, Facebook and Instagram to recruit new anglers, retain current anglers and reactive former anglers by encouraging them to purchase a Michigan fishing license.

8. Create Ads

MI DNR provided their marketing agency with significant direction on ad creative + messaging which resulted in a delay of the original launch day of the campaign. They provided the marketing agency with photos to show diversity and also re-wrote a lot of the ad copy.

While the creative worked for MI DNR, they believe the ads could have been better for an even more effective campaign.

MI DNR's creative can be viewed and/or downloaded [here](#).

9. Implement Campaign

MI DNR worked with Brogan & Partners to run the campaign from May to September, 2021.

10. Monitor Campaign

MI DNR had the marketing agency provide reports bi-weekly throughout the campaign. At one point, a report revealed that the MI DNR should remove an Instagram ad due to the cost per click and low performance.



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Evaluate Campaign

MI DNR evaluated their campaign in October 2021. See Results info above and their [case study](#) for more info.

Roadblocks

To increase tourism, the county Convention and Visitors' Bureau (CVB), funded a digital marketing campaign at the same time the MI DNR ran their fishing license campaign. The same marketing agency was spearheading the CVB campaign and had concerns with the two campaigns competing against each other. MI DNR removed some key words from their targeted audiences (camping and boating) to minimize duplication of efforts.

MI DNR experienced issues with access to their data to properly track consumers as noted in "Ensure Tracking is Set Up and Ready" above. They are currently working to gain approval to use pixels to have better tracking capabilities in the future.

Other Insights from These Campaigns

The funds from the Association for Fish & Wildlife Agencies Multi-State Conservation Grant and RBFF provided MI DNR with a huge opportunity to implement a digital marketing campaign. Overall, the MI DNR views the campaign as a success but are also continuously working to improve all efforts.

Given that fishing license sales were increased significantly in 2020 as a result of the pandemic, the MI DNR appreciated they could execute this campaign in 2021 versus 2020.

They will continue to use some of the creative and digital marketing methods used in this campaign to continue marketing efforts with their future campaigns.



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Lessons Learned & Future Plans

MI DNR is interested in running a campaign on their own in the future using social media ads. However, they would like to use different creative materials and better tracking parameters. They are currently working to gain approval to use tracking pixels to implement better tracking in the future.

MI DNR plans to target a more diverse population and more female anglers, with the possibility of adding in target audiences interested in general outdoor activities like campers and boaters.

MI DNR had to spend time providing a lot of direction to their marketing agency which ultimately delayed the campaign launch. They suggest having detailed discussions about data tracking expectations and limitations with the marketing agency when planning the campaign.

Advice on Creating a Digital Marketing Campaign

The state agencies involved in this project shared their advice to other state agencies looking to create similar campaigns for the first time.

MI DNR highly suggests that state agencies communicate with their marketing agencies to determine if there are other competing campaigns occurring during the same time frame as their campaign. If possible, work with the marketing agency so it does not take on similar campaigns. This was a challenge that they never expected. The campaign was successful, but they felt it could have been even better without similar competition.

They also suggest having a more detailed discussion on the data tracking expectations and limitations with their marketing agency as theirs did not deliver as expected.

Creative and Additional Information from State Agencies:

- Creative from campaigns can be found [here](#).
- [Michigan Department of Natural Resources case study](#).



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