

The Sixth Annual 24 Hours of Booty

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NEED/OPPORTUNITY / 24 Hours of Booty Inc. runs the official 24-hour cycling event of the Lance Armstrong Foundation and the *only* 24-hour road cycling charity event in the country. A registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit charity located in Charlotte, North Carolina, 24 Hours of Booty Inc. provides an extraordinary cycling event that is safe, fun and open to those of all levels of cycling ability. Individuals and teams gather at the Queens University athletic fields for camping, food and fun. The mission of *24 Hours of Booty* is to increase cancer awareness, support cancer research and programs, and raise funds for the Lance Armstrong Foundation, The Keep Pounding Fund at Carolinas Medical Center, and the Brain Tumor Fund for the Carolinas. Since its inception in 2002, *24 Hours of Booty* has donated US\$1 million to cancer charities.

THE HISTORY OF 24 HOURS OF BOOTY

The event was created by *24 Hours of Booty* founder and president, Spencer Lueders, who is married with three young children, is a NASCAR patent attorney by day, and runs this successful charitable organization by night and during his spare time. Today, the organization is a professionally run and volunteer-driven organization with more than 150 volunteers.

In 2001, Spencer wanted to combine his love of cycling and his passion for supporting the Lance Armstrong Foundation. While riding the “Booty Loop,” a popular three-mile circuit for cyclists and runners in one of the most scenic areas of Charlotte, North Carolina, Spencer was struck with an inspiring thought: He would ride the “Booty Loop” for 24 hours straight.

In 2002, the inaugural *24 Hours of Booty* launched with Spencer riding 312 miles solo on the “Booty Loop.” Although Spencer planned the event alone—as a “test ride” to see if it could be done—many people came out to ride with him at all hours of the day and night. Generous members of the community were impressed by Spencer’s efforts, helping him raise US\$6,000 for the Lance Armstrong Foundation.

- ▶ In 2003, the *Second Annual 24 Hours of Booty* emerged as an official community event, where 110 riders met the challenge, raising over US\$33,000 for cancer charities.
- ▶ In 2004, the *Third Annual 24 Hours of Booty* hosted 505 riders and raised over US\$105,000.
- ▶ In 2005, the *Fourth Annual 24 Hours of Booty* became an established Charlotte cycling event, hosting 825 riders and raising over US\$275,000.
- ▶ In 2006, the *Fifth Annual 24 Hours of Booty* hosted a record 918 riders who raised over US\$350,000.

- ▶ In 2007, the *Sixth Annual 24 Hours of Booty* surpassed its fundraising goal of US\$500,000 by raising more than US\$750,000 for cancer research and programs. It also exceeded its attendance goal of 1,000 people with more than 1,390 participants.

While *24 Hours of Booty* has experienced significant fundraising and attendance growth every year since its inception and has earned a reputation as being a first-class event, the organization did not have a communication plan in place or the staff resources available to effectively promote the *24 Hours of Booty* brand and name to the media and its target audiences.

To carry out the vision and mission of the *24 Hours of Booty* event, the team implemented a communication plan that would help promote the event while getting the names of Spencer, founder and president, and Patti Weiss, executive director, in front of target audiences.

INTENDED AUDIENCE(S) / Since the event is open to those of all ages and cycling abilities, the primary audiences for *24 Hours of Booty* included the public and the corporate sector. Participants typically include, but are not limited to, experienced cyclists, riders of all ages and ability levels, cancer survivors and caregivers.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES / The goals of the communication campaign were to:

- ▶ Promote *24 Hours of Booty* year-round as the official 24-hour cycling event of the Lance Armstrong Foundation and the *only* 24-hour road cycling charity event in the country.
- ▶ Increase participation in the event.
- ▶ Raise more money for cancer research and programs.
- ▶ Generate more corporate support of the organization and event.

The objectives of the communication campaign were to:

- ▶ Generate interest, support and coverage from the media, while fostering relationships between the media and *24 Hours of Booty* representatives.
- ▶ Position Spencer Lueders, founder and president, and Patti Weiss, executive director, as expert resources for the media.
- ▶ Make the *24 Hours of Booty* brand and name synonymous with being a first-class event and with Spencer's name and face.
- ▶ Keep the *24 Hours of Booty* brand and name in front of key audiences on an ongoing basis.
- ▶ Bring the human-interest element to the *24 Hours of Booty* event by highlighting key volunteers and participants to share their personal stories about cancer with the media.

SOLUTION OVERVIEW / Since no formal media outreach had been previously been done, the team needed to start from scratch with all communication materials and outreach plans. To effectively promote *24 Hours of Booty*, they implemented a detailed communication plan to raise awareness about the event; position the organization's leaders as expert resources; increase sponsorship opportunities; and be a reliable media source before, during and following the event. Rather than limit media opportunities to just the event, the team implemented a number of tactics and communication vehicles to help keep the *24 Hours of Booty* brand and name in front of target audiences and to help make Spencer Lueders' name and face synonymous with the event.

The plan entailed identifying and reinforcing the following key messages:

- ▶ The team at *24 Hours of Booty* consists of experts and leaders in producing an extraordinary cycling event that is safe, fun, and open to all levels of cycling ability; increasing public awareness and support for cancer research and programs; and raising funds to support the Lance Armstrong Foundation and other local cancer charities.
- ▶ *24 Hours of Booty* is the only 24-hour road cycling charity event in the country.
- ▶ *24 Hours of Booty* is the official 24-hour road cycling charity event benefiting the Lance Armstrong Foundation.
- ▶ *24 Hours of Booty* is held on a unique three-mile course that provides access to everyone and promotes a sense of community.
- ▶ *24 Hours of Booty* is a first-class event where all participants are taken care of from start to finish.
- ▶ *24 Hours of Booty* offers a user-friendly web site and online fundraising program for all registrants.

Several tactics and communication vehicles were implemented to meet the objectives of the communication plan.

The team distributed a steady stream of announcements regarding the activities of *24 Hours of Booty* to media targeted toward the audiences in order to reinforce an image of a vibrant and growing organization and to strengthen the *24 Hours of Booty* brand and event. These press releases included the following topics: ancillary events that supported *24 Hours of Booty*; awards received by *24 Hours of Booty* and/or its leadership; speaking engagements, conferences and workshops involving *24 Hours of Booty* leadership; new sponsors or partners for the event; and post-media interviews.

The team identified opportunities for radio, television and print media interviews, with an emphasis on the organization's key messages. This included pre-event publicity, publicity at the event, post-event publicity and ongoing publicity following the event.

The team prepared profile and feature story pitches about Spencer, Patti, key volunteers, and cancer survivor participants to share with print and broadcast media contacts. They also identified speaking opportunities for Spencer and Patti to present to groups and meetings where *24 Hours of Booty* target audience members gather.

The team pursued award opportunities to garner media exposure and to promote *24 Hours of Booty*. My Team of Experts helped facilitate the nomination of Spencer for the 2007 *Charlotte Business Journal's* list of "40 Under 40," a list of young leaders of accomplishment in recognition of his business achievements and commitment to the community. Spencer was named to the 2007 "40 Under 40" list and was featured in a June 2007 special insert section. He attended the awards ceremony and was then featured in the *Charlotte Business Journal's* Book of Lists "40 Under 40" section that was printed in December 2007.

The team positioned *24 Hours of Booty* leadership as expert resource contacts. In addition to regular press releases and pitch opportunities, they sent newspaper, magazine, radio and TV information on a quarterly basis to recommend *24 Hours of Booty* leadership as an expert resource.

The team helped facilitate relationships with *24 Hours of Booty* television and radio sponsors, and helped build new partnership opportunities with other media, which ran complimentary print ads for the *24 Hours of Booty* event.

Since the event is truly unique and brings in so many different people, there was great potential for media interest. With more than 1,300 participants, the team's tactic was to create a media tent to be an on-site resource for media representatives interested in covering the event. The media tent was promoted to media in advance through a media advisory invitation, and signage was posted in the media parking area giving directions to the media tent. Media guests were encouraged to sign in at the media tent, which provided an opportunity to capture who was covering the event and to follow up with them after the event.

The following items were available at the media tent:

- ▶ A sign-in sheet
- ▶ Laminated media pass lanyards
- ▶ Refreshments
- ▶ A course map and access to complimentary bikes to use on the course
- ▶ Media kits with goodie bags (this included 25 yellow gift bags, each adorned with a *24 Hours of Booty* sticker; inside each bag was a media kit in an orange envelope, a *24 Hours of Booty* pen, a water bottle and "Booty Blend" Starbucks coffee beans). Not only did the bag make a nice presentation, but made it easy for each media representative to carry the information. The media kits included information about the event, bios about the leadership of *24 Hours of Booty*, cancer statistics, fun facts, testimonials, a list of sponsors, and a photo CD.

To give the media a variety of human interest stories to choose from, the team worked in advance to identify active teams, as well as cancer survivors and participants, to be available for any potential on-site media interviews.

Having the media tent and an on-site presence proved to be a success and played a critical role when a thunderstorm closed the course down for two hours late in the evening. The team implemented the crisis communication plan by instructing participants where to take safe shelter. They were in constant contact

with media wanting updates about when the course would re-open. The television stations were able to give updates during their late evening broadcasts, and *The Charlotte Observer* included the information in a follow-up story in the next morning's paper. The efforts were effective because they conveyed that *24 Hours of Booty* had a game plan, took action and served as a resource to the media. The following are two testimonials (responses to a post-event survey) about the storm:

- ▶ “Everything was handled in the best ways. When it rained, you provided a place to go to get out of it.”
- ▶ “Thank you for a wonderful well-run event. I had a great time, even with the terrible weather on Friday night. I look forward to participating again and will bring a waterproof bag :-). Congratulations on the fundraising this year too. It speaks volumes that your team's efforts and the efforts of all the riders raised so much money for a great cause.”

IMPLEMENTATION AND CHALLENGES / The project budget was US\$9,600 for 12 months starting 1 April 2007. Since 24 Hours of Booty Inc. retained My Team of Experts on 1 April 2007, one of the biggest challenges was only having four months to promote the brand and event, which took place on 27–28 July. After immediately preparing background information about the client with key message points and information about the event, the team quickly moved forward in creating a series of announcements that were pertinent to the organization, but enabled them to keep the event name and leadership top of mind for the media and for target audiences. The intent was for people to constantly see the *24 Hours of Booty* brand and name.

The other challenge was describing the origin of the *24 Hours of Booty* name and specifically the origin of the “Booty Loop” name, which often got misrepresented in the media as the course that was named for the runners and cyclists in tight Spandex shorts. To ensure a consistent and accurate message, the team prepared a clear and concise description that was used in message points, on the organization's web site, in media outreach and in the event media kits. They also referenced the event as *24-Hour Charity Cycling Event* in e-mail subject lines to help prevent any e-mails to the media from going to a spam filter.

MEASUREMENT/EVALUATION / The project's results were measured in five ways, including:

1. The success of the event.
2. Media coverage received before, during and after the event.
3. The print and broadcast value of media coverage.
4. Exit survey highlights.
5. Accolades Spencer received following the event.

24 Hours of Booty surpassed its fundraising goal of US\$500,000 by raising more than US\$750,000 for cancer research and programs. It also exceeded its attendance goal of 1,000 participants with more than 1,390 registrants.

There was tremendous media coverage before, during and after the event. This included 125 published articles and 39 photos (published between April 2007 and December 2007), which averaged an advertising value of US\$35,688. During the event, all five Charlotte television stations (some came out multiple times), and *The Charlotte Observer* covered the event. The advertising value for television interviews was US\$7,550. The overall advertising equivalency ROI was 586 percent.

According to an exit survey for all participants, 53.7 percent of respondents indicated they heard about the event through the media and 28.8 percent heard about the event from the *24 Hours of Booty* web site.

Spencer Lueders, founder and president, also received three noteworthy accolades for the success of the *24 Hours of Booty*:

- ▶ He was named a finalist for the first-ever NASCAR Home Depot Humanitarian Award. In being a finalist, Spencer was also awarded a US\$25,000 donation for 24 Hours of Booty Inc. He was in the running with Don Miller, project creator and director of Stocks-for-Tots Charity Event, who won the award; and Kyle Petty, driver for Petty Enterprises and co-founder of Victory Junction Gang Camp.
- ▶ He was also chosen (at the recommendation of one of the reporters with whom the team worked closely throughout the year and who got to know him) as one of *The Charlotte Observer's* "Seven People to Watch" in 2008 and was featured in one of a series of seven articles that highlighted each of the selected people who are influential in shaping the Charlotte region.
- ▶ He and four *24 Hours of Booty* representatives and volunteers traveled to Austin, Texas, to attend a Lance Armstrong Foundation event to celebrate the organization's accomplishments with the Lance Armstrong Foundation. As part of the celebratory activities, Spencer and his team participated in a private bike ride with Lance Armstrong.