Evocities Regional Relocation Campaign
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NEED/OPPORTUNITY
In July 2005, seven regional cities in New South Wales (NSW) formed a cooperative alliance to change the perception that there are only two types of places to live in Australia: capital cities or the country (or “bush”). At the time, there was a general lack of awareness about the existence of regional cities among residents of metropolitan cities, and many, including the media, held negative images of the NSW countryside.

Many in Sydney were struggling. The city was becoming increasingly congested, living costs were rising, and there were predictions of future challenges related to catering to a growing population with shrinking disposable incomes. With the search for greener pastures on for many, and with “Sea Change” and “Tree Change” programs already putting alternative possibilities to major city living on the agenda, the time was right to introduce the concept of a “City Change” that compared seven cities favorably to Sydney.

At the time, regional municipalities were, with varying degrees of success, independently pursuing initiatives aimed at attracting new residents and industries. To increase their push, Albury, Armidale, Bathurst, Dubbo, Orange, Tamworth and Wagga Wagga formed an alliance, the first of its kind in Australia. Each of the cities was growing and offered affordable housing as well as outstanding industry, education, cultural and lifestyle opportunities. They also all had the capacity to support further population growth.

Following extensive market research, a new brand—Evocities—was created to identify the seven cities and to promote the benefits of living, working and investing in one of them. Evocities was created to raise awareness of the benefits of regional city life and to highlight these centers as vibrant, thriving locations that offer employment, financial rewards and increased lifestyle opportunities.

SHJ was appointed as Evocities’ PR agency following a competitive tender process in April 2010. In the planning phase, research was commissioned in Sydney to better understand the needs of target markets that had the potential to relocate and invest in regional cities. The research revealed:
- Twenty-four percent of respondents were likely or very likely to consider relocating to regional NSW in the future.
- Those who had some connection to the regional cities were more likely to relocate.
- One of the most significant barriers to relocating was concern about finding suitable employment.

INTENDED AUDIENCE/STAKEHOLDERS
The campaign targeting was based on extensive market research into Sydneysiders’ attitudes toward relocating. From the research, it became clear from the demographics that there were distinct groups of Sydneysiders who were most likely to consider a move to a regional city. The
three target segments that were the most attractive were named the Familites, the Bloomers and the Free Wheelers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>Demographic information</th>
<th>Triggers</th>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>Benefits sought</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Familites</td>
<td>Ages 35–45 with children under five years of age</td>
<td>- Lifestyle</td>
<td>- Employment</td>
<td>- Employment prospects</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Moving away from the big city</td>
<td>- Family</td>
<td>- Education</td>
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<td>- Education</td>
<td>- Health facilities</td>
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<td>- Safety</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bloomers</td>
<td>Ages 45–55, they are likely to be empty nesters or to have children who have finished school.</td>
<td>- Lifestyle</td>
<td>- Family</td>
<td>- Lifestyle</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Moving away from the big city</td>
<td>- Employment</td>
<td>- Natural features</td>
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<td>- Friends</td>
<td>- Employment</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- Climate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Free Wheelers</td>
<td>Ages 25–35, they are in the early stages of their careers—mostly young singles and young parents.</td>
<td>- Career advancement</td>
<td>- Family</td>
<td>- Employment</td>
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<td>- Moving away from the big city</td>
<td>- Employment</td>
<td>- Education</td>
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<td>- Friends</td>
<td>- Safety</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Lifestyle</td>
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**GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**
While the ultimate objective of the campaign was to convince Sydneysiders to move to an Evocity, research indicated that the average time required to make a relocation decision was 12 months. Therefore, while mindful of the overarching goal, the objectives of the campaign were to:

- Introduce and increase awareness to target audiences through traditional and new media.
- Highlight the wealth of lifestyle, real estate, career and investment opportunities in each of the seven cities via traditional and new media.
- Drive traffic to the Evocities website.
- Put people on the path toward considering making the move to an Evocity.

The specific metrics put in place for measuring the success of the campaign were as follows:

- Achieve a minimum of 350 pieces of coverage in 2010.
- Reach a minimum potential audience of 4 million in the first six months of the campaign.
- Recruit a minimum of 700 fans to the Evocities Facebook pages.
- Attract 3,000 visitors per month to the Evocities website (joint goal with marketing partner).
Achieve 600 relocation enquiries through the Evocities website (joint goal with marketing partner).

SOLUTION OVERVIEW
In developing the strategy, a number of factors influenced the team’s thinking:

- The social marketing principle that successful social change programs tap into existing sentiment rather creating something that doesn’t exist. Social change programs are strength-based, offer positive change, use the power of communities and don’t rely solely on the power of individuals.
- Consistent and growing discontent with life in Sydney.
- The ongoing debate about sustainable population growth in the increasingly congested capital cities.
- Launching during a highly politicized time, with considerable focus on regional Australia.

As a result of these factors, the team created a strategy that:

- Featured a big “kickoff” to introduce the Evocities concept.
- Targeted the “semi-converted” as the most likely to relocate—Sydneysiders who had an existing connection to one of the Evocities and were living in Sydney’s commuter belt, feeling the pressures of life in a capital city.
- Focused on the positives of Evocity living, rather than being overly critical of Sydney.
- Motivated people to work, live and invest in an Evocity.
- Addressed the barriers to relocation, particularly negative perceptions about employment, by bringing everyday Evocity stories to life, using real-world examples that people could relate to.

IMPLEMENTATION AND CHALLENGES
Evocities is truly a collaborative program. SHJ was an active participant in monthly steering committee meetings, working with the cities and the marketing agency to identify and manage issues as they arose. A clear strategy and impeccable work plan were imperative in steering the campaign, particularly as funding came from the cities, the Australian and NSW governments, and a group of corporate sponsors. SHJ developed media protocols and detailed approval processes to ensure timely delivery of materials.

SHJ happily contributed to activities outside the scope of the PR contract as they were imperative to the campaign’s success. These included developing and delivering sponsorship packages, preparing briefs for ministers and government departments, and issuing media alerts on behalf of ministers.

The following activities were supported by a range of marketing activities by marketing agency Ascet, including outdoor and online advertising, the Evocities website and an EvoJobs online jobs platform.
**Web site copy—August 2010.** Given SHJ’s role in writing the majority of marketing materials and ensuring consistency of messages, the team drafted the copy for the Evocities website. This was delivered ahead of time and on budget.

**Marketing collateral—August – September 2010.** The team created the copy for detailed fact sheets on each city, highlighting the best parts of each, combined with interesting statistics and facts. These were distributed in enquiry packs and on the website.

**EvoIndex consumer research—August 2010 and December 2010.** To help generate news hooks for media stories on the Evocities campaign, the team developed the EvoIndex, a regular quantitative consumer survey designed to highlight the advantages of living in the cities. The research was made up of respondents from Sydney and the seven cities.

The focus of the first EvoIndex was affordability and focused on the difference in disposable income between Sydney and the seven regional cities, with the Evocities emerging clear winners. The second EvoIndex focused on work-life balance and demonstrated that people in the Evocities spend less time traveling to work, at work, stressing about work and thinking about work once they have left for the day. They are also far more likely to engage in leisure activities with the extra time this affords them.

As part of the push to get the Evocity story on the media agenda, the team publicized the results of the EvoIndex surveys to metropolitan Sydney and local Evocities media with impressive results.

**Launches—September 2010.** To unveil the initiative, the team hosted a media launch with all seven mayors at NSW Parliament House. To exhibit the campaign’s cooperative nature, they approached, secured and managed the attendance of the federal minister for Regional Australia Simon Crean, MP, and Steve Whan, minister for rural affairs, which meant a rare gathering of three levels of government in support of the campaign. The Speaker of the House, the NSW leader of the opposition and key Federal Independent MP Tony Windsor and MPs representing the cities also attended, making the event truly bipartisan and a real media draw.

The team then launched the campaign in the cities with four local launches held in Albury, Armidale, Orange and Wagga Wagga. The local launches were attended by the mayors of each of the cities, campaign supporters, relocators, members of the local community and media.

**Welcome Back Facebook campaign—November – December 2010.** To target those with existing connections to the Evocities, the team created a campaign named “Welcome Back.” The first activity engaged both current and former Evocity residents with the creation a Facebook page for each of the Evocities. To encourage interaction with the page, visitors were asked to post about their Evocity, and a promotion ran to prompt people to return to and share the pages.

The team leveraged existing Facebook communities to create a new community of Evocity residents who love and are proud of their cities. The easy “share-ability” of Facebook meant that members of the pages helped grow the community by inviting members of their networks to join, particularly those in Sydney. SHJ created the copy and artwork for the Evocity pages, built the
Communities, conducted initial monitoring and built a local media relations campaign to support the activity.

**Case studies—ongoing.** Ongoing case study and feature placement was a crucial component of the ongoing media campaign. They helped to bring to life the stories of those who have already made the Sydney to Evocity relocation successfully and kept *Evocities* in the news and front of mind for Sydneysiders.

With the help of the seven cities, the team compiled a detailed case study catalogue of almost 100 “happy relocators.” These case studies were sold to media progressively over the life of the campaign, with a particular focus on trade titles to showcase the variety of career opportunities available in the cities.

**Media office—ongoing.** To ensure media opportunities weren’t missed and all enquiries were funneled through one contact, the team operated a dedicated media office that was supported by a single resource who would then direct the calls to appropriate councils and spokespeople. As part of this effort, they also carefully monitored all relevant media for coverage related to *Evocities* and responded as appropriate.

It was important to ensure consistency in messaging and approach across seven local media teams. SHJ produced a local media guidance kit, including messaging, FAQs, approval processes, guidelines on tone and style, and parameters on which topics were within the *Evocities* scope.

**Issues kit—ongoing.** SHJ recognized that a program trying to lure people away from Australia’s most populous city would attract some criticism; therefore, the aim was to ensure all responses were well-supported, neutral to positive in tone and in line with the campaign’s over-arching messaging. To ensure spokespeople and local PR teams were able to respond quickly and effectively to issues at both a campaign and local level, the team created a “live” document of potential issues, likely questions and recommended responses. This kit was added to on an ongoing basis as issues or potential issues arose.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>EVOCITIES budget</strong></th>
<th>Planning and strategy development</th>
<th>Fact finding and family visits</th>
<th>Case studies/features</th>
<th>EvoIndex</th>
<th>Website copy</th>
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<tr>
<td>Professional/supplier fees</td>
<td>A$27,000</td>
<td>A$24,000</td>
<td>A$20,000</td>
<td>A$68,000</td>
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<td>Fact sheets</td>
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<td>Issues kit</td>
<td>Metro launch</td>
<td>Local launch</td>
<td>Welcome Back</td>
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<td>A$8,000</td>
<td>A$13,910</td>
<td>A$7,000</td>
<td>A$50,000</td>
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<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>A$330,000</strong></td>
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MEASUREMENT/EVALUATION OF OUTCOMES
Since people take, on average, 12 months to move, the original aim was to build brand awareness in the campaign’s first phase. However, the reaction to the campaign was so strong that many cities had already welcomed new residents; more than 30 couples or families have moved to an Evocity.

In regards to general awareness and consideration of the Evocities, in the first EvoIndex research survey conducted in August 2010, Sydneysiders were asked if they would consider living in one of the Evocities; 24.6 percent indicated they would. In December 2010, the same sample size was asked this question, with 37.3 percent saying they would consider such a move, an increase of 12.7 percent in only four months.

The campaign exceeded all of its specific targets.

Achieve a minimum of 350 pieces of coverage. The campaign generated a total of 676 media appearances. Highlights included a double page spread in Sydney’s Daily Telegraph, a feature story on A Current Affair—including a visit to two of the cities—and a feature on the 7:30 Report. The announcement of the campaign and the EvoIndex research was the most viewed story on SMH.com.au on the day of the launch. The equivalent advertising value of the PR is well over A$2.5 million.

Profiling of case studies has been a particularly strong feature of much of the coverage, with real-life stories adding to the Evocities value proposition.

Reach a minimum potential audience of 4 million. The above reported coverage reached in excess of 8 million Australians.

Recruit a minimum of 700 fans to the Evocities Facebook pages. By the end of 2010, the seven Evocities Facebook pages had a combined total of 974 fans. Social interaction with these members was strong, with frequent comment and sharing of content.

Attract 3,000 visitors per month to the Evocities website. This target was significantly exceeded, with more than 55,000 visits to the Evocities website in 2010, an average of over 18,300 since the campaign launched in September. The fact that 75 percent of visitors to the website were from Sydney served as a strong indication that the campaign successfully tapped into existing sentiment and reached the target market.

Achieve 600 relocation enquiries through the Evocities websites. More than 1,200 people have requested more information about moving to one of the seven Evocities, doubling the target. Of those making enquiries, 18 percent indicated they had found the campaign through PR-generated editorial. A further 28 percent nominated radio as the source, much of which could also be attributed to PR activity.