

# Case Study

# Unlimited: creating the Western Sydney University brand

Inside the strategy, execution and results of the University's impressive rebrand that embraced the diversity of its local community.

LEGENDS  
SERIES

★★★★★  
EXTENDED VERSION  
WITH MORE INSIGHT  
AND IMAGERY

March 2015





Published by *Marketing*.

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*Marketing* would like to thank Western Sydney University and its agencies for allowing us to publish the details behind this impressive project, and we applaud them on the results and recognition achieved.

Product code: MKACS0008

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*Marketing* is a publication of  
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# Unlimited: creating the Western Sydney University brand

**Campaign:**  
Western Sydney University brand launch

**Client:**  
Western Sydney University

**Agencies:**  
We Collective, Finch, Red Agency, Match Media, The Leading Edge, Citizen

### BACKGROUND

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On 30 August 2015, the University of Western Sydney rebranded. It was the first identity shift in over a decade. Though the change was subtle, it was bold, now being known as Western Sydney University, symbolising the value it has for its community – putting Western Sydney first.

This name change was accompanied by a new visual identity including a new logo, alongside a refreshed brand attitude and voice more relevant to the incoming wave of students and an international audience. The other aim was to address the changing landscape of Western Sydney, which is now the fastest growing part of the country with an amazing amount of investment being poured into the area from infrastructure, to innovation and the arts.

### OBJECTIVES

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The overall objective for the campaign was to communicate a competitive and sustainable position for Western Sydney University that would attract high performing students, particularly those in the region - to stay in the region where most of Sydney's future jobs will be. This meant influencing various parts of the community - from the students themselves, to their parents, government, businesses and the media.

With the rebrand launch planned for the University's annual Open Day we planned for a pre-launch teaser campaign period in the six weeks beforehand. The success of the brand's launch campaign has therefore been measured in two stages: first by the impact on visitor numbers to the Open Day (30 August) YOY, and second, the impact on the number of first preferences for the University (30 September) YOY.



### STRATEGY

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To develop the strategy, extensive research was conducted into the perceptions of the Western Sydney area, the outcomes of which served to identify positioning options for the rebrand. What emerged were positive practical values associated with Western Sydney such as 'hard-working,' 'self-motivated,' 'non-judgemental' and 'streetwise'.

Supported with statistics showcasing that Western Sydney is one of the fastest growing and most dynamic areas in the country, these values led the way for the University's 'Unlimited' campaign, positioning Western Sydney University as Sydney's most ideally located and

progressive university, located in an area renowned for a spirit of determination enabling global perspective and opportunity for its students.

What followed was the development of a communications plan to communicate this perspective, championing the qualities of Western Sydney and amplifying the University's role in the region.

An integrated through-the-line communications strategy was executed featuring advertising across digital, TV and radio to establish the brand identity, and out-of-home displays in Western Sydney to generate top-of-mind targeted awareness. This was further amplified through PR activity.

Target markets for the campaign were:

- ✪ **Primary:** High performing current school leavers (ATARs over 80) residing in Greater Western Sydney and considering undergraduate courses. The University's mission is to retain these local high achievers who would traditionally have sought out a Sydney metro university.
- ✪ **Secondary:** Non-current school leavers residing in Greater Western Sydney considering undergraduate or postgraduate coursework as well as current school leavers with ATARs below 80. This market is targeted to support the University's mission of being the preferred provider to prospective students in its backyard while showing the ATAR is only a small part of the story and that where the student finishes after their training is the real measure of capability.
- ✪ **Tertiary:** Persons considering postgraduate research programs residing in the Sydney statistical division. This market is targeted as part of the University's desire to continue attracting the best researchers and investing in world leading research .

## EXECUTION

### INFLUENCER ENGAGEMENT

One major element influencing the rebrand of the University was the perception of the Western Sydney area, so part of the campaign involved a quasi-rebrand of Western Sydney. To do this, six weeks out from the launch of the rebrand, a social media influencer engagement program was initiated. Coined #NewWS ('New Western Sydney' and a play on the abbreviated colloquial name of the University - UWS) the aim of the activity was to champion Western Sydney, viewing Western Sydney through a new lens; a new

era for an area that had too long been overlooked.

This involved the PR team identifying and reaching out to high profile people from, or connected with, Western Sydney and the University, to help tell the story via social channels and their followers. They were each sent an influencer pack featuring a #NewWS branded hoodie with a selfie stick and personalised note asking them to show their pride for Western Sydney by taking a photo of themselves with the hoodie on, posting it to their social media and hashtagging #NewWS. From this, a flurry of positive social media sentiment about Western Sydney circulated. 36 celebrities took part including key identities such as Jana Pittman, Jason Dundas, Nova's Smallzy and journalists who grew up in Western Sydney.

The campaign reached over four million social media users with 1.6 million impressions made.

### PR

Pre-launch PR activity was initiated ahead of the launch of the rebrand, from July 2015. This involved seeding University stories into mainstream media which spoke to the values that would be highlighted as part of the official rebrand but also the change that has happened in society, business and with technology that highlight why Western Sydney University is increasingly relevant. This activity was ramped up as launch day approached.

Additional PR activity was called in to play to address rebrand objectors when news of the rebrand leaked during the internal communications phase. A social media movement titled, 'Save the Bird' was created by some students in an attempt to preserve the then UWS logo (which included an abstract book in the shape of a bird).

A swift social media response, based on a crisis plan which had

**Students who had been consulted helped show the organisers behind the 'Save the Bird' the context for the change, converting them into social media advocates for the rebrand.**

been architected in advance, connected students who had been consulted along the way with those that were surprised by the change and helped show the organisers behind the 'Save the Bird' the context for the change, converting them into social media advocates for the rebrand.

Additionally, to address questions posed by traditional media, the University held an early media conference where the new brand was officially launched to them, giving Western Sydney University spokespeople the opportunity to inform attendees, viewers and readers about the new positioning, while correcting misconceptions that emerged from the leak with respect to the spend that had been allocated to the project.

Media coverage around the new brand ran from Friday afternoon into the weekend, ahead of the Open Day on Sunday 30 August 2015, creating interest and intrigue around the new brand to drive attendees to the Open Day.

The successful media launch including the impromptu media conference resulted in a 27% increase in Open Day registrations, compared to 2014.

Media coverage generated from PR around the launch resulted in 149 pieces of coverage in tier one media with 90% of these positive in tone.



Notably, there was increased key message penetration, spokesperson quotes and tier one media from 35% pre-press conference to 78% post-press conference, swinging sentiment and public opinion from negative to positive.

PR activity continues to be implemented, with stories highlighting how Western Sydney University is unlocking the potential of Australia's current and future leaders, pioneering new methods of learning, consistently investing in world-class research, taking steps to encourage an unlimited future for its students and the community, while embracing and driving change.

#### EXPERIENTIAL

To immerse prospective students and community members into the new

look and feel university, an ultra-modern Open Day experience was created to launch the new brand with a bang. Most notably were the TEDx-style talks delivered by inspirational, high profile figures such as Jessica Watson, Waleed Aly and Steve Waugh who align to the 'Unlimited' attitude the University instils in its students.

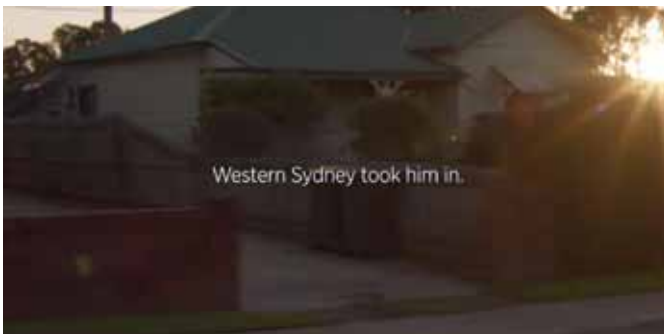
The quality of the Open Day experience resulted in a 128% increase in presentation attendance, while Open Day video content shared on social media over the weekend reached 312,437 people, generating 64,157 views and 1677 likes/shares. Furthermore, 90.3% of survey respondents indicated that the overall experience at Open Day was good or excellent with the excellent category shifting nearly 6%.

#### ADVERTISING

Large-scale advertising commenced to showcase the new look of the University from the 30th of August 2015 across OOH, TV and digital. The creatives were focused on magnifying the 'Unlimited' messaging of the campaign.

Stills used for the OOH activation in Western Sydney were simple in design, featuring real-life students who are doing remarkable things alongside the word 'Unlimited'. Examples include Lakshmi Logathassan, a previous NSW Young Woman of the Year who pioneered the Laptop Project which arranges for government-funded laptops from NSW secondary schools to be collected, repaired and sent to schools in rural and remote Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Kenya.

## 7 CASE STUDY



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Three TVCs seeded across TV and digital also showcased the 'Unlimited' stories of alumni who have gone on to succeed on the global stage. Melissa Chiu, a former University of Western Sydney Art student is now the Director of Washington's Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, and Jay Manly, a former University of Western Sydney Engineering student, now an Engineering Project Manager at Tesla were stars.

The third TVC was another elegant piece of storytelling and went on to attract global media attention. It features the story of alumni, Deng Adut, a former child soldier in Sudan. After being shot in the back when he was 12 years old, Deng was rescued by the UN and taken to Western Sydney, where at the age of 15 he taught himself to read, before going on to complete a law degree at the University of Western Sydney while living out of his car. Deng is now a Refugee Lawyer in Western Sydney.

Deng Adut's video attracted 1.5 million views across social channels – Facebook and YouTube, and media interviews were secured with BBC Worldwide, Sky News, and Channel 7 news. The TVC was labelled one of the top ads of the year by the Gruen panel. The biggest coup of all being that all the additional earned media coverage played the ad that told Deng's story.

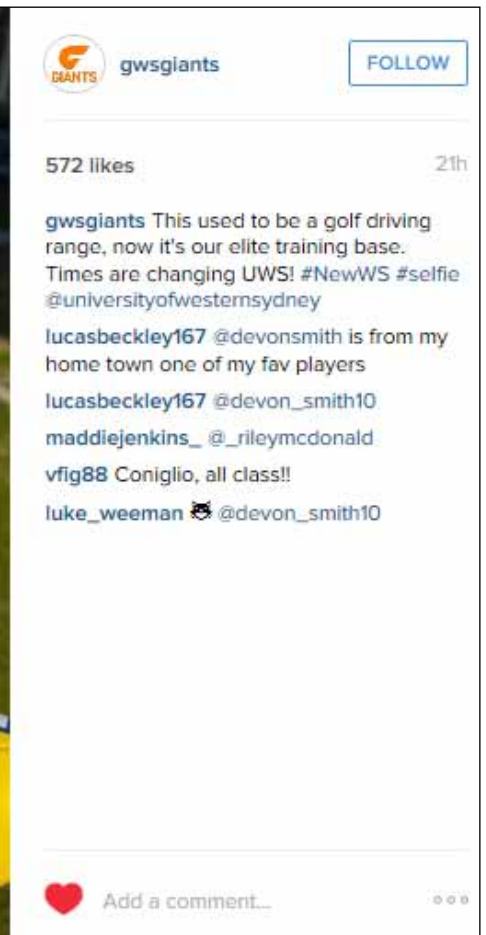
All of these TVCs showcase the global perspective and opportunity Western Sydney University prides itself with offering its students and displays at the utmost level, the 'Unlimited' potential of Western Sydney University students.

### RESULTS

While campaign effectiveness is often judged on numbers alone, this one has also been a task

of capturing hearts and minds. This is harder to measure. It's true there was a 27% increase in registrations to the 2015 Open Day, in comparison to 2014. It's also impressive, at this early stage of the campaign to see a 4.4% increase in preferences for Western Sydney University year on year, an extremely positive mark of success in contrast with a wider industry downward trend. Additionally, as a result of the campaign, the University's social media followings saw an increase with 20% more Twitter followers, 10% more Instagram followers and 1000 new Facebook likes.

However, what stands out most has been the thousand of comments on social channels that have shown the pride in what Western Sydney University stands for as a beacon of community, and hope – with unlimited significance.





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