

CASE STUDY

NATIONAL CRIME AGENCY (NCA)



The National Crime Agency is responsible for leading the UK's fight to cut serious and organized crime. The agency's focus is on the big threats – targeting and pursuing serious and organized crime and criminals who pose the greatest risk to the UK.

The work is hugely complex, high-level and large scale. Officers operate at the forefront of law enforcement, building intelligence, pursuing the most serious and dangerous offenders and developing and delivering specialist capabilities for partner organizations.

KEY RESEARCH

We conducted wide-ranging qualitative interviews and focus groups with key people across the Agency in order to really get under the skin of the human experience of working there.

The key insights were:

- When NCA investigators succeed the impact is huge and far-reaching. The criminal activity they stop covers everything from child sexual abuse to illegal firearms trafficking, cyber crime, kidnapping and extortion. They are focused at this level of criminal activity. The police, by contrast, have to deal with everything from shoplifting upwards.
- A lot of the criminals the NCA targets feel they are untouchable. It's very exciting to prove they are not.
- The work is exciting, and we shouldn't underplay that.
- Investigators are often serving police officers or have strong links to policing. They rarely engage with usual recruitment channels, so we needed to think differently.
- Location was seen by the Agency as key – they were keen to recruit candidates close to the locations of their regional offices.

THE CORE MESSAGE

To work in crowded streets and packed transit stations, our campaign needed to have immediate visual impact. The NCA hunts the big fish of the criminal world. So, the shark is a perfect visual metaphor to illustrate the level of criminality the Agency handles; it's the ultimate hidden predator and its fin creates an easily recognizable identity.

Our visuals show a huge shark fin bursting through the ground, towering over well-known landmarks and wreaking havoc in recognizable, urban UK locations in London and Manchester. Each visual represented the scale of damage caused by high-level crime, while storm clouds provided a suitable dark and menacing backdrop. These visuals were then complemented with a simple message:

No predator too big.

It was a potentially very impressive proposition for the 1,500 investigators and other professionals the NCA wanted to recruit. But the issue they faced was profile. The NCA was competing with MI5, MI6, GCHQ and police forces (among others) for this talent. The intelligence organizations mentioned had sexier brands; the work of the police forces was better known and understood.

In short, NCA had been under the radar and needed to arrive on the scene with a bang. They needed a confident, attention-grabbing campaign to put their employer brand front-of-mind for their target audience.

MEDIA STRATEGY

We decided to focus the marketing on outdoor media. This would enable us to reach the widest possible audience in the locations where we wanted to focus. We identified outdoor locations which would target servicing police officers on their daily commute – for example, Manchester Piccadilly station and the Metro line to Greater Manchester Police HQ – in addition to specialist online media.



LOCATION-SPECIFIC EXECUTIONS

We created a number of different executions, each of which used place to illustrate a key area of crime in which the NCA operates. These different locations help to give an idea of the breadth of the NCA’s work, while the oversized fin gives a sense of the huge scale of the crimes being tackled.



Corporate crimes, such as money laundering.



Organized drug crime.



Serious crime in communities, such as organized child abuse.



Smuggling people, drugs and weapons across borders.

OUTCOME

We rolled out the campaign for digital, data, tech and specialist firearms audiences. The results were very impressive:

29,684 candidates to the NCA landing page.

15,703 applications across 143 roles.

2,228 candidates invited to interview.

225 job offers.

825 held in talent pool awaiting job offers.

This was a hugely successful campaign which drove brand awareness and a large number of applications. We exceeded NCA’s expectations, raised awareness of the NCA as an alternative employer for serving police officers and improved perceptions of the NCA as an employer with a unique offering.