

## **A New Take on a Historic Parade**

### **The 111<sup>th</sup> Annual Newport Beach Christmas Boat Parade Sails into a Record-Breaking Media Relations Year**

#### **RESEARCH**

Newport Beach's "Christmas Card to the World," the historic 111<sup>th</sup> Annual Newport Beach Christmas Boat Parade is an established and locally-loved event known by the masses. Bringing in one million guests over five nights (Dec. 18-23, 2019) annually for over 100 years, media are naturally attracted to the spectacle. The previous year earned a record 225 million media impressions, however, the very next year the same boat parade earned a record-shattering 1 billion impressions, taking the parade to a nearly 400% growth in media relations YOY. How was this possible?

The two-women PR crew of Newport Beach & Company, the destination's global marketing agency for the city of Newport Beach who handles all marketing and communications for the parade, chartered a new course for the 111<sup>th</sup> year. By fishing for new angles in business, human interest, lifestyle and more, a robust and multi-faceted media relations strategy was planned to win over media in all mediums: broadcast, print, digital, radio – *hook, line and sinker*.

With plans in place, opening night of the parade saw sudden national BREAKING NEWS that seemingly would capsize all planned media coverage for the event. Would the team be able to keep the plan on course?

Here is a deep dive into the 111<sup>th</sup> Newport Beach Christmas Boat Parade media relations strategy that earned 324 media placements, over one billion impressions, 14:33 hours of air time and the parade's most celebrated and proudest media placements of all-time.

#### **PLANNING**

Program Start Date: August 12, 2019

Program End Date: January 8, 2020

Total Budget: \$10,000

The Newport Beach Christmas Boat Parade inherently provides significant assets to attract media, which include:

- Nearly 100 elaborately decorated boats of all sizes which sail along a 14-mile route in Newport Harbor for five nights. Boats will showcase moving apparatuses, light and laser shows, singers, dancers, throw gifts out to spectators and even fire exhibitions from their boats.
- Celebrity Grand Marshal (Newport Beach resident and star of HGTV's hit series *Flip or Flop* and new docu-series *Christina on the Coast*, Christina Anstead)
- Opening and closing nights included spectacular fireworks displays and every night featured a different grand marshal.
- Ring of Lights Home Decorating Competition is the sister event to the parade where dozens of waterfront homes decorate their houses from top-to-bottom in over-the-top

holiday displays. Some homeowners build out new installations in the front of their home, bringing in real ice and stage light shows.

With the known assets in mind, the following objectives and plans were put into place in Aug. 2019:

- **Pitch and secure placements to earn 250 million impressions to outperform the previous year's results in relevant Southern California outlets in all mediums.**
  - o Draft and circulate announcement press release, first week of Sept.
  - o Begin securing coverage in mid-lead print and digital outlets, first week of Sept.
  - o Draft and circulate detailed press release in December with full line-up of festivities and ways to watch
  - o Put together a robust press kit with assets: fact sheet, historical images, images and b-roll of the parade and Ring of Lights from previous years to give media an easy-to-access hub for all their needs.
- **Stretch story ideas by working new angles to secure additional coverage in new outlets or sections.**
  - o Lifestyle Angle: Search for all writers who covered holiday light roundups in previous year and pitch boat parade
  - o Home and Garden: Pitch Ring of Lights home decorating competition
  - o Business Angle: Pitch business of the boat parade, the \$6 million revenue generated during parade and the local businesses who benefit.
  - o Human Interest Angle: Pitch stories about individuals who dedicate their time and dollars to decorating and participating in the parade. The grandson of the founder of the boat parade is the co-chair of the parade and is an excellent interview for a historical angle.
  - o Entertainment Angle: With a local celebrity Grand Marshal onboard, pitch entertainment and celebrity outlets
- **Secure a live remote with a Los Angeles morning news show to tease parade.**
  - o Begin pitching LA broadcast stations the month of to secure live remotes
- **Secure coverage in all Los Angeles broadcast stations.**
  - o Begin pitching LA broadcast stations via media alert two weeks prior to event
- **Plan and execute a successful opening night media event.**
  - o Host a VIP opening night kick-off event with remarks by the Mayor, Christina Anstead (Grand Marshal) and other pertinent civic and city leaders.
- **Conduct a post-event media blitz with newly created photo and video assets for continued coverage for all nights of the parade.**
  - o Work with videographer to create a b-roll package of parade and circulate the next morning after opening night to broadcast stations.
  - o Work with photographer and circulate images from opening night to media list.

The targeted demographics for this campaign was far and wide in the Southern California drive market with the general public and families due to the mass-appeal of the Newport Beach Christmas Boat Parade. There was also significant outreach for national placements and to

Newport Beach's already established global markets via agency representation in Canada and the United Kingdom.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

The team felt confident with the media relations plan put into place, it was time to implement. Below are highlights from the implementation process:

### **Media Relations and New Angles:**

After securing calendar listings in all local outlets, next was to work on a variety of feature and roundup stories. The team worked to place the boat parade in all "holiday happenings articles." The team also worked to secure individual interviews with boat owners and home owners who volunteer their time and dollars to decorate their property as elaborately as possible to share holiday joy. In addition, keeping the promise to explore new and different angles, the biggest success was the development of the business angle that had not been attempted in years past. The idea was "The Business of the Boat Parade" – a feature story about what it takes to execute the parade and the tremendous positive impact on every corner of the community. Interviews were set up with all civic entities involved: Newport Beach & Company, Newport Beach Chamber of Commerce, the parade founder's grandson, boat owners, home owners, boat charter company's, restaurants who see their best five nights during the parade, hotels and a past economic study was given to media. Two cover stories were secured: the cover of the *Orange County Business Journal* and cover of the Sunday business section of the *Los Angeles Times*. The team also set up an exclusive for the *Los Angeles Times*, to cover the installation of an 80ft yacht, complete with a 180-foot crane to place a spinning carousel, Ferris wheel and LED roller coaster across the side of the boat.

The team also is proud to work with *Conde Nast Traveler*, *Sunset Magazine* and *Good Housekeeping* on lifestyle/home and garden pieces as well as numerous round-ups for best places to view Christmas Lights in the country and region.

### **Opening Night Morning Live Remote:**

Morning television is very short-lead and after a couple of weeks of pitching, a four-part segment live remote was secured with *FOX-11 Good Day LA* on Dec. 9 to take place on Dec. 18, giving the team a little over a week to plan and execute. The team coordinated this entire shoot, prepped all spokespeople, drafted talking points, showcased 15 businesses, worked with dozens of volunteers and dressed each segment to make the four-part series as festive and as visual as possible to ensure success. The four-part series on the morning of opening night went as follows:

- **6:00 a.m. Overview of the Parade:** The team secured two boats, the yacht mentioned above and a smaller boat with a fire display to tease the parade and a spokesperson. The boats were filled with people as they are during the parade clad with Santa hats.
- **7:15 a.m. Overview of Opening Night Event at Marina Park:** An opening night event takes place at a waterfront park complete with food vendors. The team previewed the event with five food vendors a local high school marching band with the waterfront and two boats from previous segment as a backdrop. For more visuals that are needed for

live TV, our team brought in an abundance of decorations including trees and wrapped presents. As our spokesperson walked the host through each food vendor, *Good Day LA* also flew a drone for an amazing visual.

- **8:30 a.m. How to Float and Watch:** One of the fun ways to view the parade is by water, we brought in three unique experiences: a gondola, a floating tiki bar and two electric boats. The segment took place on the water in Newport Harbor, our spokesperson and Good Day LA host were on the gondola while a gondolier was singing, we brought in décor and our staff and other members of our hospitality community as parade-goers on the tiki bar and two electric boats – as again the scenes needed to look full, visual and fun! We all floated around each other during the segment and we heard producers in the news room were “freaking out” about how fun and over-the-top that scene was, which were told they never do!
- **9:19 a.m. – Dine and Watch:** Newport Beach is home to a dozen waterfront restaurants along the harbor and a local-favorite way to watch the parade is by dine and watch. We worked with four restaurants and chefs who brought in the boat parade and winter menus they were serving that evening. One restaurant even brought in their festively-decorated golf cart to show how they deliver to locals during the parade, the host opted to jump on the cart and be driven into the scene to start the segment. Our boat parade spokesperson walked viewers through each restaurant and again, the team bought extra décor and food such as berries, pomegranates, rosemary sprigs, evergreen branches and more to make sure each table was as visual as possible.

#### **Los Angeles Broadcast Coverage on Opening Day/Night:**

Of all mediums, the real media relations success of the parade hinged on securing Los Angeles stations 50 miles south to Newport Beach to cover the parade. For the previous two weeks, a media alert was circulated to Los Angeles broadcast stations stating that the Newport Beach Christmas Boat Parade was home to all the premium holiday content viewers want to see. The team listed out visual opportunities, spokespeople and that our location was perfect for “man on the street” interviews. The team emailed the alert several times then called each news room every day the week of the parade to book all stations.

After the the four-hour live remote segment with *FOX-11 Good Day LA* on the morning of opening night (Dec. 18), the team’s work started coming to fruition, *NBC-LA* called stating they were on their way to Newport Beach and wanted the following: interview a spokesperson, home owner, boat owner, restaurateur and provide historical b-roll of the parade. With an hour’s notice, the quickly worked all sources to put together a junket across the destination to fulfill *NBC-LA*’s needs.

Mid-afternoon, the team called all Los Angeles stations one more time and received verbal confirmations and felt confident the parade would have excellent coverage. HOWEVER, an hour before the parade was slated to begin: **BREAKING NEWS** President Trump is the third president in our nation’s history to be impeached. When it comes to broadcast television, breaking news is the enemy of public relations professionals – more often than not, your segment is canceled! The team called and texted all contacts and convinced the stations to still come down to bring

the magic of the season to viewers. All the while promising to service each station with b-roll the next morning in the event coverage was not possible. In the end, the breaking news was not a deterrent and all Los Angeles stations drove the 50 miles south to Newport Beach to cover the parade. What's more, the team worked with every crew's diverse needs while making sure every station interviewed the parade's spokesperson. This was a big success and record for the parade.

### **Opening Night Event:**

As mentioned above the team, dovetailed a media event with a consumer viewing event the greater marketing team created. The family-friendly kick-off event with local vendors, performers, fireworks and photo opportunities on the harbor for prime viewing of the parade. The majority of the budget was spent on opening night media event portion. The team hired an event planner to take care of all event logistics: setting up red carpet, stage, tables, chairs, food and beverage for VIP's. The team wrote all talking points for the five speakers: The Mayor of Newport Beach, Newport Beach & Company. President and CEO, Newport Beach Chamber of Commerce president, grandson of the founder. Of the boat parade, and Christina Anstead – the Grand Marshal. The team booked a photographer and videographer to capture the entire event to service to media the following morning. After the presentation took place and a tree lighting ceremony, guests were encouraged to join the consumer event to enjoy food and beverage before the parade went by. Meanwhile, the team started to work with all stations as mentioned above while making sure to mingle with invited attendees the 90+ media and social media influencers.

### **Post-Event Tactics:**

To keep media coverage momentum up for the remaining four days of the parade, the next morning team serviced their media distribution list with a custom b-roll package which included interviews with spokespeople, interview with celebrity Grand Marshal Christina Anstead, footage of the parade and opening night event. This created a turnkey package for newsrooms and media and subsequently were picked-up by various outlets.

In addition to the multi-media team at the opening night event, the team also booked a photographer on the Grand Marshal boat to capture shots of Christina Anstead, celebrity Grand Marshal. Those were serviced to entertainment/celebrity outlets and were picked up by *Page Six* and *People* among others.

### **EVALUATION/RESULTS**

The 111<sup>th</sup> Newport Beach Christmas Boat Parade was a record-shattering year and successful beyond all measure. Due to the parade's historical nature, the team could have rested knowing no matter what there would have been some coverage. However, the team went the extra mile to creatively slice and dice the parade's angles to secure coverage in new beats while proactively gleaning coverage in nearly every targeted outlet and in the Southern California region and beyond. The team worked to secure dozens of sources in the community from boat and home owners to restaurateurs and other small business owners. They were all media trained and prepped and many were needed on a moment's notice, however if they weren't available – the team would work hard to find others for the story at hand.

All objectives were met and success total by numbers is as follows:

In total by numbers, over **324 media placements went live** (43 national, 82 local, 193 broadcast) earning **1.1 billion media impressions** – a **388% increase** from previous year! Secured broadcast placements included a four-part live remote feature with *FOX-11 Good Day LA* featuring 14 local businesses. Opening night saw live broadcast coverage on all local Los Angeles stations including *NBC, ABC, CBS, KCAL, FOX* and *Channel News Asia*. The segments were aired on affiliate stations all across the United States which totaled over **14 hours in air time**. Lifestyle print and online coverage highlights included *Conde Nast Traveler, Thrillist, Good Housekeeping, Page Six* and *People*, while the business angle earned two cover stories: The Cover of the *Orange County Business Journal* and cover of the business section in the *Los Angeles Times*.

The success of the campaign was due to the team's careful consideration of thinking through needs of media every step of the way pre-and-post-parade to ensure all outlets were taken care of quickly and accurately. There were numerous obstacles and challenges along the way, but the team pressed on and in the end were immensely proud of the body of work created. All community partners and locals that were featured were ecstatic and leadership and parade organizers were beaming with pride.

Thank you!

We hope you come see us during the next Newport Beach Christmas Boat Parade!