

Insight & strategy: Boost Your Voice

How a telco turned its stores into polling stations ahead of Election Day in order to boost brand loyalty

October 20, 2016

As we reported earlier this month, **Boost Mobile** in the US is offering to turn its locations in low-income and minority communities into polling stations.

Boost Your Voice, created by **180LA** in Santa Monica, is being promoted with an online microsite, on social media and through a petition on change.org, which people can sign to urge state officials to accept the telco's offer.

We speak to **Tylynne McCauley** and **Brian Farkas**, associate creative directors at 180LA, about the importance of empowering people and what it took Boost to make this project happen.



Tell me about Boost Mobile and its positioning.

McCauley: Boost Mobile is a wireless pre-paid carrier, which means it doesn't have any contracts. Its demographic is pretty much 100% low income, working-class people. They're very hard-working, usually juggling two or three jobs. As a brand Boost is very customer-focused and sees itself as an ally that stands up for its customers, helping make their voices heard. It's also very well-known for its excellent customer service.

What are the brand's main challenges?

Farkas: In the telco category in general, brand loyalty is very, very low. Since there are no contracts and our demographic faces financial challenges, people jump around a lot to different carriers and switch to whoever has the best deal. So it's very hard to give people a reason to stay with you and remain brand loyal.

What was the brief?

Farkas: The idea came out of a monthly social media brief that was very open-ended. Every month we have a brief around how to engage people on social media and it is always as simple as 'How do we make people's voices heard?'

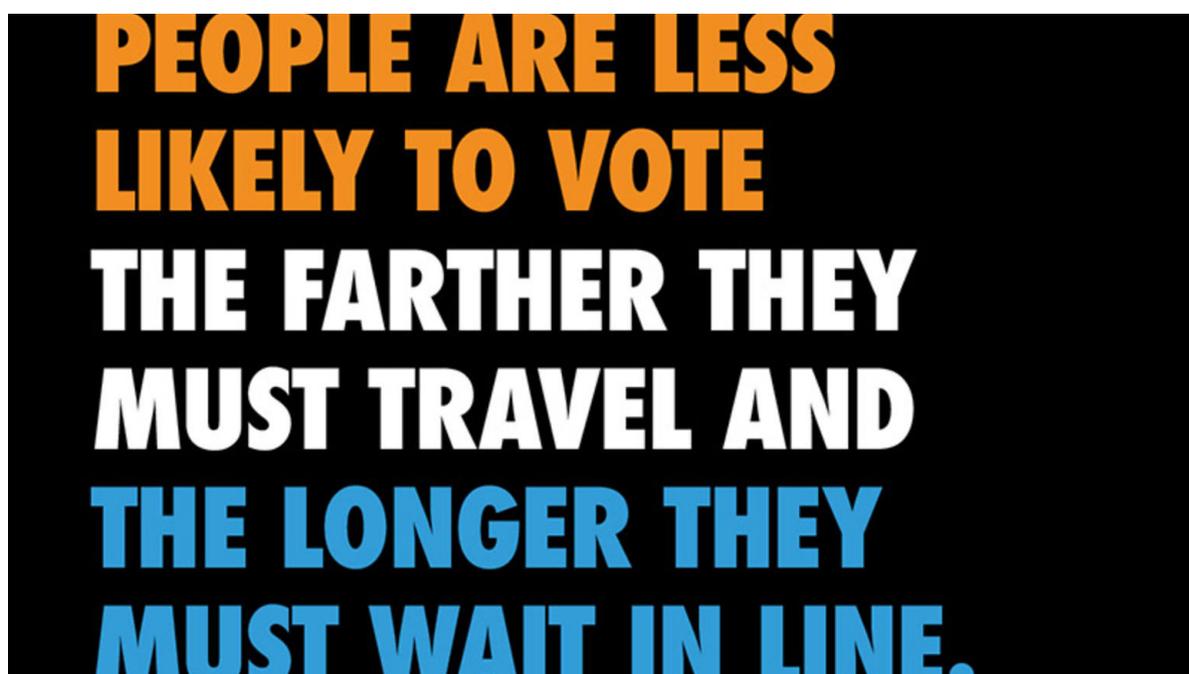


How did you come up with the idea?

Farkas: We saw a problem for our customers. As they are usually in minority communities, they weren't really represented in the American election process. We found that barriers for voting is an issue. This demographic is more likely to have longer lines, not enough poll stations and not enough resources during the elections. We saw an opportunity to be the solution to this problem. Our stores are positioned in these communities so we thought: 'Why don't we offer our stores as poll stations on Election Day?'

Why did you launch an initiative around voting rights?

Farkas: Obviously, this is an issue that affects our customers but it is relevant to all Americans. We are a democratic country and voting is our right, so everyone should be able to do it. Anybody that believes we are a democracy and that our voices should be heard equally should care about this issue.



**PEOPLE ARE LESS
LIKELY TO VOTE
THE FARTHER THEY
MUST TRAVEL AND
THE LONGER THEY
MUST WAIT IN LINE.**

What were the business objectives behind the campaign?

Farkas: First and foremost, increasing brand loyalty. We wanted to give customers a reason to stick with us and show them that we have their back. Hopefully, they see Boost as a contributor to their culture and their community.

McCauley: We also wanted to spark social engagement, empower people to spread the message and have conversations around the issue that will hopefully lead to the long-term solution to the problem, not just in this election.

How did you make the project a reality?

Farkas: It was a pretty monumental undertaking. We discovered each county in the US has their own rules and regulations when it comes to determining polling stations for elections. So we put together an outreach team and had to individually contact 817 counties across the US, which is every county with a Boost store in it.

McCauley: We also reached out to all states that had a Boost store and spoke to their Secretary of State. So it was top down and bottom up approach.



**LESS THAN HALF
OF THOSE
WHO MADE
UNDER \$20,000
VOTED IN 2012.**

How many Boost store have you converted into polling stations so far?

Farkas: We have six confirmed and we're aiming to have two more before Election Day.

McCauley: Some of those are in swing states. Swing states are very important in US elections because they can determine the overall vote and the difference can be made with as little as 500 votes.

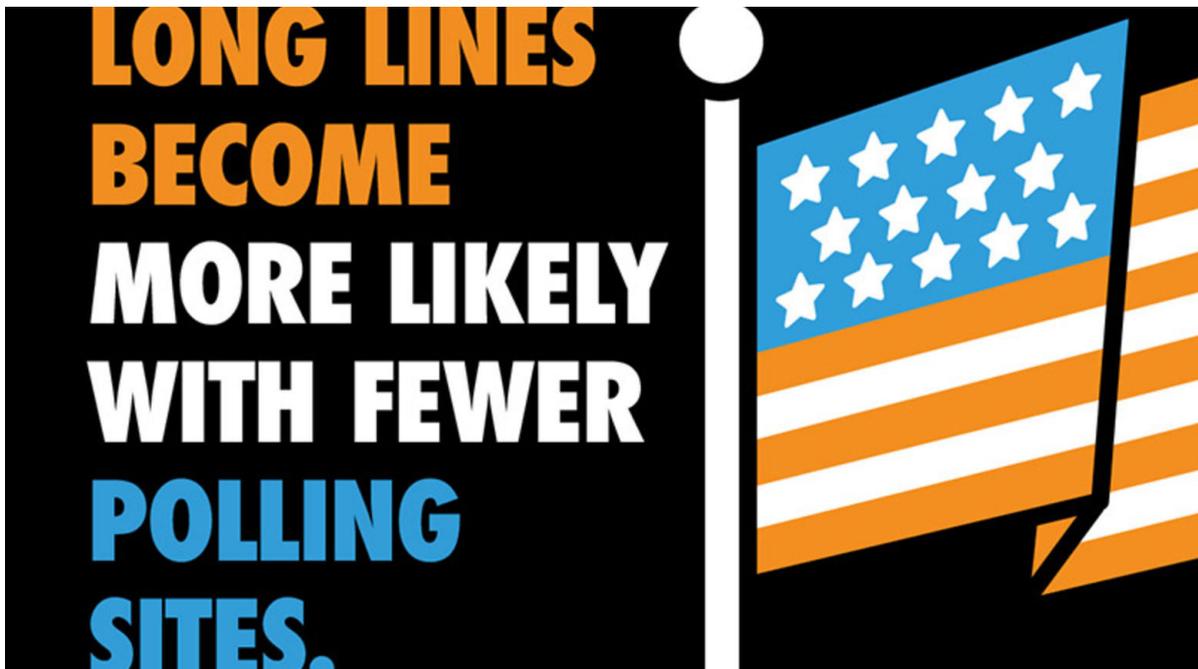
Why did you choose to do a petition on change.org?

Farkas: We wanted to make the general public aware of this issue and also put some pressure on counties that are considering our offer. This has never been done on such a scale and a lot of counties were somewhat sceptical. So trying to get something like that adopted can be hard and that's why we decided putting some

pressure from the public can help. We also put a spotlight on the issue which was one of our objectives.

McCauley: During the outreach phase a lot of people were surprised that we wanted to do this but were very grateful and really thought there was a need for that. But the reaction ranged. In some places, which actually have really long lines, didn't want to have anything to do with our offer. Elsewhere, people thought it was a great idea but didn't know how to implement this because the rules had been set for so long and their hands were tied.

Every time something is signed on change.org it notifies the Secretary of State for each state. We thought that if people start telling the government this is a problem that should be addressed, then maybe, moving forward, election officials will know that this is something that should be worked on.



What has the feedback been so far?

Farkas: Both consumers and the media love it. It's the type of idea that almost seems obvious when you say it and people are responding really well to it. On the county-side, Orange County has been very receptive and has been talking about why it is important for government and corporations to work together.

Do you have any results that you can share?

Farkas: We will know more results after the elections, of course, but we can say

that we've tried to work with influencers to communicate the message and say that voting is part of people's identity. Just last week we had Murs [the rapper], who broke the world-record for rap by rapping for 24 hours. And throughout the whole time he was wearing one of our 'Voter' shirts to spread the message.



Do you plan to continue the campaign? If so, how?

McCauley: Yes. Once we brought this idea to Boost they immediately loved it. They are fully committed to this and are hoping to see more and more Boost stores becoming polling stations in the future.

Farkas: In fact, that was a concern to the counties that we talked to. They asked us if this is a one-off marketing campaign or something long-term. Boost made it very clear that this is ongoing and this is just the beginning. Our goal is to create a shining example of success, bring attention to the issue and hopefully scale the programme in the future.