recollective

Sparkler: Lockdown Unlocked

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"Given the pace of change during the pandemic, staying close and listening hard to consumers as they navigate these times is more important than ever. Using Recollective's platform was the perfect way to do this."
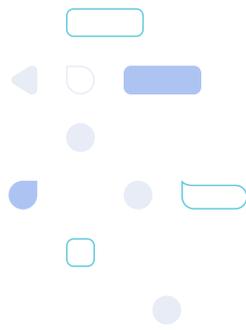
Jonny Stuffins, Sparkler.

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By Spring of 2020 the path became clear when countries started to enforce lockdown measures to try and contain the virus.

Consequently, the social, economic, political and cultural responses to the lockdown and pandemic shifted the way in which people navigated their day-to-day lives. At the same time, this uncertainty forced businesses to cut back their budgets and put planned research projects on hold.

As a result, companies entered an unprecedented time with little insight into how consumers' lives and attitudes were changing to adapt to the pandemic.

Background

Without a doubt, 2020 has been a year dominated by Covid-19. At the start it was hard to imagine the impact that the new coronavirus would have across the world, but by Spring of 2020 the path became clear when countries started to enforce lockdown measures to try and contain the virus. Consequently, the social, economic, political and cultural responses to the lockdown and pandemic shifted the way in which people navigated their day-to-day lives. At the same time, this uncertainty forced businesses to cut back their budgets and put planned research projects on hold. As a result, companies entered an unprecedented time with little insight into how consumers' lives and attitudes were changing to adapt to the pandemic.

Challenge

Sparkler, part of PA Consulting, understood that a lack of insight into the everyday lives of people dealing with the pandemic was causing their clients a number of challenges and resolved to address the problem.

To do so, Sparkler needed to determine:

- How to uncover information that was relevant to a broad set of clients across a variety of different industries; and

- How to capture and communicate that information to their clients in a timely and consistent manner so that it would be topical and relevant.

To best tackle this challenge, Sparkler wanted a flexible approach that enabled them to connect directly with consumers in a remote, ongoing environment. More specifically, whatever solution they chose had to be:

- Easy to set up and user friendly (both for the researcher & participant);

- A safe and comfortable environment for participants to encourage them to share their experiences and promote genuine, continuous conversations;

- Functionally able to facilitate questions to be asked and answered at any time;

- Quick to access, so that data could be rapidly analyzed and distributed;

- Flexible enough to adapt to a range of possible outcomes (since it was impossible to predict how long lockdown/ pandemic would last).

Solution

After evaluating different options, Sparkler's team decided that an online community powered by Recollective would provide the flexibility, tools and user-friendly environment they needed to meet their objectives.

Having previously worked together, Sparkler knew they could count on Recollective to back them up over the whole course of the initiative:

- Recollective's responsive team would be there to help resolve any issues, provide technical support and answer questions.

- With time of the essence, Sparkler's past experience showed how quick and easy setting up a community on Recollective could be.

- Recollective's mobile enabled, user friendly platform made it possible to avoid extensive respondent "on-boarding" time and allow Sparkler to get straight into the research programme.

- Finally, the platform itself provided the ability to brand the community, capture video, conduct ongoing diaries/ rapid-response projects, and leverage easy to use analysis tools.

With this in place, the Lockdown Unlocked project was born. The research design incorporated a wide range of activities, including a video diary, open discussion forums and standalone activities.

Video Diaries

To understand how lifestyle was shifting during the pandemic, Sparkler had participants check-in on an adhoc basis, whenever they had something they wanted to show about their life. They captured those day-to-day behaviors with short videos via Recollective's Journal Activities. In doing so, each video diary opened a window to see inside the participants' "new" routines and enabled Sparkler to understand the highs and lows they were experiencing as the pandemic progressed.

Discussion Forums.

With quantitative data showing that the national UK population was increasingly divided on key attitudes towards the pandemic response, Sparkler also wanted to explore those opinions. To do this, they leveraged the Discussions feature in Recollective. By combining a general open Discussion forum plus targeted Discussions specific to controversial topics, participants were encouraged to share their experiences and bounce opinions off of one another.

The Discussions helped to categorize participants (e.g. those with a more positive attitude vs. people who were struggling) and also functioned as a way to keep members engaged over the long-term. Just as importantly, the Discussion forums enabled participants to get to know each other and built a safe, collaborative environment for honest conversations.
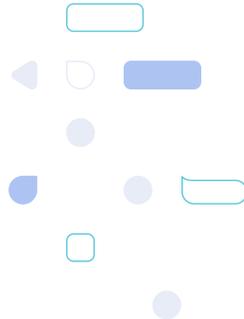
Ad Hoc Activities

Alongside the Diaries and Discussion forums, Sparkler ran standalone activities each week to explore topics of interest to their clients. To provide focus and sector-relevance, they centered each Activity on a particular area of peoples' lives using the "Wheel of Life" framework. In doing so, Sparkler was able to create focused reports (rather than just exploratory results), share sector-specific actionable recommendations and attract clients from different verticals to their webinars.

The Wheel of Life

Analysis

Finally, from Sparkler's point of view, Recollective's segmentation and analysis tools were essential to quickly digesting and distributing their findings. For example, Smart Segments made it possible to target Activities at specific groups and then filter on their responses to build a qualitative picture for each of them.

Tools such as automated word clouds helped Sparkler quickly pull out key themes as they arose and build up a shifting picture of sentiment. Recollective's automatic speech-to-text transcription functionality dramatically reduced the effort required to review video diary submissions and made video content searchable, which in turn further enhanced the understanding of group attitudes and sentiment.

As a result, Sparkler was able to quickly distill information, generate reports and get time-relevant data into the hands of their clients.

They found that the best way to communicate and distribute their findings was to develop a weekly content marketing campaign that consisted of emails and webinars. The use of Recollective proved to be hugely successful to support the project's initiatives:

1. Using Recollective, Sparkler was able to develop long-term relationships with their participants in a trusted environment. That facilitated honest feedback and insight into their day-to-day lives, making it possible to gain timely and relevant feedback for their clients.

2. Recollective's segmentation tools allowed the team to target specific audiences and tailor the research towards a wide range of client needs. In turn this helped provide more insightful, nuanced qualitative insights and recommendations rather than broad findings.

3. Recollective's intuitive interface and analysis tools are what enabled Sparkler to gain and distribute timely, relevant insights to their clients. They saved time setting up the study, onboarding participants, fielding activities and analyzing the data which meant they were able to turn around the information faster.

Conclusion

Overall the community has served as a way to keep a pulse on how consumers' were reacting to lockdown measures and restrictions in response to the pandemic. What started as a 3 month initiative, has since been extended twice (and is still going!).

Over the course of the project, Sparkler has seen a 70-100% completion rate on the weekly activities due to the platform's intuitive and engaging environment. Sparkler has also been able to gain the attention of their clients by generating more than 25 insight emails, blog posts and LinkedIn articles, conducting 21 client webinars and hosting more than 250 attendees. Their clients have been thrilled with the insights provided and it has prompted many to have more detailed conversations internally about how they can use the information to help make more informed business decisions during this challenging time.