

OVERVIEW

Hollyoaks, the UK's most watched continuing drama aimed at 16-24 year olds, wanted to tackle cyberbullying head-on through a hard-hitting storyline. Sixth former, Esther, was about to become a victim of her peer group. Within six months, viewers would see her change from a confident teenager with a bright future to an alcohol and pills fuelled suicide attempt.

With an active online audience, Lime Pictures and Channel 4 education needed a partner who would bring the story to life digitally and deliver on these key objectives:

OBJECTIVES

- Educate, entertain and engage - develop a compelling online concept to add value to the storyline.
- Build awareness of the storyline with the existing and wider audience.

OUTPUTS

With 38% of young people affected by cyber bullying, Democracy believed that the digital aspect needed to show how social media makes bullying a 24/7 experience. Democracy proposed creating a world first: a fictional social network that offered rich content to viewers and gave greater depth to the TV plot.

Naively created by fellow sixth form character Dylan, DocYou was the kind of social network that every parent fears - no safety checks, no options to report abuse and no accountability. The perfect environment for unchecked bullying.

For fans of the show, the site allowed for real time, two-screen viewing, incorporating a design and build that would be accessible via smartphones and tablets (the two most likely viewing devices) in addition to desktop. Plus, it shared much of the functionality that the audience would recognise from Facebook and tumblr. This in turn would ensure viewers were encouraged to consider how liking or disliking, commenting on and creating content might contribute to cyber bullying and make users confront their own tacit complicity as voyeuristic participants – a role often taken on by those who 'turn a blind eye'.

The world first – designed to get people talking while engaging in a way relevant to the key audience – was brought to life by Democracy with a hard-working campaign structured around five pillars of activity:

1. Developing the site from scratch
2. Audience testing to ensure optimum functionality with target demographic
3. Pre-launch blogger engagement to create a viral buzz
4. Reaching out to mums to widen the audience
5. Facebook advertising to ensure as many people, to whom the story would be relevant had a chance to find out about the groundbreaking site

OUT TAKES

- ✓ Hollyoaks viewers visited DocYou 350,000 times generating 1 million page views
- ✓ Posts about DocYou on the Hollyoaks Facebook page attracted 20,000 comments
- ✓ Facebook advertising achieved an additional 1,733 Facebook users generating over 1 million content impressions
- ✓ 30 blogs were generated covering themes dealt with in DocYou and created 29 quality inbound links to the DocYou site

OUT COMES

1. Educate, entertain and engage
 - DocYou demonstrated the power of online relationships, exposing how a social media platform can be used to abuse and bully others. The site tackled taboo topics including trolling, death, tribute pages and memorial sites, in a groundbreaking piece of storytelling that encouraged the audience to consider their actions through social media
 - DocYou was written into the TV storyline, with characters spotted logging on to view and contribute content
 - The idea was pioneering - and the audience loved it because they related to it. More than 20,000 comments were posted on the DocYou site, many of them talking about what the characters should do; others offering support for DocYou
2. Widen audience
 - DocYou reached out to influential bloggers in fashion and entertainment, and mummy bloggers - all previously untapped audiences
 - Hollyoaks received its highest viewing figures in two years for Esther's suicide episodes, with up to 1.35m people tuning in to Channel 4 on Monday 21 January at 6.30pm and more than 1.1m switching to E4 for the next installment at 7pm.

CLIENT COMMENT

Andrew Barron, Digital Product Manager, Lime Pictures: "Democracy produced a visually impressive site that delivered on the functionality. The supporting blogger outreach campaign built links to help with Google ranking and widen the reach of the campaign. The feedback through Facebook made compelling reading – confessions from viewers about how they too had been victims of cyberbullying made the project really worthwhile."