

Budweiser's World Series Home Run: 1 Campaign Success Story, 3 Viewpoints

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A Budweiser case study, told from three different viewpoints: brand, creative, and media. Hear the unique perspectives each team brought to the table to make Budweiser's World Series campaign a home run.

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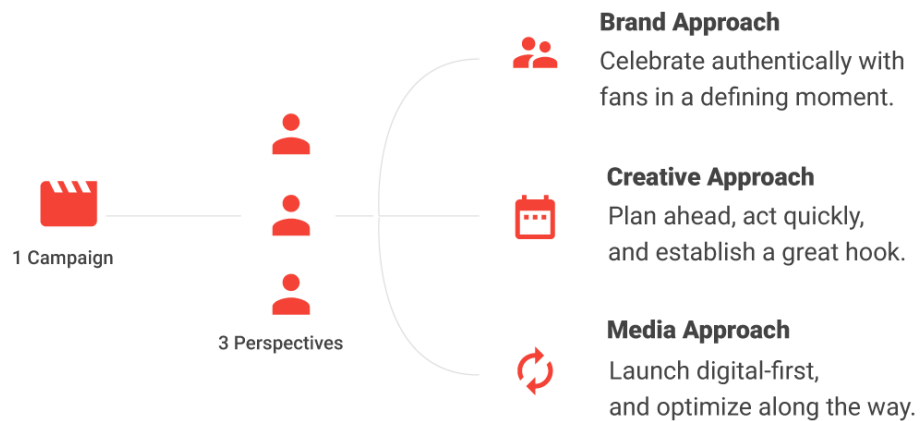
On a Friday night less than two weeks before the final game of the World Series, Budweiser's brand and sports media and marketing teams sat down with their social media agency, VaynerMedia, to talk magic. Something big was brewing, and it wasn't just beer.

It had become clear that the Cubs could actually win the World Series, something baseball fans have been waiting for since 1908. The Budweiser team was fired up. "We knew we had something powerful on our hands," said Ricardo Marques, VP of brand at Budweiser. "If the Cubs were to win, every sports fan around the world would remember the day. But whether the Cubs won or not, the moment would be historic and we wanted to create something unforgettable around it."

Of course, the Budweiser team realized they wouldn't be the only brand planning to capitalize on the World Series. So that Friday night they devised a strategy to stand out through timing and authenticity. The plan was audacious. To pull it off would require speed, agility, masterful storytelling, and the real-time advantage of YouTube.

[The Budweiser YouTube ad](#) garnered over 3M views in its first week live. And to date, 71% of views have been organic—2.6X the organic view rate for Budweiser's YouTube channel in 2016. Among ad viewers, average lift in ad recall was 28%, and average lift in consideration was 22%, both in the "high average" range for the brand. The video also inspired viewers to take action. "Budweiser" enjoyed a whopping 487% lift in Google/YouTube searches among users who saw the promoted creative.

So how did they do it? On the Budweiser side, we'll hear the brand perspective from Ricardo Marques and the media perspective from Lucas Herscovici. On the agency side, we'll hear from creative leads Todd Bradley and Joe Leotta. Together, they'll give us the complete picture of how Budweiser created even more magic for Cubs fans out of the 2016 World Series win.



The brand perspective: Celebrate authentically with fans in a defining moment

With Ricardo Marques, VP of Brand at Budweiser

Budweiser has a long history of celebrating big, zeitgeist-defining moments—such as the [Super Bowl](#) and the [Olympics](#)—with fans.

Budweiser's goal for the World Series was to reaffirm the brand's incredible long-term relationship not only with baseball, but specifically with the Cubs. At the same time, Budweiser didn't want people to feel as if they were being marketed to.



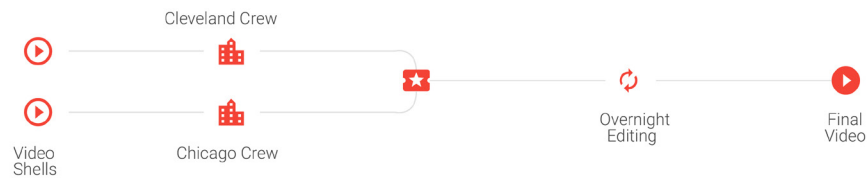
"That Friday night, we asked ourselves an important question," said Ricardo. "If the Cubs win, how can we celebrate with fans in the most genuine, authentic way possible? For us this wasn't so much about selling more beer, but about giving fans a story with which to memorialize the historic moment." With the help of VaynerMedia, YouTube, and Major League Baseball, Budweiser mined its own rich history with the game for the answer.

The creative perspective: Plan ahead, act quickly, and establish a great hook

Todd Bradley, VaynerMedia Creative Director, and Joe Leotta, VaynerMedia Account Director

Budweiser's creative strategy for the World Series was to deliver a viral-ready fan reaction video as soon after the game ended as possible. "But this isn't something we could have started planning for in July," said Joe Leotta, the Budweiser account director at VaynerMedia. "We had to wait for the right moment."

"Our greatest creative challenge? We didn't know who would win," said Todd Bradley, creative director at VaynerMedia. To prepare for both a Cubs and an Indians win scenario, VaynerMedia worked fast in the days leading up to the big game to create two different video shells. To fill in the gaps on the night of the final game, they sent crews to each team's home city to tape real fans in real bars.



After the Cubs' win on Wednesday, the Chicago-based crew hurried back to the office to edit. They worked through the night and posted the finished video on YouTube before sunrise on Thursday morning. Budweiser linked to the video on Facebook and Twitter, and ran [TrueView ads](#) to promote it on YouTube.

The team knew how important it would be to [capitalize on the first five seconds of the video](#), so the ad opens with an inspiring 1991 clip of beloved sportscaster Harry Caray predicting the Cubs' future. "As sure as God made green apples," he says, looking into the camera, "one day the Chicago Cubs are gonna be in the World Series." Years of audio recordings of Caray were collected and edited together so that it feels like he was

"calling" the game himself in the video.

The media perspective: Launch digital-first, and optimize along the way

With Lucas Herscovici, VP of Media, Digital, and Sports Marketing at Anheuser Busch

"A few years ago, Budweiser wasn't making 'made-for-digital' video," according to Lucas Herscovici, VP of media, digital, and sports marketing at Anheuser Busch. "Now we think digital first."

Budweiser knew YouTube would be the right place to launch its World Series campaign from the beginning. "YouTube gives us the ability to leverage the right video for the right story, long or short," said Lucas, "and it's the perfect channel for really immersive content like this that demands attention. This video was a two-minute-long build in anticipation. YouTube lets that story unfold naturally."



Budweiser struck the right balance of paid and earned media with this campaign by front-loading media spend in the first 48 hours the ad was live, and letting organic buzz ripple outward from there. The brand started with multiple versions of the same video ad on YouTube. Then, they used real-time analytics to see which version was resonating with fans. By quickly pinpointing the best-performing ad, they could put their money where the magic was and shift spend to support the most compelling video.

Conclusion

Results from Budweiser's World Series ad have been overwhelmingly positive, but the benefits don't end there. "As an added perk within the company, people are extremely proud of the work we did," said Ricardo. "There was power in getting together, talking through our ideas and challenges, and collaborating to move mountains overnight. Our company culture has been energized thanks to this campaign."

There is energy in authenticity, and Budweiser hit the bull's eye of authentic brand response to this significant cultural moment. The team did it with timeliness, cross-collaboration, and a YouTube-first approach. Harry Caray might have predicted this outcome as well when he said, "It could be, it might be ... it is! A home run!"