

nimlok[®]

case study

nimlok case study: the trade show puzzle solver

Nimlok solves trade show puzzles. This was the message that the Chicago-based company wanted to communicate at EXHIBITOR2013, the world conference and exhibition for trade show and corporate event marketers. The challenge, however, was not only delivering the message, but doing so in a way that was new, creative and distinct.

objectives

Nimlok participates in and operates campaigns around the EXHIBITOR show for the primary purpose of connecting event marketers with their local Nimlok distributor partners. The objective for the 2013 puzzle campaign was to double the number of connections made from the 2012 campaign.

puzzle solver concept

The concept was simple. Nimlok is an expert trade show and event puzzle solver, and when you solve puzzles with Nimlok, you win big. The challenge was communicating this message in a new and distinct way. "Puzzle solver" campaigns have been used by many companies before, so Nimlok had to execute creatively and without flaw to sell the message.

the puzzle solver campaign execution & details

Nimlok's campaign consisted of two parts: online puzzle-themed contests and onsite puzzle-themed contests at the EXHIBITOR2013 show.

online at nimlok.com:

Outside of EXHIBITOR, Nimlok introduced the puzzle theme and challenged users to solve online jigsaw puzzles for 60 days (beginning 45 days prior to the EXHIBITOR show) for a chance to win one of two Apple iPad Mini's. The mobile-friendly puzzles, which changed each month, were featured on Nimlok's website, www.nimlok.com/puzzle. Once a user solved the puzzle, they provided their contact information for entry into the iPad Mini drawing. Nimlok used social media – including Facebook, Twitter and its blog – email marketing and their presence at EXHIBITOR2013 to educate and encourage participation in the online contests.



Participants could solve Nimlok's puzzle on www.nimlok.com/puzzle.

onsite at EXHIBITOR2013

the booth:

Nimlok's 20' x 20' booth was built specifically for the EXHIBITOR show and designed to look and feel like the set of a game show. It incorporated bright lighting and colors and an open floor plan. A host, dressed in a tuxedo, was supported by a team of Nimlok staff representatives dressed in matching Nimlok shirts and ties – for the gentlemen – and scarves – for the ladies. Audio and visual equipment played game show music, Nimlok commercials and countdown clocks, all of which supported the game show host's continuous, welcoming and energetic messaging.



Nimlok booth at EXHIBITOR2013.



The Nimlok team, including the host, pose for a picture.

The booth also incorporated contestant "stations" on which games were played. The stations were close enough to the aisles so as to be inviting, but far enough inside of the booth to act as a stage. Stations were reconfigured and placed in the center of the booth for the daily cash prize drawings, which enhanced the stage effect and provided a nice photo backdrop for winners as they posed with giant checks.



Contestants prepare for competition, supported by Nimlok staff.

the games & prizes:

To keep the concept fresh throughout the show and encourage return visits, each day featured a different puzzle or game and more chances to win.

Day 1: Let your vision take shape wooden puzzle challenge - participants had two minutes to create a pyramid using three trapezoidal wooden blocks. The first person to correctly solve the puzzle received their own version of the game to take home.



A participant works to solve the wooden puzzle challenge.



The wooden puzzle was comprised of three trapezoidal wooden blocks.

Day 2: Building your trade show foundations with JENGA™ - Like JENGA but only life-sized, participants removed blocks from the bottom of the tower and placed them at the top. After three minutes, the individual with the tallest tower won. Each player took home a mini JENGA™ game.



Contestant removes blocks from the tower's base.



Contestants compete to build the tallest tower.



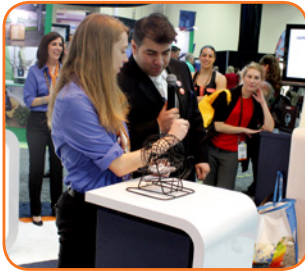
A Nimlok representative resets a tower.

Day 3: Catch Phrase – Trade show edition - Competing in teams of two, participants had to guess the trade show word or phrase based on clues given to them by their teammate. All players received Nimlok branded M&Ms candy, but the team with the most correct guesses won.



Contestants provide clues to get their partners to guess the word.

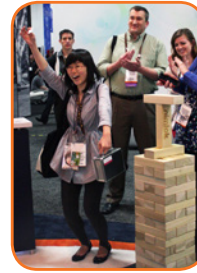
The winners from each day's puzzles were entered into a drawing – held at the end of exhibit hall hours – for cash prizes of \$500, \$250 and \$100. All participants received a “Nimlok Puzzle Solver” pin for their lanyard in addition to the daily giveaways.



Nimlok staff pull the winning daily drawing numbers for cash prizes.



Those entered into the drawing look on with anticipation.



A happy cash prize winner celebrates.

the nimlok team:

When you team up and solve trade show puzzles with Nimlok, you win big. Staff was a critical component to communicating this message. The Nimlok team consisted of Nimlok representatives, a booth activities manager and the host.

Nimlok representatives

Nimlok representatives' three main responsibilities were to recruit contestants, support the contestants that they recruited and field questions and inquiries regarding Nimlok.

- **Recruiting contestants:** Nimlok reps combed the aisles around the booth, recruiting potential contestants. The recruiting process occurred throughout the entire day, even as games were being played. Recruiting during game play was the most effective way to recruit because people were more likely to stop to watch the show and be persuaded to participate.

Reps were trained to be knowledgeable of the day's puzzle and were provided key phrases to use while recruiting such as, “Solve our simple puzzle for a chance to win cash prizes,” and “Nimlok solves your puzzles, now you have a chance to solve ours.” They distributed postcard-sized handouts that outlined the daily schedule, games and prizes to passersby. When an individual volunteered to play, the rep would scan the new contestant's badge while leading them to the contestant station.



A Nimlok representative pairs with a contestant.

- **Supporting contestants:** Nimlok reps were trained on the specific rules and game-play of each activity. Although the host reiterated those rules, reps were responsible for ensuring that their contestant fully understood how to play. During game play, reps actively supported their contestant by clapping and calling out words of encouragement. They acted as that contestant's personal cheerleader. Reps were also responsible for score-keeping and upholding rules for their individual contestant.

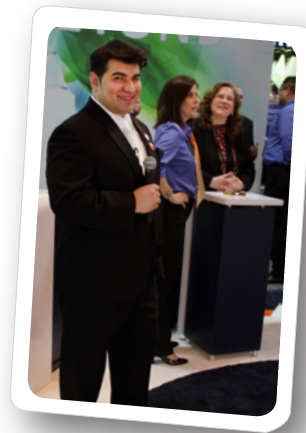
- **Fielding Nimlok questions:** Nimlok reps, in addition to knowing the ins-and-outs of the puzzles and games, were also trained to qualify the contestant – confirming whether or not the individual was aware of and interested in Nimlok products – and to promote Nimlok capabilities. All reps were long-time Nimlok veterans that were comfortable with and passionate about Nimlok products and services. Many contestants did not actively seek out the Nimlok booth at the show but, rather, stumbled upon it. Having a knowledgeable and personal staff member present gave contestants the opportunity to start a conversation that might never have occurred otherwise.

Booth activities manager

The booth activities manager had extensive, behind-the scene responsibilities that were critical to the flow and operation of the booth. The manager operated all multimedia, which included balancing sound levels between videos, music and microphone inputs as well as queuing and transitioning videos prior to and following rounds of play. The manager also coordinated the distribution of daily giveaways and cash prizes and was responsible for taking photos of winners throughout the day. Finally, the activities manager provided campaign direction to all staff. Whether coaching the team on key phrases, reviewing game rules or assigning tasks, the activities manager was the engine behind the operation.

Host

The final piece of the staff puzzle was the host. Rather than hiring outside talent, Nimlok made the decision to use an internal employee – who had a better understanding of Nimlok’s capabilities and brand voice – to fill this role. The host was responsible for attracting attention, explaining and promoting daily games, puzzles and prizes and communicating the themed goals and messages to the audience. He was trained to know key words and phrases, such as, “Nimlok is your trade show puzzle solver,” and “Nimlok’s been solving puzzles for more than 40 years,” which were instrumental in linking the booth theme with the larger campaign.



Nimlok’s host, Joe, leads the show.

The entire objective of Nimlok’s campaign was to create a fun, interactive and memorable experience. The atmosphere created by the booth, the puzzles and staff worked cohesively to achieve this objective throughout the course of the show.



promotional strategy

Nimlok used a marketing mix of communication vehicles, starting 60 days prior to the EXHIBITOR show, to educate and drive the target audience to the Nimlok website and to build interest in EXHIBITOR show activities. All promotional touch points were aimed at connecting the potential client with a local Nimlok “puzzle-solving” partner.

social media

In the months leading up to the show, Nimlok used social media and its blog to promote EXHIBITOR in-booth activities and encourage followers and readers to solve Nimlok’s online puzzles. Just prior to and during the show, Nimlok used social media to update followers on EXHIBITOR happenings. This included booth tease photos, status messages and participant pictures. Post-show, Nimlok posted photos on Facebook and its blog of the booth, game-play and winners as well as the daily drawing cash prize winners, which allowed contestants, prospects and Nimlok staff to relive the fun experience.



email marketing

Nimlok sent three types of email messages over the course of 60 days to promote and support the campaign.

- **Solve the online puzzle** – Three emails were sent prior to EXHIBITOR to Nimlok’s database. These communications primarily promoted the online puzzles, but also included secondary messages that hinted at Nimlok’s EXHIBITOR theme and invited readers to register for the show’s exhibit hall free as a Nimlok guest.

- **Solve puzzles with Nimlok at EXHIBITOR** – One email was sent to show pre-registrants prior to EXHIBITOR. The email invited recipients to visit Nimlok’s booth to play and win. The email also promoted Nimlok’s online puzzle as a secondary message.

- **Thank You for Playing** – A follow-up email was sent the week following EXHIBITOR to all persons who engaged with Nimlok at the booth. In addition to thanking attendees for engaging with Nimlok, the email included links to contestant photos on Nimlok’s Facebook page and promoted another chance to win with the online puzzle.



Email sent to show pre-registrants promoted onsite and online events.

face-to-face marketing

The face-to-face experience was the most detail-oriented element of Nimlok's promotional strategy and included collateral, giveaways and photo opportunities.

- **Nimlok commercials:** Prior to the start of every round, contestants and the audience watched "a word from the sponsor." These brief commercials highlighted Nimlok's capabilities, creativity and history. The commercials were created specifically for the EXHIBITOR show, but can be repurposed in the future for other promotional campaigns.

- **Online puzzle QR codes:** Attendees who could not participate in booth activities could scan a QR code and solve Nimlok's online puzzle from a mobile device.

- **Postcard handout:** Staff distributed a postcard, which included game times and details, to passersby as well as to contestants, encouraging them to return for the daily drawing and next days' games.

- **Lanyard pins:** All participants received a unique "Master Puzzle Solver" pin for their show lanyards. There were four pin designs: one that corresponded to each day's game and one general pin for individuals who connected with Nimlok but did not play a game. Contestants were encouraged to "collect them all" by returning to the booth the next day to receive a new pin.



A Nimlok representative pins a button on a contestants lanyard.



Contestants received a puzzle master button for participating.

- **Nimlok branded game giveaways:** All participants received small game-related giveaways that were branded with the Nimlok logo. Giveaways included the wooden block puzzle, a mini JENGA™ set and Nimlok branded M&Ms.



Contestant shows off her own pyramid puzzle prize.



Catch Phrase contestants received Nimlok M&Ms.

- **Photo opportunities:** Photo ops were important elements in creating an exciting game-show environment. Every winner – big or small – had their picture taken with the Nimlok host, and giant checks were used as props when presenting the daily drawing cash prize winners with their prize. These fun photos were posted on Facebook following the show for contestants to browse and download.



Contestants pose with Nimlok staff, holding their prizes.



Cash prize winners pose with a giant check.

results

Campaign results were measured in a variety of ways. Outside of EXHIBITOR, results were measured by online and social media traffic statistics and quantity of puzzle players. At EXHIBITOR, results were measured by the number of connections made with clients and prospects, audience impressions – the number of attendees who stopped and looked at the booth –and interactions on Facebook.

ONLINE:

- 275% increase year-over-year in quantity of online participants
- 15% of those who completed the puzzle navigated to other pages
- 18% increase year-over-year in website referrals from social media sources

ONSITE:

- 235% increase year-over-year in leads gathered at EXHIBITOR2013
- 42% of people who stopped to look at the booth or booth activities eventually engaged
- 62.5% increase year-over-year in Facebook interactions

The results exceeded expectations across the board, but especially so on Facebook. Traffic increased 450% from January to March, an increase that was 62.5% greater than the increase that occurred during the online campaign in 2012. The increase in interactions was mostly attributed to likes, shares and comments on photos, as contestants visited Nimlok's Facebook page following the show. Contestants from EXHIBITOR2013 sought out Nimlok mediums post-show, which is a dramatic indicator of brand recognition and the memorability of Nimlok's campaign.

Although Nimlok more than exceeded its lead objectives, the true measurement of campaign success will be the conversion rate of leads into sales. Nimlok will conduct a proper ROI analysis three to six months following the show, once follow-up sales are tracked and analyzed. After this analysis, this case study will be updated to include that data.

conclusion

Nimlok's fully integrated "puzzle solver" marketing campaign utilized interactive email, web and face-to-face promotions that cohesively worked together to generate leads and connect the target audience with their local Nimlok partner. The company exceeded its lead goals by 39% and created brand awareness for attendees, press and fellow exhibitors. Every detail, from the booth design to the online puzzle to the giveaway pins, connected and worked together to meet overall objectives.

Nimlok wanted their 2013 campaign to create memorable experiences while driving home its main message -- Nimlok solves trade show puzzles. As attendees sparkled in the stage lights and audience members stood captivated by the thrill of competition, it was clear that Nimlok had solved the EXHIBITOR puzzle. The experience was memorable and the message was clear. Nimlok solves trade show puzzles. Always has, always will.

