



BC IDEAS EXCHANGE



MAKE DIGITAL MEDIA HERE

Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission

SYNOPSIS

That's the Spirit!

"*Make It Here – Innovate Kelowna*" is a brand owned by the Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission (COEDC) and shared with multiple stakeholders to build awareness of the entrepreneurial spirit in Kelowna and the Central Okanagan. It was created to attract innovative businesses and the creative class to support a knowledge-based economy in the Central Okanagan region.

THE CHALLENGE

The Talent Search

The primary barrier facing the rapidly growing tech sector in Kelowna and the Central Okanagan is access to a talented workforce, particularly for Digital Media (DM) companies. In response to feedback from the local industry, the Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission (COEDC) created multi-layered programming to attract qualified talent to the region. Using the *Make It Here* brand, the COEDC campaigned at the Toronto Animation Arts Festival International, also promoting the region as a destination for gaming, animation and digital media companies in the process of expanding or relocating.

THE SOLUTION

Getting Creative

In April 2016, in a first for the Kelowna community, the COEDC brought together a cross-jurisdictional delegation including government, post-secondary education and industry to talk about how to promote the digital and creative sectors. The COEDC created and facilitated programming aimed at recruitment of the Digital Media workforce. It also developed a promotion strategy aimed at capturing the interest of digital media companies in Toronto, including a:

- pitch session targeted to Toronto-based digital media studios
- "Boomerang" reception targeting alumni from the region's two post-secondary institutions
- panel presentation and booth at the Toronto Animation Arts Festival International targeting workforce, studio and production recruitment in the DM industry

The COEDC launched a portal website called *MakItHereKelowna.com* that promotes relocation to the region. It is the region's first one-stop-shop landing page to funnel inquiries about relocation while promoting the region. The site includes two videos, *Make Life Here* and *Make Digital Media Here*, to coincide with the campaign.

BENEFITS

Making Friends

The *Make Digital Media Here* campaign provided many benefits to the technology sector and Central Okanagan community beyond the direct outcomes to the DM industry, including:

- fostering of the culture of collaboration and partnership amongst multiple stakeholders in the region with a common goal of enhancing the sector, including multiple levels of government, non-profit organizations, post-secondary institutions and industry.
- increased awareness of the growing technology sector and changing demographics in Kelowna and the Central Okanagan.
- creation of a model of collaboration to achieve specific goals that can be replicated beyond the digital media and technology sector.
- leveraged and increased awareness of the *Make It Here* community brand.

LESSONS LEARNED

Making it Work

Several key factors were instrumental in the success of the campaign, including:



Collaboration

The COEDC leveraged the spirit of collaboration present in the region to bring together a diverse group of partners with the common objective of enhancing the digital media sector in the Central Okanagan.



Engagement

Partners were engaged early and often in order to capitalize on varying skill sets, connections and expertise.



Community Branding

Partners were united under the overarching *Make It Here* brand to present a consistent message promoting opportunities in the Central Okanagan.



Planning

Many months of meticulous planning was necessary to bring the campaign together. Do not underestimate the time and resources involved.

OUTCOMES

Attracting the Talent

Direct impacts were realized within two weeks of the *Make Digital Media Here* campaign, including:

- contact with 31 digital media studios over three days.
- interest from more than 240 qualified applicants in response to their call to hire 52 animators and 3 Director/Supervisors. Many have already relocated and purchased homes in the region.
- the Okanagan Young Professionals Collective connected with 45 young professionals to encourage relocation to date, receiving three receptive replies.
- a local company closed a multi-million dollar deal, influenced by the culture of collaboration and community demonstrated by the delegation.
- Okanagan College connected with a leading animation software provider to establish an Animation Centre for Excellence in the region, receiving three solid applications for a faculty position in the animation program.



TESTIMONIALS

"This award is so well deserved. The work that went into this campaign was tireless and our local studio is using this campaign as a tool to successfully hire and relocate over 50 new residents to Kelowna" (Ashley Ramsay, CEO of Yeti Farm Creative)

COMMUNITY INFORMATION

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