



DUBLIN[®]
IRISH FESTIVAL



Category 54
Best New Promotional Activity
Giant Eagle Dublin Irish Festival Kick-Off Party
Budget \$750,000 – \$1.5 Million

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GIANT EAGLE
MARKET
DISTRICT

Overview Information:

Introduction & background of the main event

For 28 years, the first weekend in August has been reserved for the largest three-day Irish festival on the planet. The Dublin Irish Festival, hosted annually in Dublin, Ohio, a city just northwest of Columbus, is one of the nation's premier Irish festivals and a Central Ohio tradition. More than 100,000 guests visit the Festival each year to experience the best of Irish dance, music, art, sports and culture. Located on 39 rolling acres in Dublin's Coffman Park, the Dublin Irish Festival brings guests from all over the world together in celebration of all things Irish.

The Dublin Irish Festival is grateful for the long-lasting relationships it has developed with local businesses and organizations as festival sponsors and partners. Each year, the Festival strives to work in tandem with these organizations to develop unique integrated marketing and promotional initiatives, which succeed in maximizing brand exposure for both individual sponsors and the Festival as a whole.

Description and purpose/objective of promotion

In July 2014, Giant Eagle Market District hosted the first-ever official "Countdown to Dublin Irish Festival Kick-Off Party" at its Dublin store in an effort to further promote the Dublin Irish Festival as a festival sponsor. This two-hour event, scheduled for a week before the start of the Festival, gave guests the opportunity to eat and drink Irish food and beverages from other festival sponsors whose products were sold at Giant Eagle.

Giant Eagle generously reserved its cafeteria and outside patio area for the "Countdown to Dublin Irish Festival Kick-Off Party" and festively adorned the event space with white, orange, and green balloons, festival signage and other Irish-themed decorations. Guests were invited to bring their refreshments out onto the patio and enjoy a live performance by Mad Maudlin, a local band specializing in Irish music.

At the kick-off event, guests also had the opportunity to purchase official 2014 Dublin Irish Festival merchandise in advance, and many took advantage of this pre-festival sale to purchase items that traditionally sell out quickly during the festival weekend, such as festival T-shirts, commemorative mugs and co-branded, limited edition Dublin Irish Festival/Giant Eagle growlers.

But the "Countdown to Dublin Irish Festival Kick-Off" activities were not solely confined to the cafeteria and patio areas; indeed, celebration of the event extended throughout the entire store. Giant Eagle customers who just happened to find themselves in the store that night were greeted by Irish dance groups and a pipe and drum band. In the weeks leading up to the 2014 Dublin Irish Festival, Giant Eagle devoted much care and planning to the creation of in-store displays that prominently featured other festival sponsors' products. Cross-branded end-aisle displays set up for the "Countdown to Dublin Irish Festival Kick-Off" event included Killian's, Pepsi, Bob Evans and more.

Additionally, Giant Eagle purchased Dublin Irish Festival T-shirts for their employees to wear to work throughout the last weeks of July and during the Irish Festival weekend in order to further promote the Festival to its customers. These shirts were proudly worn by Giant Eagle cashiers and other employees at the "Countdown to Dublin Irish Festival Kick-Off Party," which added to the cohesive incorporation of all things Irish throughout the entire store.



The "Countdown to Dublin Irish Festival Kick-Off Party" was promoted and organized by Brian Ferrier, Regional Director of Operations for Giant Eagle, who took on this extra responsibility in addition to his other duties as 2014 Dublin Irish Festival Honorary Chair. Throughout the kick-off event, Brian was on hand to welcome customers to the store, answer questions about the Dublin Irish Festival and Giant Eagle's involvement and encourage customers to enter raffles for Prize Packs full of festival T-shirts and tickets.

Description of what was being promoted

The "Countdown to Dublin Irish Festival Kick-Off Party" was created as a promotion for the Dublin Irish Festival, Giant Eagle and other festival sponsors. This two-hour event, hosted at a location mere minutes away from the Festival grounds, gave guests the opportunity to eat and drink Irish food and beverages from festival sponsors whose products were sold at Giant Eagle, purchase festival merchandise in advance and experience a sneak peek of the Festival's entertainment lineup a week before the actual event. This scaled down version of the Dublin Irish Festival gave customers a taste of all that the Festival has to offer and aimed to encourage increased event attendance and reinvigorated support of festival sponsors.

What makes this promotion different from other promotions?

The "Countdown to Dublin Irish Festival Kick-Off Party" was a unique promotion in that the idea was initially created and developed by Brian Ferrier, 2014 Dublin Irish Festival Honorary Chair and Regional Director of Operations for Dublin Irish Festival sponsor Giant Eagle. In July, Brian approached the Dublin Irish Festival with the idea of hosting an official kick-off event to jumpstart promotion and marketing for the week before the Festival.



Located mere minutes away from the Festival grounds, Giant Eagle's Dublin store was a perfect location for the first-ever kick-off event. Giant Eagle had already gone above and beyond in the incorporation of Dublin Irish Festival branding and sponsor merchandise into its in-store displays and cross-branded end-aisles. In the weeks leading up to the Festival, employees wore Dublin Irish Festival T-shirts at cash registers and were eager to provide customers with extra information regarding Giant Eagle's role as a festival sponsor. Because Giant Eagle already showed great initiative in incorporating a multifaceted co-branding campaign with the Festival and its other sponsors into its in-store environment, the Irish entertainment and themed activities featured at the kick-off event seamlessly blended into the store's already-festive atmosphere.

The execution of a promotional event like the "Countdown to Dublin Irish Festival Kick-Off Party" presents a myriad of potential challenges and necessitates possessing the ability to solve unconventional problems. Not all sponsors would be capable of even contributing to such an event, and very few have the resources and

dedication to develop, organize and pitch the idea on their own. What truly makes this promotion event stand out is the uniqueness of the sponsor itself. As one of the largest, privately owned and family-operated companies in the nation that holds community engagement to high esteem, Giant Eagle's commitment to the Central Ohio community and the Dublin Irish Festival has been incomparable. Since 2008, Giant Eagle has explored countless avenues and pioneered various innovative marketing and promotional strategies in an effort to further connect with the Dublin Irish Festival in an evolving and exciting partnership. The dedication Giant Eagle displays as a Dublin Irish Festival sponsor is definitely something that deserves to be commended. Throughout the many years of partnership, Giant Eagle has become a sponsor on which the Festival can rely. In addition to performing the duties and responsibilities explicitly written in its sponsorship contract with precision and reliability, Giant Eagle enhances the Festival by taking steps to exceed all expectations, an effort clearly showcased in the success of its inaugural "Countdown to Dublin Irish Festival Kick-Off Party."

Target audience for the promotion

The Giant Eagle Market District is a recently launched concept inspired by the open-air markets of Europe. The Market District invites customers to explore a culinary, dining and shopping experience unlike any other. Featuring some of the freshest domestic seafood, fresh-cut meats and more than 400 artisan cheeses, a world of food is available to the customer every day.

With the development of Giant Eagle’s Market District concept at the Dublin location, this promotion event was the perfect way to generate exposure for the Dublin Irish Festival and engage the customers who shop at Giant Eagle. Festival guests are a strong match for the sophisticated food and beverage shopper that Market District seeks, not only in Dublin, but in their entire market area.



Attendance

The first-ever “Countdown to Dublin Irish Festival Kick-Off Party” was a free event open to the public. Although both the Dublin Irish Festival and Giant Eagle mentioned the kick-off on their social media pages, in press releases and in emails, there was no need for guests to pre-register specifically for the event. In fact, because kick-off activities were not solely confined to the cafeteria and patio area, the celebration of the event extended throughout the entire store, and many Giant Eagle customers who just happened to be in the store that night became part of the event without even planning to do so. Giant Eagle customers were greeted by performances

from Irish dance groups and pipe and drum bands, invited to enjoy Irish food, drink, and music and were encouraged to purchase Dublin Irish Festival sponsor products from eye-catching displays that were prominently featured throughout the store and on the ends of aisles.

As part of the kick-off celebration, Giant Eagle generously reserved its spacious cafeteria and adjoining outside patio area for customer use throughout the duration of the event. The patio space, which was tastefully decorated with bunches of orange, white and green helium balloons, as well as Dublin Irish Festival signage, proved to be so inviting, customers shopping at other stores housed in the Giant Eagle Perimeter Loop shopping center ended up joining the event. Giant Eagle’s location in a high-traffic shopping center proved to be beneficial, as many guests were drawn to the welcoming atmosphere of the store and the excitement surrounding the event.

Since the “Countdown to Dublin Irish Festival Kick-Off Party” was incorporated into almost every aspect of Giant Eagle store operations for two hours on a Friday night, hundreds of people—even customers who did not intentionally plan on attending the promotional event—participated in the festivities and came away with a better understanding of the Dublin Irish Festival and its sponsors.

Tie-in of promotion to main event

Each year, the Dublin Irish Festival works closely with local businesses, many of which have long played a vital role in the success of the Festival as partners and sponsors. By establishing and maintaining relationships with local organizations, the Dublin Irish Festival has become an annual event that encourages increased civic engagement and strengthened community partnership.

The “Countdown to Dublin Irish Festival Kick-Off Party” is a wonderful example of the Festival and its sponsors’ ongoing dedication to the Central Ohio community. Initially created and developed by Brian Ferrier, 2014 Dublin Irish Festival Honorary



Chair and Regional Director of Operations for Dublin Irish Festival sponsor Giant Eagle, this festive and family-friendly event strived to give customers a scaled-down sneak peek of the Festival. In addition to having food and drinks from other festival sponsors, the kick-off event featured performances by Irish dancers and pipe bands, and offered guests the opportunity to purchase official festival merchandise.

In its inaugural "Countdown to Dublin Irish Festival Kick-Off" event, Giant Eagle succeeded not only in supporting the Dublin Irish Festival, but other sponsors of the Festival as well. Through the incorporation of other Dublin Irish Festival sponsors in end-aisles and in-store displays, Giant Eagle provided innumerable merchandising and promotional opportunities. In showing support for its fellow sponsors and partners, Giant Eagle effectively created an in-store environment dedicated to promoting the unified sense of community that is at the heart of the Dublin Irish Festival.

Overall revenue & expense budget of promotion

The "Countdown to Dublin Irish Festival Kick-Off" event proved to be successful in generating revenue for very minimal expense. The sale of official festival merchandise, including festival T-shirts and commemorative mugs, as well as limited edition co-branded Dublin Irish Festival/Giant Eagle growlers, was immensely popular with kick-off guests. Much of the merchandise offered at the kick-off completely sold out by the end of the two-hour event—a full week before the Festival even began.

The performers featured at the "Countdown to Dublin Irish Festival Kick-Off Party" generously offered their services for free, which lessened the expenses associated with hiring talent for the event. Giant Eagle chose local performing arts organizations that have been involved with the Dublin Irish Festival for years, such as Mad Maudlin, a local Irish band; dancers from Regan-Rankin Academy of Irish Dance; and bagpipers from a local pipe and drum group. As a thank you to the performers who volunteered their time to make this first-ever kick-off party an amazing experience for guests, Giant Eagle gave each performer a gift card to be used at any of its supermarkets or convenience stores.

Duration of promotion

In July 2014, Giant Eagle Market District hosted the first-ever official "Countdown to Dublin Irish Festival Kick-Off Party" at its Dublin store in an effort to further promote the Dublin Irish Festival as a festival sponsor. The event, which lasted approximately two hours, gave guests a scaled down sneak peek of the Festival a week before the actual event.



Description of sponsor/charity/volunteer/school/other group involvement with event/organization and promotion and benefits to each

As one of the largest, privately owned and family-operated companies in the nation that holds community engagement to high esteem, Giant Eagle's commitment to the Central Ohio community and the Dublin Irish Festival has been incomparable, and this dedication is seen in the development and execution of the first-ever "Countdown to Dublin Irish Festival Kick-Off Party." Since 2008, Giant Eagle has explored countless avenues and pioneered various innovative marketing and promotional strategies in an effort to further connect with the Dublin Irish Festival in an evolving and exciting partnership.

In July 2014, Giant Eagle Regional Director of Operations and 2014 Dublin Irish Festival Honorary Chair Brian Ferrier approached the Festival with his idea of hosting an official kick-off event at Giant Eagle's Dublin location to jumpstart promotion and marketing throughout the week before the Festival.

For the event, Giant Eagle generously reserved its cafeteria and outside patio and festively decorated the store with white, orange and green balloons, festival signage and other Irish-themed decorations. Additionally, Giant Eagle scheduled entertainment for the event—including a local Irish band, bagpipes and Irish dancers—that accurately represented the high-quality programming guests could expect to experience at the Dublin Irish Festival.

Performing arts organizations featured at the event included several that have been involved with the Dublin Irish Festival for years, such as Mad Maudlin, a local band specializing in Irish music; dancers from Regan-Rankin Academy of Irish Dance; and bag pipers from a local pipe and drum group. Members of these groups volunteered their time and talent for the event, and received Giant Eagle gift cards as a thank you for their involvement.

Through the incorporation of other Dublin Irish Festival sponsors in end-aisles and in-store displays, Giant Eagle utilized the "Countdown to Dublin Irish Festival Kick-Off Party" as a valuable merchandising and promotional opportunity. In showing support for its fellow sponsors, Giant Eagle effectively created an in-store environment dedicated to promoting both the Dublin Irish Festival as a whole and the organizational partnerships that make the event possible year after year.

Overall effectiveness/success of promotion

New promotion events like the "Countdown to Dublin Irish Festival Kick-Off Party" serve to highlight the uniqueness of Festival sponsors like Giant Eagle and their commitment to the Festival and the community as a whole. As Honorary Chair, Brian Ferrier was able to serve as an ambassador for both the Festival and Giant Eagle, which allowed for innovative cross-branding of products in-store, as well as the development of new marketing initiatives.

Giant Eagle's promotional efforts as a Dublin Irish Festival sponsor greatly influenced the overall success of the Festival in 2014. Approximately 98,000 guests attended the 2014 Dublin Irish Festival between Friday, Aug. 1 and Sunday, Aug. 3, and the Festival pulled in a record crowd of 13,000 guests on Sunday. Even more impactful has been Giant Eagle's influence on how festival sponsorship is viewed by potential partners. A record \$260,340 was invested by sponsors in 2014, and a survey conducted with guests at the Festival showed that Giant Eagle was one of the most-frequently recalled sponsors. With the help of innovative sponsors like Giant Eagle, the Dublin Irish Festival sponsorship program has provided an event marketing opportunity for corporate sponsors who wish to extend their reach and connect with the Festival's desirable demographic.

The quality and quantity of support the Dublin Irish Festival receives annually from Giant Eagle is truly remarkable and the dedication Giant Eagle displays as a festival sponsor is definitely something that deserves to be commended. Throughout the many years of partnership, Giant Eagle has become a sponsor on which the Festival can rely. In addition to performing the duties and responsibilities explicitly written in its sponsorship contract with precision and reliability, Giant Eagle enhances the Festival by taking steps to exceed all expectations.

Supporting Question:

What challenges/obstacles did you foresee/encounter in creating the program/activity/idea, and how did you handle them?

The biggest obstacle faced during the creation and planning of the "Countdown to Dublin Irish Festival Kick-Off Party" was time. Brian Ferrier approached the Dublin Irish Festival with the idea of hosting a promotional event at the Giant Eagle Dublin store in early July, with the hope of hosting the event a week before the Dublin Irish Festival, which traditionally occurs during the first weekend of August. This limited time frame made it difficult to schedule and secure entertainment with enough time to effectively promote and market the event.

The Dublin Irish Festival and Giant Eagle were able to address these issues with the help of generous support by performing arts organizations like Mad Maudlin, Regan-Rankin Academy of Irish Dance and local pipe and drum groups. One challenge faced during the organization of this event occurred when the original band set to play, the Ladies of Longford, had to drop out at the last minute due to scheduling conflicts. Fortunately, Mad Maudlin was more than happy to be flexible and attend in their place. These performing groups have been involved with the Dublin Irish Festival for years and were more than happy to contribute to the event.

Outstanding cross-branding efforts by both the Dublin Irish Festival and Giant Eagle's marketing and communication teams also contributed to the overall success of this event, despite the aggressive deadlines faced by both teams. Through comprehensive social media marketing campaigns produced by both the Festival and Giant Eagle, the "Countdown to Dublin Irish Festival Kick-Off Event" garnered a sizeable crowd for its very first year.