

FRESH APPROACH TO PROMOTE SAFE SEX WITH GAY MEN: AN AUSTRALIAN FIRST LARGE-SCALE INITIATIVE

AUTHORS: M. WACHER / T. TANG / Y. CALMETTE / K. PRICE, ACON
MWACHER@ACON.ORG.AU | 02 9206 2072 | 414 ELIZABETH ST, SURRY HILLS NSW 2010 | WWW.ACON.ORG.AU

INTRODUCTION

In 2013 ACON launched the community engagement platform *Ending HIV*: the first large scale, multi-platform campaign to mobilise men who have sex with men (MSM) around ending the HIV epidemic.

Ending HIV encouraged HIV negative MSM to test more, HIV positive MSM to consider early treatment and all guys to continue practicing safe sex, particularly through the use of condoms.

Research from the study titled 'PASH: Pleasure and Sexual Health', showed evidence of significant shifts in risk behaviour trends, indicating some condom-fatigue and a reluctance to engage with safe sex messages amongst MSM.

To address this challenge ACON developed the *I'M ON* campaign - an extension of *Ending HIV* - to motivate guys to continue condom use as a means of reducing HIV transmissions. The campaign was first run in 2013 and then again in 2014, and as a key component of the 2014 campaign, a unique and impactful initiative was developed to put condoms back onto gay men's agenda.

The initiative was called the Giant Condom.

METHODS

During the late evening hours of Thursday 6 November 2014, an 18-metre tall, hot-pink sheath resembling a giant condom was installed onto Sydney's famous Hyde Park Obelisk. The monument was selected for its central location with high visibility from passers-by and motorists alike as well for being close to the suburbs of Darlinghurst and Surry Hills, known for their dense gay populations.

The 'surprise' approach of the Giant Condom grabbed the attention of Sydneysiders and commuters, instantly generating buzz and hype.

Male ambassadors were hired to engage with passers-by during peak foot-traffic periods over the week it was installed by handing out condoms and providing more information about the campaign and activation.

The campaign included outdoor poster advertising and, to extend the conversation online, was supported with Facebook advertising and web content, a promotional video and a social media competition that encouraged users to share photos of the Giant Condom with prizes targeted towards gay men.

RESULTS

Even though the Giant Condom was only installed for a short period of time, the impact it created exceeded expectations with safe sex becoming a hot topic of conversation locally and internationally, making headlines in over 40 countries.



An independently conducted post-campaign evaluation survey asked over 500 local MSM to feedback on the campaign.

Some highlight results include:

✓ **RECALL**
76% of the respondents recalled the Giant Condom.

😊 **PERCEPTION**
More than 81% of the respondents considered the Giant Condom as a useful reminder of the importance of condoms to prevent HIV. The three most commonly chosen terms to describe it were 'eye-catching', 'good idea' and 'memorable'.

👉 **PERSUASIVENESS**
91% of survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed that condoms are the most effective way to prevent HIV.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the Giant Condom reflect the great success of this Australian-first initiative. It proves that in an advertising-saturated society and despite the ubiquitous nature of safe sex messages for three decades, promoting HIV prevention in non-traditional forms of media can have a significant impact.

Using large-scale initiatives like the Giant Condom are a fantastic way of reaching high volumes of key affected populations in a short period of time.

THINKING BIG CAN DELIVER BIG.