

The **co-operative** bank
Literary
Festival

The Henley Literary Festival

The brief: to launch a new literary festival, building brand awareness and establishing the event in 'the big league' of literary festivals from the outset.

We knew we had a challenge on our hands: literary festivals are springing up all over the UK and the Henley market enjoys a wealth of successful festivals and events on its doorstep. To succeed would require something fresh, contemporary and stimulating. Mexia worked alongside Festival Director Sue Ryan (former Managing editor of the Daily Telegraph) and the rest of the committee to develop the overall marketing strategy and messaging using our unique Foresight planning process. Given the rich variety of authors and subject matters covered, from sport to politics, adventure to fiction, lifestyle to children's books and more, the core message of the campaign was 'something for everyone'.

As a start-up event our marketing budget was very limited. We decided to focus on an initial launch to local businesses and community groups and centre our efforts on PR, backed up by a strong online presence, door drops and programme distribution supported by an outdoor campaign of banners and posters in the final run up to the event. The PR effort focused on regional press, as research for other local events showed that the majority of uptake would be in a 10-15 mile radius around Henley, although online PR and national coverage did attract a much wider audience, with visitors attending from all over the UK. Once the initial launch announcement was released, we worked on a steady stream of news, author profiles and updates on ticket sales to maintain a high profile in local media. In the final weeks, the emphasis for PR shifted to regional broadcast with interviews on local radio and regional television.

The results were amazing: weekly coverage in the local Henley paper plus regular in-depth features in the Reading Evening Post in the weeks running up to the festival, features in numerous other papers and magazines covering more peripheral towns like Marlow, Maidenhead, High Wycombe and Slough, plus coverage in the Daily Telegraph and The Times ensured phenomenal media exposure. A total of 57 pieces of print coverage were generated (most of these in-depth pieces) between June and September, including 35 in September alone. The event was listed on 26 event listings and attained a broad online coverage with website visitor numbers rocketing in the weeks leading up to the event. With a total of eight radio interviews and coverage on both BBC and ITV regional news, the PR campaign ensured that the Henley Literary Festival was firmly on the map. Andrew O'Hagan of the Daily Telegraph described it as "One of the best literary festivals in the country", praise indeed for a literary festival in its first year.

Commenting on Mexia's efforts on behalf of the festival, Festival Director Sue Ryan said "The Henley Literary Festival went from a standing start to getting 5,000 people attending events. We had no advertising budget and so the PR was absolutely key and Mexia came up trumps – we

had masses of coverage in local and national press as well as radio and TV. It was an impressive feat by any standards.”

Sue Ryan
Festival Director
Henley Literary Festival