



The True Rock Stars of Business

Gold | Effie United States | David vs. Goliath - Services | 2024

Brand/Client: **Workday**

Lead Agency: **Ogilvy USA**

Contributing Company: **Merkle**

(This case study has been edited by the entrant to remove confidential information)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Can differentiation help new brands drive exponential growth, but then hinder it as they mature? For enterprise software challenger Workday, focus on HR helped turn its first 15 years into blockbuster success with explosive growth. But over time growth plateaued, revealing that it lacked the broad relevance to drive expansion. Pushing against the staid world of B2B, we introduced a disruptive emotional benefit – recognizing our audience as the true rock stars of business. Our effort drove a 65% increase in brand consideration, reversing 5 years of slowing leads growth into a +50% upside. Rock on!

THE CHALLENGE

Reverse five years of slowing pipeline growth by untethering Workday from its limiting reputation as a niche HR specialist.

THE INSIGHT

Finance and HR leaders have evolved from unsexy back-office functions to visionary changemakers, but feel misunderstood and seek new respect.

THE STRATEGIC IDEA/BUILD

Elevate unsung Finance and HR decision-makers by repositioning them as modern business' true rock stars.

BRINGING THE IDEA TO LIFE

We invited some of the world's biggest rock stars to rock the business-as-usual approach to B2B marketing.

THE RESULTS

We shredded our goals - increasing consideration by 65%, resulting in a 50% boost to Workday's sales pipeline.

THE CHALLENGE

STATE OF THE MARKETPLACE & BRAND'S BUSINESS

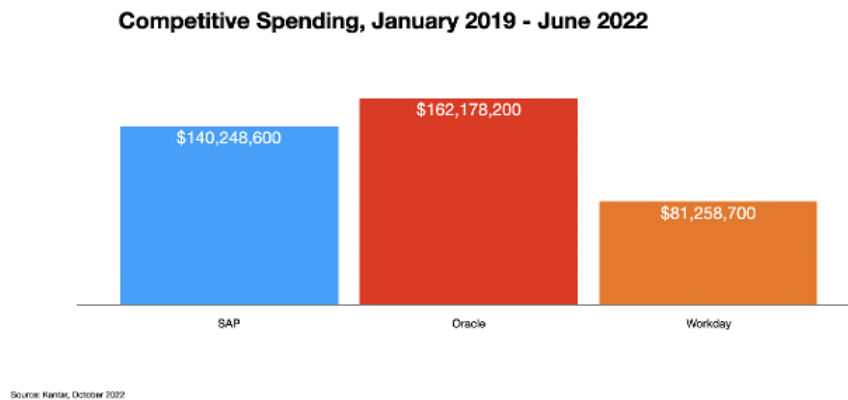
One hit wonder?

Since 2007, Workday has offered software for two key business functions: HR and Finance. In HR, they've been a massive hit, with a customer base that includes over 50% of the Fortune 500.¹ But with that kind of success, additional upside growth was limited, and organic growth was declining.² Meanwhile, they've struggled to gain the same kind of traction in Finance as they did in HR, and Workday's reputation was that of a narrow product specialist,³ not the brand juggernaut they aspired to be. Subsequently, consideration had been stagnating for a year, improving just one point from Fall 2021 to Fall 2022.⁴

Competing in the shadow of giants

The narrow perception of Workday is framed by the category's two legacy behemoths: SAP and Oracle. Both offer full-spectrum IT solutions and decades more experience, enabling deep client relationships and 'lead integrator' positions with 40x more customers and annual global revenues 4x that of Workday.^{5,6,7} Their advantage is constantly reinforced through much higher spend⁸ and high-profile partnerships like SAP's sponsorships of the NBA and NFL,⁹ and Oracle's sponsorship

of F1 powerhouse, Red Bull Racing.¹⁰ Workday was playing third fiddle.



You don't get fired for hiring the big guys

SAP and Oracle's edge is compounded by the risk-averse psychology of enterprise software buying.¹¹ In other words, you don't get fired for renewing your contract with SAP or Oracle. Executives who want to chart another course do so at their own peril. Going with a smaller company - even a superior specialist - is a riskier decision, and a harder internal sell-in. Talk about a highway to the danger zone!

An eroding growth trajectory

You could see the headwinds manifesting in the business. Workday's pipeline, measured by assessing annual revenue value of media qualified leads, had seen sliding growth for five years.¹² Aside from a 2021 COVID bounceback year - one enjoyed by the entire sector¹³ - the trendline was clearly moving in the wrong direction. Workday faced a tight deadline to achieve their ambitious \$10 billion revenue goal by 2025,¹⁴ so a sluggish 2023 was not an option.

Our challenge was clear, and our communications approach began to take shape:

- **The challenge:** untether Workday from its limiting reputation as a niche HR specialist.
- **The communications imperative:** to break out and broaden consideration, we decided to shift from narrow, rational, product-focused marketing to a wider, more emotional, fame-driven approach.

Business Objective

Turn around 5 years of declining revenue pipeline growth, and grow from 25% to 30%.

Rationale: Due to Workday's long sales cycles, we prioritize lead value over revenue. But the CAGR of Workday's lead value was diminishing precipitously, from 108% in 2018 to 25% in 2022.

Unless we could reverse that trend, revenue pipeline growth was projected to decline to 6.5% in 2023, representing several hundred million dollars in missed lead value.

Measurement: Pipeline value growth would be measured using Workday's internal Salesforce Dashboard, which tracks media qualified leads and then estimates their annual revenue value.

Marketing Objective

Increase consideration by 12 points, from 38% to 50%.

Rationale: Workday's awareness wasn't the main thing holding us back, it was our reputation. Due to our HR niche, a concerning 49% of our audience said that Workday doesn't have solutions relevant to their needs.¹⁶ We needed a wider group of potential customers to consider Workday for their organization.

Measurement: Workday's quarterly advertising exposure test would be used to pinpoint how our communications drove consideration amongst the audience who saw our ads versus a control sample.

Activity Objective

Drive 750 million impressions of earned media.

Rationale: To eclipse SAP and Oracle, we couldn't sustainably outspend them. We earned media to help drive the kind of ESOV that drives market share.

Spoiler alert - this case includes a Super Bowl activation. The prior year B2B giant Salesforce had made a splash with Matthew McConaughey, which we estimated earned them 750 million impressions.¹⁷ We set out to top that.

Measurement: Earned impressions were estimated using Muckrack, a PR management platform.

Sources

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3. Oracle.com, "Workday is Not an ERP, and That's a Problem", January 20, 2022
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INSIGHTS & STRATEGY

AUDIENCE

Meet the Change Suite

Workday's marketing efforts target organizations with 500+ full-time employees, specifically focusing on non-customers.

The two most important assets of just about any organization are its people and its money. Because Workday helps you manage both, our audience was the people in charge of the workforce and the software they needed: mainly CFOs (Chief Financial Officers), CHROs (Chief Human Resource Officers), and CIOs (Chief Information officers).

Traditionally, these have been back-office functions. Boring, predictable, and hardly sexy. If the software they used wasn't broken, they weren't looking for something new. But over the last several years, digital transformation has fundamentally changed the nature of their jobs and the challenges they're looking to solve.

- CFOs are no longer just bean counters in charge of the monthly books and budget tracking. They're expected to identify new revenue streams and weigh new business models.¹⁸ They're valuable, strategic partners for their fellow members of the C-Suite.
- Meanwhile, CHROs are helping pivot their businesses away from static and task-based jobs and toward becoming more diverse and agile skills-based organizations.¹⁹ It's no longer simply a matter of onboarding and time tracking in a physical office. CHROs ensure that they have the right people, in the right roles, in a variety of new and hybrid working environments.
- As technology trends accelerate, CIOs aren't just overseeing IT systems and server rooms. They're reimagining the role of technology in the organization - full-stop.²⁰

To help Workday grow, we needed to resonate with all of them - not just HR. And to

help Workday truly break out from our B2B bubble, we needed to occupy a more salient role in their minds.

THE INSIGHT

New mindset, same old reputation

As their responsibilities changed, so did their attitude. These once boring, back-office operators have become bold visionaries.²¹ Yeah, that's right. They've got some swagger now. Leather jackets and Ray-Bans optional.

The only problem was, the world didn't see them that way. Sure, they'd earned some newfound admiration from business colleagues and peers. But when was the last time you heard a kid say they wanted to be a CFO when they grew up? How often do CHROs trend on social media? Who dresses as a CIO for Halloween?

Despite having the heroic spirit of the boldest changemakers, they felt misunderstood and undervalued in their everyday lives.²²

From backstage to center stage

We knew we couldn't shift brand salience by copy-and-pasting the classic B2B playbook: competing on product superiority. After all, our audience didn't need or want another promise from another software company. That old song and dance was going to land on deaf ears.

The big opportunity was fulfilling an emotional void that had been ignored. After all, these unsung heroes just wanted a little credit, some R-E-S-P-E-C-T, for all the big moves they'd been making. To be met with fanfare for helping their organizations navigate all kinds of obstacles, challenges, and changes. And we were ready to give it to them.

We knew our audience, and we knew what they needed:

- **The insight:** There was a gap between our audience's self-image versus public reputation. They saw themselves as bold changemakers, but the world didn't.
- **The strategic opportunity:** To supercharge Workday in our audience's hearts

and minds, by introducing a disruptive emotional benefit in the category as the only brand to give them the big stage respect they crave.

THE STRATEGIC IDEA/BUILD

Workday: championing the true rock stars of business.

Workday elevates unsung Finance and HR decision-makers by repositioning them as the real stars of modern business.

To boost their recognition, we needed to create communications that made our audience feel appreciated, while also sharing their star status with their friends and family. But what would happen when we brought actual rock legends into the mix?

Sources

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19. Deloitte, "Tech Trends 2022: A Human Capital Perspective"
20. McKinsey, "The CIO challenge: Modern business needs a new kind of tech leader", January 27, 2020
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22. Agency Persona Interviews, CHRO, CFO, and CIOs, Fall 2021

BRINGING THE IDEA TO LIFE

KEY ELEMENTS

"The Rock Stars of Business" bathed our audience in the warm glow of the spotlight like they'd never experienced before, which changed how they saw Workday.

Announcing the rock stars of business

We started by letting our audience know that they rock - with share-worthy vintage-style band posters, made for LinkedIn. We used rock iconography in print and OOH, celebrating our audience for making big moves in business.

Petty rock stars want the limelight back

But then we invited actual rock stars to be part of the conversation, which turned up the volume in a completely unexpected way. Five legends of music were impressed with our audience – but they weren't too pleased that the rock stars of business were actually being referred to as rock stars.

Activated on site and with sales teams

With our audience flattered and primed, we updated Workday's homepage with our rock star theme. Because prospects evidently meet with sales teams, we equipped them with all of the tools – from Zoom backgrounds to merch – to entice them to become a rock star with Workday.

Workday, and our audience, were officially on center stage.

KEY BUILDING BLOCKS

In digital and print, we relied on universally recognizable rock iconography to drive our message home. From devil horns to a jagged edged font, we always stood apart from the typically bland B2B ads. And we made healthy use of puns, repeatedly encouraging our audience to “business on” (you know, instead of “rock on”).

For our Super Bowl video, Paul Stanley of KISS fame acknowledged “we know using Workday for finance and HR makes you great at your job, but that doesn't make you a rock star.” Because our legendary rock stars are petty – but not right – we used the sign-off: “Be a Finance and HR rock star with Workday.” Our end card was Workday's logo, customized to represent the bright spotlights of a concert stage. And it included a quick guitar riff, of course.

STRATEGY

Like a love ballad, our plan gained momentum over time.

Seeding the campaign

We launched on the night of the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame induction ceremony, by releasing vintage-style concert posters on LinkedIn that celebrated the Rock Stars

of Business. We created custom units for each of our main persona audiences – CIOs, CHROs, and CFOs – and encouraged our audience to tag their friends and colleagues.

Building a new emotional meaning in Workday

To add weight to our endeavor and connect with Workday's older, more traditional audience, we capitalized on the release of the Wall Street Journal's "Best Managed Companies" list. In a sea of typical B2B advertising, we stood out with a full-page, rock-inspired salute, paying homage to the business world's top performers. This message was further reinforced through out-of-home screens in six prominent business districts. Our goal wasn't to sell a product; instead, we aimed to celebrate and elevate our audience.

Teasing our big splash

But to break out, we needed to go beyond expected business media. So we amped things up when we announced Workday's surprising Super Bowl appearance in the press, earning coverage in the places that cover popular culture – like *Variety*,²³ *Billboard*,²⁴ and *People*.²⁵ It was a far cry from Workday's usual PR plan.

Turning Workday's 17,000 employees into a media channel

We mobilized Workday's employee base and sales teams to amplify our message by arming them with stickers, emojis, email headers, and Zoom backgrounds. And of course, rock style merch.

Breaking out for maximum disruption

It wasn't enough to flatter our audience, or change their perception of Workday. Using the principles of cultural imprinting,²⁶ we needed them to know that other people – executives, friends, family – were seeing it too. That's why the Super Bowl was such a critical component of the plan. And that's where we brought in the rock stars – Ozzy Osbourne, Joan Jett, Gary Clark Jr., Billy Idol, and Paul Stanley. From social media teasers to our :60 breakout spot during the Super Bowl, they let the world know that they wanted their name back.

Extending the story

The morning after the game, we ran a sorry-not-sorry ad in the Wall Street Journal, reiterating that our audience were the true rock stars of the business world. And smart :15s featuring our rock stars would continue for weeks after the game in pre-roll and paid social.

Sources

23. Variety, "First-Time Super Bowl Advertiser Workday Hopes to Make Noise in Big Game Debut", January 25, 2023
24. Billboard, "Ozzy, Joan Jett, Billy Idol, Paul Stanley & Gary Clark Jr. Rip Corporate 'Rock Stars' in Super Bowl Ad", February 12, 2023
25. People, "Billy Idol Takes on Corporate America's Use of 'Rockstar' in 'Really Fun' Super Bowl Ad for Workday", February 6, 2023
26. Melting Asphalt, "Ads Don't Work That Way", September 14, 2014

RESULTS

RESULTS OVERVIEW

And the crowd went wild

When this tour began, our setlist was straightforward:

Free Workday from its limiting reputation as a niche HR specialist. Shift from narrow product marketing to fame-driving brand marketing.

Hero an audience that for far too long has been relegated to the shadows.

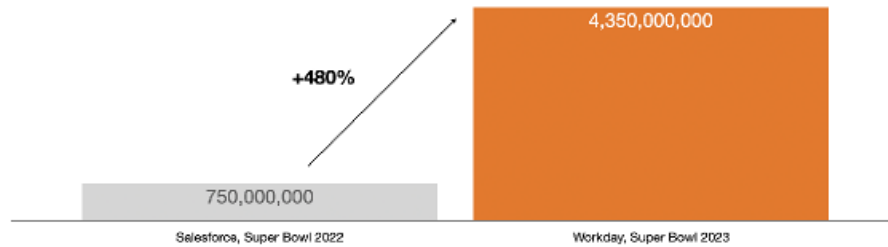
This effort transformed Workday from a niche specialist to a brand that demanded attention. And all of that attention turned into real results. While betting on brand is a long-term play designed to generate large effects years down the line, the early indicators prove we have a big hit.

The world began to pay attention to Workday

Our fame-driving approach worked, as paid media drove earned media. While SAP and Oracle sat on the sidelines, Workday drove an 4.35 billion (yes, billion) earned impressions around the Super Bowl.²⁷ Time called it "the most unexpected collaboration of the year",²⁸ and the AdMeter ranked Workday

#1029 - beating all other B2B brands, and dozens of beloved household names.

Rock Star Earned Media Impressions

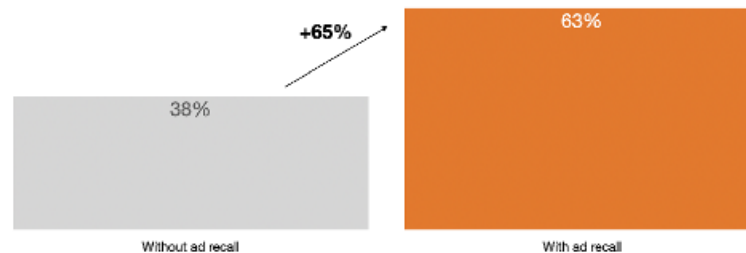


Sources: Muckack, March 2023

Which spiked our brand consideration

By shedding our specialist reputation, more people began considering Workday. 63% of people in our audience who recalled our campaign said they considered Workday, versus just 38% of a control sample.³⁰

Consideration Amongst Finance/HR software decision-makers, Q1 2023



Sources: Workday Q1 Ad Exposure Test, March 2023

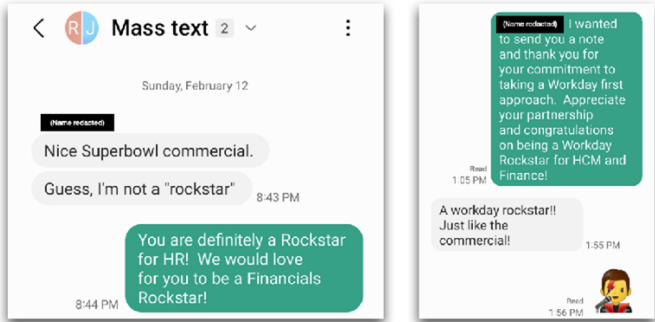
All that translated into a rock star increased in pipeline value.

We successfully reversed Workday's downward trend in pipeline growth. The

value of our media-qualified-leads shot up 50% in Q1, doubling last year’s growth rate and absolutely slaying our goal.³¹

In one case, one of Workday’s existing HR customers took note of our spot. Months later, they upgraded their contract to include Finance, proudly proclaiming herself a “Workday Rockstar”.³² Talk about a mic drop.

Text between customer and Workday sales representative



Source: Workday

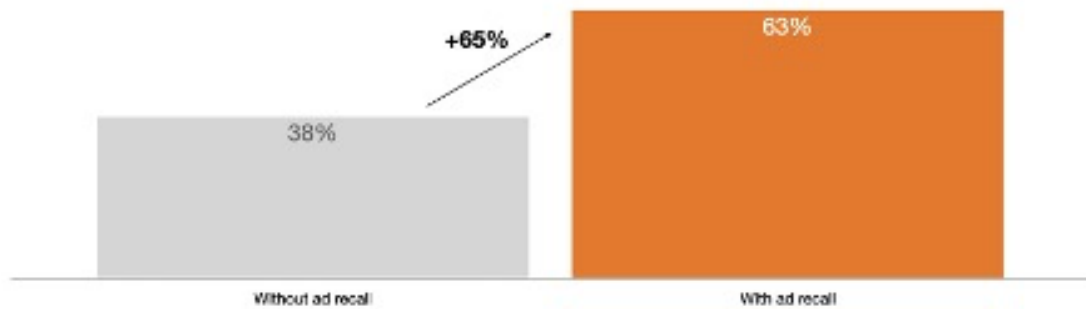
Business Objectives

Turn around 5 years of declining revenue pipeline growth, and grow from 25% to 30%.
Result: Our Q1 revenue pipeline grew by 50% YoY – smashing our goal of 30%.
Context: With Workday’s long-lead sales cycles, even we were blown away by the immediate results. Not only did we successfully reverse our downward growth trajectory, in just one quarter we added more than \$100 million in pipeline value on top of our aggressive goals.

Marketing Objective

Increase consideration by 12 points, from 38% to 50%.
Result: Consideration increased from 38% to 63%, doubling our goal of a 12-point jump.
Context: By aiming for brand fame, Workday was no longer merely catering to a narrow slice of the market represented by HR professionals. With consideration covering well over the majority of the market, we had officially broken out. ³⁰

Consideration Amongst Finance/HR software decision-makers, Q1 2023

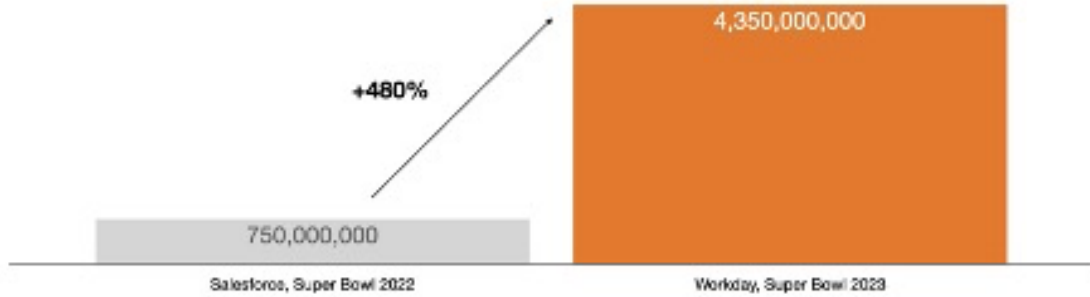


SOURCE:
Workday Q1 Ad Exposure Test, March 2023

Campaign/Activity Objectives

Drive 750 million impressions of earned media.
Result: Workday drove 4.35 billion earned impressions, beating the benchmark set by Salesforce by 480%.
Context: Our PR efforts made Workday top of mind for the masses. With coverage pretty much everywhere - from the New York Times ³³ to The Today Show ³⁴ - Finance and HR professionals were no longer unsexy or anonymous. Thanks to Workday, everybody started to see how cool they were. That's the kind of ESOV that love songs are made of.

Rock Star Earned Media Impressions



Source: Mucklow, March 2023

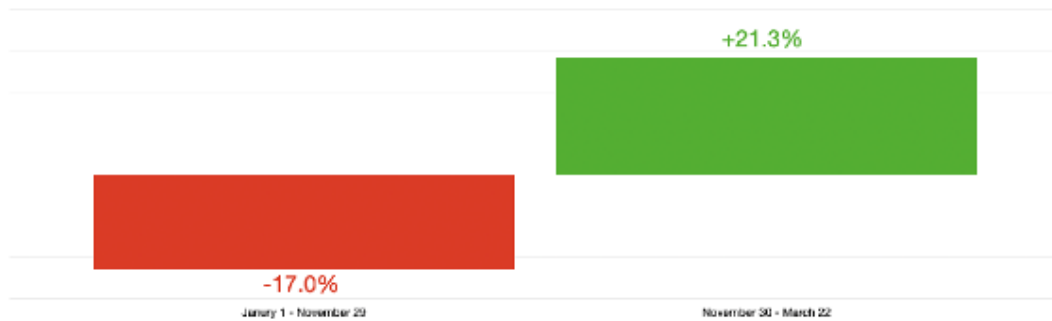
ADDITIONAL RESULTS

The campaign contributed to shifting perceptions of Workday's prospects amongst investors and analysts, positively impacting share price momentum.

Running out of growth steam with its specialist HR focus, the market needed to see a broader offering and customers. But that would require a shift in perception, and an evolution from our reputation as a specialist.

By resetting Wall Street's perceptions of Workday's momentum and growth prospects, we helped influence Workday's share price. Workday went from underperforming the Nasdaq (down 17.0% for all of 2022 before launch) to handily outperforming it over the duration of the campaign (up 21.3%)³⁴

Workday vs NASDAQ Composite, January 2022 - March 2023



Source: Yahoo Finance, WDAY vs. DJC

OTHER CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

- Societal or Economic Events (e.g. changes in economic, political, social factors)

Higher inflation rates and increased unemployment continue to hamper global technology spending, causing Forrester to take down their projected growth rates from 5.7% to 4.7% - while rates for the United States are marginally higher at 5.4%.³⁶

And while cloud growth rates are roughly double the rest of technology spending, growth in cloud applications (like HR management - Workday's bread and butter) is slowing due to market saturation.³⁷

Despite these hurdles, we managed to dramatically accelerate Workday's growth trajectory.

Sources

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32. Workday text between sales team and prospect
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35. Yahoo Finance, WDAY vs. IXIC, January 2022-March 2023
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37. Forrester, Announcing The Public Cloud Market Outlook, 2022 To 2026, November 21, 2022

INVESTMENT OVERVIEW

PAID MEDIA EXPENDITURE (CURRENT YEAR/TIME PERIOD)

[REDACTED]

PAID MEDIA EXPENDITURE (PRIOR YEAR/TIME PERIOD)

[REDACTED]

COMPARED TO COMPETITORS IN THIS CATEGORY, THIS BUDGET IS

[REDACTED]

COMPARED TO PRIOR YEAR SPEND ON THE BRAND OVERALL, THIS YEAR'S BUDGET IS

[REDACTED]

PRODUCTION & OTHER NON-MEDIA EXPENDITURES

[REDACTED]

OWNED MEDIA

Owned media played a key role in our plan. Workday's 17,000 employees used the assets we gave them - stickers, emoji, wallpaper backgrounds and merch - which they proudly amplified across their social media channels. Our content - from LinkedIn posters to rock star videos - was social media catnip, which we used to populate Workday's owned channels. And the Workday.com homepage was updated to drive home the rock star theme - ensuring a close connection between our marketing and the user experience.

SPONSORSHIPS AND MEDIA PARTNERSHIPS

- Sponsorship - Talent or Influencer

Our concept hinged on curating an eclectic assembly of rock luminaries who possessed the following attributes:

- A subtle edge - one that exudes charisma and intrigue without intimidating our audience.
- Worldwide resonance - to cater to the campaign's multi-market scope, spanning five global regions.
- Contemporary legend status - a status that resonates with an audience in their 40s and 50s, while leveraging Workday's contemporary appeal.
- A well-honed sense of wit - a crucial element to provoke the desired emotional response.

Sources

- 38. Workday, Internal Rock Star Measurement Report, March 2023
- 39. Workday, Internal Rock Star Measurement Report, March 2023

TOUCHPOINTS

- Digital Mktg. - Social: Organic
- Digital Mktg. - Social: Paid
- Digital Mktg. - Video Ads
- Influencer / Key Opinion Leader
- Interactive / Website / Apps
- OOH - Billboards
- Print - Newspaper
- Public Relations
- TV

MAIN TOUCHPOINTS

1. TV
2. Digital Mktg. - Social: Paid
3. Print - Newspaper

SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

- Facebook
- Instagram
- LinkedIn
- X (Formerly Twitter)
- YouTube

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