



HIGHLIGHTS

Widely used to build \$6m endowment campaign, boost membership and define the Foundation's work online and in public events

Key media partners featured films and articles about the organization in a way they hadn't for over 25 years

Over 85,000 views in a 5-month window, with well over 5,000 shares of content on Facebook and Twitter

THE DEPARTMENT OF EXPANSION

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Case Study:

THE LEAKEY FOUNDATION

Building an endowment campaign fundraising tool and renewed media attention for one of the most venerable non-profits dedicated to the study of human origins.

Founded in 1968, The Leakey Foundation's mission is to increase scientific knowledge, education and public understanding of human origins, evolution, behavior and survival. The list of scientists who have received support from The Leakey Foundation reads like a virtual Who's Who of evolutionary science, including Jane Goodall, Dian Fossey, and Birute Galdikas, and more recently, Robert Sapolsky, Richard Wrangham, Dan Lieberman and many others. Yet with a name that is practically synonymous with the study of human origins, the organization faced a challenge in effectively communicating their complex mission, and remaining compelling and critical in a landscape where belief in evolution was increasingly under attack.

Objectives

- Provide The Leakey Foundation with a key film explaining their mission
- Provide an engaging and inspiring fundraising tool for the endowment campaign
- Renew enthusiasm and excitement for the Leakey brand
- Achieve high profile science media coverage for The Leakey Foundation

Approach

How do you take a science brand that people associate with stones and bones, and breathe new life and excitement into it?

We began our work with The Leakey Foundation by creating a signature mission film for the organization, focused on the question, "What makes us human?" We conducted interviews with many scientists who had received Leakey funding over the years, and quickly understood that the Leakey Foundation's work is full of romance, adventure and the thrill of a constantly evolving science that attempts to explain human existence at its core. Rather than being focused on the past, we learned how vital the study of evolution is in providing us with a lens through which to interpret some of humanity's greatest ongoing challenges.

Our task as filmmakers was to communicate science to a non-science audience, without losing its scientific integrity. And to make the science come alive in a tangible way. By using exceptional cinematography matched with carefully curated interviews, we were able to create a unique audio-visual experience that gave The Leakey Foundation a critical communication and development tool.

As a second phase project, we continued exploring evolution as a lens through which to interpret our everyday existence by examining the roots of human aggression. We created a series of short films "The Bi-Polar Ape" examining the debate on human aggression from multiple viewpoints. Branded as "Brought to you by The Leakey Foundation," the films were able to achieve key media partnerships with The Guardian and Scientific American. Both publications prominently featured the films on their websites over the course of a week-long series, with key articles about the science and the work of the Foundation. Other blogs picked up the content and wrote about it themselves. The Leakey Foundation had not received this kind of coverage for over 25 years.

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Results

Both the Mission Film and the Bi-Polar Ape series had significant impacts for The Leakey Foundation, both in terms of development, and in terms of raising their public profile. The Mission Film helped define the organization's core reasons for existence to their stakeholders, and was used widely in personal meetings for the endowment campaign, at public events and online to refresh and re-engage relationships with existing donors, and to attract new ones. The Bi-Polar Ape series secured close to 85,000 video views in a 5-month period, and was shared well over 5,000 times on Facebook and Twitter. All four videos consistently ranked in the Top 20 most trafficked content on the entire Guardian site, and secured coveted Front Page spots each day. The Guardian continues to link to the films as "related content" whenever they post new articles about primates/evolution, extending the "long tail" of impact.

From Don Dana, President, The Leakey Foundation:

"It would be difficult for me to adequately express the great experience we had with this team. We have a mission that is difficult to convey, especially in a short film. Kristina and Marj understood that, and were able to design a film that made our mission accessible to the public without watering down the complexity of what we do. They were intellectually brilliant, creative, responsive, and the superlatives could go on forever. They really cared, and their work showed that they cared. Importantly, they were able to create media that appealed to a broad audience, and were articulate enough to earn the respect of our diverse and highly sophisticated board and science advisors."

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"Their films helped The Leakey Foundation successfully raise over \$6 million in our Endowment Campaign, increased membership sign up rates on our website and at public lectures and garnered us major scientific media exposure. They are the featured content on our homepage and funding page have been used extensively at public events and in funding meetings with private donors and foundations. We have had great success and applause for their work. They performed on time and on budget. In short, they are a high quality team, and you can't go wrong with them."

Next steps

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