

# case study

## Nike's "Running Guy" comes to life on radio



### **Best of Show**

Gold - Mixed Media over \$1M

Silver - Radio

Nike Canada

### **Nike RunTO**

Toronto had a nightmare summer. There was a West Nile virus scare, concern about mad cow disease and the SARS outbreak and subsequent quarantine of anyone exposed to the viral infection.

Pity then the organizers of the inaugural Nike RunTO 10K event scheduled for July 27, 2003 - smack dab in the middle of all this urban angst.

Nike wasn't to be deterred, however. It wanted to generate awareness of the run and inspire the average Torontonian to get off the couch; energize the entire city throughout the campaign using media that spoke to runners and would-be runners; drive Torontonians to the Web or to retail outlets to register for the run; and to forge a strong link between Nike and Nike running products and RunTO.

The company thought the best way to achieve those goals was to create "Running Guy," a novice runner, not in the best of shape, who was determined to run in the Nike event even if it killed him. Further, Nike determined that Running Guy would become part of the CFNY-FM morning show for nine weeks, giving him both a zany forum to inform listeners about RunTO and the opportunity to create awareness for the company.

Nike chose CFNY-FM not only because the station delivered the target audience the company wanted, but also because it had the attitude to complement Running Guy's personality.

To ramp up excitement for the race, Nike launched a one-week teaser campaign with a series of tongue-in-cheek messages such as "10 km to a collapsed lung" and "10 km to the fetal position" in newspapers and on buses and streetcars, street level billboards, superboards and elevators as well as fitness clubs. For additional impact, Nike also dominated 12 subway trains and the Eglinton subway station.

Week two of the campaign was given over to introducing Running Guy himself. He and other runners made the rounds of the city every morning, lunchtime and evening rush hour. He also became part of the CFNY-FM morning show, finding a sparring partner in Todd, one of the DJs. Running Guy's banter with Todd was recorded just 10 minutes prior to air and was reviewed by the company's creative agency in Portland, Ore. minutes before being broadcast. The back and forth between the two men - Running Guy in the street, Todd in the studio-ran four times a morning. Running Guy also had a column in Metro Today, Toronto's free commuter paper.

The quirky Nike Web site built especially for the race, [www.runto.ca](http://www.runto.ca), which masterfully mixed pre- and post-event community building and promotion with a low-key brand and product message, went on to also be named Best of Show at the Digital Marketing Awards earlier this fall.

On race day, 7,500 runners completed the course, per capita the highest turnout for a Nike 10 km run, easily outdistancing other events in Los Angeles, London and Santiago, Chile.

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The campaign was a resounding success. Every major media outlet in Toronto gave the run some form of editorial coverage valued at more than \$1 million in total. Running Guy himself became a local celebrity. He signed 600 autographs, had dozens of cookies baked for him on race day, had his photograph taken 500 times, threw out the first pitch at a Toronto Blue Jays Baseball game and posed as a Toronto Sun Sunshine Boy. And if that wasn't enough, Running Guy also received three proposals of marriage.

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