



## Explore St. Louis: Kidnapped Chicagoan

### EXPLORE ST. LOUIS

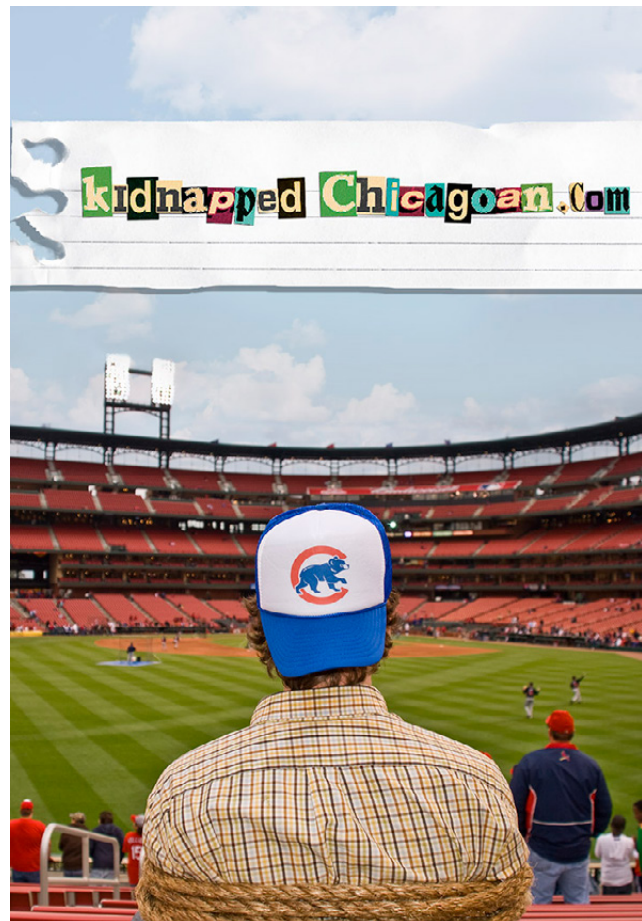
#### BACKGROUND

The St. Louis Convention and Visitors Commission (St. Louis CVC) advertises to attract leisure tourists in feeder cities around the Midwest such as Des Moines, Kansas City, and Memphis. However, despite being the biggest feeder city for St. Louis, Chicago has not been targeted due to the high cost of running a traditional media plan. The Agency convinced the St. Louis CVC to allow it to develop a non-traditional approach to test what could be accomplished behind a modest \$80k investment. The result was a very unconventional approach to tourism marketing. We decided to stage a faux kidnapping, complete with a mystery plot, dedicated website and social media campaign to get the attention of Chicagoans, then show them St. Louis highlights – while communicating our story via their the smartphones.

*“A huge buzz generator that was picked up by the major networks in Chicago”*

#### CREATE

The “Kidnapped Chicagoan” campaign launched with transit banners on Chicago’s L-train commuter lines announcing, ransom-note style, that a local resident had been abducted from the city. Intrigued by the mystery of the messages, Chicago commuters used their smartphones to click through to the website listed on the banners – kidnappedchicagoan.com. – Here they were treated to photos, videos, interactive Google maps, Foursquare and Twitter feeds from the victim (real Chicago resident and actor Scott Stangland), seen bound with heavy rope while having the time of his life visiting the City Museum, Anheuser-Busch Brewery, Grant’s Farm, Saint Louis Zoo, Forest Park, Citygarden and a Cardinals game, as well as other highlights. The campaign



included a cell phone number, prompting more than 2,000 calls and voicemails from individuals asking where Scott had gone, if he needed to be rescued, what he was doing and if they could come visit him. The multimedia campaign, which showed no St. Louis branding, engaged young Chicagoans' sense of adventure and humor and showed them how much fun they, like the Kidnapped Chicagoan, could have on a weekend trip to St. Louis.

## **DEPLOY**

The campaign became an instant hit with Chicago commuters, media, bloggers and Tweeters in both cities. Kidnapped Chicagoan website visitors left messages of support and friendship for the victim and discussed his plight among themselves. In St. Louis, the CVC was interviewed by the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, St. Louis Business Journal, and independent weekly newspaper Riverfront Times. In Chicago, the campaign garnered coverage by WBBM radio (CBS Network), WBKB- and WBBM-TV (NBC and CBS networks, respectively).

## **DELIVER**

"Kidnapped Chicagoan" was bold creatively, but mild in price as the lion's share of advertising dollars went to the transit ads (\$50,000), while H&L agency staff shot the entire story with a hand-held video camera, unscripted, in one madcap weekend on a shoestring budget. The transit media campaign delivered 108 million impressions in just over eight weeks, with more than 23,000 (current total) unique website visitors to the Kidnapped Chicagoan website. Additional TV added value exceeding two million impressions. Importantly, the success of the campaign ensures that Chicago is firmly established in all future marketing plans.