

Fashion and Technology Converge: The Nokia 252 Cellular Phone Launch
Crescent Communications – Atlanta, Georgia

SITUATION

Why introduce a product with old technology into the marketplace? Today's consumers demand digital technology in their mobile phones, so how could Nokia, the world's leading digital phone manufacturer plan the introduction of the Nokia 252 (an analog/old technology product) into the competitive cellular phone market? The answer-- to distinguish Nokia's product as a "fashion phone" to create new demand for what could be considered old technology.

Another challenge was that the product would not be available until late fall, which would compete with other electronics on the cluttered holiday shelves, the marketing department's success was riding on the outcome of the national Nokia 252 launch. Crescent Communications was called upon to develop and execute an event that would be such a memorable occasion that it would generate publicity, and secure the product's position.

Crescent's plan and ultimate success was based on several important issues: location, timing, market trends and emotion. Acceptance by the consumer media, coupled with immediate results, was critical for the product's success. Secondly, Nokia, recognized as a product innovator, and as the leader in the use of color and graphics on its mobile communications products, was facing parity in the market by launching a non-digital phone. Research, however, supported the fact that the market was evolving for cellular phones -- from a strictly businessman's and techno-savvy market to that of the general consumer, with convenience and lifestyle as key elements. Recognizing that emotion plays a large part in purchase patterns and the traditional black cell phone was becoming a thing of the past, Crescent Communications worked closely with Nokia to develop a message that would position the phone in a memorable way. On the morning of Sept. 4, 1997, at the renowned, supermodel-owned Fashion Café in the heart of Manhattan -- undeniably the U.S. mecca of fashion and chic-- Nokia's impact to the mobile phone market was made. Color, design and fashion messages merged into the body of technology phrases traditionally used to describe Nokia products. The Nokia 252 was successfully launched as "The World's Most Fashionable Phone."

RESEARCH

Crescent reviewed company research conducted by the Nokia Design Center to develop the launch message. An informal phone survey of several event planners and fashion consultants was conducted to develop a short list of possible fashion-industry spokespersons for the event. An Internet search was conducted to identify a location with the tightest connection to the chosen fashion theme. With a limited launch window, agency editorial calendar research was conducted to determine dates for best consumer visibility. Finally, the perceived success of the product was important to sell, given the perceived technology hurdle it faced.

Research findings:

- Wireless trends showed the fastest growing market was among young adults, specifically women, and although wireless is moving to digital, there are still more than 45 million analog subscribers.
- Two designers and a fashion supermodel were reviewed as options, but Niki Taylor was identified as the most recognizable tie-in. Additionally, research revealed that this event would mark Taylor's first appearance in New York in more than a year.
- Fashion and NYC -- obvious tie-ins. The Fashion Café offered the completion of the message.
- Editorial research revealed that September was late, but could work within production schedules for holiday buyer's guides.
- A company goal became the theme: "transform a technologically advanced, functional solution into an object of desire."

PLANNING

Objectives:

- Generate national awareness of and desire for the Nokia 252 based on color and design
- Secure Nokia's position as an industry leader in color and design by developing and enforcing key messages
- Reinforce Nokia as an innovative company with innovative products

Target audiences: New York fashion editors, wireless trade editors, consumer media (print and broadcast)

Strategies:

1. Position the Nokia 252 as a commodity item that has evolved to become a "fashion accessory," much in the same way as sunglasses, wristwatches and pens
2. Provide support materials the day of the event for immediate media acceptance and timely photo shoots

Creativity: To maximize the impact of the Nokia 252 as a fashionable mobile phone:

1. Crescent created the concept—a first for the phone industry— then arranged for the venue in a city with the highest connection to the fashion industry and media and secured a supermodel as the fashion spokesperson.
2. Crescent created "The World's Most Fashionable Phone," a tagline to identify/differentiate the product.
3. Crescent developed a high-impact invitation that ties fashion flair with the culinary element of the event.

Budget: The total budget for the launch and associated activities was \$100,000, including location, development and staging of a launch press brunch event (\$20,000), hiring spokesperson talent (\$30,000), creation of a multi-media presentation for the press event (\$40,000) and other miscellaneous public relations-related materials and agency out-of-pocket expenses (\$10,000).

EXECUTION:

Fashion Launch: To launch the Nokia 252 through a one-day event and generate national media attention, key messages had to be funneled through the most influential media. Positioned properly, a combined fashion and technology story would interest fashion and trade publications immediately; however, the biggest influencers would be the consumer magazines – specifically the coveted holiday gift pages which were already on deadline. A special emphasis was placed on consumer media targeting women.

Generate Pre-Event Interest and Excitement

- **Linen Napkin Invitation** – A printed invitation announcing Niki Taylor's association with the phone was sent overnight to 290 top editors and broadcasters in an attention-getting oversized mailing tube, combined with a wineglass and Nokia 252 color-coordinated plastic flatware.
- **Fashion Café Support** – In addition to the mailing list, Crescent also called upon contacts at the Fashion Café to spread the word of the supermodel's long-awaited appearance in New York City.
- **Day of Event** – Setting the stage for the event that would soon follow, guests were greeted with high-impact fashion and runway music the morning of the event.

Develop and Secure the Fashion Message Crescent recognized that words were not enough to convince anyone that a phone didn't have to be "high-tech" to be cool. It was critical to reinforce and secure the "fashionable phone message" with visual support elements to the audience.

- **Fashion Window Boxes** – Developed to reinforce the fashionable phone message, Nokia 252 mobile phones were color-coordinated and displayed with items such as Tiffany glass, Fendi bags, Chanel scarves and Mont Blanc pens, to visitors as they entered and exited the Fashion Café.
- **Multi-media presentation** – Crescent developed a 20-minute multi-media presentation incorporating personal fashion items that have also seen an "evolution" such as pens, sunglasses and wristwatches into lifestyle images to enforce the key message of

cellular phones evolving from a functional tool – to a fashionable “object of desire.” The presentation ran throughout the duration of the press conference and mobile phone fashion show.

- **Phone Fashion Show** – Executed by Crescent to complement the multi-media presentation and highlight how the color of a phone allows people to express their personalities. Fashion models parading in designer outfits representing Nokia 252 colors took the stage with supermodel Niki Taylor as the grand finale.
- **Newsletter**— Crescent decided to tell them again. The “Inside Nokia” newsletter developed quarterly provided additional messages supporting the Nokia 252, fashion and Niki Taylor to Nokia’s customers who sell phones directly to consumers.

EVALUATION:

The Nokia 252 debuted in style at New York City’s Fashion Cafe during what could arguably be the company’s biggest public relations event to date.

Objective 1: Generate national awareness of and desire for the Nokia 252 based on color and design

- **41 percent response rate to the unique invitation** with 121 responses and 114 confirmed “yes” responses to attend the event.
- **58 percent of media invited attended the launch.** 67 print and broadcast journalists, as well as photographers attended the event.
- **8 editors called to apologize about missing the event**, requested materials for inclusion in their publications, and commented on the creativity of the mailer, including *Rolling Stone Magazine* and *Working Woman*--unheard of in the fast-paced consumer magazine industry.
- **100 percent of Crescent’s top wireless and consumer electronics trade magazines covered the phone.**
- **More than 17 million in print circulation** has resulted since the September launch, with upcoming coverage in *Allure*, and *Boca Raton Magazine*.

Objective 2: Secure Nokia’s position as the leader in color and design by developing and enforcing key messages

- **100 percent of the consumer and fashion media coverage supported key messages** including mentions of color, design, style or fashion in describing the product.
- **100 percent** of the broadcast coverage highlighted the fashion message and showcased Niki Taylor with the product. Clips ran on CNN, “FOX on Technology” and VH1 Fashion Awards.
- **75 percent of trades--traditionally dedicated to wireless technology--supported the fashion message.**
- **13,000 cellular carriers, dealers and retailers** who sell the Nokia 252 to consumers read the story in the newly re-vamped “Inside Nokia” newsletter.

Objective 3: Reinforce Nokia as an innovative company with innovative products

- Media received a Nokia 252, to experience the phone’s eye-catching flair and impact the fashion circles with a hot new product not yet available.
- Non-working model Nokia mobile phones were also immediately available for photo shoots and tight upcoming deadlines for key holiday issues and gift guides.
- A limited edition series was developed several months later to be sold at the Guggenheim Museum.
- Media relationships were developed, resulting in additional media coverage on other Nokia products in publications such as: *Marie Claire*, *Elle*, *Vogue*, *The Source*, *Men’s Journal* and more.

In summary, Crescent helped Nokia successfully introduce the Nokia 252 by gaining immediate publicity reaching more than 19 million targeted consumer and trade media and boosting awareness of the product in time to impact holiday season sales.