

**THE
AUTHENTICITY
ADVANTAGE:
DRIVING
RECRUITMENT
WITH REAL
STUDENT &
ALUMNI STORIES**

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University of Wolverhampton



AGENDA

- ♦ Gen Z trust issues
- ♦ Who is winning?
- ♦ What is working at Wolves
 - ♦ Every Story Has A Start
 - ♦ Could it Be?
- ♦ Influencers and UGC
- ♦ Incentives to drive content
- ♦ Participation not perfection
- ♦ Creative framework – The sandbox
- ♦ Key takeaways

GEN Z AND TRUST

Cutting through the noise in a sceptical landscape

THE TRUST DEFICIT

82% of Gen Z trust
organisations that use
images of real customers
(CX Today).

95% of prospective students
value testimonials over
corporate copy
(Unibuddy).

WHO IS WINNING AT AUTHENTICITY?

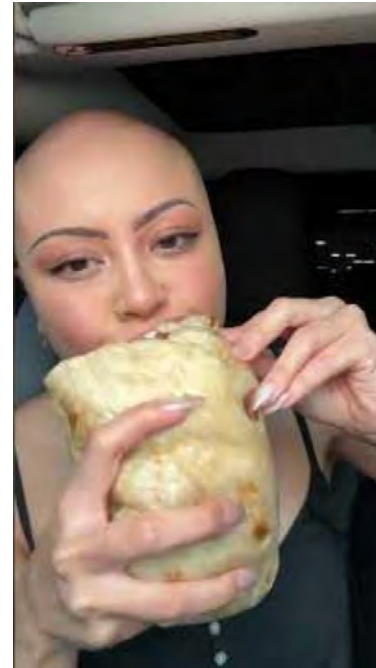
Name some brands that you feel have an authentic image...

WHO IS WINNING AT AUTHENTICITY WITH GEN Z?

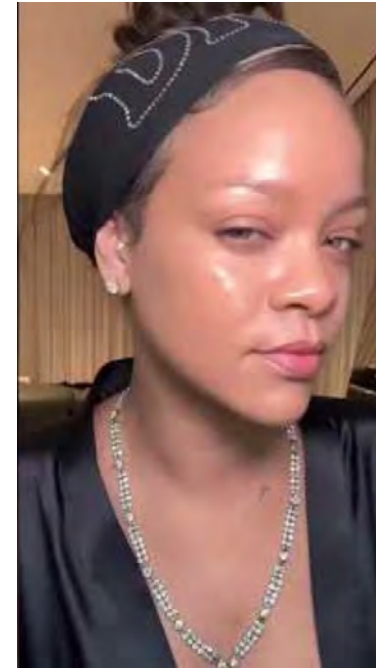
GymShark



Chipotle



Fenty Beauty

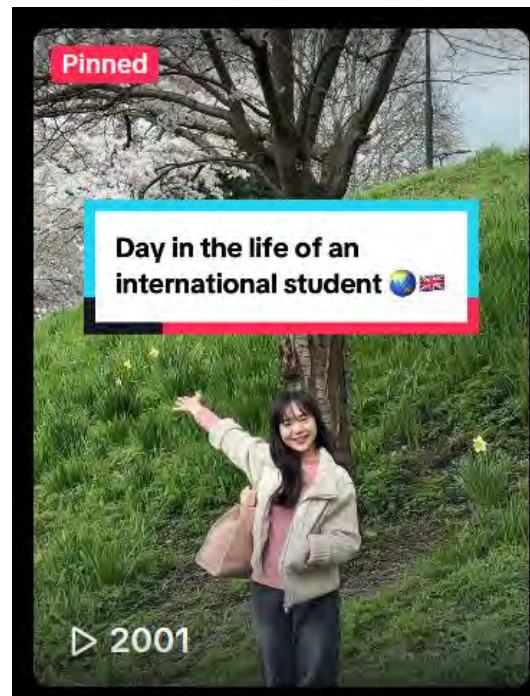


SHOUT OUT TO HE EXCELLENCE

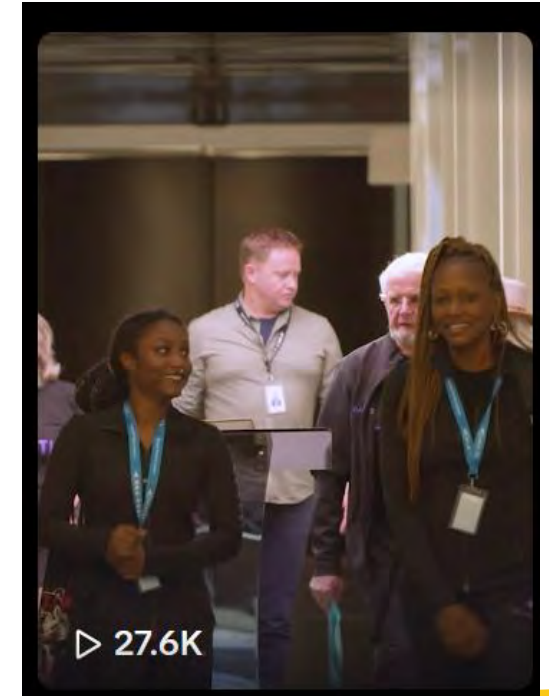
Loughborough Uni



Sheffield Hallam



Uni of Aberdeen



WHAT IS WORKING AT WOLVES

Tried, tested, failed and success

WHICH IMAGE WOULD YOU CHOOSE?

A



B



C

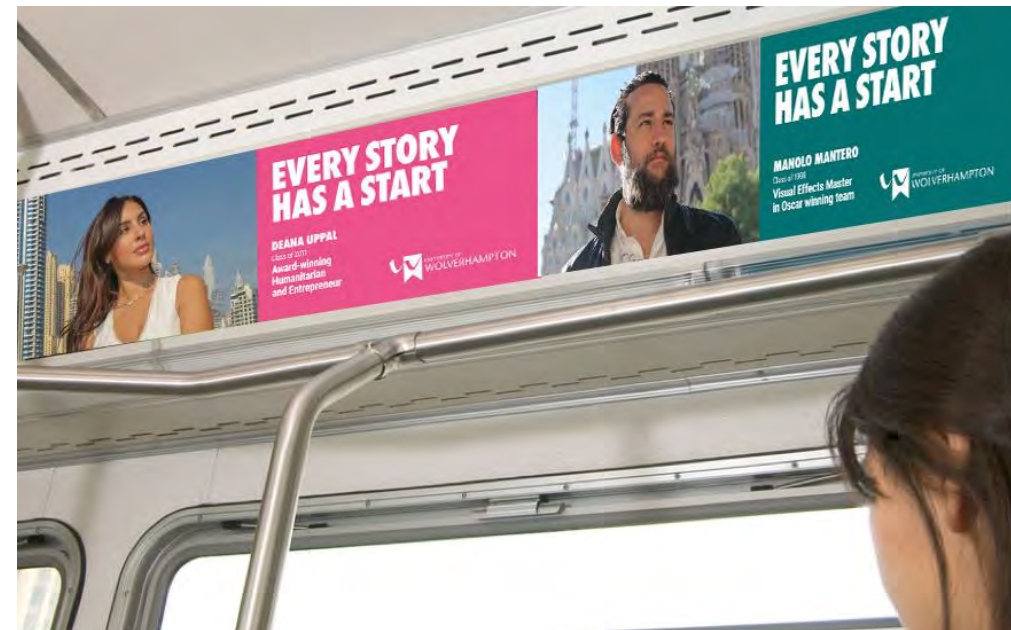


D



EVERY STORY


- ◆ Strategy – Develop sense of pride, growth of 1st choice
- ◆ Concept – Showcase outstanding alumni as proof of service
- ◆ Realisation – Engaged with warm alumni who showcases excellence
- ◆ Briefing and Editing – Highly polished look but non scripted, editing to match look.





deana.uppal 
Wolverhampton, UK



deana.uppal  I recently participated in my university's case study @wlvuni, and they chose my story for their campaign. It's great to see the billboards around town. I hope my story can inspire others who've faced adversity, encouraging them to create the future they desire and deserve, regardless of circumstances 🙌 @wlvalumniassociation #wolverhampton #westmidlands #university

5 w



j.sype 🍌🍌🍌
5 w 1 like Reply

— View replies (1)



Liked by wlvuni and 13,129 others
1 May



Add a comment...



Deana Uppal • 1st
Kindness Diaries DKU Charitable Trust
2w •

Thankyou [University of Wolverhampton](#) for giving me this recognition and choosing my career journey to use as an example for your campaign. To see my photo across my home town on the billboards is truly to ...see more



with Professor Ebrahim Adia, PhD, SFHEA

Professor Ebrahim Adia, PhD, SFHEA and 61 others

6 comments • 1 repost

NEWS

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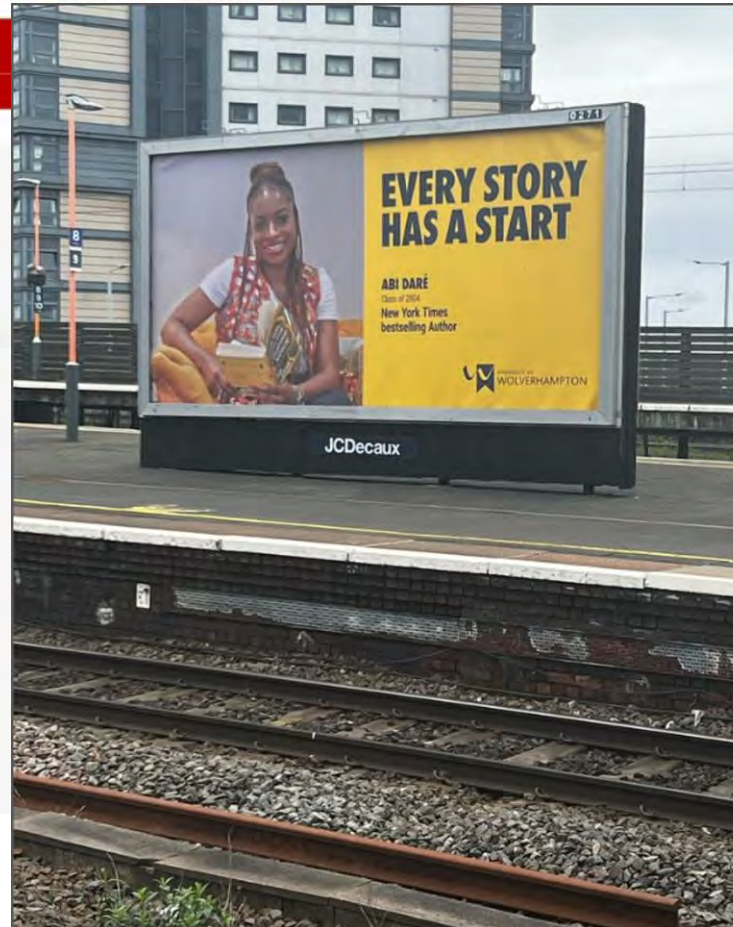
England | Local News | Wolverhampton

University celebrates former students' successes



WOLVERHAMPTON UNIVERSITY
Author Abi Daré is one of three former students taking part in the campaign

Caroline Gall
BBC News, West Midlands



abidare_author • Follow

Wolverhampton Train Station



abidare_author @wlvuni x Abi Daré: every story has a start. Thank you @wlvuni for this opportunity 💜.

2 w



unwankwor My personal pesin 🙌 proud of you sis

2 w 1 like Reply

View replies (1)



davewedge9 Never get tired off seeing this!! 🍌

2 w 1 like Reply

View replies (1)



233 likes

25 May



Add a comment...

Post

THE RESULTS

- ◆ Worldwide paid and organic reach
- ◆ Increased CTR for adverts increasing engagement by up to 50%
- ◆ 6 of our top 20 video on Youtube are 'Every Story'
- ◆ Improved results in Clearing and following campaigns
- ◆ Positive feedback from stakeholders

COULD IT BE?

- ◆ Strategy – greater engagement with Gen z
- ◆ Concept – Spoken word piece, authentic voice of WLW
- ◆ Inspiration – Addidas, popular music, immersive feel
- ◆ Realisation – Engaged with academic staff and alumni
- ◆ Briefing and Editing? – minimalizing the sanitisation

Nate Ethan Watson reposted this



University of Wolverhampton

131,281 followers

1yr •

In our first "Every Story Has a Start" podcast, the UK's first transgender rapper and WLV grad [Nate Ethan Watson](#) shares his journey of embracing his true self, studying Public Health, and advocating for LGBTQ+ ...more

EVERY STORY HAS A START

Nate Ethan Watson

Podcast available now



UNIVERSITY OF
WOLVERHAMPTON

Every Story Has A Start Podcast | Nate Ethan Watson

50

5 reposts

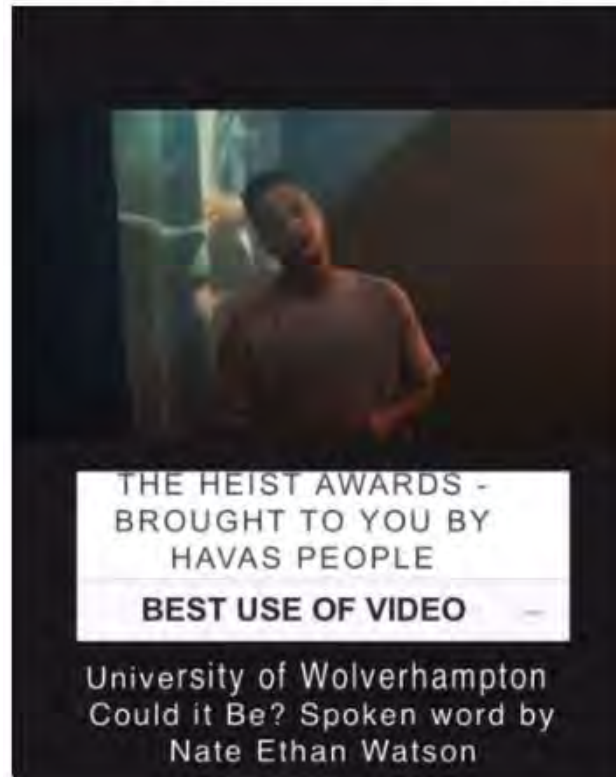


Nate Ethan Watson • 1st

National Diversity Winner: Positive Role Model LGBT 2022 - Awareness ...
7mo • Edited •

I never imagined that telling my truth in a university advert would lead to this.

"Could it Be?" the spoken word I created with the University of ...more



Nate Ethan Watson • 1st

National Diversity Winner: Positive Role Model LGBT 2022 - Awareness...
5mo •

I actually can't believe this! Out of everything I've done in my life seeing my face on public transport has to be one of the wildest achievements for me.

Have you spotted me on the metro? lol



24

2 reposts

THE RESULTS

- ♦ The video contributed significantly to a successful clearing with over **317,967** clicks and **6.78k** conversions in 2024 when launched.
- ♦ The video was the top performing creative shared across all channels on results weekend with over **57,000** plays.
- ♦ The strength of the content was demonstrated by an increase in campaign engagement year on year by 6%
- ♦ Campaign pages outperformed several high-traffic university pages during the same period.

THE "DE- CORPORATE" REWRITING CHALLENGE

The Task: translate the statements into a 15-second script for a student ambassador to say to a camera.

The Goal: To see who can strip away the jargon while keeping the USP intact.

LIBRARY

Our award-winning library offers 2,000 individual study spaces, high-speed Wi-Fi, and extensive digital archives to ensure students have a multidisciplinary environment conducive to achieving academic excellence

SU

The Students' Union provides a diverse range of extracurricular societies and social events, fostering a sense of belonging and community engagement while enhancing the holistic student experience.

CAREERS

The Careers Service utilizes a strategic approach to employability, offering bespoke consultations and industry-led networking opportunities to facilitate successful graduate outcomes in a global marketplace

INFLUENCERS AND UGC

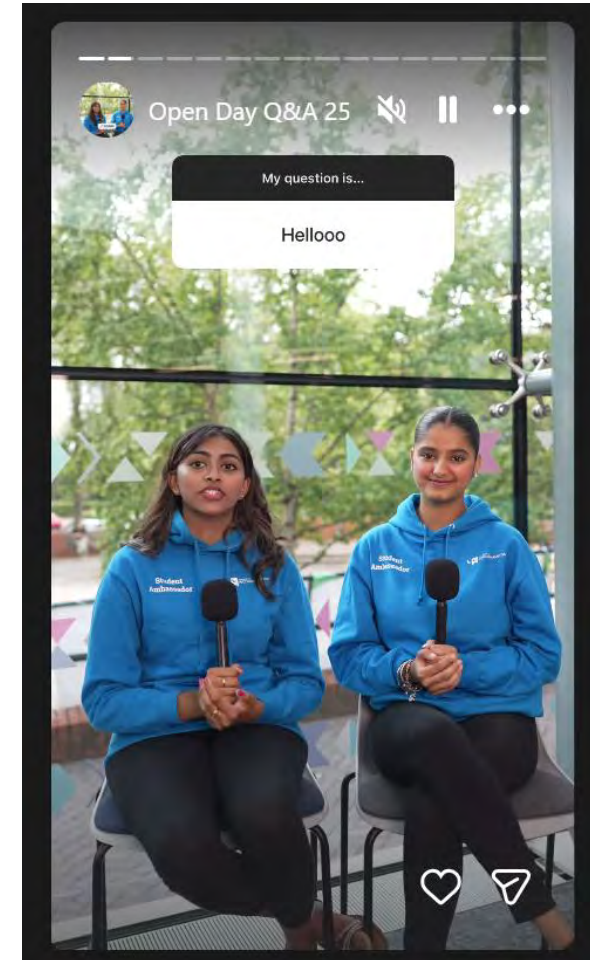
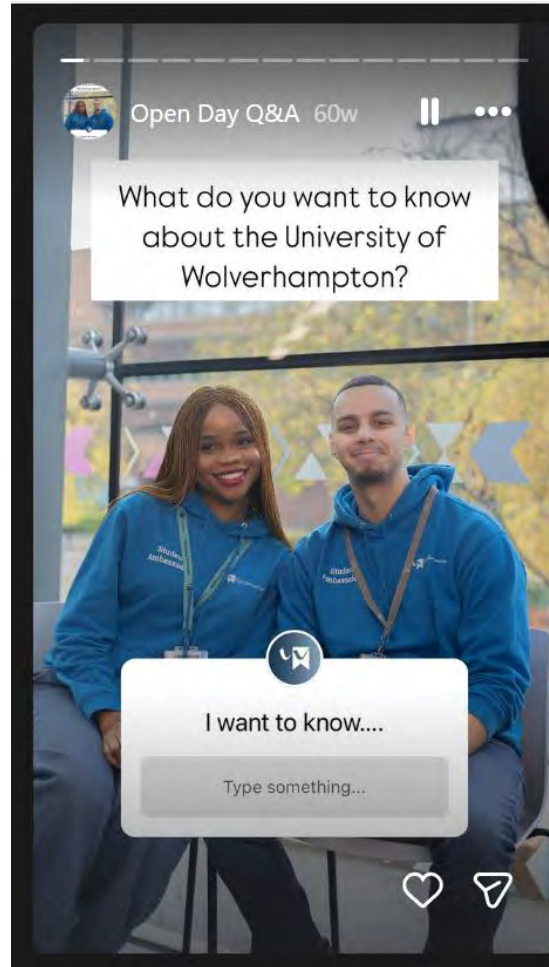
The shift from "Produced" to "Participatory" marketing.

USER GENERATED CONTENT



AMBASSADORS

- ◆ Photoshoots
- ◆ Video stars
- ◆ Models
- ◆ Live Q&A's or broadcast live interviews
- ◆ Consultation on content



THE CRICKET MOMENT...

Failed:

- ✗ Posters / social posts offering amazon vouchers for content
- ✗ Going into subject sessions
- ✗ Delivering a session at the ambassador training – call out
- ✗ Offering work experience to creative subjects

Success

- ✓ Posting paid work opportunities via ambassador platform
- ✓ Graduate Intern scheme
- ✓ Engaging with international students
- ✓ Academics recommending students to work with

INCENTIVE INNOVATION

The Activity: select a persona:

- the shy International Postgrad
- the busy Commuter Student
- the reticent art student
- the high-achieving Athlete
- the mental health support user

The Task: How do you get that specific student to create content?

The Goal: Shift the focus from "paying for content" to "building community." or value exchange

PARTICIPATION, NOT PERFECTION

Gen Z wants participation, not perfection. They favour unfiltered product reviews, “day in the life” creator content, and behind-the-scenes storytelling.

A 2024 report from HubSpot found that 61% of Gen Z prefers brands that collaborate with relatable creators over celebrities.

CRISIS VS. AUTHENTICITY

The Activity:

- A student influencer posts a video: Showing a messy dorm
- Complaining about a long queue at the cafeteria,
- Struggling to make friends
- A nice video but shots of campus with broken furniture or works ongoing
- but it's their most viral and "authentic" post.

The Task: You must decide:

- Do we Ignore,
- Delete/Ask to Remove,
- or Engage/Lean In?

SAFE CREATIVE SANDBOX

The Technical "Non-Negotiables":

- ♦ Phone held vertically (9:16).
- ♦ Wipe the camera lens first (the most common "unusable" mistake!).
- ♦ No background music (we'll add it later)
- ♦ No graphics

Three specific clips for b roll:

- ♦ A close-up of your morning coffee/tea.
- ♦ A 5-second "point of view" shot of you walking into your favourite building.
- ♦ A shot of your laptop screen or notebook mid-study.

Micro briefs :

- ♦ Get ready with me
- ♦ Come with me on my commute
- ♦ Join me for lunch
- ♦ Best place to study alone / with a group
- ♦ Best place to meet and socialise on or off campus
- ♦ Uni accommodation essentials

The "Real Talk" Prompt:

- ♦ *Tell us one thing that went wrong today and how you fixed it.*

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ♦ What do you want to achieve? What are your key messages?
- ♦ Work out how you will measure before you start
- ♦ Bravery breeds trust – don't be afraid of big or heavy topics – cost of living, mental health
- ♦ It requires resource – who is going to coordinate, review, edit, publish content
- ♦ Identify a pool of content creators for training
- ♦ Search students putting out content already
- ♦ Value students input pay or provide a good value exchange
- ♦ Provide a good framework / safe sandbox for content creators
- ♦ Think beyond case study – podcasts and interactive content for an immersive experience