

O2 | Gold Winner

Orchestrating Executive Engagement

O2 Business wanted to introduce an Executive Engagement Program to help strengthen and advance relationships with its key customers and to drive strategic engagement that would deliver significant revenue opportunities.

The Executive Engagement Program was innovative in two ways. First, it was tiered, with different levels of access and benefits for senior executives. Second, it allowed O2 to bring relevant existing initiatives and activities together and take an orchestrated approach, rather than conduct random acts of engagement.

The apex initiative of the program is O2 Business's Customer Advisory Council (CAC), which facilitates customer feedback from the highest levels to O2, helping shape its strategic direction and providing the vehicle to test and share thoughts and direction with customers.

The most innovative feature of O2's approach was moving to an orchestrated program that aligned with the ABM program. This involved taking existing activities – including the executive team's sponsorship of priority accounts, ongoing ABM activities, and executive roundtables, conferences, and innovation workshops – and putting them into a tiered program of benefits for executives in the community. Tiering enabled the identification of four levels of access including: an inner circle of key accounts and senior leaders, an outer circle of priority accounts and senior executives, other business customers, and prospects.

A combination of secondary research, interviews with key customers, and inputs from accounts and sales teams showed there was an unmet need among senior level customers for peer networking to discuss both emerging business opportunities enabled by communications technology, and challenges in operationalizing technology solutions across the business.

Customers were invited based on current O2 revenue, size of wallet share, future growth of customer business, and strategic alignment to ensure a decent cross-section of the market, across both public and private sector. Marketing worked closely with account teams to further profile and build stakeholder plans for potential accounts at each tier of the program. For the CAC, there was an invitation list of 20 executives at 20 priority accounts, with a goal of achieving 12 members. Ultimately, 18 accepted, far exceeding expectations and indicating that the CAC could be of real value to customers.

This new initiative required strong collaboration to bring the plan to fruition. Externally, O2 partnered with consultants to help design the program and internally there was a wider project team with

representatives from other departments in marketing, sales and beyond. Senior internal sponsorship was instrumental in allowing O2 to connect with senior client executives.

To be successful, the program had to be incredibly focused, driven by O2, and built on a solid foundation of continuous insight into the market that audiences would relate to. Thought leadership issues and themes were agreed by the CAC, and its members then helped to shape a piece of original research which was released to the community and became the focus for customer events and an awards program. This thought leadership piece was in-depth study with YouGov and Development Economics to investigate the importance of digital connectivity to the UK economy overall and to individual business outcomes. Not only did the CAC help to scope the research, they provided insight into digital connectivity in their businesses as well as their views of the wider societal issues and impacts. The research was developed as an annual benchmark and index that is available to all executives in the community, with the goal of helping them to improve their own business outcomes. This link of strong insight and research development sets the program apart from customer advisory panels that other businesses use to provide input only on their own strategic direction as a business.

In addition to the CAC and the thought leadership research, the program includes a customer summit, an awards program, and an interactive digital tool based on the research, which allows customers to benchmark their digital connectivity.

The O2 Executive Engagement Program has been deemed a success as measured against Reputation, Relationships, and Revenue:

- **Reputation** - O2 introduced the Net Promoter Score (NPS) customer satisfaction measure in 2019, at the same time as the program kicked off, and then quarterly. There has been a steady improvement in NPS across O2 Business, most notably in those accounts involved in the Executive Engagement Program.
- **Relationships** - O2 has reached senior stakeholders in the most important accounts, where previously there no key relationship. Engagement at more senior levels through the CAC has led to introductions to new stakeholders in all strategic accounts at the senior level but also and as crucially, at the operational level.
- **Revenue** - A direct marketing contribution to pipeline revenue of £15 Million with an additional £33 Million indirectly generated, taking into account influencers' participation in the program. Furthermore, the accounts involved in the inner circle alone represent a total contract value of over £120 Million.