

## Case study

# Thomas and Friends 60th Anniversary Celebration



## THE PR BRIEF:

*In 2005, the much loved brand children's brand Thomas and Friends was celebrating its worldwide 60th anniversary. Its New Zealand distributor, leading toy company Planet Fun called on Joe Public to recommend and implement a PR strategy highlighting the brand's milestone and celebrating its success to pre-schoolers and their families in New Zealand.*

## CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVES

- To communicate Thomas and Friends as part of the Planet Fun family - offering both fun and socially interactive activities for grown up kids.
- To maximise awareness of the brand's milestone celebration in a fun environment.

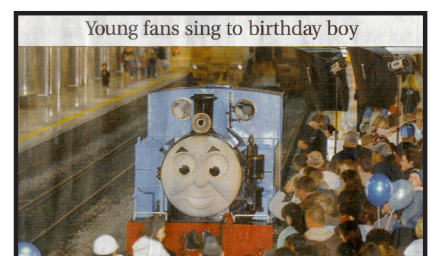
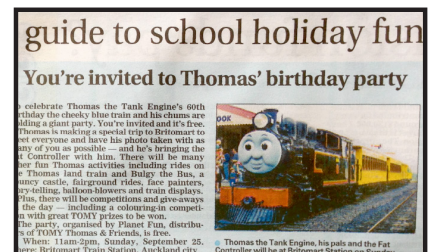
## THE PR STRATEGY

Incorporating media relations and event management, Joe Public and Planet Fun hosted an old-meets-new-party at the then-new Britomart Transport Centre, inviting young families to meet a Thomas the Tank Engine steam train visiting from Glenbrook.

Joe Public recommended the 60th anniversary party to include Thomas' 'friends' – Bulgy the bus, the Fat Controller, and a Thomas land train. Fairground rides, a colouring competition station, bouncy castles, storytelling, DVD screenings, train displays, face-painting, balloon art, bubble artists, clowns, singing fairies and magicians were also planned.

A pre-event media relations programme, targeting local Auckland and national media, supported the drive to encourage families to the event. The event was part of an integrated marketing campaign which included press ads and direct mail highlighting the upcoming party.

Joe Public managed all event logistics including its health and safety plan, issues management, security, engagement of all contractors and suppliers, and on the day hosting.



## THE RESULT

The Thomas and Friends 60th party celebration was an outstanding success, with approximately 15,000 people attending. As this was Britomart's first major event since opening, these numbers were unprecedented. Over 30,000 items of Thomas and Friends merchandise were given away to children, helping to contribute to the brand's goodwill and a sense of excitement amongst the visitors.

Joe Public successfully managed a One News story for the evening's 6pm news, and a page three story in the NZ Herald, plus extensive local press coverage. Radio ad libs in the lead up to the event on More FM, Classic Hits and ZM were aired, and several live crosses were broadcast from the event by More FM Auckland.