

IT After Dark, summarized:

The challenge:

When the pandemic kept us all from meeting face-to-face, the world went digital-first, fast. IT infrastructure nearly cracked under pressure, and IT pros scrambled to hold our now fully digital world together.

The insight:

Behind frontline workers are teams keeping our demanding digital lives running. The “backline” — IT Pros — need celebrating, too.

The idea:

A digital rec-room to escape from the chaos, unwind, and recharge during long days and nights of keeping the world connected.

Bringing the strategy to life:

IT After Dark: a content hub with 8-bit gaming, de-stressing resources and time-saving tools to celebrate and support IT pros.

The results:

An all-time high of 65% brand familiarity among new contacts¹, with 40% lower CPA compared to the prior pandemic year.²

State of the business:

Eaton is a challenger brand and perennial underdog. In the highly commoditized, undifferentiated category of IT power management, they're up against brands with broader name recognition and more spending power. APC by Schneider Electric is the industry Goliath, with 78% familiarity and a 63% market share that dwarfs Eaton's 39% and 17%, respectively.³

To punch above their weight, Eaton must outsmart—not outspend—the competition. And win the hearts and minds of IT pros. Now, take that already uphill battle and add the chaos of the pandemic.

With the sweeping shifts to remote work, distance learning and our increased reliance on digital and virtual connections in our daily lives, IT pros—Eaton's core audience—had more on their plate than ever. It's no surprise that 60% of IT pros reported more work anxiety compared to the year before.⁴ At the same time our audience's attention and sanity shrank, Eaton's budget did, too.

So, our challenge was twofold: the stresses of the pandemic made our legendarily marketing-averse audience even harder to reach, while budgetary constraints meant we needed to engage them more cost-effectively than ever before.

It's also worth noting that with a long, 3–5-year purchase cycle for IT power products, our goal is not immediate sales, but brand familiarity, so that whenever the time to purchase does come along, we're on IT pros' short-list of suppliers.

Audience:

Eaton's core target audience is IT professionals, the primary buyers of IT power management solutions. While working largely behind the scenes, they help keep our connected, on-demand world running. Eaton understands the vital role that their customers play, and IT pros themselves know how critical they are to their organizations. Yet, they often feel underappreciated, both by the end-users they support and the public at large. Their job can be an uphill battle on multiple fronts, balancing big picture organizational goals and an endless stream of tech support needs.

- They tend to be dry-humored and sarcastic, with little patience for tech malfunctions-and even less for marketing efforts.⁵
- On a normal day, they have moments of escape between the flow of jobs, requests and occasional crises. They fill these moments with message boards, meme culture and mini games, as brain breaks to decompress.
- They're avid retrophiles, with a nostalgic connection to the video games of their youth (Atari, Nintendo, classic arcade game type stuff).⁶

When the pandemic hit, IT infrastructure buckled under the pressure. Non-stop Zoom calls. Massive shifts to remote work. An 18% increase in in-home data usage.⁷ A 1087% increase in education app downloads in a single, 2-week period.⁷ Critical medical services. In the eye of this storm was the IT professional, struggling to make it all work. IT pros were more overwhelmed, and harder to connect with, than ever.

Measurable Objectives:

Objectives

- Increase brand familiarity among new contacts
- Gain contacts more cost-efficiently

KPIs

- Meet or exceed target goal of 50% familiarity (historic benchmark)⁸
- Lower CPA from \$78.21 (historic benchmark)⁹

The idea:

As a tech company on a mission to improve lives, Eaton knew this was the moment to celebrate and support IT pros, not sell to them. So, we gave IT pros the one thing their days (and night and weekends) had lost. A break.

Introducing **IT After Dark**... A digital rec-room to escape from the chaos, unwind, and recharge during long days and nights of keeping the world connected.

2021 IT Sleep & Stress Report

We asked IT pros how the pandemic is affecting their workloads, stress levels and work-life balance. Here's what they had to say.

LET'S CRUNCH SOME NUMBERS!

Overview

Our respondents were IT pros in a variety of industries including service providers, education, manufacturing, healthcare, finance and retail.

Responses by industry

- Service provider / IT consulting
- Manufacturing
- Finance
- Retail
- Education
- Healthcare
- Other

60% of IT pros saw their workloads grow in 2020.

Have you experienced any positives as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?

- **26%** My company has made more financial investments in IT infrastructure
- **32%** Management has a higher appreciation for IT
- **41%** I don't have to commute as much (or at all)
- **44%** I've been able to spend more time at home
- **20%** No, it's been all bad

NO COMMUTER THAT DOES COMPUTE!

Currently, my biggest causes of work stress and anxiety are:

Continuous uncertainty	3.52
Doing more with less	3.32
Pressure to innovate faster	3.10
Facilitating remote work	2.82
Keeping my job	2.24

Results ranked most stressful (5) to least stressful (1)

IT pros in ● education (69%), ● finance (79%) and ● retail (71%) were even more likely to report higher workloads.

Dream Gallery

Fan submitted work nightmares

IT AFTER DARK

Children's book

A bedtime story about what IT pros do

Desk-ercises

Exercises for IT pros to do at their desks

Legend of the PDUicorn

Win prizes in this addictive game

24/7 hotline

Comic relief emotional support hotline

Resources

To help IT pros avoid all nighters

IT sleep & stress study

The first study of its kind on IT pro workloads

On IT After Dark, weary IT pros could:

- **Desk-ercise:** stretches and meditations to relieve hours of sitting, typing and screens.
- Thwart IT headaches (and win prizes) in our **8-bit Game**.
- Avoid all-nighters with **Tips and Handbooks by Eaton experts**.
- Read the **IT Sleep and Stress Report:** the first study of its kind in the US.
- Call our tongue-in-cheek **Emotional Support Hotline** for 24/7 comic relief.
- Read our **first-ever IT Children's Book** with their kids: an illustrated story explaining how IT pros keep our world running.

Mid-campaign, we tested and optimized Media Assets to highlight gameplay and amplify prizing CTAs.

Communications Strategy:

In order to reach IT pros at their most unreachable moment, our digital rec-room leaned into their love of retro gaming. Our communication and media approach was equally gaming-inspired, taking cues from successful mobile and video game ad strategies to look, feel, sound and work completely unlike traditional B2B.

- Be entertaining and helpful, above all.
- Show IT pros we "get" them by bringing humanity, empathy and humor to a dry, technical category.
- Provide multiple entry points (both in messaging/content but also in media channels) to connect with IT pros regardless of primary interest.
- Go where the gamers are and convert them. Capitalize on the brand exposure with conversion-driven direct response executions, creating a strong, holistic story arc.
- Everybody loves prizes: Preserving a classic, hard-working promotional tactic, we used a 12-week prize period to drive urgency (and capture accurate contact information).

Channel Strategy:

The IT Pro audience is digitally and mobile connected. So our media plan focused on the channels/platform they already frequent.

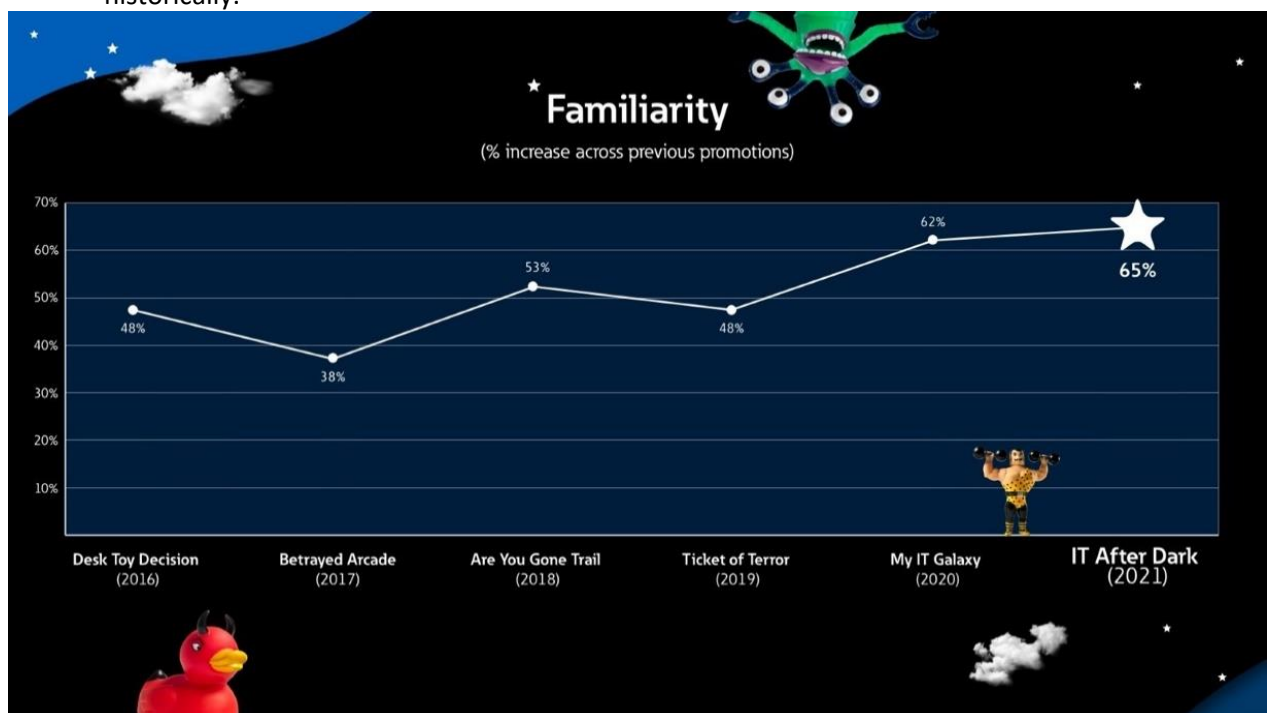
- Paid:
 - o Industry e-newsletters: Audience publication delivered content messages within timely and relevant niche news publications.
 - o Programmatic & Endemic Publishers: Video, animated and static placements in highly targeted programmatic and direct-to-publisher placements resulted in efficient cost per conversion.
 - o Publisher sponsored articles: Longer form content within publisher environments to generate high engagement and time on page, increasing familiarity and pre-qualifying traffic to owned hub.
 - o Paid Social Media: Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn & Reddit reached untapped audiences and retargeted engaged users, which was optimized through creative testing.
- Owned:
 - o Organic Social Media: Social content engaged current Eaton followers over the length of the promotion.
 - o Campaign site: Marquees on the content hub drove traffic to the promotion, capitalizing on organic and paid traffic from other sources.
 - o House emails: Emails sent to owned lists highlighted different aspects and introduced more people to the promotion.
 - o CRM Onboarding Program Emails: Increased repeat engagement with contacts captured during the promotion and created a smooth onramp to traditional email programs.

Results:

Our approach to support and celebrate our audience struck a chord and drove record engagement, setting an all-time high of 65%¹⁰ brand familiarity among new contacts—a 30% increase over the historic benchmark¹¹ of Eaton’s already high-performing campaigns. And we achieved this while reducing CPA by 40% compared to the prior pandemic year¹².

1. Increase brand familiarity among new contacts:

- ITAD generated 65% familiarity, improving upon benchmark by 30%.
- Ensuring net new contacts not only know what Eaton is but how it supports IT professionals makes our audience more receptive to future brand messaging. The themed ecosystem that supported the promotion created more ways for our audience to continue to learn about and connect with Eaton, delivering a deeper, richer experience and more comprehensive journey than Eaton and others have provided historically.



2. Gain contacts more cost-efficiently:

- Based on PTW Media spend, ITAD had a CPA of \$46.82 -- that's a 40% improvement over this historic benchmark.
- Supported by an agile and smart media plan, the multiple content pieces and entry points to the promotion allowed IT pros to engage in the way that made most sense for *them*. The flexibility and responsiveness, as well as the tight integration between messages and media placements, was a win-win, making this promotion more beneficial for IT pros and more effective and efficient for Eaton.

Full IT After Dark site: <https://www.it-after-dark.com/>

Sources:

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4. [Eaton 2021 IT Sleep and Stress Report](#), audience research, 2021
5. Spiceworks, 5 Things IT Pros HATE About Your Marketing, 2013
6. TheGamer, Retro Gaming Is Popular Due To More Than Just Nostalgia, 2021
7. Statista, Coronavirus: Impact on online usage in the U.S., 2021
8. Proprietary familiarity survey, brand familiarity, average familiarity measured May – August 2016-2020
9. Eaton marketing database, lead generation, May – August 2020 & Eaton promotional media spend, media spend, May – August 2020
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12. Eaton marketing database, lead generation, May – October 2021 & Eaton promotional media spend, media spend, May – October 2021