



ADVERTISING COUNCIL CASE STUDY
Interview conducted with Kate Emanuel,
Senior Vice President of Non-Profit and Government Affairs

Project Examples

The Advertising Council conducts public service advertising campaigns with the help of the nation's leading advertising agencies who donate their creative talents and energy, the media who contribute—for free—valuable ad space and time, and the philanthropic support of corporations, foundations, and individuals who provide the crucial operating funds that make the Ad Council's good work possible. For over sixty-five years, the Ad Council successfully used public service advertising to address pressing social issues, inspire change, and make a lasting difference in our country.

Campaign for Freedom

Following the tragedies of September 11th, the Ad Council developed a series of public service campaigns designed to help the country heal. One PSA created by Austin-based ad agency GSD&M sought to celebrate the ideals that keep this country strong by highlighting the nation's extraordinary diversity. Showing people of all ages, races and religions stating, "I am an American," the ads helped the country to unite in the wake of the terrorist attacks. The PSAs aired just ten days after the tragedies and the response was unprecedented. Another spot featuring First Lady Laura Bush encouraged parents to speak to their children about the tragedies.

Hurricane Katrina Campaigns

In response to the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina in the fall of 2005, the Ad Council and American Red Cross launched disaster relief PSAs within days of the disaster. The Ad Council also partnered with the U.S. Department of Education to launch a PSA, featuring Laura Bush, to gain nationwide support for school-related relief efforts for the children displaced by the hurricane. Additionally, partnering with U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt, the Ad Council launched a national PSA campaign to encourage people experiencing psychological distress to consider seeking mental health services.

Generous Nation PSA Campaign

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and the tsunami, Americans selflessly responded with extreme generosity and compassion. The Ad Council saw this as an opportunity to inspire and motivate all Americans to be more philanthropic on a regular basis—not just in times of crisis. The *Generous Nation* "Don't Almost Give" campaign was created on behalf of the entire non-profit community, and provides opportunities for the public to donate or volunteer through partnerships with Network for Good, Volunteer Match and USA Freedom Corps, .

Ad Council icons and slogans are woven into the very fabric of American culture through PSA campaigns including Smokey Bear's "Only You Can Prevent Forest Fires," The Crash Test Dummies: "You Could Learn A lot from a Dummy," McGruff the Crime Dog's: "Take A Bite Out of Crime," and of course, "A Mind is a Terrible Thing To Waste," and "Friends Don't Let Friends Drive Drunk."

Good Business?

Marketing Advantage

Ad agencies offer their professional skills pro bono, because they share the Ad Council's passion to help others and tackle some of the most challenging social issues of our times. They welcome the opportunity to utilize their advertising skills for the common good. As Nina DiDesa, Chairman of McCann Erickson, New York (an ad agency that has worked on countless Ad Council campaigns) states, "Anytime we can use our ability for a worthy cause, we do it because it provides a balance to our day to day jobs. It makes us feel like we're doing something for people and humanity. Creatives want to make a difference, want to have a legacy, and want to know they've changed behaviors and made a difference in solving the problem, whatever it is."

Similarly, media companies selflessly donate time and space to Ad Council campaigns because they believe in the power of the media to help change attitudes, increase awareness and, in some cases, save lives. The Ad Council deeply understands that at the end of the day it doesn't matter how creative, poignant, funny or powerful the PSA. A PSA can only have impact if it is watched, seen, heard, read or clicked. And that's why the media is such an important partner to the Ad Council -- they ensure their messages reach the public. These companies support the Ad Council because just like everybody else, they care deeply about their listening and viewing audiences and want to help improve lives.

Networking Opportunities

By working with the Ad Council, ad agencies and media companies have numerous opportunities to network with their colleagues via the Ad Council's Board of Directors meetings, Congressional events, Annual Public Service Award Dinners and other high profile events where the Ad Council and peers recognize their good deeds.

Evolution of the Ad Council's Pro Bono Involvement

The Ad Council was founded in 1941 when the leading advertising executives of the day were asked to rally both funds and moral support necessary for America to win WWII. Working in tandem with the Office of War Information, the Ad Council created campaigns such as Buy War Bonds, Plant Victory Gardens, Rosie the Riveter's "We Can Do it" and "Loose Lips Sink Ships." After the war, the Ad Council's leadership, decided to carry on their mission and help the country tackle peace-time issues. More than sixty-five years—and thousands of campaigns—later, the Ad Council remains America's leading producer of public service communications.

The Ad Council's tradition of responding immediately in times of great need continues today. And as society has changed, so too has the Ad Council. Whether it was forest fires or polio in the '50s, the Peace Corps or racial discrimination in the '60s, pollution in the '70s, AIDS in the 80s, recycling in the '90s, the Ad Council continues to address the most pressing social issues of the day. Today, the Ad Council's docket includes campaigns addressing childhood obesity, global warming, internet safety, financial literacy, youth reckless driving, cyber bullying and autism awareness, to name just a few.

The Ad Council also steps in when the country is facing a crisis. Just as the Ad Council created ads shortly after the attacks on Pearl Harbor, the organization created its "I am an American" campaign within days of the 9/11 attacks, providing inspiration, hope and healing to all Americans. Additionally, PSAs addressing the flu vaccine shortage sought to encourage Americans who weren't at risk to give

others “a shot”. The Ad Council also joined with former Presidents Bush and Clinton to urge Americans to support the tsunami relief efforts and later, Hurricane Katrina.

Through the pro bono talent of advertising agencies and the generosity of the country’s media, the Ad Council continues to produce creative, effective, and motivating public service advertising campaigns that build awareness, change attitudes and behavior, and improve lives.

Each Ad Council campaign is sponsored by a national non-profit organization or a federal government agency, which provides the production and distribution costs and serves as the “issue expert.” The Ad Council works closely with the advertising agencies and the sponsoring organization throughout the 9-month process to develop the campaign which includes consumer research, production, media outreach, and fully integrated public relations programs.

The Ad Council then distributes the PSAs to the media, via a nationwide network of over 33,000 media outlets (TV, radio, print, outdoor, out-of-home, and Internet). In addition, the Ad Council utilizes innovative communications tools such as yellow pages, taxi cab tops, in-school programming and other emerging media outlets such as personal data assistants (PDA), video email, satellite radio and interactive television.

On average, each Ad Council campaign garners \$40 million in donated media per year and in fiscal year 2007; the Ad Council garnered an extraordinary \$2 billion in donated media on behalf of its campaigns.

Pro Bono Management

CEO, Peggy Conlon, oversees all facets of the Ad Council’s mission to address the most pressing social issues. “The Ad Council represents a unique collaboration between the advertising, media, and business communities. The leading advertising agencies from throughout the country lend us their best and brightest talent to develop our campaigns pro bono and the media industry generously donates the advertising time and space to deliver our messages to the American people.”

Longstanding relationships with most of the country’s leading ad agencies provides the Ad Council with the ability to strategically assign campaigns to an agency based on the agency’s expertise. Typically, campaigns are assigned to an agency based on interests, expertise, audience, and campaign focus. Overwhelmingly, the Ad Council’s partner agencies dedicate their very best talent and senior-level staff to an Ad Council campaign and this relationship can last literally for years. For example, the ad agency FCB has been working on the Ad Council’s Smokey Bear campaign for over 60 years. The agency Leo Burnett has worked on the Seat Belt Safety campaign for decades – same with agency Young and Rubicam’s 35-year partnership with the United Negro College Fund’s on their iconic “A Mind is a Terrible Thing to Waste” campaign. Moreover, ad agencies generally do not treat their pro bono projects differently—in fact sometimes it’s their most creative work because they truly care about the cause.

Likewise, maintaining longstanding and strategic relationships with most of the country’s media companies enables the Ad Council to leverage top-level partnerships on behalf of its campaigns, thereby ensuring millions in donated media annually. The Ad Council has also strategically placed 10 regional media directors in the top media markets (Atlanta, Chicago, New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Boston, Washington, DC, Miami, Detroit and Dallas) to conduct outreach to the media locally.

Project Acquisition

The Ad Council identifies possible campaigns through its Advisory Committee on Public Issues. Established in 1947, this “think tank”, comprised of prestigious leaders from the non-profit, business, research, academic, philanthropic, medical and public policy professions, advises the Ad Council on the nation’s most pressing social issues (on a pro bono basis). In addition, the Ad Council receives many inquiries from the general public, including individuals, non-profits, corporations or others about potential campaigns.

Campaign Criteria

Throughout its history, the Ad Council has required all campaign sponsors to be either a private non-profit 501(c)3 organization, private foundation, government agency or coalition of such groups (traditionally, the Ad Council has worked with individual non-profits or federal departments/agencies; however, increasingly, non-profits are collaborating to address a common cause).

In order for a campaign to be accepted to the Ad Council docket it must meet the following criteria:

- The issue should be of sufficient seriousness and public importance to warrant donations of space and time by the media;
- The issue must offer a solution through an individual action;
- The effort must be national in scope, so that the message has relevance to media audiences in communities throughout the nation;
- The effort should be such that advertising can help achieve its objectives and those objectives can be measured;
- The issue must be non-commercial, non-denominational, non-partisan, and not be designated to influence legislation.

The Ad Council’s current campaign docket is broken down into three themes: education, community and health & safety, with a particular focus on those issues impacting children. Understanding that social change takes time, the Ad Council requires a minimum three-year commitment from campaign sponsors.

Determining the Number and Type of Projects

At any given time, the Ad Council has approximately 50 campaigns on its docket. In terms of staffing, a “campaign manager” is assigned to each campaign with each campaign manager supervising 5-6 campaigns. This campaign manager works closely with the nonprofit or Federal Government sponsor and partnering ad agency and guides the Ad Council’s 9-month process which involves 6 major stages: 1) research and planning; 2) strategic development; 3) creative development; 4) production; 5) distribution/media outreach; and 6) monitoring and assessment.

Advertising Agency Recruitment and Outreach

The Ad Council works closely with the nation’s leading ad agencies and specifically those agencies belonging to the American Association of Advertising Agencies (AAAA), the national trade association representing the advertising agency business in the United States.

The Ad Council rarely finds the need to actively and formally recruit ad agencies to work on their PSA campaigns because the Ad Council has a historic and well-established relationship with the nation’s leading advertising agencies, some lasting 30-60 years.

Sometimes, newer agencies will approach the Ad Council and express an interest to work on an Ad Council campaign. In addition, the Ad Council’s network of non-profit clients, PR firms, and ad/media agencies will sometimes refer and direct others to the Ad Council.

Sustained Involvement

The Ad Council maintains its strong pro bono model by constantly engaging the ad agency and media communities via its Board of Directors (which is comprised of the CEOs and chief marketing offices of the nation's top media, advertising, advertiser companies and trade organizations).

Recognition for Pro Bono Work

The Ad Council believes that regularly recognizing and thanking the contributions of their pro bono partners helps to maintain and increase their support. The Ad Council uses its Annual Public Service Award Dinner, attended by over 1200 individuals from the advertising, media and corporate world, to recognize its pro bono partners before their peers with a high-level awards program.

The Ad Council also recognizes its partners through high-profile events such as Congressional Media Awards receptions, White House/Presidential events, and its "Silver Bell" award program. (The Silver Bell award is bestowed upon those media companies that exemplify extraordinary generosity and leadership in disseminating Ad Council public service messages.) Additionally, the Ad Council conducts an annual Congressional mailing in which it sends over 800 letters of appreciation to those TV stations who have donated substantial airtime to Ad Council PSAs. Furthermore, a letter is sent to that station's Member of Congress in an effort to recognize and promote their good deeds.

Impact Measurement System

Although most Americans can assuredly recite Ad Council slogans, Ad Council PSAs are not just memorized--they mobilize. The Ad Council tracks all of its campaigns to ensure they are effective in raising awareness, changing behaviors or motivating the public to action.

The Ad Council conducts extensive research and surveys to measure the impact of a campaign. Success of a campaign is measured by tracking donated media (via quarterly reports), tracking visits to the campaign's website or calls to a toll-free number, and conducting pre- and post-campaign launch tracking studies that measure attitudinal, behavioral and awareness shifts among the campaign's target audience.

Through extensive research, the Ad Council is able to track the response and impact to each campaign. A campaign generally undergoes:

- Strategic research and evaluation: Extensive research and review during the campaign's formative stage informs the most effective communications strategy.
- Communications checks: The creative concepts are tested with consumers in order to gauge their response to the advertising.
- Peer Review: For all Ad Council campaigns, feedback and approvals are solicited from its Campaign Review Committee (a panel of the nation's top advertising executives who meet monthly to review and approve three critical stages of a campaign: the strategy, creative concepts, and final advertising materials).
- Media measurement: Donated media support is monitored to estimate the number of ad placements, media impressions generated, and the monetary value of these placements.
- Tracking survey: The tracking study gauges trends over time among the target audience. It measures awareness of the issue, recognition of the advertising, and changes in relevant attitudes and behaviors.
- Consumer response: All forms of consumer response are monitored including website traffic, brochure requests/downloads (if appropriate), email sign-ups, etc.

Lessons Learned

Biggest Challenge

The Ad Council's biggest challenge is to make sure its PSAs are seen, heard, and read in an ever-changing, fragmented and cluttered media environment. More importantly, it needs to ensure the PSAs are actually achieving results—that is, increasing awareness, changing social norms, and inspiring action. With heavy competition for limited media resources, the Ad Council is constantly evolving its strategies to ensure the PSA messages reach the public and motivate.

Biggest Success

In fiscal year 2007, the Ad Council received over \$2 billion dollars in donated media on behalf of its fifty PSA campaigns. This gift from the nation's media companies enables the Ad Council to achieve its other biggest success: incredible results for its campaigns leading to lasting and positive social change. For example:

- In just the first six months of the Big Brothers Big Sisters' Mentoring campaign, there was a 75% increase in applications to become a mentor.
- The Wireless AMBER Alerts campaign, where people can voluntarily sign up to receive Alerts on their cell phones, has resulted in over 400,00 signups thereby increasing the number of people who could help locate an abducted child.
- The Ready campaign—which encourages Americans to prepare for all kinds of emergencies--has garnered more than \$676 million in donated media over the last 4 ½ years . The campaign website has received more than 2 billion hits.
- Since its launch, the US Department of Health and Human Services' Adoption campaign has received \$150 million in donated media and more than 8,000 new families have started the adoption process with the hope of giving a child from foster care the love and opportunity they deserve.

Valuable Advice

The Ad Council understands that you must constantly recognize the good deeds of its pro bono partners and make it worthwhile for them to give their valuable time, energy and resources. This applies across the board—whether it's a Board member, ad agency executive or PSA director at a local radio station. The Ad Council also recognizes that when asking for pro bono help, it is imperative to be sensitive to the companies' bottom-line and other commitments, including their paying clients. Therefore, the Ad Council is careful to be flexible and establish reasonable expectations when working with their pro bono partners.

Contact Kate Emanuel, Sr. Vice President of Government and Nonprofit Affairs at (202) 331-4152 or kemanuel@adCouncil.org to learn more about the Ad Council and their pro bono model.