

A Window Into the Presidency - Marvin's 2012 Campaign

Fast Horse and Marvin Windows and Doors, Jan 1, 2013

Summary: 2013 Silver Anvil Award of Excellence Winner — Marketing Consumer Products — Non-Packaged Goods

In late 2011, the real estate market continued to drag in the face of the worst housing recession since the Great Depression, but Marvin had committed to retaining its workforce and keeping its commitment to its communities – just as it had the past century. Looking to capitalize on the family-owned and -operated roots that kept the company strong for more than 100 years, Marvin needed not only to increase its visibility but to give customers a reason to choose them over the competition. Moreover, Marvin had a small budget for this effort, as it was trimming costs across the board. This program had to be effective and affordable — going beyond visibility to drive sales and build Marvin's reputation and brand with consumers, channel partners and employees.

< BR>Marketing consumer products includes programs designed to introduce new products or promote existing products to a consumer audience. The non-packaged goods subcategory refers to consumer products, such as clothing, appliances and furniture.

Full Text: **SITUATION ANALYSIS**

As President Obama kicked off his re-election campaign with a major speech on the economy, a Minnesota college student sent a surprised tweet: "Did Obama just mention Marvin Windows from Warroad Minnesota???" The president didn't simply mention Marvin Windows and Doors. He used the company's story as the emotional climax of a highly anticipated address that set the economic themes of his 2012 campaign. Obama held up Marvin as an example to the nation. Telling how Marvin refused to lay off workers in the depths of the recession as competitors made deep cuts, he said, ***"That's how America was built. That's why we're the greatest nation on Earth. That's what our greatest companies understand."***

But the tale doesn't end there. Obama returned to the Marvin story repeatedly during the highest-profile moments of the 2012 presidential campaign: in his acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention; in the first presidential debate; and, finally, in his victory speech on Election Night. His opponent, Mitt Romney, also praised Marvin in a high-profile, final-week campaign appearance at one of the company's manufacturing facilities in the key swing state of Virginia.

How did a family-owned company in a tiny, northwoods town five miles from the Canadian border become one of the recurring touchstones of a presidential campaign? It didn't happen by chance. It was the result of strategic efforts to promote Marvin's 100-year heritage of family ownership, community involvement and product innovation as a competitive differentiator and reputation enhancer — and then making a concerted effort to fan the flames started by each presidential spark.

RESEARCH

We began with an audit of the window and door industry. Reviewing the marketplace, we noted

a few key differentiators for Marvin. While almost all of its competitors are based in the Midwest – often in small towns – only Marvin committed to retaining its workforce during the housing recession, while competitors went through multiple rounds of layoffs. Additionally, we dug into the purchase process for windows. Unlike most consumer purchases, which may take place within a few months, purchasing windows can be a 10-year decision, influenced at multiple points. Thus we knew a well-done institutional campaign designed to build the company’s reputation and highlight its heritage could positively influence future sales. To set a baseline for measurement and ensure we were moving the needle for Marvin, we took an initial reading of the windows and doors landscape and looked at how Marvin stacked up in online share of voice: how often Marvin was mentioned in traditional and social media. As the smallest of the Big Four window manufacturers, it ranked third in share of voice as we began planning for our campaign.

Our marketplace research gave us a solid foundation for shaping our program. With the housing business in an ongoing depression, there was a glut of industry bad news – plant closings, financial problems and layoffs. We saw a significant opportunity to tell a “hero” story, building awareness of Marvin’s position as a family-owned and operated company with a heritage of enlightened management, high-quality products, community involvement – and no layoffs. We had an opportunity to showcase the company’s stability and heritage, while reinforcing other business goals aimed at employee retention and strengthening dealer relationships. Our research also uncovered the German practice of using reduced work weeks, or *Kurzarbeit*, rather than layoffs during tough times. That insight would prove to be the critical hook for a brand-building campaign that would lead straight to the White House, and set off waves of the kind of publicity that simply can’t be bought.

PLANNING

In late 2011, the real estate market continued to drag in the face of the worst housing recession since the Great Depression, but Marvin had committed to retaining its workforce and keeping its commitment to its communities – just as it had the past century. Looking to capitalize on the family-owned and -operated roots that kept the company strong for more than 100 years, Marvin needed not only to increase its visibility but to give customers a reason to choose them over the competition. Moreover, Marvin had a small budget for this effort, as it was trimming costs across the board. This program had to be effective and affordable — going beyond visibility to drive sales and build Marvin’s reputation and brand with consumers, channel partners and employees.

Objectives

Secure coverage in premier national media and leading trade publications; increase overall media share of voice versus its major competitors (SOV was at 23% in 2011); create at least 125 million gross media impressions (up 25% over 2011); introduce the company to consumers outside of the typical purchase process (i.e. news and business, not home and remodeling).

Target Audience

Primary: High-end homeowners, builders and architects;

Secondary: Dealers and employees.

Strategy

Tell the Marvin story of heritage, ethics and values; create opportunities for Marvin’s partners to tell the heritage story; highlight unique remodeling and construction projects where only Marvin windows and doors would fit the bill. We developed a multi-faceted plan designed to launch during a key period in Q4 of 2011. This coincided with the last annual push for remodeling and replacement projects and complemented ongoing energy efficiency efforts. In addition, we conducted several trips to Warroad where we interviewed employees and captured video and photography to use when creating content during the execution of the campaign. An integrated content plan was developed for corporate materials, social media, Web and email marketing, ensuring that interested consumers, builders and architects would receive a consistent “Marvin

heritage"-themed message whether they were at a local window dealer, visiting the website or reading the blog. And we honed our media relations strategy and targets in an effort to secure a seminal story that could ignite a wave a buzz for Marvin.

EXECUTION:

- **Heritage content on Marvin.com:** Focused on family leadership, history of innovation and community support..
- **Heritage videos:** Used as sales tools and content for social media channels.
- **Marvin's blog:** Featured stories of long-time employees and their role in providing superior products and service.
- **Sponsored content:** Partnered with popular blog Design Milk to highlight Marvin's approach to unique projects.
- **Social media:** In-depth editorial calendar to give direction to a focused content push.
- **Sales tools:** Helped Marvin's independent dealers tell the heritage story.
- **Media outreach:** Created a series of business-themed and human-interest pitches, garnering significant coverage. The key was the German practice of *Kurzarbeit* that our research uncovered. We pitched that concept to the *New York Times*; the result was a **centerpiece in the Sunday Times business section**. The reporter spent three days in Warroad, interviewing company officials, residents and workers for an in-depth feature, closely mirroring the storyline we outlined in our pitch. The *Times* story was noticed by the White House and quoted in the president's speech, opening the door to a host of additional national coverage opportunities in the Wall Street Journal, AP and dozens more outlets – as well as further mentions by President Obama.

With each story, and each mention from Obama, we were there to fan the flames and generate even more buzz – using tactics ranging from additional consumer-, trade- and business-media outreach to email marketing to social media content and more. Among the efforts was a late-night, full-team rush to monitor social media buzz, track media coverage, and conduct extensive media outreach to capitalize on what was arguably the highest-profile of Obama's several references to Marvin: his prime-time speech at the DNC in September 2012. In that surprise reference, Obama mentioned "a family-owned company in Warroad, Minn.," and our team sprang into action to ensure there was no question among local and national media that Marvin was the company he was praising. Our tracking and analysis attributed approximately 122 million media and online impressions to this event alone, much of which was driven by proactive media outreach and message reinforcement — all of which started at 10:00 on a Thursday night.

EVALUATION

- During the campaign, **Marvin's overall media share of voice jumped** to 31% from 23%, a one-third increase. Though it's the smallest of the Big Four window makers, Marvin led in share of voice throughout 2012. In social media alone, Marvin's share of voice consistently tops 50%. Even more important, coverage of Marvin has been nearly universally positive, while much of the competitors' coverage focused on layoffs and other challenges.
- Marvin earned **550 million media impressions** for this program, nearly 350 percent higher than our goal.
- Sponsored posts on Design Milk garnered 100 retweets each, 500 sales leads **and 2.4 million impressions**

- We reinforced Marvin’s expertise in millwork through our successful social media Q&As and a video series “Inside Every Marvin Window.”
- Company president Susan Marvin received **hundreds of emails and letters** thanking her for the no-layoff stance.
- Dealers saw an increase in leads and were **invited to bid on projects** based on media coverage. Coverage led to a number of sales, including a significant contract as far away as France.
- Media personality Greta Van Susteren said, “Had I known about Marvin, I would have specifically asked to have Marvin windows installed” in her home.
- During a MN Public Radio interview with Marvin, the host remarked: **“You can’t buy this type of publicity.”**
- A typical NYTimes.com commenter wrote: **“Bravo for those hockey-playing, ice-fishing woodworkers in frigid Minnesota.** Perhaps they’ll show us how good old-fashioned sweat and elbow grease can lift us out of our doldrums and start building a sustainable nation for the next century and beyond.”
- Additional highlights included a *New York Times* video looking at Marvin’s role in the community as well as coverage from the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Miami Herald*, Esquire, New York magazine, the National Review, the Associated Press, McClatchy-Tribune News Service, Bloomberg TV, MSNBC, CNBC, Fox & Friends, and hundreds more consumer and trade media outlets.
- Susan Marvin was selected by Twin Cities Business magazine, Minnesota’s premier business publication, for inclusion in its annual “200 Minnesotans You Should Know” issue.
- On Dec. 22, 2012, this chapter of the Marvin story ended with another headline in the *New York Times*: “No-Layoff Company Now Writes Profit-Sharing Checks.” Despite battling through the Great Recession for four years, Marvin Windows and Doors showed a profit for 2012 of \$779,379. The company shared the profit with its more than 2,500 workers, with the average employee receiving a check for \$311 – plus a ham.

Marvin deemed the campaign a huge success – its sales have grown through a tumultuous period while its competitors have struggled. Its online and overall media share-of-voice lead the industry. And the President of the United States repeatedly held up Marvin Windows and Doors to the nation as an example of our country’s heritage – and a key to its future.