



Cause an Effect - State Farm Empowers Teens to Drive Big Change

Weber Shandwick and DDB and State Farm, Jan 1, 2013

Summary: 2013 Silver Anvil Award Winner — Integrated Communications — Consumer Products — Non-Packaged Goods

In 2012, State Farm gave the decision making power of a \$1 million grant program to 30 students and the entire Facebook community. Cause An Effect, a crowdsourced program, garnered more than 1.2 M votes in three weeks. There were 418 K unique visitors and 189 unique media placements. The \$25,000 grants reached 22 states and 40 communities ranging in size from 222 to eight million. Examples of winning causes ranged from helping an animal shelter replace its rescue van to assisting groups that support the homeless and impoverished.

Integrated communications includes any program that demonstrates leadership of public relations strategies and tactics in a creative and effective integrated campaign, along with other marketing or communications. The program must demonstrate the clear leadership of public relations, along with its integration with other disciplines.

Full Text: A 90-year company with a strong, recognizable brand took a risk in 2012. And the risk paid off. State Farm gave the decision making power of a \$1 million grant program to 30 high school and college students and the entire Facebook community. In the past, the company struggled with driving media and engagement around their extensive grant programs. In 2012, the goal was to reach a much broader audience with a new, more relevant, social media program and engage people throughout the process. And they caused quite an effect. More than 1.2 M votes were cast in three weeks. There were 418 K unique visitors and 189 unique media placements. The \$25,000 grants reached 22 states and 40 communities ranging in size from 222 to eight million. Examples of winning causes ranged from helping an animal shelter replace its rescue van to assisting groups that support the homeless and impoverished. It also proved to a team of young people they really could drive change and make an impact.

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS / OVERVIEW

State Farm was looking for new, more relevant ways to engage with consumers regarding their philanthropic donations, and that spring, they launched Cause An Effect (CAE). CAE empowered people to identify issues in their community via Facebook. Then the program connected them with a local nonprofit that can help solve the problem, and provided an opportunity to receive \$25,000 in funding support. State Farm researched other crowdsourced grant programs to ensure CAE was easy and accessible and didn't suffer brand and reputation issues other companies experienced in the past.

Causes were submitted via Facebook to the State Farm Youth Advisory Board (YAB). The YAB is 30 students, 17-20, from the U.S and Canada who run a \$5 million-a-year grant program. The YAB reviewed the submissions and selected 100 finalists. Then communities rallied behind their Cause by voting on the State Farm Facebook page for three weeks. The 40 top vote receiving Causes each won \$25,000.

State Farm's program goals were to reach and engage with a new audience, create social and

traditional media buzz, identify and address issues, and highlight the YAB involvement of the program. State Farm kept a few key concepts at the forefront of their design: **transparency, flexibility and simplicity; encourage engagement; represent State Farm's longstanding values, and be different.**

RESEARCH

External

- **Changing Our World** – A 2011 survey on sustainability and cause marketing, 83% of consumers believe companies should accomplish their business goals while still trying to improve society and the environment.
- **University of Texas** – Research done by the University Of Texas School Of Management found corporate charitable contributions are an effective way to enhance revenues in the 'consumer sector.' Companies with a solid CSR connection outperformed the S&P 500 index by 3.5% points over five years.

Internal

- **Facebook** – Working with Facebook we researched different methods of consumer engagement and how they are best received on the Facebook platform. Through those discussions and research we found that crowd sourced initiatives performed well as did youth-led programs.
- **Past Campaigns** – State Farm studied other crowdsourced philanthropic campaigns to be sure CAE was unique and avoided pitfalls that caused reputation issues for other consumer brands that had experimented in this space.

PLANNING

Objective / Strategies: Launch a program that generates social and traditional media buzz, fuels consumer participation around the community needs; raises the awareness of State Farm's philanthropic work and the YAB; and identifies and addresses the consumer's key issues across the country.

- **Identify and address key issues and reach a new audience:** State Farm made the submission process easy and unlike traditional grant applications, opened up the funding categories to allow more creative ideas, utilized existing networks (national and state nonprofit partners, legislators, community leaders, etc.) and internal communication vehicles to spread the word; and shared the opportunity with non-traditional stakeholders through grassroots outreach, traditional and social media.
- **Create social and traditional media buzz:** State Farm created a multi-layered approach: educate and engage employees and State Farm agents to execute the program and become CAE ambassadors; extensively promote CAE via social media including bloggers, Facebook Twitter, and ads; and create a consumer friendly Facebook tab that was easy for participants to share with friends and family, and a promotion tool kit for the top 100 nonprofits to help them promote their cause in their community via social and traditional media and existing networks.
- **Highlight the YAB and youth involvement:** CAE needed to stand out, since it was not the first crowdsourced grant program. The involvement of the YAB made CAE unique. All messaging focused on this key differentiator.

EXECUTION

Identify and Address Key Issues and reach a new audience

- Through employee and agency engagement, integrating online advertising with a grant

program, promotion via social media channels and traditional media placements, CAE reach a new audience.

- State Farm created a Facebook experience that was easy for the consumer to submit ideas, share their involvement and vote for their favorites.
- State Farm paired each cause with a nonprofit that was charged with identifying and implementing a solution to the problem raised by the consumers who participated in CAE

Create social and traditional media buzz

- State Farm identified key media markets (i.e. LA, MSP, Chicago, Orlando, etc.) and targeted pitching efforts while also pitching to smaller markets and bloggers.
- An ad campaign was launched that focused on the target demographic (18-45); social content provided for agents and media specialists; cross-promotion of CAE on all State Farm social media.
- Weber Shandwick's created the Q&A, two of the three press releases, and the nonprofit tool kit. DDB created the Facebook tab platform and led the Facebook ad and sponsored search efforts.

Highlight the YAB and youth involvement

- With the help of State Farm, the YAB created videos talking about the board and their thoughts on CAE and what it meant to them that were shared on the CAE Facebook tab and social media properties.
- Social posts on all State Farm properties that promoted the YAB throughout all of CAE.
- Utilized the YAB members as program spokespeople for media interviews.

EVALUATION OF SUCCESS

Identify and address key issues and reach a new audience

- State Farm grant programs traditionally support organizations whose mission and goals closely related to our business like auto, home and financial safety organizations like the Red Cross or the Junior Achievement. 75 % of CAE grant recipients were "non-traditional" State Farm grant recipients such as Skate for Change, a group of young skateboarders committed to giving back to the low income and homeless in Lincoln, Neb.
- 38,000 people took to Facebook and cast more than 1.2 M votes in three weeks. The 40 winning organizations came from 22 states and the top five voting- receivers came from cities with populations less than 275,000. Six neighborhood parks were built or improved, while more than 65 percent of the causes directly impacted youth.

Create social and traditional media buzz

- Social media results – Positive sentiment increased 7.1% Received 3,000 submission and 1.2 million votes with a 11% conversion rate. 418K unique visitors, 38 K unique voters, 22K socials shares and a 25% return rate. 51% of the conversation during voting was on Facebook and 40% on Twitter.
- 189 unique media placements were garnered; some highlights were placements in NBC LA, ABC San Francisco, Orlando Sentinel, *Mashable* and the *Philadelphia Tribune*.
- State Farm agents were engaged in the program. One out six cause submitters heard about CAE from an agent. Three of the winning causes had a direct connection with their local agent.

Highlight the YAB and youth involvement

- The three YAB videos received more than 2700 views.
- Throughout the program, YAB members were used as spokespeople in media markets across the country discussing the programmatic elements during the cause submission and the voting phases. Also, YAB members took part in several of the grant check

presentations which raised their public profile throughout the U.S.

- Increase awareness of YAB – Facebook likes increased 462% in 2012. The YAB website saw a 37% increase in traffic resulting in a 61% increase in grant requests. Their YouTube video views increased 342% over the previous year.

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