



FDOT NoExcusesFL Twitter Campaign

The Tombras Group and Florida Department of Transportation, Jan 1, 2013

Summary: 2013 Silver Anvil Award of Excellence Winner — Public Service — Government

After analyzing data on impaired driving enforcement, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) realized its messaging wasn't getting through to young adult males. To increase awareness, FDOT utilized Twitter to promote its "Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over" campaign. Using the handle @NoExcusesFL, FDOT crafted messages that spoke directly to the audience.

To further promote messaging, FDOT partnered with Florida sport teams, like the Miami Heat, and well-known media personalities on Twitter. This effort increased knowledge of its impaired driving enforcement campaigns by 16.9 percent and increased awareness of its "Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over" campaign by 141.7 percent.

Public service includes programs that advance public understanding of societal issues, problems or concerns. The government subcategory includes all government bureaus, agencies, institutions or departments at the local, state and federal levels, including the armed forces, regulatory bodies, courts, public schools and state universities.

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RESEARCH

In analyzing primary data collected over seven years that reflected the effectiveness of impaired driving enforcement messaging, FDOT realized it needed to change its message to reach young adult men. The data revealed that young males, especially young African-American males, do not fear death from traffic accidents. They have a feeling of invincibility and are therefore inured to messaging featuring graphic images of wrecks. Instead, they react to messaging that features repercussions, such as fines and jail time, for bad driving behavior.

Secondary research led to selecting Twitter as the main messaging platform for the campaign. Research shows that the target demographics have a higher-than-average usage rate of the site: nearly 30 percent of online African-Americans use Twitter—13 percent daily—which is nearly double the overall average. Also, 26 percent of Internet users ages 18-29 use Twitter, which is nearly double to rate for those ages 30-49.

This research led to creating the "No Excuses" Twitter handle and "Just A Warning" microsite URL to support the "Drive Sober" campaign.

PLANNING

In general terms, the plan was to use a multi-platform approach to social networking to target the key demographic via mobile-friendly channels, such as Twitter and urban radio stations. The primary target audience in this key demographic was African-American males, ages 18-34 in the state of Florida. An additional secondary audience consisted of all young adult males, ages 18- 34 in the state of Florida.

To avoid the perception among the target audience that messaging was talking down to them rather than at them, the look and feel of the messages were strategically crafted to resemble the voice of the demographic. A list of key words and phrases was also created to attract the target audience through Twitter's search function. By promoting tweets with these phrases, FDOT's messages would appear as a top result in searches of these words to further promote them.

Along with the key words, partnerships were formed with personalities and profiles many in the target audience follow on Twitter, such as urban radio stations, professional sports teams, DJs, and more. The target audience trusts and respects the content from these sources, so messaging gained traction coming from them.

A microsite was created to showcase social activity and provide useful tools to the target audience, such as links to traffic smartphone apps, insurance points, and safe driving tips. This site name and URL were titled after what everyone hopes to hear when stopped by law enforcement: "Just A Warning."

The three specific measurable objectives of these endeavors were as follows:

- To raise awareness about the drunk driving enforcement campaign among the target audiences during the enforcement periods.
- To increase awareness of the dangers associated with drunk driving, both legally and physically.
- To create conversation and engagement among the target audiences via social networks during the enforcement periods.

EXECUTION

Prior to this initiative a seat belt enforcement campaign was running on the Twitter feed. Once data was collected on that effort, FDOT began tailoring the message to focus on the results of driving under the influence.

Key tactics included crafting messages in the same tone and language used by the target audience, leveraging partnerships to further spread messaging, and using keywords to appear in user searches. FDOT also retweeted positive messages from people in the audience speaking out against drunk driving and even responded to those who glorified driving under the influence on Twitter.

The major difficulty with planning and executing the initiative was pushback from the national Department of Transportation (DOT). Incentives, such as gas cards, were originally part of the plan. However, due to national regulations FDOT was not allowed to distribute them. Instead, the budget for those items was transferred to promoted more tweets via social to gain impressions. These promoted tweets appeared in the Twitter feeds of those who mention or follow accounts relating to the keyword buckets created for the campaign.

EVALUATION

At the end of the campaign a survey was conducted to measure the effects of the messaging. As a result of the campaign:

Objective 1: To raise awareness about the drunk driving enforcement campaign among the target audiences during the enforcement periods.

Result: Awareness of the newly introduced campaign theme line “Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over” increased 141.7 percent.

Objective 2: To increase awareness of the dangers associated with drunk driving, both legally and physically.

Result: Awareness of drunk driving enforcement messages increased 16.9 percent.

Objective 3: To create conversation and engagement among the target audiences via social networks during the enforcement periods

Result: The account garnered more than 860,330 total impressions, attracted 2,012 new followers, and partners tweeted to a total of 1,149,531 followers.

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