



“Turkey-tizing” Helps Marketers Get Out Their Message

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Along with lumpy gravy and the standard fixings, this Thanksgiving nearly 11,000 turkeys will be served with marketing messages.

Two New York-based marcom execs, Mark DiMassimo, CEO of marketing agency DiMassimo Goldstein, and Eric Yaverbaum, president of PR firm Ericho Communications, are spending \$350,000 to ship 10,930 turkeys tagged with print ads for Offlining Inc., their social awareness campaign encouraging consumers to turn off electronic devices more often. Recipients of the free turkeys signed a pledge at <http://www.offlininginc.com> between June and early November promising to have 10 device-free dinners before Thanksgiving and to refrain from using any electronic devices on Thanksgiving Day. Some accompanying ads, which can be sent as free e-cards from Offlining’s site, depict Pilgrims surfing the Web and clutching iPhones, and a cartoon turkey pointing a rifle at a cell phone. All ads come with the tagline “Give thanks, not thx.”

Yaverbaum stresses that he and DiMassimo aren’t anti-technology fundamentalists. For years, he says, they’ve been “convincing people to log on, click here, call now and add friends to your digital network” for their day jobs. They also rely on online marketing to promote Offlining. But Yaverbaum says he’s concerned that too much reliance on technology is negatively impacting in-person socialization, prompting people to work at all hours and interfering with personal relationships. Yaverbaum himself has struggled with a Blackberry addiction. “We’re trying to teach people to enjoy the benefits if they learn how to use the off button every once in a while,” he says.

Yaverbaum says that using turkeys as a marketing medium and playfully tying technology to Thanksgiving themes in the ads helped make the messages stand out to consumers and garner press mentions. “If you don’t get the attention of the public, your ad is not going to resonate,” he says. Offlining previously received media attention for releasing print ads and e-cards featuring disgraced celebrities Mel Gibson, Tiger Woods and Lindsay Lohan for a Yom Kippur campaign.

Yaverbaum and DiMassimo are investing their own money into the turkey initiative. It’s an expense that Yaverbaum says he can afford, even if he doesn’t get a complete financial return on his investment. “If you want to justify in dollars and cents, you can’t. Justify it in what we give back to society; we can do that.” But he adds; “This is not 100% altruistic. We will get some calls for business from this.”

Yaverbaum’s goal is to get a million people to sign Offlining’s pledge. “Everything in life is happening faster,” he says. “If we can slow things down just a little bit, that would be a major accomplishment.”