

PROGRESSIVE GETS TO THE HEART OF WHAT MAKES MOTORCYCLISTS TICK

Progressive Insurance with Jericho Communications

Category 97: Use of Research for Publicity

OVERVIEW:

Imagine how it would feel to be number one at your game, but no one knows it. That was the public relations dilemma faced by Progressive Insurance's Special Lines Division when the management team turned to Jericho Communications for help. Although Progressive was the top insurer of motorcycles in the country, it was one of the industry's best-kept secrets. Jericho's creative team got to work developing a humorous, offbeat survey that leveraged the company's winning ad campaign -- "Insure Your Passion" -- and demonstrated just how intimately the insurer knew and understood its customers. The tongue-in-cheek research compared the passion quotient of bikers to non-bikers. The story captured the attention of the press and brought a chuckle to consumers around the country, while positioning Progressive as "the number one insurer of motorcycles." With Jericho by its side, Progressive rode out in front...turning heads like a shiny new bike on a sunny afternoon for all to see.

PLANNING:

The objectives of the program were to:

- * Convey that Progressive understands the motorcycle consumer and is the country's number one insurer of motorcycles
- * Establish awareness of Progressive as an industry leader among the motorcycle trade and consumer media

To do this, the following strategies were employed:

- * Create a news story that makes both the media and consumers do a "double take" and notice Progressive
- * Sponsor and conduct original research of motorcycle riders, positioning Progressive as a leader and authority in this market

Progressive's target audiences were:

- * Potential motorcycle insurance customers, particularly professional men in their 40s who primarily ride on the weekends
- * Motorcycle trades and general consumer media, as conduits to the above audience

RESEARCH:

Management Briefings – Jericho interviewed key executives at Progressive to better understand their target audience of motorcyclists and quantify how this

audience differs from other types of insurance (namely auto) customers. During this research phase, Jericho set a plan in motion to leverage Progressive's advertising theme of "Insure Your Passion." The power of this message -- coupled with an integrated, targeted publicity campaign -- was high-octane fuel. The tagline got to the heart of one of Progressive's marketing pillars: that the company truly understands motorcyclists, which puts them inside this elite society of road warriors. The Jericho team believed that this phrase tied directly into how consumers feel about their bikes and the unique motorcycle lifestyle -- and that it would make headlines with just the right publicity spin. They followed the road signs and set out on phase two of the research.

Consumer Survey -- Jericho created a humorous, offbeat survey designed to uncover the true nature of bikers in America. To do this, the team gathered information from 1,100 men (both cyclists and non-cyclists) about various issues relating to passion. The "Proof is in the Passion" survey was far from conventional in its approach, with questions such as, "Do you cry at romantic movies?" and "How often do you buy your partner roses?" and "Which well-known person do you find most devoid of passion...?" The research team asked these questions face-to-face at the Superbike Challenge two-day motorcycle event in California; they also conducted interviews by telephone. The survey found that cyclists are far more passionate about life than non-cyclists.

EXECUTION:

A simple, but craftily written press release and Did You Know fact sheet announced the survey results to the media. The materials focused on the most unexpected social findings -- like motorcyclists are five times as likely to cry during a romantic movie than men who don't ride motorcycles...and 63 percent of men who ride motorcycles said they are moved by poetry while only 23 percent of men who don't ride will own up to this...and 5 percent of bikers said that money was not essential to their happiness as compared to the 13 percent of non-bikers who said this was so.

The survey results added a new dimension to the biker persona, and provided the media with a newsworthy lifestyle story that they were eager to report. The press played off the survey's tongue-in-cheek attitude, with headlines like: "Survey's Surprise: Motorcyclists Just Softies," "Real Bikers Cry at Movies and Send Flowers," and "Another Stereotype Folds...Motorcyclists Like Poetry." Teasing soundbites proliferated, for instance: "Here's something I bet you didn't know about motorcyclists: they're a bunch of softies;" and "Guys who ride motorcycles are hard and tough, right? Uh-uh. They're really pussycats;" or how about "... just as cultural anthropologists discovered that real men do indeed eat quiche, it has now been revealed that motorcycle men are secret sentimentalists." The media and consumers both raised an eyebrow as they smiled at the news -- and many took notice of Progressive for the first time.

EVALUATION:

1) Progressive Rides Out in Front. The publicity campaign created a buzz about Progressive and the true nature of motorcycle riders. The survey generated more

than 53 million media impressions with an advertising equivalency topping \$350,000, and included coverage in: USA TODAY, LOS ANGELES TIMES, CHICAGO TRIBUNE, PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER, DETROIT FREE PRESS, DENVER POST, MINNEAPOLIS STAR-TRIBUNE, SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE, FT. WORTH STAR TELEGRAM, PALM BEACH POST, CLEVELAND PLAIN DEALER, PLAYBOY MAGAZINE, ELLE MAGAZINE, NEW WOMAN MAGAZINE, BLOOMBERG NEWS, CNBC "UPFRONT TONIGHT," AP RADIO "CONSUMER WATCH," ABC NEWS "PAUL HARVEY"... and many more. A large number of key motorcycle magazines also reported the story. But perhaps most importantly, the majority of the news stories noted Progressive as "the number one insurer of motorcycles," establishing and reinforcing Progressive's leadership position in the minds of consumers everywhere.

2) Shining Like a Brand New Top-of-the-Line Bike for All to See. The publicity campaign put Progressive in the limelight, shining like a brand new top-of-the-line bike on a sunny afternoon for all to see. Not only did the motorcycle trade press cover the survey, but HOTBIKE asked Progressive to byline an article about insurance. That kind of industry leadership positioning just can't be bought. To top that off, several motorcycle dealers contacted Progressive and were eager to hear more about their insurance programs. Progressive is now better poised to "insure the passion" of bikers across America.