

Drunk Driving Prevention



Campaign History and Evolution

In the early 1980's, statistics showed that alcohol-impaired driving fatalities accounted for nearly 50% of the total motor vehicle traffic fatalities in the United States. In response to this alarming trend, the Ad Council and NHTSA launched their first public service advertising campaign aimed at drunk driving prevention. This initial campaign targeted the intervener, with messaging making them feel personally responsible for stopping a friend from drinking and driving. This campaign concluded with the tagline, "Drinking and Driving Can Kill a Friendship" which eventually evolved to the widely recognized "Friends Don't Let Friends Drive Drunk" tagline in the 1990s.

This campaign has played a significant role in improving the safety of our roads and the tagline has become ingrained in American culture and vernacular. The phrase, "One for the road" was transformed into "Friends Don't Let Friends Drive Drunk" and even today, 94% report being aware of this tagline. Furthermore, in large part due to this PSA campaign, more than two-thirds of Americans (68%) say they have tried to stop someone from driving impaired. During the time this campaign was in market, alcohol-impaired driving fatalities decreased from approximately 21,000 people in 1982 (or about 50% of all motor vehicle fatalities) to 12,500 people in 1999 (or about 30% of all motor vehicle fatalities).

Despite these successes, crashes involving alcohol consumption started rising again in 2000. Traffic statistics showed that younger drivers aged 21 – 34, predominantly men, were responsible for nearly 60% of alcohol-related traffic crashes. In 2005, drunk driving was one of the most frequently committed crimes in the United States, killing someone every 45 minutes, representing nearly 32% of all traffic fatalities. Over 13,000 people died in highway crashes involving a driver or a motorcycle operator with a blood alcohol concentration of .08 or higher in the same year.

In response to these trends, the Ad Council and NHTSA decided to refocus the Drunk Driving Prevention campaign. Rather than target the intervener, the new campaign would target those most likely to drive impaired. Mullen, the Massachusetts-based advertising agency, was recruited to provide pro bono strategic direction and creative development for the campaign.

Strategic Development

Assessing the Problem and Identifying Target Mindset

The team set out to assess the problem and identify the mindset of the target audience. First, the Ad Council reviewed the data on major trends in drunk driving. Drawing on several research studies, including an exhaustive study by the firm Porter Novelli, a demographic and psychographic profile was developed of those most likely to get behind the wheel impaired. In June 2003, the team conducted a series of focus groups with the target audience in several markets.

Through this research, the mindset of the target audience became clearer. These young men aged 21–34 are mostly well-meaning "average Joes" who don't intend any harm but continue to drink and drive. Many have driven impaired multiple times in the past without getting in trouble. They tend to feel either invincible or just overly optimistic about the control they have over their lives.

Throughout the research, one theme kept coming up. The most common excuses for impaired driving were "I'm just buzzed" or "I just had a few." "Buzzed" was part of the target's vernacular and signified anything from feeling slightly tipsy to being falling-down drunk. And even when they may have had more than a few drinks in a short period of time, before getting behind the wheel, they tended to minimize the effects of alcohol by saying that they just had "a few."

With this understanding of the target audience, the team set the following objectives for the campaign:

- To inspire discussion about the dangers of driving "buzzed"
- To prevent impaired driving by defining the feeling of being "buzzed" as a reason not to get behind the wheel

Creative Development and Evaluation

In 2005, Mullen produced a compelling multimedia advertising campaign targeting the buzzed driver himself. Television, radio, billboard and other out-of-home venues, the Web, newspaper, and magazine ads were created and distributed nationwide. The television spots depicted various scenarios, featuring young adults who were clearly drunk, and then contrasted them with onlookers who were impaired but not obviously drunk. The ads concluded with the lines, "It's easy to tell if you've had way too many. But what if you've had just one too many? Buzzed Driving is Drunk Driving." Radio ads took a similar approach, describing embarrassing scenarios where it is obvious someone has had too much to drink. Print ads gave recipes for making drinks such as a margarita, but added ingredients such as "1 false sense of security." The print ads concluded with the lines, "Never underestimate 'just a few.' Buzzed Driving is Drunk Driving."

As with all Ad Council campaigns, the ads required approval from the Ad Council's Campaign Review Committee, a peer review group consisting of top executives in the advertising industry. In August 2005 boards and scripts of the ads were presented to a series of focus groups with the target audience, and feedback was largely positive with young male respondents reporting that they found the PSAs clear and relevant.

Finally, a quantitative copy test of the produced TV PSAs was conducted in November 2005, prior to the campaign launch. The study, fielded by Lightspeed Research, was conducted online among 305 men age 21-34 nationwide. After viewing an ad, respondents were asked a series of evaluative questions. The results echoed the earlier qualitative feedback. A large majority of respondents said that the ads were clear, memorable and motivating. About 7 in 10 (69%) agreed "this ad makes me think twice about driving when I feel 'buzzed' from alcohol."

Campaign Launch

In December 2005, the Ad Council distributed the ads to more than 28,000 media outlets nationwide. Television, radio, print, web, out of home, and alternative media advertisements flooded the market and sought to change public behavior. As with all Ad Council PSA campaigns, media is not planned or bought; instead, the campaign relies on media outlets to donate time and space for the ads. In addition, the Ad Council's Media team marketed the campaign to media companies through several forms of outreach to assure national exposure and an effective campaign.

A December launch was particularly appropriate timing, since drunk driving crashes spike during the Christmas-New Year's week. The Ad Council partnered with the Television Bureau of Advertising (TVB) to create a "roadblock" of the TV PSAs during the month of December. The TVB worked hard to encourage its network of local broadcast TV stations to donate airtime to the PSAs in December, particularly during the week between Christmas and New Year's. Through different forms of outreach, the TVB secured commitments from more than 600 television stations in nearly 200 markets, resulting in approximately \$3 million in donated media in that week alone.

Additionally, a special agreement with the Outdoor Advertising Association of America (OAAA) committed to placing more than 8,000 "Buzzed Driving" billboards and 100 vinyl bulletins nationwide, with a concentration in areas with higher rates of impaired driving fatalities.

The Ad Council's PR team led several other activities to get the word out through the press that would go on to reach over 49 million people. A localized "Bites and B-Roll" package, featuring sound bites and video footage, was distributed to TV stations. Over 930 local broadcast news programs on 336 television stations in 168 markets covered the campaign. It was featured on such high-profile programs as ABC's Good Morning America and CNN's Headline News channel. Additionally, the "Buzzed Driving" campaign was highlighted in radio segments throughout the country. Local NHTSA spokespersons were made available for interviews. The Ad Council also developed Web streaming video packages customized for local viewing. Finally, in partnership with the North American Precise Syndicated, the Ad Council distributed a mat release, or prepackaged newspaper article, to more than 10,000 suburban daily and weekly newspapers.

Ongoing Creative

Since the campaign launch, additional advertising has been added to the campaign's creative roster to extend the message's reach. While the original creative took an outwardly humorous tone to appeal to its target audience, the humor in the next phase of creative, which launched in 2008 was subtler, with the ads focusing on the life-threatening consequences of impaired driving. That same year, the campaign made its first foray into the Hispanic market. Based on findings from focus group research conducted with Hispanic males, ages 21-34, this advertising took a more emotional approach, highlighting the impact of impaired driving on the driver's loved ones in order to appeal to Hispanics' strong connections to their families.

The following year, in 2009, responding to a rise in the percentage of females dying in alcohol related crashes, the campaign expanded its reach to women ages 21 – 44. The new ads also took an emotional approach and, rather than focusing on the consequences of buzzed driving, asserted that by choosing not to drive buzzed a life is essentially saved. Despite nuances in how the message is communicated to different target audiences, the core message of "Buzzed Driving is Drunk Driving" was maintained through all creative executions.

As the campaign has continued to evolve, the Ad Council has built a robust social media presence using Facebook, Twitter, and the campaign's landing page, BuzzedDriving.AdCouncil.org. Elements on these mediums currently include an interactive game that simulates the effects of buzzed driving, videos of people whose lives have been personally affected by drunk driving, and additional elements continue to be incorporated on an ongoing basis. As of August 2011, the campaign has amassed over 9,000 Facebook fans and nearly 5,000 Twitter followers, positioning social media as an important new means of expanding the campaign's reach.

Going forward, the Ad Council will continue to create advertising to raise awareness of the issue, initiate a national dialogue on buzzed driving, and change behavior. To assure that these goals are met, the Ad Council and NHTSA will continue to work closely with leading ad agencies to evolve the creative and with the media companies to secure donated media. Thanks to the ongoing commitment by all parties involved with the "Buzzed Driving" campaign, it continues to broaden its reach year after year, resulting in one of the highest awareness rates for the "Buzzed Driving" campaign across the Ad Council docket.

Evaluating Campaign Impact

Estimated Donated Media

In terms of support from the media community, the campaign has been a top performer at the Ad Council. From 2005 through first quarter 2011, the campaign garnered over \$367 million (estimated) worth of donated media. Thanks to strong continued support, measurable results, and constantly refreshed creative, donated media shows no sign of slowing.

Since launch, radio garnered a large share of total media donations, but support in other media was also strong. The TVB-led roadblocks during the winter holidays that proved themselves so successful immediately after launch have continued every year since and continue to make a meaningful impact. These roadblocks every December and January were responsible for a total of \$22.3 million of TV support during those concentrated one-month periods from 2005 to 2010.

Estimated Donated Media June 2008– March 2011	
Medium	Donated Media (\$)
Radio	\$202,224,700
Broadcast and Cable TV	\$86,728,300
Out-of-Home	\$34,894,500
Interactive	\$21,889,200
Newspaper and Magazine	\$7,772,900
Alternative Media	\$9,865,300
Public Relations (Earned Media)	\$4,275,500
TOTAL	\$367,650,400

Tracking Survey Results

Tracking surveys help to gauge the campaign's effectiveness and impact over time by trending awareness, attitudes and behaviors among the target audience nationwide. Immediately prior to the campaign launch in December 2005, the Ad Council fielded a benchmark tracking survey of adults age 21+, including an oversample of men ages 21-35 years old. To qualify, respondents had to be frequent drivers and drink alcohol at least occasionally. Follow-up surveys were fielded every January since 2006, immediately following the December TVB-led heavy-ups.

Survey Results

Every January since 2006, the tracking survey showed an increase of adults 21+ who are refraining from drinking and driving. The most recent results in January 2011 demonstrated:

- Awareness of the campaign: With more than one-half of adults ages 21+ (49%) and nearly 6 in 10 men ages 21-35 (56%) familiar with the campaign, the campaign's awareness level is substantially stronger than any other campaign currently on the Ad Council docket (approximately 50 campaigns), due in large part to strong donated media support and media partnerships and a strong suite of creative assets.
- Opinion of the campaign: Of those aware of the campaign, approximately 9 in 10 men age 21-35 (92%) called the advertising extremely/very/somewhat effective.
- Importance of the issue: There was a significant increase in the proportion of men age 21-35 who called themselves "extremely concerned" about the issue of drunk driving, from 22% in 2005 to 27% in 2011.
- Behaviors over the holiday season: Every January for the past five years—immediately following the Project Roadblock push—an increasing number of adults 21+ report that within the past month they have refrained from driving after drinking, from 9% in January 2006 to 13% in January 2011. The growth was similar among men 21-35, from 17% to 25%.

While the Ad Council cannot claim the campaign as the sole driver of these behaviors, it is likely that it played a large role, due to the campaign's vast reach and recognition among the target audience.

Conclusion

In conjunction with law enforcement, as well as other national and local public service messages, the "Buzzed Driving" campaign has done a remarkable job in the arena of drunk driving prevention. The "Friends Don't Let Friends Drive Drunk" message to interveners has been thoroughly ingrained in American culture, while the newer "Buzzed Driving is Drunk Driving" message continues to take advantage of increasing momentum by tackling the problem head-on and placing the responsibility to not drive impaired on buzzed drivers.

Since the launch of the campaign in 2005, the number of people who have died in a highway crash involving a driver or a motorcycle operator with a blood alcohol concentration of .08 or higher has decreased steadily each year, from about 13,500 in 2005 to just under 11,000 in 2009. The success of the "Buzzed Driving" campaign can be attributed to a number of factors including a strong research-based foundation, an appropriate tone, and an engaging and hard-hitting message directed at the target audience. By reaching as many people as it has—and by continuing to take advantage of favorable momentum—the campaign has undeniably played a role in saving lives and will continue to do so as it evolves with all future efforts.