

AA

One day, your experience will need ours

Client:
Automobile
Association

Agency:
Young
Advertising

Team:
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BACKGROUND

The Automobile Association is an integral part of the Irish Motoring Market. The yellow vans are synonymous with the organisation and it has always been seen as a friend of the motorist. From childhood, today's motorists would be as familiar with the AA Badge as many of the best known car marques. From the AA Rescue, AA 5 Star, AA Insurance and AA shops, their presence is significant and highly visible throughout Ireland. However, in the early to mid 90's the car market was in a depressed state due to the economic downturn and high interest rates, leading to reduced car sales.

This had a knock-on effect for the Automobile Association. The intangibility of AA membership meant that motorists took risks rather than spending scarce disposable income on it. Also the motorists' attitude that today's cars are so well built that they don't break down, put the organisation under pressure. Motorists forget it's not always breakdowns that cause problems. Lights being left on, punctures, keys lost etc. are everyday motoring experiences but the "won't happen to me" approach prevails. The AA could not sit still and had to find out how to convince the motorist why membership should be part of their driving experience.

MARKETING BACKGROUND/ STRATEGY

Following several 'brainstorming' sessions it was agreed that an extensive qualitative research programme should be undertaken. If a new communication programme was to be undertaken it was vital that a comprehensive study of both current

and non members attitudes towards the organisation be established. What do motorists think of the AA? Is it relevant? Does it offer a good service? Is it expensive? Who is a typical member?

Only when these questions were answered could a new communications platform be considered to form the basis of the AA's long-term advertising strategy.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

As an organisation, the AA was seen as steady, courteous, conservative, honest, old-fashioned and West-Brit. If described as a person, he or she would be safe to bring home to Mum but wouldn't leave a lasting impression.

Those who were current members were largely content with what membership offered them, but trying to attract new members was becoming increasingly difficult. The AA's image and relevance to today's motoring needs was being questioned.

Essentially motorists felt that they couldn't really see the benefits of joining an organisation that was from another era and wasn't part of the ever-changing 90's.

MOVING FORWARD

Having assessed the research, a new marketing strategy could now be developed which would encapsulate all aspects of the AA's service. The strategy agreed would be for the long-term and there must be total commitment across the marketing mix. Before advertising, the following elements of the AA's structure had to be redeveloped -

- Customer Service had to be improved.

- Recruiting techniques had to be examined.
- Staff had to be trained.
- Fleet and van livery had to be updated.
- Uniforms of staff had to be given a 90's look.
- Pricing structures had to be reviewed.
- Added-value for members.
- Brochure material had to be redesigned.
- Product make-up had to be looked at.

One year later a new advertising strategy could be developed following implementation of the above elements.

Before 1994, the Automobile Association's advertising spend had been quite modest and mainly used on radio. However, with a complete re-imaging of the organisation in mind, the recommendation was to use television with radio support.

Thus the following strategy was developed:

ADVERTISING OBJECTIVES

The key objective of our advertising communication programme would be to present the AA as a dynamic, progressive, modern motoring organisation that is totally relevant to today's motoring needs.

"We want people to be proud of the AA badge"

OTHER OBJECTIVES

- Enshrine a desire for motorists to seek out the benefits of AA membership.
- Communicate that the AA is more than just a breakdown service.
- Build a new brand identity.
- Provide a platform for all communications.
- Increase membership from 80,000 to 100,000+ over 5 years.
- Increase the AA's profits.

Rather than just showing a normal breakdown situation, it was felt that the AA must come across as something

much bigger. Motorists must see the organisation in a much more contemporary and relevant fashion. The new television commercial more than fulfilled these expectations and depicted the AA's scale of operations in a dynamic, modern state of the art style never seen before. It conveyed a feeling of confidence underlined by the new theme line "One day your experience will need ours".

The client was totally committed to the above the line support and used radio to back up the television spend. The actual ad spend was still quite small by other television/radio budgets (140k) but it was felt that the creative communication was strong enough to create the necessary impact.

All below the line support also carried images from the TV campaign such as posters, leaflets, brochures etc. Anywhere there was communication from the AA, it reflected the above the line communication.

RESULTS

In the past five years the AA's membership has increased by 35% from 80,000 to 120,000. In tracking studies, the image of the AA has improved dramatically and is seen as a much more relevant part of today's motoring needs.

Why should the Automobile Association be awarded the most effective advertising campaign over the long-term?

- Total commitment to communication strategy.
- Over 80% of marketing budget has been advertising.
- Positive image shifts from motorists.
- High increases in business despite increased competition from competitors (i.e. Insurance companies/motor manufacturers and the arrival of the RAC all offering rescue services)
- Commercial won The Grand Prix and a Gold Award at Kinsale Advertising Awards in 1994.



- Membership continues to increase.

CLIENT ENDORSEMENT

Advertising has played a significant role in re-imaging our organisation. We know from our tracking studies and personnel that the complete through the line communications programme has reshaped and identified a unique brand character that is growing year on year, thus leading to commercial success.

Dennis Fisk, AA

CURRENT STATUS

To build on the success of recent years a new series of 10 second commercials has been developed. They depict everyday motoring dilemmas in humorous executions under the theme line "One Day". Again, all through the line material will feature elements of the television campaign for complete consistency. The making of seven new commercials is further evidence of the AA's belief in the power of advertising.

SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The Automobile Association's membership was static in the early to mid 90's due to the economic downturn and falling car sales. Membership was not seen as a necessity but something which one could survive without during one's motoring life. The AA needed to act to re-address the situation.

MARKETING BACKGROUND/ STRATEGY

A full-scale qualitative market research programme was undertaken to assess motorists' attitudes towards the AA. The results depicted the organisation as steady, courteous, conservative, honest, old-fashioned and West-Brit. Essentially it was becoming more irrelevant and out of touch with motoring needs.

MOVING FORWARD

A full-scale re-structuring of the AA was undertaken before an advertising strategy was devised. The foundations had to be stabilised before above-the-line support could be considered.

ADVERTISING STRATEGY

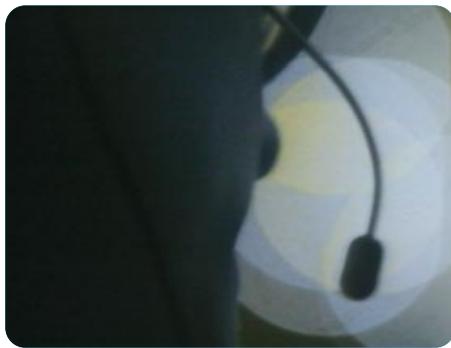
The key advertising objective was to present the AA as a dynamic progressive, modern motoring organisation that is totally relevant to today's motoring needs.

ADVERTISING EXECUTION

A 50 second corporate television commercial with radio and through the line support under the theme line "One day your experience will need ours".

RESULTS

Membership of the AA has increased by 35% over the past 5 years. The AA has recognised the importance of the advertising support in re-imaging the organisation and is totally committed to continuing with that philosophy.



50 sec. TV commercial.

