



Club Achievement 2005/2006 Communication

Austin Advertising Federation, Scott Van Osdol, President

Background

The Austin Advertising Federation is fortunate to serve one of the three most “wired” markets in the nation. This allows us to continually push the boundaries when reaching out to our target audiences, supplementing traditional media channels with the latest and best communication tools.

But communication is more than message delivery—more than media and tools. It is a process of message creation and honoring the brand. Moreover, communication is a two-way street, so we structure our communication to receive as well as send.

The Communication Process

Our target audiences fall into four main areas:

- the Ad Fed Board of Directors
- club members and the advertising community
- our Public Service clients’ target audiences
- mass media and the general public

In each area we try to maintain consistency and honor our brand messages:

- to board members, the value of service
- to members and the ad community, the value of membership and volunteering
- to our public service clients’ audiences, the value of giving
- to the general public, the value of advertising’s role in public and economic life

Conversely, messages originate in the target audiences and are delivered back to us:

- verbally, at meetings
- email hyperlinks on the website
- invitation responses
- survey responses
- a widely published phone number staffed by our Executive Director

To assure consistent brand messaging and delivery all messages are reviewed and approved by the president. In all cases, we try to make communication—both outgoing and responses to incoming—accurate, timely, and effective.

Media Used in Case Studies: (see samples)

- **Email**, traditional, with graphic or text attachments, hyperlinks to website
- **Email**, interactive form-based with embedded graphics, using Cvent invitation/registration software, hyperlinked to website
- **Survey**, interactive, linked to Cvent web-based surveys soliciting feedback
- **Newsletter**, emailed, graphic-based with hyperlinked text, photos, illustrations, hyperlink soliciting member news
- **Website**, currently being redesigned for improved navigation, with high-level search engine accessibility, and a private, password-protected area for internal Board communication and document archives
- **Website** response buttons: newsletter subscription, volunteering, sponsorship sales; buttons generate email to appropriate officer or committee chair
- **Mail**: membership renewal/response/welcome, hand-signed text on letterhead, with graphic collateral (brochure, membership certificates, etc.); event invitations and campaign collateral, such as ADDY Call for Entries poster, Public Service campaign postcards
- **Telephone**: membership renewal and to promote event registration
- **Press releases and media appearances**: to promote club and public service client events

Case Studies: Describe your club’s use of communication materials for all of the following areas:

Regular communication with members: Newsletter

- **Objective**: to promote upcoming events, generate committee and event volunteers, report member news, promote the value of membership, solicit new members, create income stream with sponsor display ads. (**Exhibit: December newsletter**)
- **Target Audience**: members, potential members in ad community, news media.
- **Budget Recap**: expense, none: produced by volunteer labor, broadcast using donated service, hyperlinked back to website on donated server. Income: display ads, hyperlinked logos, as part of benefits package for sponsors.

- **Distribution System:** email broadcast with hyperlinks back to website: ±1700 sent. Member news solicited through email prior to publication.
- **Results:** Regular bi-monthly publication kept our audience informed and engaged. Specifically, from March 2005 to March 2006, we saw the following improvements in our core metrics:
 - Membership retention improved to 83.4%
 - Program attendance increased from an average of ±70 to ±80
 - Volunteer numbers increased over 100%, from ±100 to over 200 (**Exhibit: Volunteers Data**)
 - ADDY entries consistent with last year (791 in 2005, 749 in 2006)
 - **Samples:** Newsletter reprints. See also <http://www.austinadfed.com> to view back issues in html format. All samples produced by Austin Ad Fed members.

Communication with members: Diversity Committee weblog

- **Objective:** To improve committee communication
- **Target Audience:** Cultural Diversity committee members
- **Budget Recap:** no funds spent
- **Distribution System:** weblog
- **Results:** This new innovation holds great promise: committee members use a web log to keep each other posted on progress. It is not a substitute for committee meetings, but a supplement, allowing more effective communication between meetings. If the Diversity blog proves useful, we will use it for other committees.
- **Sample:** Diversity blog reprint. All samples produced by Austin Ad Fed members.

Event Promotion: Email, traditional, *Texas Lottery RFP Luncheon*

- **Objective:** To generate luncheon registration.
- **Target Audience:** The ±240 members and ±1700 contacts in our database.
- **Budget Recap:** Pro-rata share of Executive Director monthly fee: ±\$200.
- **Distribution System:** Email broadcast
- **Results:** We used traditional email to promote an early season luncheon, *The Texas Lottery, a Retail Challenge and Preview into the RFP*. The invitation graphic was so well designed we wanted to give it maximum exposure by placing it in the body of the email, ahead of the body copy. (**Exhibit, Texas Lottery Email**) By using JPEG format and several test emails, we made sure all email readers would reproduce the email as planned.

The luncheon was well attended: 75 guests from agencies and vendors heard a presentation full of clues as to what the Lottery would look for during its upcoming agency review. We provided the Texas Lottery with an attendee list, so guests would receive the official request for proposal. Registration was conducted using email RSVPs through our Executive Director at rsvp@austinadfed.com. The event was also listed on the web homepage, with hyperlinks to RSVP.

- **Sample:** Email, Texas Lottery Invitation, Yahoo! Luncheon Invitation. All samples produced by Austin Ad Fed members.

Communication with non-members: Hurricane Relief Project

- **Objective:** To provide relief for Ad Fed members displaced by hurricanes.
- **Target Audience:** The ±240 members and ±1700 contacts in our database. Ad Fed members and friends throughout District 10 and states affected by hurricanes.
- **Budget Recap:** zero expense.
- **Distribution System:** Email broadcast to Austin list, member response through web form, results posted to Austin website, coordination with national AAF office for regional email broadcast, weblog publication throughout the South.
- **Results:** The Hurricane Relief project was designed to provide immediate aid to Ad Fed members displaced by hurricanes in Louisiana and Texas by providing an alternative to running their businesses from laptops using cell phones and hotel internet dial-up service.

We began by soliciting our members for offers of unused office space with computers, phones, and broadband access. We collected ten offers from Austin members, a impressive number considering the imposing nature of the donation. Donors completed an online form and the offers were posted to our website. We asked the national AAF to broadcast email to members in affected states, directing them to our website. Notice was also posted on relief weblogs (blogs) hosted by the Miami ad club.

The low number of refugee responses surprised us. To the best of our knowledge only two groups were placed at Austin agencies. We heard stories of more groups winding up in Houston and Atlanta following Hurricane Katrina. Several members from Beaumont/Port Arthur, displaced a month later, found housing and office space through contacts in District 10.

Our Hurricane Relief web page featured a link to the American Red Cross Hurricane Relief fund. The club donated the proceeds from our first luncheon

sponsorship—\$600—to the Red Cross.

In the final analysis, the campaign can be considered moderately successful. We positioned the Austin Ad Fed as a leader in responding quickly to the crisis, and allowed our members the chance to support their fellow members throughout the region.

- **Samples:** website reprints, email reprints, newsletter. All samples produced by Austin Ad Fed members.

Self-promotion: The 2006 ADDY® Awards Campaign, *Call for Entries, The Judges Ritual Invitation, Awards Show Invitations*

- **Objective:** to promote the ADDY Awards. To position the ADDYs as one of our industry's leading professional development opportunities, Austin advertising's biggest social event, and as an exceptional promotion vehicle for industry vendors. **(Exhibit: Official ADDY Judges Vehicle photos)** (Sorry, couldn't avoid the pun.)
- **Target Audience:** members, non-members, ad agencies and industry vendors, news media and the general public.
- **Budget Recap:**
 - Production: zero dollars; design, printing produced by sponsor donations
 - Distribution: ±\$600 postage expense for several direct mail pieces, pro-rata portion of annual \$500 Cvent Software fee (±\$100)
 - Income: ±\$70,000 gross, \$15,000 net
- **Distribution System:**
 - Mail, for Call for Entries, Awards Show Invitation poster, postcards
 - Cvent invitation email, registration software
 - Web pages for registration, entry, show information
 - Phone calls to promote registration
 - Press releases
 - Cvent survey response software
- **Results:** The 2006 ADDY campaign allowed us to use for the first time the full range of tools supplied by our new Cvent Invitation/Registration software. These include html invitations allowing more effective use of embedded graphics, online registration and payment, and a follow-up survey soliciting suggestions and volunteers.

We used traditional design, printing, and mailing for the Call for Entries pieces (1500 each postcards, posters), supplemented by html email and a web area for online entry and Awards Show registration (<http://www.lettheritualsbegin.com>). The flash-based

entry site featured rules, information, downloadable versions of ADDY promotional graphics for use as computer desktops, plus ADDY tattoos and incantations, all contributing to the ADDY event brand. Show invitations were mailed, followed up by interactive email invitations, linked to online registration.

Awards show registration was supplemented by more than 300 phone calls. Press releases and photos supplied to the media resulted in a photo placement and caption in the Austin Business Journal. **(Exhibit, ABJ Reprint)**

For the first time, we are using an online survey tool, part of the Cvent software. We hope to solicit valuable input and gain new volunteers for next year's ADDYs.

The ADDYs were a complete success, with 749 entries and some 650 awards show attendees. The exceptional range of distributed event collateral was possible due to the Cvent capabilities.

- **Samples:** Call for Entries postcards, poster, email reprints, invitations, web page reprints. All samples produced by Austin Ad Fed members.

Others: Public Service Campaigns for Art From the Streets, Hill Country Ride for AIDS, The Sims Foundation

- **Objective:** to promote the causes of our public service clients, improve their fundraising capability, and increase their volunteer participation
- **Target Audience:** mass media, the general public, Ad Fed members and friends
- **Budget Recap:** expenses: zero, all design, printing, and media donated. Proceeds from National Club Achievement Public Service Awards (\$1300) used to produce, distribute campaigns, and to purchase Teleclip reports for post campaign evaluation. See Results below for income produced for clients.
- **Distribution System:**
- Posters, postcards, paper systems, assorted print collateral, mail and hand distribution
- Web-based and traditional email campaigns, club newsletter stories
- Press relations campaign focused on securing client on-air appearances, press releases
- **Results:**

In recent years the Austin Ad Fed has won multiple first place National Club Achievement Awards for our Public Service campaigns. These campaigns form a major component of our communication practice.

All campaigns begin with traditional marketing briefs. The client and volunteer team commit to goals and responsibilities, and the clients are made to understand that the

value of donated campaigns can approach \$50,000, (not including on-air media appearances, which can be valued at upwards of \$60,000). Volunteers then design and produce collateral, which, in general, is printed pro-bono by Ad Fed member vendors. Print campaigns are supplemented by email campaigns. We recommended a sophisticated web host (Convio) to one client, HCRA (<http://www.hillcountryride.org>) that allows for online donations and html email/response campaigns. We redesign the website graphics every year to match print collateral. We keep Ad Fed members updated through regular email broadcasts, newsletter stories hyperlinked to client sites, and fundraising appeals.

Press relations is a major component of these communication efforts. The media campaigns are led by experienced volunteers, often media relations directors at member agencies. Our best estimate is that this year's HCRA campaign placed nearly \$50,000 worth of on-air appearances of client staff. **(Exhibit: Teleclip Coverage memo for 2004: 2005 report not available, but on-air appearances were comparable.)**

In campaign media releases, the Ad Fed focuses on the client story, and remains in the background. We speak to our own involvement in annual press releases about winning Public Service Club Achievement Awards **(Exhibit: Press Release, reprint)**

Volunteer recruitment is a critical part of this communication process. At the June Big Wig Awards, our annual business meeting honoring our industry's unsung heroes, the service providers, the president launched the new volunteer campaign brand message, "*Give it away. It comes back.*"

We spread the brand message with an email broadcast directing people to new web pages describing our public service campaigns. The homepage features a new "Get Involved" button. In our highly trafficked web Job Line, we created new Volunteer Opportunities listings for each of our three public service campaigns. Volunteers can sign up by emailing committee chairs directly from the project descriptions. **(Exhibits: austinadfed.com Volunteer Pages)**

The web homepage has a link to the newsletter subscription form, which has a space for people to volunteer. The form is sent to several officers, including the volunteer coordinator, who contacts potential volunteers by phone and email. In each newsletter the Letter from the President speaks to the value of volunteering, with hyperlinks to the volunteer web pages. **(Exhibits: Newsletters)**

The response has been overwhelming, with some three-dozen volunteers steered to pro-bono campaigns. We get one or two new volunteers per week from the Newsletter subscription form. Our volunteer coordinator works closely with university ad club's

volunteer coordinators, and does follow-up by phone and email. The end result is an unprecedented number of new volunteers working on club projects like the ADDY Awards and our public service campaigns: over 100% growth in the number of volunteers this year. **(Exhibit: Volunteer List, HCRA, AFTS Contact Lists)**

With public service campaigns, the effectiveness of communication can be measured in dollars. Since our first HCRA campaign in 2004, donations have increased 56% from \$290,000 to \$452,000. In November, Art From the Streets earned homeless artists a record \$80,000 from sales of their artwork **(Exhibit: AFTS Clipping Book, photos)**. Our logo redesign and poster campaign for the Sims Foundation (musicians' low-cost mental health services) contributed to a 50% spike in client applications over 90 days.

- **Samples:** posters, postcards, email and web page reprints, clipping book, Teleclip report for HCRA, AFTS, Sims. All samples produced by Austin Ad Fed members.

Conclusion

Communication is an ongoing process. We continue learning how to use our Cvent invitation/response software. We are redesigning the website for improved navigation and a cleaner look, and expect to launch the new site by mid-March. With all this new technology, however, we are careful to not overlook the human element. Our membership committee greets all guests at luncheons and events, takes new members in-hand, phones all new members to make sure they're getting involved, and our volunteer coordinator calls to determine the best fit for members skills and interests. We expect to learn much from our members by using the new Cvent survey tool, and will use that information to refine our communication approach.