

Don't Text and Drive

More than 440,000 people are killed and injured in the U.S. every year due to distracted driving. The Miami-Dade Expressway Authority (MDX) wanted to create a national awareness campaign that would communicate the true danger of texting and driving in order to shift drivers' mindsets, change their behaviors and eventually enact a law banning texting and driving. Instead of taking the gory, or shocking route, MDX chose to connect emotionally with drivers, showing the damage that can be done to those left behind.

In April, MDX teamed up with Ronin Advertising Group to produce a short film entitled *The Last Word*. The video shows the after-effect on one's family.

One component of the campaign was the use of T-shirts with QR codes. When scanned with a smartphone, the code launches the video/website. In all, 10,000 T-shirts were distributed at key events, including the Miami-Dade College graduation, as a gift to all new graduates in a bag labeled "this bag will save your life."



The students received the shirt and gift bag after they signed a pledge to not text and drive, with a branded mini Sharpie keychain that they were also able to keep as a reminder. "We created the shirts because we wanted the students to watch the film and pass it on to their family and friends, but knew that the venue where we would have the most access to them was not necessarily the best one for them to interact with the film," says Karen Ableman, president of Ronin Advertising Group.

To date, there have been more than 30,000 views of the film on YouTube. There has also been extensive media coverage of the campaign, as well as a highly active Facebook page.

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BizTip Find the right piece

According to Ableman, using branded merchandise is about more than putting your logo on a product and distributing it. "It is about finding a piece that fits with your target and maximizing new technology as an effective communications tool - one that stays with the user both physically and experientially," she says. The QR codes removed a barrier to watching the film as well as allowed constant access in a format the target was interested in. "Additionally, the message has to stand out as more important than the logo. MDX's name/logo is not on the shirt because we see the core message of the campaign as being exponentially more important when it stands alone," says Ableman.

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