

OnStar Turns to Radio for “Personal” Touch

Objective

Build product identity and brand recognition for OnStar, a totally new in-vehicle safety and security service from General Motors. Convey to consumers the personal benefits of the service.

Media Strategy

Use Radio for its contextual in-car listening and its unique position as the most personal of mediums. Create an individual image in listeners' minds that allows each consumer to envision how the new service can be a benefit to them specifically.

Radio Plan

Develop a series of powerful Radio spots that use live recordings of dramatic real-life situations where consumers have used OnStar. Continue to produce new spots on an ongoing basis to keep the campaign fresh.

Results

OnStar has doubled its subscriber base to over four million customers and enjoys nationwide recognition of its brand and a high level of consumer understanding of its product.

When OnStar, the in-vehicle safety and security service from General Motors, was first introduced, it faced a complicated marketing challenge. It needed to establish product identity, brand recognition, and deliver a call-to-action message that motivated consumers to action. As a totally new category, OnStar had to define the benefits of its novel service while simultaneously conveying how it could be helpful and useful to consumers on a “personal” level.

“Personal Touch”

For that “personal” touch, OnStar turned to Radio. “Radio is the best way to describe what OnStar does,” stated Andrew Young, Director, Marketing, OnStar. First, OnStar capitalized on Radio’s contextual nature by reaching consumers in their cars, where they can imagine for themselves the real-life advantages to having the service. Then, OnStar maximized what Young referred to as “Radio’s freedom from the constriction of visuals” to create a very personal and relevant image in the consumer’s mind.



With its *Real Stories* campaign launched in 2002, OnStar uses actual recorded live calls from subscribers in need of assistance - which OnStar readily provides - to create powerful images that engage consumers. “Rather than ‘seeing’ someone else on TV, Radio listeners interject themselves into the situation,” Young explained. “The invisible nature of listening creates a ‘pseudo interaction.’ They visualize how OnStar can help in *their* life.”

OnStar had already experienced success with Radio in 1998 and 1999 when it ran its *Storytellers* campaign. The Radio commercials for that campaign were reenactments of actual incidences in which OnStar subscribers utilized the service. But in 2002, technological advances made it possible to replay the live call with the dramatic interactive dialogue between an OnStar operator and a subscriber.

From remotely unlocking a vehicle for a frantic Mom who accidentally locked in her infant, to detecting air bag deployment and dispatching local police to the scene of an accident, to alerting local medics to the location of a car whose driver is having a heart attack, OnStar has developed over 300 different creative treatments in the past three years. Five different Radio commercials are produced every three weeks and rotated with 20% of the weight behind each one. An OnStar commercial was recognized for its excellent creative in 2004 with a Radio-Mercury Award.

“Key metrics took dramatic increases”

Placing most of its buys on Network Radio, OnStar also matches up the call with the lifestyle profile of the network. “We try to use the proper sensitivity,” Young explained. “It also helps us break through the clutter,” he added.

Since launching the *Real Stories* campaign, OnStar has doubled its subscriber base to over four million customers and enjoys nationwide recognition of its brand and consumer understanding of its product. Subscriber retention is extremely healthy and they are experiencing growth in the sales of OnStar’s hands-free service. According to Young, “The key metrics took dramatic increases.”

OnStar’s campaigns pre-dated the Radio Ad Effectiveness Lab’s (RAEL) study, “Personal Relevance, Personal Connections,” by WirthlinWorldwide. However, OnStar’s success is a testament to the results of the study, and the implications for advertisers: Radio is the most personal of mediums. To view the Wirthlin Study and other RAEL research please visit www.RadioAdLab.org.



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