

American Greetings Measures The Success of Their Seasonal Product Campaigns Using PR Newswire's New Measurement Service, MediaSense

OVERVIEW

Since opening its doors nearly 100 years ago, American Greetings has strived to help people everywhere express their innermost thoughts and feelings, enhance meaningful relationships and celebrate life's milestones and special occasions.

Today, the social expression industry is generally led by two major players, one of which is American Greetings, but competition also includes many smaller niche companies. It is with this landscape in mind that the public relations team at American Greetings, led by Laurie Henrichsen, creates each of their individual PR campaigns.

Whether launching a new line of holiday greeting cards, introducing a new licensing initiative or announcing an innovative new special occasion product, each campaign that Laurie and her team creates must communicate specific corporate messages as well as individual campaign messages. These messages must be strong enough to generate positive media coverage for American Greetings and its products.

CHALLENGE

With 10 major holiday campaigns and many more product launches featuring everyday products and licensed characters like Strawberry Shortcake®, Care Bears® and Holly Hobbie®, the PR team at American Greetings is busy. Measuring the results of campaigns to establish areas in need of improvement or illustrating success is of critical importance. However, like many in-house communications teams, they do not have the luxury of devoting a lot of time or resources to this function.

In the past, American Greetings used a variety of methods, ranging from expensive measurement services to in-house efforts to research and produce their own reports. While the measurement services provided valuable data, they were very costly, and at times, extremely labor intensive with many technological “bells and whistles” that required too much staff time for data entry and training.

According to Laurie, “We needed a measurement system that could provide all the important information on our coverage such as volume, tonality and share of voice without

detracting from our ability to develop campaigns for upcoming product launches and media relations work.

SOLUTION

American Greetings is a valued customer of PR Newswire. When PR Newswire approached American Greetings about beta testing a new measurement product, Laurie valued the chance to participate.

“I have always relied on PR Newswire for their cost-effective and high-quality news distribution and targeting services, so I was very interested in learning more about the new measurement service.

“PR Newswire’s service, MediaSense, provided all the key categories of measurement we needed. Once we established our criteria, the service required little staff time. The charts and executive summaries were shared in a format that made it easy to identify strengths and weaknesses and share results with our executives.”

MediaSense provides a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the media coverage an organization receives. Reports are delivered on a quarterly basis and contain an evaluation of media coverage throughout that time period based upon several measures.

Quantitative criteria include volume of coverage and coverage by media type. Qualitative measures include an evaluation of each article’s tone (positive, negative, neutral), the presence of key corporate messages, the overall quality of coverage based upon an article’s length, placement, publication type and tone, and the equivalent ad value. All quantitative measurements are also evaluated based upon a comparison to a company’s key competitors, while qualitative reports offer an unbiased assessment of how a company is portrayed in the press.

The analysis is delivered in reports that consist of charts and graphs illustrating each aspect that has been measured and that can be easily incorporated into Microsoft Word or PowerPoint and shared among colleagues.

According to Laurie, “MediaSense is a great value, and fills a void in the marketplace that until now was not being met.”

RESULTS

American Greetings was pleased with the results that MediaSense provided on two important levels: the actual results were positive reinforcement that Laurie and her team had communicated their key messages to their important media audiences; and, the reports

provided a way for Laurie to communicate the cost effectiveness and value of her campaign to her key executives.

“As is the case with most PR departments, a lot of time, research and preparation goes into defining our key messages, developing a PR plan, preparing a list of targeted media contacts and pitching media. The results provided by MediaSense showed our time was well spent since we did achieve communication of our key messages. Importantly, the results also illustrated specific opportunities for improving future campaigns.

“The reports provided a relatively turn key way for us to communicate the success of our campaigns to top management. It also helped us illustrate the potential power of PR and the importance of including it as a cost-effective element of the overall marketing strategy.

“PR Newswire’s flexibility and willingness to work with us on the timing of announcements and our seasonal PR campaigns was also a big plus. Our experience working with PR Newswire was very positive.”