

MADD Uses Viral E-Mail to Build List

By Kristen Bremner

With its first two viral e-mail campaigns, Mothers Against Drunk Driving expanded its e-mail list by more than 30 percent from 10,000 names to in excess of 13,000.

The seasonal campaigns both were first-time e-mail efforts related to campaigns the organization has conducted via direct mail for many years. They also were the first campaigns since MADD teamed with application service provider Convio about two months ago. The Convio tool lets nonprofits manage relationships with donors through Web content and e-mail.

“For about a year and a half we’d been providing a weekly e-newsletter but we’d never really had direct appeals or efforts to engage our constituency directly through e-mail,” said Bobby Heard, national director of marketing and development at MADD, Irving, TX. “The beauty of what Convio has created is that it can help us build our e-mail file.”

The e-mail efforts aimed not to solicit donations but to encourage recipients to pass the e-mails on in an attempt to build MADD’s e-mail file, he added.

When the partnership began, MADD had about 10,000 e-mail names compared with 2 million on its postal file.

The first campaign went to the MADD e-mail file Nov. 21 for the group’s Rating



Though only 2% of e-mail recipients clicked through, traffic to the Web site rose when e-mails were sent.

the States report. These people received a personalized “report card” containing information on how the state they live in stacks up regarding drunk-driving laws.

Rating the States has been a MADD program since 1991, and the campaign takes place every three years. This was the first time it was conducted online, and the direct mail component has not yet dropped.

The second campaign, sent Dec. 12, was “Tie One on for Safety,” in which MADD asked supporters to pledge not to drink and drive. This annual effort always occurs between Thanksgiving and New Year’s. Again, it was MADD’s first e-mail effort behind this campaign, and there was also a direct mail effort.

Both e-mails called on the recipient to forward them to friends and family.

Though only about 2 percent of recipients of a forwarded e-mail clicked through and signed up at MADD’s Web site, the overall e-mail file has risen more than 30 percent since the campaigns began. One possible reason for the jump is that, instead of clicking through, people went directly to the MADD site after receiving one of the forwarded e-mails. This was encouraged in the original messages.

The Rating the States e-mail said, “We also hope you will tell your friends and loved ones to visit our Web site and register for a personalized alert on their state grade.”

The Tie One on for Safety message said, “After making your online pledge, you can send a personalized MADD e-card to friends and loved ones and ask them to join you in your commitment to making America’s roads safer for all of us.”

Though some who signed up at the Web site may have done so as a result of a direct mail piece, Heard said that the majority had to result directly from the viral e-mails.

“Based on the timing of the Web traffic, they had to have come from these e-mails,” he said. “There isn’t any other pattern of this happening in the past.”

MADD will continue using viral e-mail to build its file for at least the next six months as opposed to prospecting via e-mail, Heard said. ■



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