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Fellowes works ID-theft angle

Craig McGuire - 10 Jul 2006 11:00

Chicago-based manufacturer Fellowes wanted to position itself as the expert in personal protection. Using the topical issue of identity theft as its hook, Fellowes tapped GolinHarris for a consumer education effort.

"When it comes to associating your brand with consumer issues, there is a limit to what you can accomplish with advertising," says Maureen Moore, Fellowes director of corporate marketing. "PR gives you more access to the media and a vehicle for participating in campaigns to educate consumers."

Strategy

As part of consumer communication, it became clear that Fellowes needed to differentiate itself from the competition and simultaneously educate consumers about its products' features, thus building brand preference, says Zandra Zuno, VP and director of marketing at Golin.

"While the category had shown tremendous growth over the past several years, there was still very low penetration with the personal machines," Zuno adds. "And while the issue of identify theft was becoming more prevalent, only banks such as Citibank were really addressing the issue."

The aim was to educate national and local media, and, in turn, their audiences, about how consumers can protect themselves.

Tactics

Golin struck up a partnership with the founders of the Identity Theft Resource Center (ITRC), a leading consumer advocacy group, to serve as spokespeople via press materials, a radio media tour, and an ANR.

"This... involved telling a continual story to mainstream consumer media about the prevalence of ID theft and the role of shredders in prevention," Zuno says.

Two electronic press kits were distributed featuring Fellowes shredders with timely angles.

"Even with use of VNRs and b-roll on the decline, the team saw the need to provide footage of Fellowes shredders with the rise of identity theft-related news stories," Zuno says.

A VNR was distributed with the topic of protecting your credit during the holidays and featured tips from the ITRC, says Moore.

The team also utilized the holiday shopping season to recommend the DS1 shredder as the

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ideal holiday gift.

And, the team worked with the Federal Trade Commission as it released its 2005 FTC announcement on consumer complaints about fraud and identity theft.

Results

In six months, Fellowes received more than 156 million media impressions and an ad value of \$1,749,262, Zuno estimates. This included a seven-minute segment on *Today*, as well as a placement on CBS' *The Early Show* by pitching safety features on the new DS1 shredder, as CBS was working on a shredder-safety story.

Golin successfully pitched *Good Housekeeping*, and the DS1 was named the "All-Star Shredder" in its February issue, reaching 17 million consumers and helping generate the company's highest post-holiday Web traffic.

The identity-theft VNR received 84 airings and nearly 2.9 million media impressions. And there were more than 35 b-roll airings of the FTC announcement, featuring branded Fellowes visuals and ITRC quotes.

Future

With the beginning of Fellowes' fiscal year in April 2006, the team is developing new research on consumer perceptions of identity theft and will continue an aggressive campaign to position Fellowes as an expert in identity-theft protection and shredder safety for families, Moore says.

PR team: Fellowes (Chicago) and GolinHarris (Chicago)

Campaign: Fellowes' Powerful Protection

Duration: June 1, 2005, to March 31, 2006

Budget: \$550,000

PRWeek's view

The DS1 shredder may not be the most exciting product to promote, but the issue of identity theft certainly is of growing interest to consumers these days.

The campaign was distinctive not because Fellowes was able to establish the DS1 shredder as the definitive machine in its category, but because Fellowes was able to more closely associate its brand with identity-theft prevention. This clearly gives it a stronger platform to promote its products.

It is that association and the sharing of the spotlight with advocacy groups that will sway certain consumers much more effectively than paid advertising.

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