

# Ontrack gets PR from bug's bite

**Client:** Ontrack Data International (Minneapolis)

**PR Team:** Gregory Communications (Ardmore, PA)

**Campaign:** Using "Love Bug" crisis to promote recovery software

**Time Frame:** Thursday, May 4 to Wednesday, May 10, 2000

**Budget:** Nominal up-front cash payment plus 5% commission on sales the publicity generated

Faced with losing hundreds of valuable JPEG and MP3 graphics files to the not-even-likable "Love Bug" virus, Gregory Communications SVP Doug Rose needed answers – and he needed them in real time.

The small PR firm in Ardmore, PA was among the thousands of companies worldwide held hostage by the nasty virus-du-jour that struck on Thursday, May 4.

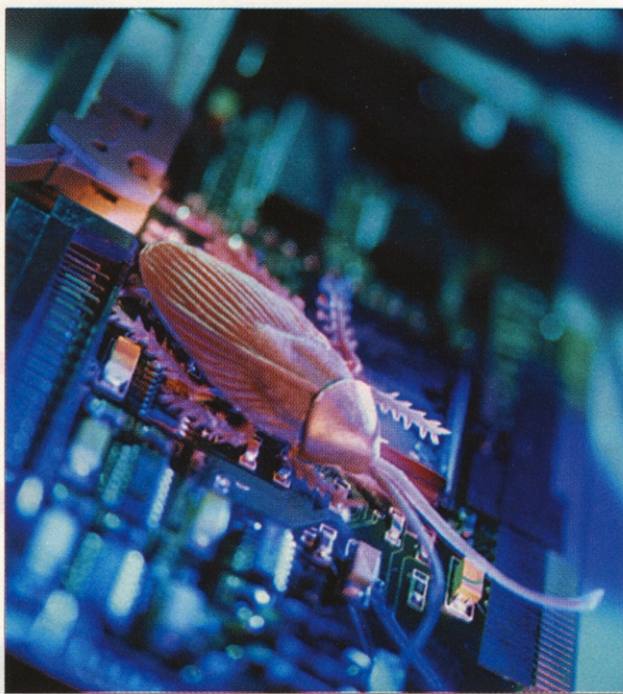
Gregory's "expert" computer consultants weren't much help – they informed Rose that they couldn't save the damaged files. Luckily, Rose recalled an e-mail he had recently received from a Minneapolis-based data-retrieval outfit, Ontrack Data International. A few phone calls later, Rose had exactly what he needed: a \$50 downloadable application developed to restore damaged MP3 audio and JPEG files.

With the crisis averted and the files restored, it dawned on Gregory Communications president Greg Matusky that opportunity wasn't just knocking – it was virtually kicking down his door.

## Strategy

"We were dumbfounded to learn that the application had received no media coverage," says Rose. "That Monday, May 8, we e-mailed the chairman, offering our services for a nominal up-front cash payment and a 5% commission on any sales our publicity generated in on-line downloads from a special Web site."

Ontrack's software development team had designed the new version of the Easy Recovery product specifically for



**Tough love...** Ontrack had a small window and no PR team in place

the Love Bug, getting it out the door the day after the virus began wending its way around the world.

Though there were few if any competing products on the market that soon, it made little difference. Ontrack didn't have a PR team in place to get the word out to the hi-tech media in time.

## Tactics

Gregory got the green light from Ontrack by 7:52 pm Tuesday evening. A "PR Swat Team" of 10 pros was quickly assembled and a press release crafted. The release included a unique element: Mike Rogers, Ontrack's chairman and CEO, was quoted as saying, "In fact, the authors of this press release contacted us based on their successful use of the product to recover files from infected computers throughout their office network."

The release was quickly dispatched to PR Newswire and Internet Wire, where it appeared by 8:30 pm. The group then waged a broadcast, e-mail and fax campaign, while manning the phones in a media outreach that ran until midnight. The outreach resumed early the next morning.

## Results

Ontrack's software application received media coverage by ABC.com, *The Industry*

*Standard*, *Investor's Business Daily*, CNET, ZDTV, *Future Image Report*, numerous network affiliate TV stations and others.

With ongoing coverage of the havoc caused by the pesky virus fresh in their minds, many journalists responded positively to the agency's pitch.

"They grabbed my attention because of the timeliness of the rapidly spreading virus," says Elinor Abreu, staff writer at *The Industry Standard*. "It was interesting how they came across each other, but without the news hook I probably would not have given them a second thought."

Ontrack won't release sales figures but says the Web site hawking the product received over 1,600 visitors in the week or so after the disaster.

## Future

Pleased with the coverage garnered, Ontrack officials say they would consider using Gregory Communications in the future on a project-by-project basis. "Particularly, they were really interested in the concept of deploying the 'PR Swat Team' we used during this project," says Rose.

Hopefully, next time around, millions of people will not have to be inconvenienced for the agency to pick up a little extra business.

**Craig McGuire**