



2012 Gold Effie Winner

“Book Burning Party”

Category: **GoodWorks – Non-Profit**
Brand/Client: **Troy Public Library**
Lead Agency: **Leo Burnett/Arc Worldwide Detroit**

Strategic Challenge

Due to a struggling state economy, Troy, Michigan, has seen a drop in property values in recent years that has precipitated a 20% drop in revenue to the city¹. As a consequence, the city has had to make cuts in personnel and city services. One of the services at risk in February 2010 was the nationally recognized Troy Public Library. A tax increase for additional operating funds, including the funds necessary to keep the library open, was put up for vote. Troy Citizens United, a local, well-funded political group, campaigned against the tax increase using social media, direct mail, newspaper and public access television. With no organized support for the library to counter TCU’s campaign, the vote failed.

In the fall of 2010, the city tried again, this time asking voters to pass a library-only tax increase. Again, TCU campaigned against the increase. Amidst allegations of ballot tampering and fraud, while library tax increases in eleven surrounding communities passed, the vote failed once more.

Though the library was scheduled to close in the spring of 2011, library supporters managed to get the city to approve one last vote for a tax increase. If it didn’t pass, the library would close on August 5 and sell all of its books and materials. By

the time we were approached in mid-June, there were several obstacles to overcome:

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- 1) During one of the worst economies in state history, voters were being asked to approve a tax increase they had already voted down twice.
- 2) A strong anti-tax sentiment was sweeping the country.
- 3) The opposition already had a four-month head start campaigning against the increase.
- 4) Only six weeks remained until the vote.
- 5) Library supporters didn't have any money to contribute.
- 6) Our budget was only \$3,500.
- 7) As if turning out Yes voters weren't difficult enough, the vote was scheduled for August 2, the height of the dog days of summer.

¹Statistic provided by Leger A. (Nino) Licari, Assessor, City of Troy

Objectives

We only had one chance to succeed.

Expected voter turnout was 19%¹. As seen from the previous two elections, if the same voters were to turn out, the majority would have been No votes. Because Yes voters are more difficult to turn out than No voters, we needed to substantially increase voter turnout in order to secure enough Yes votes.

¹Statistic provided by Frank Houston, Chair of the Oakland County Democratic Party

Insight

For nearly 18 months, the opposition had successfully shaped the library conversation to be all about the consequences of a Yes vote (tax increase), rather than the consequences of a No vote (library closure). In fact, one of their mass mailings encouraging citizens to vote No on the library tax increase didn't mention the word "library" at all. We knew we had to change the conversation from taxes to library.

We had to make people stop and think about the consequences of a No vote.

The Big Idea

A vote against the library is like a vote to burn books.

Bringing the Idea to Life

Step 1: Disrupt the conversation

We began by posing as a clandestine political group, Safeguarding American Families (SAFe), and brought a whole new point of view to the library issue. We said we wanted the vote to fail, but not because of the tax increase. We wanted the library to close so we could have a party. A book burning party.

We waged a political campaign which began by planting yard signs around the city that said, "Vote to close Troy library Aug. 2nd, Book burning party Aug 5th."

The reaction was immediate. People hated the idea and took our signs down. In the dark of night, we put up more. They took them down, we secretly put up more. Our cloak-and-dagger approach fueled

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the conversations on our Facebook page and on Twitter. People demanded to know who we were and what gave us the right to burn the library's books. We added talk value to the campaign and incited reactions by creating videos, T-shirts, want ads, foursquare check-ins and Facebook polls. Much to the dismay of the opposition, people were no longer focused on the tax increase. They were talking about the horrible idea of burning the library's books.

The story spread from newspapers to TV. It spread online from local to national news. It even made international news. So now that we had everyone's attention...

Step 2: Refocus the conversation

Days before the vote, we created a default landing tab on our Facebook page with the message, "A vote against the library is like a vote to burn books." We began posting on our Facebook wall under the name "No Book Burning Party," encouraging conversation about the value of books and the merits of the library. Again, the news spread from Facebook to newspapers to TV and across the blogosphere.

We had gotten the people of Troy to stop and think about the fact that whether the books were sold or burned, the result would be the same. If the vote didn't pass, their beautiful library and all of its wonderful books would be gone for good -that's the consequence of a No vote.

Communications Touch Points

TV

- Spots
- Branded Content
- Sponsorship
- Product placement

Radio

- Spots
- Merchandising
- Program/content

Print

- Trade/Professional
- Newspaper - print
- Newspaper - digital
- Magazine - print
- Magazine - digital
- Custom Publication

Direct

- Mail
- Email

PR

Events

Interactive

- Display Ads
- Web site
- Digital video
- Video skins/bugs
- Social Networking Sites
- Podcasts
- Gaming
- Mobile
- Other

Packaging

Product Design

Cinema

OOH

- Airport
- Transit
- Billboard
- Place Based
- Other _____

Trade Shows

Sponsorship

Retail Experience

- POP
- In-Store Video
- In-Store Merchandizing
- Sales Promotion
- Retailtainment

Guerrilla

- Street Teams
- Tagging
- Wraps

Buzz Marketing

Ambient Media

- Sampling/Trial

Consumer Involvement

WOM

Consumer Generated

Viral

XOther Craigslist: asked for help with large fires. Ebay: posted lawn signs. Zzzle: created branded items.

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Media Expenditures

Sept 2010 – Aug 2011

YEAR PRIOR: Sept 2009 – Aug 2010

- Under \$500 thousand
- \$500 - 999 thousand
- \$1 - 2 million
- \$2 - 5 million
- \$5 - 10 million

- \$10 - 20 million
- \$20 - 40 million
- \$40 - 60 million
- \$60 - 80 million
- \$80 million and over

XNot Applicable

- Under \$500 thousand
- \$500 - 999 thousand
- \$1 - 2 million
- \$2 - 5 million
- \$5 - 10 million

- \$10 - 20 million
- \$20 - 40 million
- \$40 - 60 million
- \$60 - 80 million
- \$80 million and over

Owned Media Sponsorship

We placed one 2" x 3.5" classified ad in the Troy Times asking for clowns and ice cream vendors for the book burning party.

Additional Marketing Components:

- None
- Pricing Changes
- Couponing
- Leveraging Distribution
- Other (Please Explain)

Reach:

Local

Results

How do you know it worked?

Optimistic projections estimated voter turnout at 19%¹, while actual turnout reached 38%, that's double the projected number². And Troy's voter turnout was 280% greater than surrounding communities who saw an average actual turnout of only 10%³. The library won by a landslide.

¹Statistic provided by Frank Houston, Chair of the Oakland County Democratic Party

²Agency research, 8/10/2011, Oakland County Clerk/Register of Deeds Elections Division

³Agency research, 8/10/2011, Oakland County Clerk/Register of Deeds Elections Division

Why are these results significant?

Thanks to the library's victory, kids can still enjoy summer reading programs, the unemployed still have job training resources, senior citizens still have access to computers, students can still get homework help and the jobs of those who work at and service the library were saved.

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Anything else going on that might have helped drive results?

It was an election, so the small group of library supporters were voicing their point of view at city council meetings, in a flyer, in one newspaper ad and on their own two Facebook pages – though this wasn't much different than what they had done in the first two elections.

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