



NHTSA

2019 Rail Campaign

Findings from Focus
Groups to Assess Creative
Concepts

December 5, 2018

6 groups in 3 cities where multi-fatalities have occurred at rail crossings

Participants: licensed drivers ages 18-49 who self-report they have raced trains

1. Tarrytown, NY: November 14, 2018
2. Phoenix, AZ: November 19, 2018
3. Houston, TX: November 26, 2018

53 participants: 30 men, 23 women

Assess 3 creative concepts, relative to perceived effectiveness in conveying the message:

Trying to race an oncoming train is extremely dangerous

NOTE: For this report, numerical references to grades and grade averages are cited. However, due to small sample sizes, these metrics are not intended to be projected across any population group. Rather, they are only indicative of the degrees of differing opinions expressed by the participants in these six focus groups.

3 Concepts

1

Legendary Last Words

- Contrast memorable last words of great people with the mundane, foolish last words of those hit at rail crossings
- 3 video ideas depicted, each with scenario of driver deciding to race the train
- Radio script (with Nathan Hale's last words) read

2

Inner Voice

- There is a moment of temptation when at a railway crossing - when maybe for just a second, the driver thinks about trying to beat the train and cross the tracks.
- Video idea depicted: Fantasy football fantasy
- Banner ad idea: Train obliterating the letters of "Maybe I can beat the tr..."

3

You Know It's True

- People already know they shouldn't try to cross the tracks. Doing so is categorically stupid. Concept uses reality based theme.
- Video idea depicted: Security camera scene of driver snaking through crossing gates
- Banner ad ideas: Photos and actual statistics about train crossings in the geo-area near the person who is online

— Assessments: Legendary Last Words



- “Dark humor” makes it attention-getting and memorable
- Points out influence of peer-pressure
- Sudden jarring & startling sound of train horn
- “Legendary Last Words” catchphrase



- Needs to be more graphic, e.g., show crash or aftermath
- Makes fun of death & a serious matter
- Radio: boring; Nathan Hale unknown to many
- Sarcastic tone bothersome to several

Grade-Point-Averages:
(on 4.0 scale)

2.66 (videos)

1.77 (radio)

Lowest (combined) of the
3 concepts

Only 4 participants
considered this concept
as having the most
promise of being
an effective campaign

— Assessments: Inner Voice



- “Self-talking” and “daydreaming” considered as on-point, relevant
- Sudden jarring & startling interruption of train horn
- Banner ad idea more positively assessed than video; simplicity and creativity



- Storyline took too long to get to the point
- Fantasy football situation not relatable to all (especially women); use something more realistic instead - e.g. late to pick up child; late to work
- Needs to be more graphic; show or audibly imply impact
- Silliness of farfetched fantasy football scenario

Grade-Point-Averages:
(on 4.0 scale)

2.36 (videos)

2.47 (banner ad)

8 participants considered this concept as having the most promise of being an effective campaign

— Assessments: You Know It's True



- “More real” and credible; “it really could happen”
- Surveillance scene intriguing, attention-getting, dramatic
- Banner ads’ stats and localized “personalization” add to credibility and interest



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- Needs to be more graphic; show crash, aftermath
 - Banner ads: boring-looking in design/appearance; despite good content, would not catch attention visually

Grade-Point-Averages:
(on 4.0 scale)

3.17 (videos)

3.45 (banner ad)

41 participants considered this concept as having the most promise of being an effective campaign

RECOMMENDATION:
YOU KNOW IT'S TRUE

— YOU KNOW IT'S TRUE

Rationale

- Most credible and relevant of the three ideas
- Intriguing, attention-getting
- Consistency in comments, descriptions, impressions across all 6 groups
- Universally appealing to both genders and full age range

Suggested Considerations for Refinements

- Depict or imply (visually and/or audibly) impact of vehicle and train in video
- Develop series of online ads with intriguing statistics for use in geo-areas where train/vehicle crashes have not occurred; e.g.:
 - Average train's speed at a particular crossing
 - Average stopping distance for a train at a particular crossing