

**Maricopa Association of Governments  
Youth Empowerment Project  
Message Testing Notes**

Summary

In February 2009, three diverse groups of teens were engaged in message testing discussions on the winning entries of the Public Service Announcement Competition. The message testing was held to ask teens what aspects of the winning entries they liked or disliked, and gather their suggestions for enhancing the effectiveness of the ads in reaching the teen population. Overall, teens liked the concepts represented in the winning Web banner and print ad. Teens indicated the final productions should be edgy but simple to appeal to teens. One group did not recognize the song lyrics highlighted in the Web banner. For the print ad, teens gave positive comments about the word graphic but suggested making it easier to determine what shape the words were meant to create. Detailed notes from the discussions follow.

Date: 2/9/09

Group: Avondale Youth Advisory Commission

Attendees: seven teens

Ethnicity: six White, one Hispanic

Gender: six females, one male

Age Range: 14-21

Comments on Web Banner:

- Photo:  
The group really liked the photo and didn't want it changed. They felt the photo would grab their attention and the attention of other teens. They mentioned this look is becoming more popular. They interpreted the photo to mean dating violence can happen to tough girls too. They voiced the need to keep the photo edgy. We talked about having several photos representing a diverse group. They thought this could work and suggested the ability to interact with the banner to change the photos instead of just scrolling on its own.
  
- Lyrics:  
The group also liked the lyrics and suggested keeping them "as is". Teens said the combination of the photo and lyrics would draw teens' attention. We talked about concerns with the text being perceived as glorifying violence. The group felt they, and other teens, wouldn't interpret the text in this way. They said teens make a quick, literal assessment. They would recognize the song and wouldn't look for symbolic meaning.
  
- Suggestions:
  - Have photo fade to a black screen and list the Web of Friends Web address. The group felt highlighting the Web site address in this way

would be more effective than trying to include it with the photo because the graphic is already “busy looking.”

- Keep edgy to help draw teens’ attention
- If adding additional pictures, have interactive ability so viewers must click to see the different photos.
- Keep the original lyrics

#### Comments on Print Ad:

- **Heading:**  
The group felt it would be helpful to change “Abuse is never okay” to “Dating violence is never okay”.
  
- **Graphic:**  
The group felt the word graphic was very effective in appealing to teens. They said they would take time to read all the words in the graphic. They felt it was important to keep the graphic element black and white. They stated the graphic’s simplicity made it more interesting and different from many other ads seeking teens’ attention. We talked about how it is difficult to tell what the graphic represents. The group felt that not being able to tell what it was right away helped draw attention to it. We talked about ways to help enhance the graphic without making it “in their face”.
  
- **Suggestions:**
  - Add language to identify as dating violence in heading
  - Make sure grammatical errors are fixed
  - Keep in black and white
  - If enhance to tell graphic is arm sling, be subtle so as not to make it obvious. This would take away from the curiosity factor of trying to figure it out.
  - One suggestion was to add additional words making the outline of a hand to help in determining it is an arm sling. Others felt it was effective without any changes.

Date: 2/17/09

Group: Tempe Mayor’s Youth Advisory Commission

Attendees: 12 teens

Ethnicity: seven White, three Hispanic, one Asian, one Other

Gender: eight females, four males

Age Range: 12-19

#### Comments on Web Banner:

- **Photo:**  
The group stated the photo grabbed their attention. The group had differing views about the photo’s content. Some teens felt the photo seemed to stereotype the types of girls that are involved in unhealthy relationships. They suggested finding

a similar photo without the collar. Other teens felt the photo showed that dating violence happens to a variety of people, not just the “girl next door.” The group felt the graphic and lyrics complemented each other well.

- **Lyrics:**  
A majority of the group immediately identified the words as lyrics and was familiar with the song. These teens were also familiar with the intent of the song. We talked about the importance of attributing the lyrics to avoid copyright issues. The group talked about addressing psychological elements of dating violence and mentioning that guys are also affected.
- **Suggestions:**
  - Some teens suggested keeping the banner “as is”
  - Some teens felt it would be good to use a photo without a collar
  - Use the lyrics in the banner

#### Comments on Print Ad:

- **Heading:**  
The group felt it would be helpful to change “Abuse is never okay” to “Dating abuse is never okay”.
- **Graphic:**  
Overall, the group felt the graphic grabbed teens’ attention. The group felt that the graphic distracted from the message because the reader is too busy guessing what it is. The group discussed the spelling errors. Some members felt the typos made it seem more like it came from youth while others felt it should be corrected.
- **Suggestions:**
  - Move the words into a different, more identifiable shape (i.e., broken heart)
  - Create the ad to include a message about going to the Web of Friends Web site to see what the shape is supposed to represent.
  - Add a grayed silhouette of an arm to make the sling more easily identifiable
  - Emphasize the poignant words (bolded words) by putting them in a dark red color to help in catching the reader’s eye
  - Add quotes from people instead of just words – We discussed the availability of the testimonials on the Web of Friends Web site.
  - Don’t use the word “teen”, as in “teen dating violence” in the ad since teens don’t refer to themselves as teens
  - Use larger fonts to help in reading the words
- **Suggestions from 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> place ads:**
  - Incorporate “Stop violence before it stops you” into first place ad

Date: 2/18/09

Group: Suns-Diamondbacks Education Academy

Attendees: 17 teens

Ethnicity: 14 Hispanic, two Black, one White

Gender: eight females, nine males

Age Range: 16-21

#### Comments on Web Banner:

- Photo:  
The group liked the photo. They thought it might be good to have multiple pictures. The group felt the border could be enhanced by adding color.
- Lyrics:  
The group did not recognize the words to be song lyrics. They were not familiar with the song or the band.
- Suggestions:
  - Use multiple pictures
  - Add color to the border
  - Have the girl in the photo looking at the reader

#### Comments on Print Ad:

- Heading:  
We talked about changing the title to include “dating violence” or “dating abuse”.
- Graphic:  
The group was intrigued by figuring out what the graphic was. There was a lot of discussion about what it could be. The group suggested changing the shape into something more recognizable. The group liked the idea of adding color to the bolded words. Some members of the group indicated they would go to the Web of Friends Web site to find out what the graphic image was supposed to represent, if this was presented in the print ad.
- Suggestions:
  - Use “dating violence” – The group felt “violence” included more than just physical abuse while “abuse” only made them think of physical actions.
  - Change graphic to be words on a human heart and show the heart tearing
  - The group agreed a silhouetted arm in the sling would help make it more recognizable.
  - Leave in spelling errors to show youth made the ad themselves