



Six Thinking Hats Case Study: J Walter Thompson

When J. Walter Thompson's Ford Focus account team set out to develop a summer ad campaign they were grappling with one of the biggest challenges in advertising: how to reach their target, the 18-25 year old demographic.

"This group is somewhat cynical and jaded about messages," explains JWT's Ford Focus Account Manager Paul Hallas. "They are really turned off by the hard sell."

The team wanted to build the campaign around music. To develop the concept, they called on the expertise of some of the agency's top creative thinkers, often bringing as many as 15 people together for brainstorming sessions.

"We thought we would come up with the big idea quickly, but it just didn't work," recalls Hallas. "There were a lot of strong and diverse opinions and not a lot of consensus. We realized we weren't getting anywhere with these marathon sessions so I cut meetings back to four or five people from 15. But you lose a lot of creativity when you do that."

The team develops the big idea in just three hours

Enter Six Thinking Hats™, the methodology, developed by creative thinking guru Edward de Bono. It provides a framework for exploring issues and ideas by separating the thinking into six different modes: information (White Hat), feelings (Red Hat), caution (Black Hat), benefits (Yellow Hat), creativity (Green Hat) and managing the thinking (Blue Hat). Focusing on one mode at a time, a group using Six Hats is able to think in parallel.

Using Hats, the team was able to bring more people back into the creative process. And meetings went much more quickly and were far more productive. "In just three hours we were able to put together our plan – probably in two-thirds less time than it would have taken without Hats. And the quality and quantity of ideas we could take into production were incredible. Because Hats made team members comfortable voicing their ideas, we maximized creative input," says Hallas.

They quickly identified two sponsorship opportunities for the Focus: the Detroit Electronic Music Festival, a three-day event, and Area 1, an alternative music tour. Making the most of these sponsorship opportunities was their next challenge. "You can't just hit them over the heads with car banners and logos



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-it's a major turn-off with this audience. Our goal was to become fully integrated into the event by making the Focus part of the experience," says Hallas.

Using Six Hats, the team developed a plan for sponsoring a large tent at each of the two events and fashioning it into a dance club.

To integrate the Focus, they came up with the idea of parking two Focus cars outside the tent and turning them into 'rolling speakers'. Each of the cars was outfitted with \$20,000 worth of stereo equipment, including turntables, which would allow a DJ to plug in, mix music and play it out of the cars.

Inside, visuals including pictures of the Focus were set to music, providing enticing 'eye candy'. The Fashion in Focus dancers, wearing outfits actually made from pieces of the car, added to the spectacle. There was also a computer kiosk featuring an interactive game in which the main character, a hip DJ, drives a Focus.

The campaign hit its mark, according to Hallas. In surveys conducted at each Area 1 location, more than 75% of respondents said that the presence of the Focus added value to the experience.

"The tents were hugely popular," Hallas says. "At any given time, there were line-ups of at least 100 people waiting to get inside. In advertising, it's not often that people actually wait in line to take in your message.

"We give a lot of credit to Hats. In fact, we use it all the time now and meetings are much more productive. They take about a third of the time they used to and the quality and quantity of ideas are amazing. Hats works like enormous creative caffeine. It's part of our culture now."

Summary

J. Walter Thompson's Ford account team was looking for breakthrough creative thinking to position the Ford Focus as a hip, highly-desirable vehicle among the 18-25 year old demographic.

It was a challenging prospect. The 18-25 year old age group is considered the toughest to reach - a subculture in which word of mouth rules and more traditional media such as television and print have minimal impact. To find innovative new channels to reach this target, the team needed to draw from all of its top-notch creative thinkers. Yet, the resulting strategic planning meetings proved large and unwieldy. Hampered by less than optimum group dynamics, the initiative quickly became bogged down.

To kick-start the creative process, the team turned to MICA's Six Thinking Hats™ the methodology developed by creativity guru Edward de Bono, and put together all the elements of a high-impact campaign in just three hours.

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