



### Focus Group Report

**To:** Lorraine Joubert, Marion Gold  
**From:** Arianne Corrente, Marc Mainville  
**Date:** March 12, 2008  
**Re:** Storm Water Communications Campaign

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#### **Background/Introduction**

On March 6, 2008 Clarendon Group conducted two focus groups at MacIntosh Survey Center. Two groups of 10 adults, ages 25-65 were recruited to give feedback on the logo, tagline, and creative campaign concepts for the Storm Water Communications Campaign.

Clarendon group also conducted a focus group with 18, 8<sup>th</sup>- grade students at Park View Middle School in Cranston to test the logo, tagline, and creative campaign concepts.

The following is a recap of feedback obtained during all three focus groups – you’ll notice delineation between the “adult” responses and the “kids” responses. This is not the universe of responses but instead is meant to reflect major themes and direction.

The adult focus groups were also recorded on DVD and VHS, for security reasons the focus group with 8<sup>th</sup> graders was not.

<b>Objectives</b>
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- Explore what preconceived notions there are, if any, around storm water runoff and Rhode Island water resources
- Elicit feedback on the proposed logo tagline combinations for maximum comprehension and effect
- Gather feedback on proposed campaign creative: which images resonate, and which don’t? Which concepts hit and miss the mark?
- Weed out any unintended messages from imagery or language.
- Identify any missed opportunities that exist for attracting and educating these target audiences.

<b>General Discussion / Warm Up</b>
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- *How do you learn about environmental issues in general? Can you name a few in the news lately?*  
Respondents in all of the focus groups pointed to global warming as the issue they had heard most about and mentioned that they received information on environmental issues via the internet, TV news, cable news, and from newspapers or magazines. Other environmental issues they reported hearing about include: “Save the Bay”, air pollution, contaminated drinking water, lead paint, fossil fuels, and “carbon footprint”. Anecdotally, respondents reported that 80% of what they hear about the environment is related to global warming. They also reported that the next environmental issue they hear most about is water quality (specifically drinking water).
- *Have you ever seen an ad for an environmental issue? What was it for? Was it good? Preachy?*  
Adult respondents reported seeing the “Indian with the tear” ad and “Smoky the Bear”, they also noted that they haven’t seen much paid advertising in recent months regarding environmental issues – but that network newscasts, books, and movies seem concentrated with information about environmental issues. The 8<sup>th</sup> graders at Park View reported remembering “Smoky the Bear”, seeing advertisements that tout environmentally friendly products (light bulbs, cars, etc.), and seeing messages about “going green” in magazine articles.
- *Where do you remember encountering the ad? Was it on TV or radio? Or in a magazine?*  
Respondents report seeing news stories and paid advertisements about environmentally friendly products on network television and cable, and in the newspaper or magazines. The adults and kids also consistently referenced the internet as the place they get the most information about “going green” and where they read the most about environmental issues. Anecdotally, adult respondents noted seeing very few paid advertisement or public service announcements about environmental issues and said that if they were to encounter those ads they would not want them to be “gimmicky” and reported that simple, clear messages would resonate.
- *Are there specific environmental challenges local to RI that you are aware of? How did you hear about them?* Both the adults and the kids reported hearing the most about issues having to do with “Save the Bay”, the Johnston landfill, beach closings, and issues with lead paint in Rhode Island. The kids report learning about them in school and on the TV or internet, the adults report learning about these issues on TV, the internet, and in the newspaper.
- *When you think about water issues in RI, what comes to mind?* Again, respondents reported “Save the Bay” as the water issue they hear most about. A handful of respondents in the adult focus groups also reported hearing about storm water – specific to the “big pipe” or “big tunnel” under the City of Providence. The kids reported that beach clean-ups and closings are a water quality issue they hear a lot about.

- *Has anyone here heard of storm water? Any idea what that might mean?* A handful of respondents had heard of storm water, there were references made to the “big tunnel” or “big pipe” under the City of Providence. A few of the adult respondents also recognized that storm water effects the Bay negatively and that they don’t see much happening on a state wide level to prevent the effect storm water has. Some of the adult respondents reported hearing that using pesticides on their lawn could contribute to storm water pollution; others noted that the salt used to pre-treat roads also contributes. The kids did not know as much about storm water but as the subject was explained to them they understood how everyday actions could contribute to storm water pollution.

### Creative Evaluation of Logos

- *Individual Exercise: Rank each logo without tag line from 1 – 3.* Adult respondents in number alone ranked the “Stu” logo very well, “know where it goes” ranked second, and the umbrella logo ranked third. For the kids the umbrella ranked first, “Stu” ranked second, and “know where it goes” ranked third.
- *What does the image mean to you?* Adult respondents noted that they liked the fact that Stu was animated, thought he was “cute”, and they appreciated that the message to “choose your way to protect the bay” was clear. As conversation developed and the moderator explored with respondents why they chose “know where it goes” as the second runner-up it respondents reported that the drain made “more sense” to a campaign about storm water, that the “protect the bay” angle has been done, and that “Stu” looked as if he could be in a Save the Bay ad. They liked that the storm drain logo wouldn’t blend in with pre-existing campaigns, that it was different, bright, and creative. The adult respondents chose “know where it goes” as their favorite logo after discussion.

The kids chose the umbrella logo, even after discussion, as their favorite. They liked that the umbrella symbolized protecting the bay and the rain drop at the top of the ad symbolized a storm. The kids reported liking the color combination and the “stay on top of every drop” call to action.

- *Please rank the logo tagline combinations from 1-5 (1 indicating your favorite, and 5 least favorite). Which do you prefer and why?* With adult respondents “Improving water quality is up to you” ranked the highest, they reported liking the simplicity of the call to action and the fact that the tagline tied back into the idea of water quality. The kids reported “Take steps today. Reduce storm water pollution tomorrow.” as their preferred tag line noting that they liked the call to action and the fact that it encourages the reader to learn what the steps are that need to be taken to reduce storm water pollution.

Both the adults and kids mentioned not liking being “told what to do” but instead being “encouraged” to change their behavior or learn new behavior to help alleviate the problem.

### Creative Evaluation of Campaigns

- *Which campaign did you rank number #1? Why?* Adult respondents ranked the “weapons of mass destruction” campaign the highest – they noted that the life preserver ad was thought provoking and dramatic, that it made them think about the problem and want to learn more, and that the ad with the garden hose as a “weapon of mass destruction” was creative and timely.

The kids ranked the “dad on the beach” campaign as their favorite commenting that it would make people laugh and therefore get their attention, but also understood that the campaign might not appeal to all age groups or convey a serious enough message.

- *What did the campaign you liked best make you understand about the issue? What did this campaign make you feel about the issue?* Adults reported that the “weapons of mass destruction” campaign conveyed the seriousness of the issue while being very straight forward, the campaign made them understand that there was a problem, and inspired them to want to learn more about the solution. The kids reported that these ads were, “depressing” but at the same time informative, the kids also noted that the ads in this campaign were “edgy” and would probably appeal to adults more than kids.

The kids noted that the “dad on the beach” campaign was easy to relate to because “everyone has crazy relatives”, that it was attention getting and would drive them to want to learn more, and that it was entertaining. As discussion went on they also noted that while the campaign is catchy it might not have enough substance to get adults to want to learn more and might be too silly for some. We heard the same from adults – while some enjoyed the humor in this campaign they did not think it was serious enough to make an impact and inspire a reader to want to learn more. Some adults were very offended by the bathing suit ads as well and thought they did not at all convey the issue they were meant to convey.

- *Would any of the campaigns make you want to learn more? Why or why not?* Adults reported that the “weapons of mass destruction” campaign would make them want to learn more – particularly the life preserver ad. The simplicity and authenticity of that ad really resonated with the adult respondents. They drew a direct connection between the need to save and protect the water and the problem of storm water pollution.

The kids reported that the “dad on the beach” campaign would inspire them to want to learn more by logging on to the website to learn more about the problem and about possible solutions.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the focus group findings and consultation with our design partners at Mad Creative we recommend a two-pronged communications strategy that will rely on consistent branding of paid and earned media pieces as well as the educational materials in use by program staff. Leveraging relationships with corporate and community partners in order to

ensure wide distribution of both the education materials and consistent placement of paid and earned media materials is also essential.

The market research findings tell us that adults and kids alike are drawn to simple, authentic messages, straight forward tag lines and logo treatments, and images and sentiment anyone can relate to, etc. They also point us in the direction of heavy emphasis on print and online media placements as well as a strong focus on earned media. Both the adults and kids report learning about environmental issues in the news (TV, radio, print, and online). They directly relate reliability and credibility of information with news coverage – particularly when it comes to environmental issues.

In light of these findings we propose the following:

- ❖ Target elementary and middle school students with a low-cost, high-impact poster campaign that encourages use of the resources available at [www.stormwaterpollution.org](http://www.stormwaterpollution.org).
  - Finalize details and write body copy for two posters, based on the “dad on the beach” and “dad waterskiing” ad concepts.
  - Develop downloadable screensaver and desktop background based on the poster concepts, as well as tools and curriculum resources for posting on [www.stormwaterpollution.org](http://www.stormwaterpollution.org) (possibly partner with Save the Bay or elementary/secondary education students at URI and RIC to develop curriculum).
  - Release the posters at an earned media event, held at Park View Middle School in Cranston, where the focus group took place.
  - Distribute posters to target elementary and middle schools in time for posting and use of the web tools during the 2008/2009 school year.
  - Draft articles and opinion pieces for inclusion in school newspapers, the Lifebeat section of the Providence Journal, and on relevant internet sites.
  
- ❖ Reach a broader statewide audience with a high-profile paid and earned media campaign aimed at driving people to [www.stormwaterpollution.org](http://www.stormwaterpollution.org). Once on the website visitors will be able to link to information about simple behavior change (wash your car on the lawn, pick up pet waste, etc.), initiatives at the local level to mitigate or prevent storm water runoff from reaching the water supply, etc. .
  - Finalize details and write body copy for the “life preserver” and “weapons of mass destruction” ad concepts.
  - Recruit earned media partners (WJAR, WRNI, etc.) to offer air-time – encourage weather forecasters to include a brief report on water quality in their beach reports during the summer months and to drive viewers/listeners to [www.stormwaterpollution.org](http://www.stormwaterpollution.org) to learn more.
  - Purchase ad space with a focus on print and online media outlets (ProJo.com, ProJo, local daily/weekly papers, RI Monthly, RI Future, Edible Rhody, Providence Monthly, Providence Phoenix, East Side Monthly, Newport Life Magazine, cox.net, etc.).
  - Purchase ad space in the form of bus kings during the summer months, specifically targeted at the buses that run to South County.

- Release the ad campaign at an earned media event with the intent of highlighting “best practices” in storm water management or efficient/responsible use of water.
- Draft a “library” of articles and opinion pieces for potential placement in local and statewide daily/weekly print and online publications. The “library” should include pieces with a general storm water focus as well as pieces that could be pitched to media outlets after a major storm, fish kill, beach closing, etc.
- Create a media list for use by URI staff in pitching stories from the “library” at the appropriate times, Clarendon will make initiation introductions to the contacts on the media list where necessary.

Lack of sufficient funding within the current budget for this project is the only foreseeable road block to the success of this strategy. The strategy relies the production of a large quantity of posters for distribution, placement of paid media in print publications, and the build-out of a fairly comprehensive website. Strong relationships with corporate and community partners will be essential to the success of this campaign.