

Electric Vehicle Myths Busted – Ford D Show Award Entry

The challenge: How does a leading automotive Ford become part of the conversation around electric vehicles before actually having one on the market?

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” – Nelson Mandela

Challenge and assignment

In early 2019, a senior executive at Ford attended an industry forum on electric vehicles and was taken aback by the lack of knowledge presented. Frustrated, the executive came back and requested the communications team take a look at the role of educating key audiences and stakeholders ahead of a slew of electric vehicle launches planned. After all, who better to lead the conversation than Ford – a trusted 116-year-old brand famous for “opening the highways to all mankind?”

So, the team embarked on a communications campaign with a single objective – to harness data and insights to democratize the possibility of electric vehicle ownership through education and directly address apprehensions consumers might be experiencing.

The team targeted an emerging audience of consumers between 25 and 35 years old, more tech-savvy people committed to leaving the world in a better place than they found it. Ford employees were another core target segment along with media.

Research and insights

The team dipped into existing internal and external media research. While the results provided good information with regard to the perceived challenges to electric vehicle ownership, a lack of conclusive research, particularly at a global level, meant we needed to delve deeper to develop meaningful education on electric vehicles. It was clear that our competitors were using only traditional advertising routes, without any hard data or the intention to educate.

So, our next step was to conduct original research to understand the misconceptions in greater detail and reinforce thought leadership through an independent global survey. The survey spanned Europe, North America and China, across 3,000 targeted participants from the general population. The sample used quotas and weights to ensure proper demographic representation and targeted electric vehicle owners or intenders.

We set out to engage key marketing and product departments, rather than just run with media-led input. Ford’s global director of electric vehicles, the vice president of product development, the head of marketing and the vice president of communications were all brought in early on to provide insights and support before the survey went into the field. The total cost for conducting this global survey was \$61,000.

In parallel, Ford commissioned the survey across 3,000 employees in North America.

The most significant consumer myths about electric vehicle ownership uncovered were as follows. Each myth was tackled with a content to shackle the myth:

- Myth 1: Close to 80 percent of Americans would not pick an electric vehicle because they cannot handle extreme weather (the exhilaration of electric vehicles was showcased through Ford's trademark [virtual reality simulator](#))
- Myth 2: People were most concerned, 49 percent of them, with the lack of charging stations (linked [charging announcement](#) on having the largest public charging network in North America)
- Myth 3: More than two-thirds of Americans, 67 percent, and Europeans, 68 percent, did not believe electric vehicles were powerful enough to tow and haul ([all-electric prototype towing more than 1 million pounds](#) to shatter the myth)

The internal survey found that employees were unclear on the Ford's electric vehicle strategy, with three-quarters of them wanting to know more about our plans for electrified vehicles.

Strategy and creative execution

We built a communications strategy around the following:

- To position Ford as a company that is committed to electrification and leading the way
- Inform and educate on the Ford's strategy, investments and vision for electric vehicles to consumers, media and employees
- Create a steady drumbeat of conversation releasing hard data around electric vehicle adoption and consumer sentiment

Our communications approach was designed to reinforce the Ford's thought leadership and what it was doing to bust these myths. We took these specific actions with regard to the targeted groups:

- **Educate customers**
 - Working hand-in-hand with marketing, the communications team created an [education web portal](#) – an immersive digital journey that aimed to both educate and inspire potential electric vehicle consumers. The team continued to work with various stakeholders within the organization to ensure that this was not only an earned media-facing plan, but one capable of reaching customers directly.
 - Create compelling visual content to engage younger consumers and support the survey results through real-life demonstrations leveraging Ford's upcoming electric vehicles. For example, myths around [winter driving](#) in an electric vehicle was pushed in November to coincide with the coming of winter. Teams in Europe and the United States devised a paid social media plan for focused targeting and greater reach
 - A curated series of blogposts on Medium.com by the [global director of electric vehicles](#) for the company and [director of charging](#), highlighted the education gap on the company's live electric medium channel
 - The results created a big impact internally with various groups within the organization referring to these results for upcoming content for electric vehicles. For example, the [Mustang Mach-E website](#) that reaches out to millions of customers positions the vehicle around exhilaration, a key "myth" that was highlighted in the survey.
- **Educate media**

- Organized key media placements through deskside briefings in New York and California with company leadership to help educate reporters while highlighting the survey
 - These results were so powerful, they became a part of the pre-reveal media event for the company's new electric vehicles, with more than 250 media participating
 - Recently, to educate the China customers, around the launch of Mustang Mach-E, the Chinese specific survey data was used for media presentations
 - Our leadership team continues to educate media and analysts through presentations. In 2020, for the first six months, Ford has attended more than 10 key industry platforms in 2020, including University of Michigan, Texas Automotive Association, Western Automotive Press Association
- **Educate employees**
 - Series of employee-focused online and in-person fireside chats served as a platform to address the challenges employees highlighted to electric vehicle ownership and to educate

Results

Our campaign to bust the myths of electric vehicle ownership took a village, but it proved that an integrated, communications-led effort has the power to create a real measurable impact. The “EV Myths Busted” campaign contributed to ramping up interest toward the Ford’s new electric vehicles and as measured by company’s internal annual corporate reputation survey (administered by an independent market research company), led to the company generating ***the highest lift in perception around “commitment to electrification” against industry peers.***

More than 690,000 people visited the webpage in a period of 30 days of the “EV Myths Busted” campaign and interacted with the video content, with an average completion rate of 67 percent for all the videos – higher than the average company videos of 54 percent. The website garnered more than 58,000 hand-raisers/keep-me-informed sign ups on Ford’s future electric products.

The EV Myths Busted videos generated a reach of over 1 million in the US. More than 8,000 people who viewed the videos went to the Ford site and signed up for EV updates.

More than 65 stories in North America were placed within a week, with a potential reach of 9.2 million and a potential social reach of 32.8 million (through big and smart data analytics via Prime).

Exclusive preview of the company’s upcoming electric vehicles through this effort to employees saw an *opinion shift in more than 90 percent of employees who were exposed to this program.*

Agencies involved: WPP (BCW, PS-B, GTB), Chrome (videos)

Supporting videos are below:

[EV Myths Busted: Winter Test | Electric Vehicles | Ford](#)

[Myth Busted: Fun to Drive | Ford Electric Vehicles](#)

[EV Myths Busted: All-Electric F-150 Prototype Tows 1M+ Pounds](#)