

Lansing Board of Water & Light

Campaign – Organizational Relations, *Hometown Leaders*

Background & Research

The Lansing Board of Water & Light (BWL) is more than just a utility company serving water and electricity to the greater Lansing region—it's a mainstay, dedicated to giving back to our customers and community. Employees regularly go above and beyond to serve our customers during their work day, but many also give back through volunteering on their own time.

BWL's executive director of customer operations and communications conceptualized the idea to create "Hometown Leaders," a campaign to highlight the generosity of the BWL's workforce. The communications manager oversaw and managed the project, working with a summer intern to implement it. The campaign was designed to illustrate the human element of the organization to the public and show the passion and dedication the BWL's workforce has for the community it serves.

To assess how our employees are involved in the community, we did secondary research by asking employees to nominate their colleagues who go above and beyond outside of work by volunteering in the community. A total of 14 nominations were submitted with information about volunteer work – from helping reestablish Michigan's endangered peregrine falcon population, to serving meals to the homeless over the holidays – and seven employees were chosen to be featured in the campaign.

Planning

The target audience for the campaign was the Greater Lansing, Michigan region, specifically BWL customers of all ages. The purpose of the campaign was to show that the BWL isn't just a faceless company, but that there are people who genuinely care about the work they do, both on and off the clock.

Objectives for the campaign were 150,000 views, 25 shares and 350 reactions on the Facebook advertising campaign and a broader awareness of our leaders' participation in our community. Additionally, we were looking to increase the positive responses from customers in a regular survey to measure customers' views of BWL job performance. We also sought positive anecdotal feedback from customers as well as the organizations highlighted in the advertisements.

From the department advertising budget, \$150,000 was allocated to fund the campaign. The campaign lasted seven months between June and December, with each leader featured in a commercial that ran for one month on local and cable TV with a budget of approximately \$78,000, and a paid Facebook campaign of \$3,000 total. Print ads for each leader were also run in the Lansing State Journal for \$8,500 total, Greater Lansing Business Monthly and Capital Area Women's Lifestyle Magazines for \$13,000 total, and digital billboards throughout the BWL service territory for \$50,000 total.

Execution

To tell the story in a compelling and unique way, we began by conducting audio interviews with each of the seven participants to help shape the video advertisements. We then took video of the leaders to represent their role at the BWL and had a photographer and video crew accompany the leaders to highlight where they volunteer within the community. This allowed us to create a powerful visual story to communicate the value our employees bring and highlight the tremendous work of organizations in the Greater Lansing community.

Production of the campaign went very smoothly, and all seven employees were honored to have been recognized by their coworkers to be nominated.

The series was filmed and edited by a local production firm on retainer with BWL, and still photographs were taken by an external contractor also on retainer. The production firm created a unique, 30-second video for each of the seven leaders, and BWL's graphic designer created the print and digital ads.

Evaluation

Many of the organizations the leaders volunteer with expressed gratitude for the added recognition, including the Red Cross, Meals on Wheels and the Boys and Girls Club of Lansing. The free publicity and ability to share the campaign was added value for each of them, which many expressed a sincere thank you for.

It also genuinely uplifted our workforce seeing the company celebrate fellow employees and the great things they're doing for the community. The social media posts received 181,000 views, 382 reactions and 34 shares, with many members of the community commenting on how impressive it was that BWL employees dedicate themselves to bettering our community. Our leaders also interacted with the posts, sharing them with family and friends and thanking commenters for their kind words, which spurred organic engagement on the posts.

In 2015 and again in 2019, the BWL conducted a customer survey to measure overall customer satisfaction. The BWL's job performance rating increased 2 percent both among residential customers (from 81 to 83 percent) and business customers (from 87 to 89 percent) since the 2015 survey. Part of that increase was attributed to the success and positive response following the "Hometown Leaders" campaign.