

Hanover Idling Awareness Campaign

Strategic Marketing Plan



Photograph by Eric Merberg

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Executive Summary

The Hanover Idling Awareness Campaign (HIAC) is dedicated to raising local awareness of the unnecessary and wasteful nature of engine idling. The campaign will utilize commercial marketing theory and practice in order to effect behavioral change. These techniques can be applied elsewhere in New Hampshire and Vermont.

Hanover is a town that is favorably disposed to efforts against idling. Environmentally and intellectually alert, the town is home to Dartmouth College and the only large grocery store is cooperatively owned by its shoppers. Cooperatives adhere to principles of social consciousness that makes them more willing to become involved in community issues. The Hanover Coop Food Store has a prominent position in the community and therefore has the ability and willingness to reach a large audience with an anti-idling message.

The campaign exists in the context of many other efforts in the U.S. to curtail both light vehicle and heavy commercial vehicle engine idling. The EPA has conducted workshops to promote dialogue between truck drivers and communities about alternatives to idling delivery vehicles. In addition, a Vanderbilt University study found that most drivers held inaccurate beliefs about the relative cost of idling and of restarting an engine.

One of the few inherent weaknesses in the campaign is the affluence in Hanover. As part of the argument against idling is based on saving money, people with disposable income may be less inclined to sacrifice comfort to save money. Extreme weather in the winter and summer compounds this difficulty. However, these challenges may be offset by the presence of community oriented organizations including the Hanover Consumer Cooperative Society and Dartmouth College.

Efforts are directed for maximum importance and maximum effect. Driver education students are an important target audience because they are forming their driving habits and parking habits. Driving instructors may set a poor example by allowing the engine to idle between lessons, and parents may idle while waiting for their children. A properly conducted campaign can counter these impressions on new drivers.

Idling is persistent because it is seen as necessary. Indeed shutting off an engine in traffic is inadvisable due to traffic flow implications and loss of car safety functions. However, many drivers are following advice intended for carburetors while almost all modern vehicles use fuel injectors. Today's cars require very little fuel to restart a warm engine and the restarting places little strain on the car. Idling is only cost-effective for seconds, not the minutes that many allow their engines. In order to disseminate this information, HIAC will use signs, prompts, leaflets, and word of mouth.

Strategic Plan

Vision: Hanover will be a community where drivers will recognize the wasteful nature of engine idling. Drivers will switch off engines to conserve resources and save money.

Mission: To discourage engine idling using communication, reminders, and education.

Goals:

Eliminate idling except in the case of extreme weather, mechanical failure, and in traffic.

Objective 1: Within 1 year, achieve 80% engine shutoff for passenger cars downtown and on private property. Achieve 90% engine shutoff on public school property.

Objective 2: Within 1 year hire college students and retirees to monitor compliance.

Objective 3: Within 1 year create 100 impressions per day.

Create a toolkit that can replicate the program elsewhere in New Hampshire and Vermont.

Objective 4: Within 6 months provide slogans, graphics, and compliance data from existing programs.

Objective 5: Within 6 months provide develop comprehensive metrics for reporting success rates.

Marketing Research

Industry Overview

HIAC operates locally in the context of other entities working to reduce idling. While HIAC focuses primarily on passenger cars, there are other efforts directed at passenger cars and commercial trucks. The Coop Food Store, a cooperatively owned supermarket in a town with no other supermarkets, has publicized that it requests that truck drivers shut off engines while unloading. They report a high compliance rate while allowing exceptions in cases where the truck may fail to restart. The store also encourages members and customers to refrain from allowing their personal vehicles to idle, both on store property and elsewhere (Hanover Consumer Cooperative Society, Inc). The store's market exclusivity allows it to reach a broader audience and raise awareness of idling.

There are also growing statewide and nationwide efforts to reduce idling of commercial trucks. In 2004 the EPA conducted a series of workshops designed to promote mutual understanding between truck drivers and communities. These efforts were intended to involve truckers in the development and

implementation of state idling laws, in turn increasing compliance. These workshops revealed numerous points of consideration.

Not surprisingly, community representatives at EPA sponsored discussions expressed interest in reducing the diesel pollution and environmentalists expressed interest in reducing petroleum use. In addition, truck drivers expressed interest in sleeping without diesel noise. The EPA recommends holding owners of loading and unloading locations jointly responsible with truck drivers for excessive idling that occurs at those locations. Another recommendation is to clearly exempt trucks with sleeper berths from idling laws while trucks are sleeping in states where idling alternatives are not available. Several states are funding the development of alternatives to idling in truck stops (United States Environmental Protection Agency).

Competition

Drivers idle engines for many reasons. If a driver is willing to pay for the fuel to idle, it will present a challenge for a campaign to provide the driver a sufficiently compelling reason to shut off the engine. Shutting off an engine requires a longer lead time when the driver wishes to resume travel. Drivers also leave engines running for reasons of comfort. Some believe that restarting an engine costs more money or consumes more resources than allowing the engine to idle.

Unless one is driving a hybrid or electric vehicles, idling in traffic is largely unavoidable. Shutting off engines while waiting in the travelled portion of a roadway can contribute to traffic jams and safety hazards. Unnecessary idling takes place while waiting at drive-through lines and while waiting for passengers. A 2007 study of beliefs among adults who owned or had access to private vehicles found that on average drivers believed restarting a vehicle used as much gasoline as idling for 4.68 minutes and had an overall cost equal to idling for 4.07 minutes. Drivers perceived a need to idle for similar times in order to warm the engine during cold weather. By contrast, the EPA recommends idling for no longer than 30 seconds to minimize fuel consumption as well as wear and tear on vehicles (Carrico *et al.*)

SWOT Analysis:

Strengths: The campaign has a visible presence with anti-idling signs at all three public schools, the Dartmouth College child care center, and the Bank of America drive through window. Hanover is an environmentally aware town. According to The Sustainable Hanover Committee, “the residents, businesses, and public institutions of Hanover, NH understand that in order to sustain collective well-being, all must work to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs (Sustainable Hanover, NH Committee).”

Weaknesses: The campaign currently lacks paid and volunteer hours to maintain an active presence in the community, while campaign efforts are focused statewide in New Hampshire and Vermont. Efforts are largely passive at the present time. Hanover is an affluent town where drivers may not be swayed by economic arguments against idling.

Opportunities: Hanover is home to many potential allies. The Upper Valley Sierra Club group provides valuable expert connections. Environmentally alert organizations include the Hanover Consumer Cooperative Society and Dartmouth College, both of whom are involved in efforts to discourage idling.

Threats: Hanover is home to senior citizens and young children who are more sensitive to extreme temperatures. These individuals may require a climate controlled environment while waiting in a car. Winters are cold and summers are hot. Many people will need to idle their vehicles during the winter while they defrost the windows.

Target Market Analysis

The prime target will be people ages 15 through 40 who possess or are pursuing a Class D driver's license. This will include people of all genders, races, religions, and sexual orientations. Driver education students in high school are a particularly important target because they are forming their driving habits. Their parents or driving instructors may have a habit of idling an engine while parked or may have misinformed beliefs about the energy and monetary costs of restarting a warm engine. College students, college graduates, and holders of graduate degrees are also important target markets because comprise a large portion of the population in Hanover.

The target market will have frugality and civic duty as values. These people will see shutting off the engine as an action they can take for themselves and their neighbors, regardless of attitude towards environmental conservation.

Communications Strategy

Key Message

Idling is wasteful. The word has such a negative connotation that many refer to the inaction as "leaving it running." It costs drivers money, consumes non-renewable resources, and contributes to local air pollution, while the vehicle does not move an inch.

The air quality impacts of engine idling are considerable. An idling engine burns fuel at a lower temperature than an engine operating at driving speed. Since the vehicle is not moving, it is sitting in its own exhaust, further impeding fuel combustion and releasing more hydrocarbons than a moving vehicle.

While restarting a vehicle does increase use of the battery, alternator, and starter motor, it reduces wear and tear on the engine when compared to idling. A vehicle that is running will sustain wear and tear on the engine, spark plugs, alternator, and exhaust system. The EPA recommends idling for no more than 30 seconds at a time to control maintenance costs, fuel costs, and pollution (Carrico et al.)

Logo

For regional familiarity, a recognizable logo from Vermont Idling Coalition should be used.



Source: Idle Free Vermont

Slogan

There are numerous slogans for anti-idling campaigns that are prevalent in North America. These include “Idling Gets You Nowhere,” and “Idling is Fuelish.” These typically signify affiliation with an existing movement. By using its own slogan, “Idle Engines Do No Work At All,” the Hanover Idling Awareness Campaign can avoid confusion regarding affiliations.

PR / Media Relations: The primary sources of printed news in Hanover are the Connecticut Valley Spectator, printed weekly, and the Valley News, printed daily. Both of these publications will print any letter that is submitted to the editor. Due to this accessibility and wide readership, letters to the editor are a valuable tool for reaching a large portion of the population.

These publications rely substantially on press releases and tips. For this reason, a member of the Upper Valley Sierra Club Group should be asked to serve as a media liaison. This person can answer questions and alert the press as appropriate.

Marketing Strategy

Barriers Strategy

The most persistent myths about engine idling are in regards to the amount of idling time that is appropriate. Unless relative humidity is high or precipitation is occurring, necessitating maintaining a windshield temperature above freezing, a car engine only needs to idle for a few minutes before being driven. Car dealers and mechanics spread this misinformation to their customers. With the nearly universal presence of fuel injectors, idling for longer than that does more harm than good to the vehicle.

Similarly, many drivers believe that the energy consumption and total cost of idling is less than the cost and energy consumption of restarting the vehicle.

These are deep seated beliefs. Convincing the public to follow the EPA recommendation not to idle for more than 30 seconds will require the backing of trusted sources. The Hanover Consumer Cooperative Society operates a service station adjacent to its supermarket in Hanover. The service station can inform its customers of the latest recommendations on idling. To reach even more people, the cooperative can quote a mechanic or station manager in the newsletter. This will add credibility to the assertion that modern cars require very little idling time.

Distribution

The information will be distributed at community gathering places. Public schools are of particular importance because of the prevalence of drivers waiting for passengers at these locations as well as the young lungs needing protection. Leaflets, magnets, and window decals can be provided at these locations.

Maintaining a presence and advertisements on social media is inexpensive and reaches a large portion of the high school and college populations. Due to the data collection of sites such as Facebook, these advertisements are some of the most targeted advertisements possible.

Promotions

Signs urging drivers to shut off engines have already been placed at locations where children congregate. In addition, sometimes volunteers place mock tickets on windshields of idling vehicles. These are designed to resemble town parking tickets and contain information about the wasteful nature of idling while parked.

Advertising

Facebook is by far the most cost-effective method for media-based advertising. Bumper stickers, signs, and print media advertisements will play a secondary role in this campaign. Recipients of this information will be encouraged to share it and create a word-of-mouth advertising campaign.

Social Marketing

Raising awareness of idling is by its essence an ideal candidate for a social marketing campaign. Turning off an engine can be marketed as a product that will save money while conserving resources. This is similar to the win-win situations of low-flow shower heads, home insulation, and compact fluorescent lights.

In order for this campaign to be effective it must convince its target market that the price of turning off and restarting an engine (some compromise in comfort as well as some increased wear and tear to vehicle battery and starter motor) justifies the benefits (reduced wear and tear to engine and spark plugs, reduced fuel cost, and reduced pollution.) This exchange is readily available to anyone who

uses a drive-through window or waits for a passenger, although shutting off an engine while stopped in traffic is inadvisable. The campaign can promote this change through driver education classes as well as prompts and handouts.



Photograph by Eric Merberg

Community Marketing and Sponsorship

The campaign can cosponsor community events such as lectures. Dartmouth College, the League of Women Voters, and the Upper Valley Sierra Club Group provide opportunities to cosponsor.

Promotions and Events

With help from local businesses and environmental organizations, the campaign can arrange for free parking at metered spaces for one day. The meter covers will indicate that the parking is sponsored by the Hanover Idling Awareness Campaign. This reaches drivers at a time when they are most aware of their parking and driving habits.

Budget:

Print and electronic advertising: \$500

Signage: \$300

Labor for effectiveness monitoring: \$200

Printing of prompts and handouts: \$400

Total: \$1400

Reference List

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