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## Making Noise with a “Silent” Ad Campaign

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# Making Noise with a “Silent” Ad Campaign

Rebranding a local community credit union is not something to take lightly. Shifting the public to a totally new image can be more complicated than it might seem. See how a well-executed strategy that was clearly thought out in advance made a new identity seamless for one CU.

**A** rebranding campaign can be a tricky affair, fraught with the potential for failure and negative impact to the client (see Gap, Coke). Scary as that sounds, a poorly executed rebranding of an established institution can yield even more destructive results if you’re a local community credit union that is changing its name entirely. Breaking with the established and familiar identity of the past can be jarring for long-time members – especially those who have an affinity for the established brand. It also requires a clearly thought out and well-executed strategy to shift to a new public image.

So when Oceanside Christopher asked us to refresh their nearly 47-year-old brand, our strategy to reposition them as Ocean Financial Federal Credit Union came with a laser focus on communicating that, while the name may have changed, the values of the Catholic credit union were as rock solid as ever.

First, some background: Ocean Financial, headquartered in Oceanside, N.Y., provides financial products and services to the Catholic community. Chartered in 1969 by a small group of members at the Father Joseph O’Connell Knights of Columbus (Council #3481), today it is the fourth largest Catholic credit union in the country with more than 14,000 members and \$314 million in assets.

In order to capture the attention of Ocean Financial accountholders and potential new members alike, we took an unconventional approach for an institution that had mostly relied on a local cable access channel, parish communications and word of mouth to spread their message. We created a series of video spots titled “Silent Heroes” that celebrate the values of the Ocean Financial community and appeal to a broader prospect base. These spots presented fictitious characters in familiar situations who step forward to make a difference in the lives of the people around them.

We were confident in the vision we presented to the client: Our research confirmed there was no other credit union in the area utilizing a similar marketing

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strategy – the video vignette. So we were able to present a strategy that allowed Ocean Financial to stand out from the crowd and prominently present its new brand to its audience.

The spots, which were produced in 30-second and 60-second versions, were booked to air on local cable TV and were uploaded to YouTube, allowing for digital streaming of the videos.

In the first spot, titled “Hoops with a Heart,” the coach of a basketball team of elementary school-aged children notices one of his players is wearing sneakers that are old and ragged. He takes it upon himself to purchase a new pair of sneakers with an Ocean Financial-branded credit card and surprises the boy by placing the sneakers in his gym locker before a

game. The spot ends with the smiling boy joining his teammates on the court wearing the new sneakers.

In the second spot, titled “Cooking for Good,” a volunteer at a community soup kitchen sees the critically important commercial stove give out, stopping meal service to the people who depend on the generosity of the center for food. The volunteer visits her local Ocean Financial branch to secure a loan for the purchase of an upgraded replacement stove to serve the needy people who depend on the facility for a daily meal.

Both spots end with the voiceover “Isn’t It Time We All Spread the Love?” which is based on a research-defined brand truth created for OFFCU. It centers on the nonprofit financial institution’s Catholic



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Ads can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLuqSJR6nKTHqxEFtZtLaUmVBv5umyVmnj>

values, which drive a deep respect for the people and community the CU serves.

The positive results were immediately apparent, with the client endorsing our vision and our execution. “These are fictional stories, but we’ve known members who have done similarly generous things,” said Joseph Garay, CEO of Ocean Financial. “It’s a terrific expression of who the Ocean Financial family is and the way we support each other when someone needs it.”

The ads are currently running on targeted local cable stations during primetime network programming, including A&E, AMC, HGTV and CNN. They have also been published as online pre-roll served to targeted geographic and demographic audiences. Just weeks into the rollout, the campaign has already started to turn heads. It has also succeeded in bringing

the mission of the Ocean Financial community to life by demonstrating an example of the values they live and breathe every day.

“We’ve even had peer credit unions call us, saying they noticed the rebranding,” said Garay. “They told us our approach was perfect.”

Pushing the envelope with clients is only half the goal. You need to know what direction you’re pushing – and make sure it’s always helping them drive their business forward.



*Eva LaMere is president of Austin & Williams, a full-service marketing, digital and public relations firm located in Hauppauge, N.Y.*