

Staples Leverages Nostalgia For BTS Campaign

Aaron Baar, Jul 15, 2009 01:59 PM



Quick! Name a favorite -- or even an example of -- a retailer's back-to-school commercial. For many, that commercial seems to be a 15-year-old spot calling the season "the most wonderful time of the year," as a father anticipates his kids going back to school.

That commercial, for office products retailer Staples, is back for this year's back-to-school shopping season, commemorating

not only the spot's 15th anniversary, but overwhelming popular demand to see it again, according to Don LeBlanc, senior vice president of retail marketing for Staples.

"We felt there was a role for a bit of nostalgia in our campaign this year," LeBlanc says. "We thought, given the economy, it was a good way to put a smile on people's faces."

The spot, which depicts an elated father shopping for office products with dejected children -- with the Andy Williams holiday song, "The Most Wonderful Time of the Year," playing as a soundtrack -- begins airing Wednesday and will be "sprinkled throughout" the back-to-school season.

Additionally, Staples will run a new spot, using the company's "Easy button" iconography. The spot shows moms holding up the button and talking about how it helped them buy a new backpack ("so he can stop using his sister's old one") or a new graphing calculator (which her son -- in the background -- uses to spell "Booger").

The possibility of consumer confusion over the two commercials was a concern, LeBlanc says. To make the messages cohesive, the old commercial also includes the Easy Button imagery at the end. "That was one of the things we were concerned about," he says. "We didn't want to overshadow the savings message."

In addition to the television effort, Staples (in partnership with DoSomething.org) has also launched a cause-marketing campaign aimed at teens through Facebook. The "Adopt a Pack" is an application through which users commit to donating items to help fill a backpack (notebook, folders, calculators, etc.).

After users commit to donating an item, they can share the backpack via a Facebook news feed in hopes of getting their friends to commit to purchasing items to fill the backpack as well. Users are then required to go to a Staples store to donate the items -- either through buying them at the store or by virtue of already owning them -- which will be distributed to needy students.

"It's a local program, but we're leveraging a national [social media] program to get the word out," LeBlanc says.

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