

## **Communications: Creative Media MassHousing's Ethnic Marketing Campaign**

### **Background**

MassHousing has always placed a high value on making affordable home mortgage loans to minorities. Research shows that many minorities, most notably Latinos and African Americans, have been disproportionately hurt by predatory loans, and MassHousing believes that part of its public mission is to provide responsible loans to those who have been inadequately served by the private market.

MassHousing has marketed and advertised to minority markets previously. These efforts involved advertising in media outlets that cater to certain ethnic markets, and usually involved straightforward translations of our English language advertisements.

In recent years, MassHousing's homeownership lending has increased dramatically. However, our lending to minorities stayed relatively flat, which, because the total lending increased, meant that our lending to minorities in terms of percentage was actually dropping.

In 2008, MassHousing decided to take a new, more comprehensive approach to marketing to minorities, especially Latinos, who are the fastest growing minority market in Massachusetts.

### **Partnering with professionals**

In 2008, MassHousing issued a Request for Responses to public relations, marketing and advertising companies that specialized in marketing to minorities. We selected Bauza & Associates, a Latino-owned marketing company with several high-profile clients.

Bauza & Associates has created a niche in the marketing industry by "transcreating" marketing material and advertisements into something that appeals to minority audiences. The transcreation process goes beyond translation. It re-creates the material, using text, imagery, music, photography and any other culturally relevant elements that appeal directly to the tastes and preferences of the target audience.

The MassHousing plan however goes deeper than just advertising and marketing. It also branches out into public relations and even into training MassHousing staff and staff of partner lenders to be more attuned to the needs and preferences of minority homebuyers.

The effort began in the fall of 2008 with focus groups of minority homebuyers and homeowners. The purpose was to gauge their level of awareness of MassHousing's homeownership programs. The focus groups revealed that MassHousing's brand awareness among minority populations was lower than we thought, and people had erroneous perceptions of what the Agency offered.

### **Comprehensive transcreation of all marketing materials**

Bauza & Associates developed a multi-point plan to create marketing and advertising campaigns in multiple ethnic markets. The plan included the following:

- TV, radio, print and internet ads in Spanish
- African American, Portuguese and Asian print, radio and internet ads
- An all new, transcreated web site for Latino visitors
- A sustained public relations campaign pitching journalists in ethnic media markets
- Transcreated collateral for Spanish, Portuguese and Asian audiences
- Cultural competency training for MassHousing staff and partner lender staff

## Results

While the effort is still underway at the time of this application's writing, the results have so far been very impressive:

- Two variations of a live-action Spanish TV ad have been produced and are on-air on the two major Latino TV networks in Massachusetts, Univision and Telemundo.
- The theme of the ads is **Nada como la emoción de tener tu primer hogar** – *Nothing compares to the excitement of your first home*. The theme is based on research provided by Bauza & Associates that showed that minority homebuyers, and Latinos especially, view the attainment of your own home to be a singularly momentous and exciting occasion. The TV ad shows a young couple in a home improvement store, full of enthusiasm, buying a seemingly mundane item – a garden hose – which is transformed into something special because it is for their first home. The online and print ads support these TV ads.
- Brochures have been transcreated into Spanish, with a distinctively Latino feel, while still remaining true to the MassHousing brand.
- Radio ads have been produced and are airing on stations that target Latino and African American listeners.
- Website copy has been transcreated and a new section of the massshousing.com website is being loaded with copy and imagery that appeal to Latino audiences.
- Numerous pitches have been made to Latino and African American newspapers, resulting in at least ten articles.
- Numerous radio interviews, featuring Spanish-speaking MassHousing staff, have been conducted on Spanish radio stations with Bauza & Associates coaching the MassHousing staff members.
- MassHousing is a corporate sponsor of Hoop-it-Up, a major two-day annual event in the Boston area featuring three-on-three basketball games, very popular with Latino and African American audiences.

**Conclusion**

MassHousing has always put a high value on marketing to minorities, but after thoughtful review of our efforts, aided by ethnic marketing professionals it was clear that simple translation of our English language materials was not enough.

With the aid of a firm that specializes in marketing to ethnic audiences, especially Latinos, we began the process of becoming more fully cognizant of the cultures we seek to engage – what their preferences are and how they like to receive information in a culturally relevant way.

With our totally redesigned TV ads, print ads, internet ads and collateral, all buttressed by a full court press public relations effort, we now speak more directly to Latino, African American and Asian homebuyers than ever before.