

HFA South Dakota Housing Development Authority
Entry Name First-Time Homebuyer Creative Campaign

Through the suggestion of a new marketing agency, South Dakota Housing Development Authority (SDHDA) stepped into the world of microsites, social media and out-of-home marketing. New concepts to our usual, traditional way of marketing on TV and radio, but an exciting journey!

New campaign materials were created. The concept included clouds that invited you in and left you dreamy, to scrollwork that guided you to the text we wanted you to read, to inviting pictures of first-time homebuyers that left you thinking, "that could be me." The creative concept was then applied to the different mediums to create an integrated campaign that tied all the messaging together.

Ads were then developed depending upon the audience they were targeted towards. Was it a first-time homebuyer or an influencer to the first-time homebuyer? The ads were then placed depending upon who they were directed towards. The theme of the ads would remain the same, but pictures and text would vary depending upon the audience. For the first-time homebuyers we chose edgier mediums such as Google and Facebook ads and chose traditional mediums such as newspapers for the influencers.

The other mediums used for this campaign included: TV ads on network stations; internet media placement on Google, Facebook, and local news station websites; social media mediums twitter.com/firsthomesd and facebook.com/firsthomesouthdakota; radio; print in magazines and newspapers; and out-of-home media placement of table tents and window clings in the two largest malls during back to school shopping and as screen vision advertisements in the movie theaters in the three largest cities in South Dakota.

The final piece before the ads were placed was the creation of the microsite www.firsthomesouthdakota.com to track results of the campaign while simultaneously providing the audience with relevant information. The microsite contained the information from www.sdhda.org, but in a clutter-free, easier to read, step-by-step process. Google Analytics was employed to track the results. The site also contained a voluntary survey so we could better gauge who the audience was that visited and what information they were looking for.

Because homebuying is affected by seasonality, the marketing plan was broken into three month segments to better organize our approach and track results. With the homebuying season typically during warm weather months, the bulk of our money was used during spring and summer; it decreased slightly during the fall and by winter remained at a bare minimum to keep our name out there. The overall cost of the campaign came to \$170,000 for creative design of ads and the microsite, printing and placement of the ads.

As for concrete measurement we looked at the website surveys and the comments they yielded, we looked at the click through rates from the banner ads, Facebook ads and Google ads, we looked at the average time spent on the microsite, how many pages were viewed and the bounce rate. Ads were placed in two week flights with time in between so we could pinpoint which advertising mediums performed the best.

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Throughout the campaign we learned several lessons. We learned that network television, although more expensive, yielded higher results of pages viewed on the microsite. Visitors spent an average of seven minutes on the site and viewed nearly five pages. They tend to visit more on Monday and Tuesday and hardly ever visit the site on Fridays or Saturdays. Less institutional, more general terms sent us more traffic on Google and Facebook users tended to prefer to "Like" us instead of visiting the microsite. On the social media campaign, our Facebook page that was created grew and now has 668 people that "Like" us and more importantly interact with us.

Most importantly we have had positive response to the campaign. We were contacted by lenders to have our posters placed in their business and even by a dentist that wanted to help spread our message after he saw the mall campaign. Any housing agency or partner could replicate this on any scale by taking the information we learned or ideas from the campaign and apply it to what their budget and their agency will allow.