

Michigan Technological University

Communications Plan

EcoCAR

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Situational Analysis

The EcoCAR program is a 3 year competition designed around creating a more fuel efficient car producing lower emissions. This is the next stage in a series of competitions sponsored by GM, and the US Department of Energy, along with many others. The MTU EcoCAR team will be testing the abilities of the Saturn Vue, with modifications designed and implemented by the MTU team.

The Upper Peninsula of Michigan is, comprises of 1/3 of Michigan's land area, while only holding 317,258 people of just over 10 million living in the state. This results in a very small population density throughout the area. The area surrounding MTU in particular, Houghton County has a population density of 35.6 people per square mile. This is relatively high for the region. The following table shows the county, population, land area, and population density for the counties of the Upper Peninsula.

Counties of the Upper Peninsula			
County	Population	Land Area (sq mi)	Population Density (per sq mi)
Alger	9,862	918	10.7
Baraga	8,735	904	9.7
Chippewa	38,413	1561	24.7
Delta	38,520	1170	32.9
Dickinson	27,427	766	35.8
Gogebic	17,370	1102	15.8
Houghton	36,016	1012	35.6
Iron	13,138	1166	11.3
Keweenaw	2,301	541	4.3
Luce	7,024	903	7.8
Mackinac	11,943	1022	11.7
Marquette	64,634	1821	35.5
Menominee	25,109	1043	24.3
Ontonagon	7,818	1312	6.0
Schoolcraft	8,903	1178	7.6
TOTAL	317,258	16,420	19.3

Throughout Houghton County there are many miles of rural roads; 650 miles to be exact, while there are only 100 urban residential miles. Although throughout the Upper Peninsula there are 88,000 miles of county roads traveled everyday by busy delivery professionals.

Throughout the US there are over 50 Million people that live in rural areas that all have rural mail delivery. Along with this amount of people there are over 3 million miles of roads that the rural mail carriers must travel throughout the day. The USPS delivers to all of these people everyday no matter the weather and road conditions. The cars that they use are their own personal cars; they need to perform everyday to the standards that they would like, the improved gas mileage, as well as maintaining about the same amount of interior space. The car can be driven as an everyday driver and can endure abuse of a day of driving for a number of years, in all weather conditions.

Challenges and Opportunities

Throughout the next 3 years many challenges will be faced, some of them are more important than others. First off the road conditions in the UP will provide our first significant challenge being that there are many places that access is improved by all-wheel drive vehicles. This is just in the summer, the winter conditions throughout the Upper Peninsula provide a whole new set of challenges to overcome. Things like slippery roads, snow that is too deep to drive through, these are all things that we need to consider. Despite the challenges that we will face the group of delivery professionals is a huge and wide open market, throughout the Upper Peninsula, the state and the country. The opportunity is not only with the target audience of delivery professionals, but also their served customers by example. The MTU vehicle will also expose many people to new hybrid technology by opening the common market to the hybrid vehicle concept.

Communications Goals

The goals of the MTU EcoCAR team will be:

To provide an affordable, alternate fuel automobile to the delivery professionals, that is able to perform at the speeds that are needed, as well as saving fuel, throughout the Upper Peninsula, for the delivery of small objects. By appealing to this group the next effort will be to gain publicity in their trade literature and vehicle sellers/distributors.

Measurable Communication Objectives

- 1.) Publicize Vehicle
- 2.) Gain Acceptance of vehicle
- 3.) Improve Rural reputation of hybrid vehicles
- 4.) Test vehicle documenting successes and failures to perform in the rural delivery environment.

Target audience:

The amount of land in the Upper Peninsula, and the lack of people, creates a very unique test environment for the MTU EcoCAR team. The group focused on will be the delivery professionals throughout the Upper Peninsula. This group includes rural postal carriers, product delivery persons, and service delivery entities such as floral, auto parts, medical lab samples, bank documents, legal documents, etc. The most important candidates for our testing are the postal workers. We can take advantage of the USPS's need for a vehicle year round, versus the other targets whose products aren't consistently delivered throughout the calendar year. Our greatest asset that will come with testing through the USPS is the low variability of their routes. The repetition of similar driving each week will bring back numbers that will be of the most reliable user statistics available. Ultimately, the Postal Service could provide us with a solid, concrete analysis from which informed decisions about alterations can properly and efficiently be made.

Communications Tactics and Strategies

Strategy:

With the current economy, along with the high gas prices it is becoming more and more difficult for businesses to provide delivery services at a profit. With these issues many of these businesses are looking for a more efficient and profitable way to support their product or service. For these reasons the MTU EcoCAR team sees an opportunity to provide this group with the technology to deliver their product or service efficiently and profitably.

Tactics:

- 1.) Establish open communication lines with entities that use delivery vehicles in the area. To discuss what they would like to see as part of the EcoCAR. As well as what will be done to reduce the fuel expense incurred by the delivery professionals.
- 2.) A new Class, Advanced propulsion for Hybrid Vehicles, is being taught at MTU as well as online to 60 engineers off campus, where EcoCAR will be discussed for development initiatives. The class is in partnership with GM and the Engineering Society of Detroit.
- 3.) Presentations to groups such as the Rotary spread the word of the MTU EcoCAR teams' vehicle.
- 4.) Allow local delivery drivers to test the vehicle, to show that it is able to perform tasks that they use to complete their mission.
- 5.) Introducing the use of hybrid technology into the Upper Peninsula is a very important goal for the MTU EcoCAR team. This will be accomplished by:
 - Weekly outreach events supported by media materials distributed via printed and broadcast methods. Public knowledge polls will be taken to produce percentages of people that have been reached on a weekly basis to show if the message is being spread
 - Using the Vehicle as a delivery vehicle for local flower shops, auto parts distributors as well as local non-profit organizations, this will be measured by the amount of surveys we receive back.
 - Survey population for awareness quarterly.
 - Cross reference survey results with event history to correlate what events produce awareness.
- 6.) Enter the vehicle into car shows
- 7.) Enter the vehicle into business equipment shows
- 8.) Website promotion and update.

Communications Materials

There are many materials that go into creating interest in a new product. Here is a list of the promotional products that will be used.

- Media advisories
- Surveys
- OBD2 Data Collector
- Open internet forum
- Power point and video presentations
- EcoCAR demonstrations
- Vehicle lending program with performance feedback requirements
- Vehicle painting design to increase awareness and attention
- Entry into area car shows and business equipment shows.

Evaluation:

- 1.) After presentations have been given, self-addressed envelopes will be given out to all participants with a set of feedback questions. Including questions on how well the group understood what we are trying to accomplish.
- 2.) Vehicle leasing will be monitored for time used, miles driven; fuel used, and includes performance summaries.
- 3.) Media surveys such as 'man on the street' interviews return materials identifying where the vehicle has been seen. Radio spots promoting the concept and prices for vehicle recognition.

Budget:

Focus	Item	Quantity	Cost	Total
Cab	Gas	50	\$3.50	\$175.00
	Prizes	50	\$5.00	\$250.00
				\$425.00
Marketing Items	Pens	120	\$0.52	\$62.40
	Can Coozies	150	\$3.10	\$465
	Brochure	50	\$1.50	\$75.00
	t-shirts/polos	100	\$10.50	\$1,050.00
	Shipping			\$50.00
				\$1,702
Various Expenses	Vehicle Decals	50	\$20.00	\$1,000.00
	Other			\$500.00
	Outreach (community/EDU)			1000.00
				\$2500.00

TOTAL \$4,627.00