

Business

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Ad agency blazes new trails in motorsports

By Doug Funke
staff writer

A Livonia advertising agency that happened to be in the right place at the right time now promotes itself as a pioneer in applying a new photographic reproduction technique to decals for the sides of large semi-trailers.

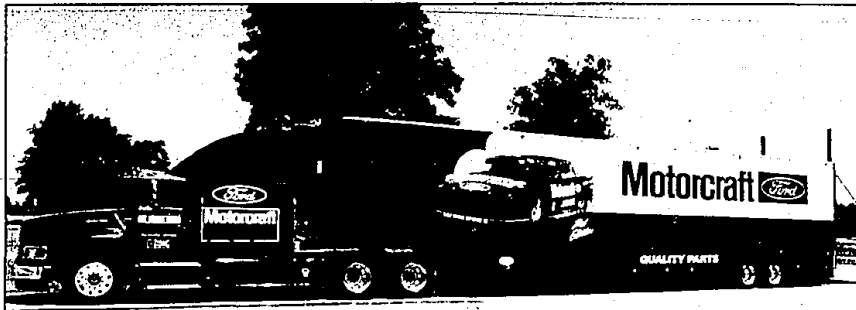
Fisher Advertising, which earlier this year established a motorsports division, picked up a job for Ford Motorcraft at the time a decal applicator for the agency learned about the new reproduction process developed by 3M.

"In the process, you literally take a 3-by-5 (inch) color photo, put it in a machine and it literally blows an image up 9-by-12 (feet) or larger," said Larry G. Clancio, a Fisher marketing rep. "Basically we were the first company in the country to use this in a motorsports application."

Fisher's assignment — to redesign the advertising on the outside of a 51-foot trailer used by Bob Glidden, a drag racer sponsored by Motorcraft, a photo of Glidden's car seems to jump off the side of the truck used to haul his equipment to race sites.

"I had a key set of objectives. I wanted the client's product to look the best it could and Fisher Motorsports to do the best job we could," Clancio said.

TRADITIONAL COLOR separa-



A photo of Bob Glidden's car seems to jump off the side of the truck used to haul his equipment to race sites, thanks to Fisher Advertising's application of a 3M photographic process.

tion for huge enlargements and air brushing on the sides of trucks don't produce the quality of 3M's process and can be much more expensive by several thousand dollars, said Clancio and Frank J. Fisher, executive vice president for the agency.

"First, you're going to get better quality," Fisher said. "3M guarantees outdoor use for three years. The market that's going to be best for

this is anything for limited production run where only two or three images are required."

"This is the leading edge of technology," Clancio added. Glidden's truck and a hauler for Morgan Shepherd, a NASCAR racer, seem to be the hit of the track wherever they go, Clancio said.

Sam Scott, Motorcraft motorsports coordinator, said Fisher's utili-

zation of 3M's technology has surpassed expectations.

"Most people couldn't believe it," Scott said. "It grabs your attention. We had Glidden's trailer in Denver and the people from Winston (cigarettes) came around. They have seen everything and even they were impressed."

"LAST WEEK, we had all the

(racing) teams we have at Ford here. They took a look at this and said, 'Maybe this is something we want to do,'" Scott said.

"It's like packaging in marketing," Fisher said. "We're actually designing a package that rolls down the highway and shows up at race meets."

With Clancio's connection to auto racing and with the hundreds of

teams involved in the sport, Fisher has decided to concentrate application of the photo process for advertising purposes to that industry.

"Here we understand the language, understand the business and know the players on a first-name basis," Clancio said. "Just think about the motorsports opportunities."

Fisher conceded that other advertising agencies will have access to the same technology but figures he has the advantage as a trend setter.

"We got such a jump getting out of the gate," he said. "We thought about the best approach and figured that motor sports is the quickest attack, the strongest link."

"Just think about motorsports opportunities, the number of suppliers in the Motor City," Clancio added.

Other applications may be to other haulers — food products, faces of human endusers — but as the number of photos grow, the process becomes less economical. "Twenty is about the limit for economies of scale," Fisher said.

The new technology in an increasingly visual world presents new opportunities for advertising agencies.

"What our objective is to give a sponsor (client) a quality product. The sponsor's objective is to get a recall of the product around the country," Clancio said.

And that's the bottom line in any kind of advertising relationship.

Manager of credit union bridges banking cultures

By David F. Stein
special writer

Lithuania is banking on Michigan — thanks to Galle Dedinas, manager of KASA Lithuanian Federal Credit Union's branch in Southfield.

Last year, Dedinas invited the officials of Litimpeks, the newly organized import-export bank of an autonomous Lithuania, to Michigan to study American banking techniques. The visit led to meetings with officials at Manufacturers National Bank of Detroit.

Now, much to the chagrin of the Citicorps and Chase Manhattan of the banking world, MNB will handle the worldwide transactions of Litimpeks and train its staff in modern banking techniques.

The agreement, upgraded in May,

is one of the first necessary steps to achieve economic independence from the Soviet Union, Dedinas said, because the Soviet ruble is essentially worthless and deals going through Moscow take months to clear.

"Even though the Lithuanians declared themselves independent, if they cannot stand independent economically, then it's just so much bravado," Dedinas said. Dedinas lives in West Bloomfield with her husband Saul and children Kristina and Tomas.

IN THE LAST five years, starting from scratch, Dedinas has also built the Southfield office of KASA into a 1,600-member branch with assets of \$5.5 million. There are some 50,000 Lithuanians in the area.

Dedinas was born in 1947 in a displaced persons camp in Germany, where her parents had fled Lithuania, where they faced confiscation of family businesses and resettlement or imprisonment by the Soviets.

The family emigrated to the United States in 1948, living in Fargo, N.D., and Brooks, Minn., before joining relatives in Detroit.

It was while attending a wedding that Dedinas was recommended by wedding guests to KASA directors to set up the Michigan branch. She was working at a Rochester, N.Y., advertising firm at the time.

Although she had little accounting experience, she was confident in her marketing and advertising skills and convinced the directors she was right for the job at a formal interview.

One early decision proved right on target. Dedinas placed the credit union office on Nine Mile, just down the street from Divine Providence Church, a religious and cultural center for suburban Detroit Lithuanians.

The credit union specializes in car loans and five-year, fixed-rate home equity loans.

BUT ONE OF its most important services is providing a banking environment for those not fluent in English.

"Older Lithuanians look more toward the comfort of doing business in Lithuanian," Dedinas said. "We're all bilingual. New Lithuanians coming in and living here — they also have a language barrier and like the idea that they can do business

with us in Lithuanian."

The Southfield staff includes loan officer Irene Vizgirda, customer service representatives Valentina Bulota, teller Daiva Memenas and Vida Zambo, who handles Visa credit cards and CDs.

A chance meeting also led to the banking agreement between Litimpeks and Manufacturers.

At an economic and trade conference in Florida in 1989, Dedinas met Rounaldas Viskavicius, the future president of Litimpeks, and the Lithuanian prime minister Gediminas Vagnorius.

Dedinas invited the Lithuanians to Michigan to study American financial techniques. The six-week visit by Lithuanian banking officials was

sponsored by KASA and the Michigan Credit Union League.

Saul Anusis, an aide to state Sen. Richard Posthumus, R-Alto, and Dedinas' brother, helped the Lithuanian bankers get together with Manufacturers' International department during their stay. The meetings led to the corresponding bank and training agreements.

The deal indicates the soundness of Michigan banking, according to Ann Arbor banking consultant Justin Moran.

"The Lithuanians were looking for a large bank with a good international department that stood up to very conservative financial standards. Manufacturers fit that bill, and none of the New York banks did," Moran said.

Insurance companies come under eye of rating services

By Sid Mitra
special writer

This is the second in a series regarding the state of health of the insurance industry.

Amid the worry and confusion surrounding the insurance industry, you can safeguard your assets by relying on those knowledgeable in the field and doing a little homework on your own.

As Joseph Belth, Indiana University professor, puts it, "The idea that an individual planner can do the analysis (of the insurance industry) on his own is quite simply ridiculous."

So the next best thing is to rely on the opinions of these rating services: A.M. Best, Duff & Phelps, Moody's Investor Services and Standard & Poor's. For details on rating companies, consult Stranger's Investment Advisor, July 1991.

Here's a brief description of the services offered by the rating companies.

● **A.M. BEST.** In existence the longest time, Best rates 1,379 (of 2,300) insurance companies on a nine-level scale ranging from A+ down to C. Best also has 10 "ratings not assigned classifications," meaning the insurance company doesn't meet Best's minimum size or the minimum financial requirements.

Best offers a wide range of services, including a number of publications. For more information, contact A.M. Best Co., Ambest Road, Oldwick N.J. 08858. Phone 908-439-2200.

● **STANDARD & POOR'S.** S&P has been rating

(financial strengths and credit quality for more than 50 years. It rates 480 companies. In April, S&P introduced "quality solvency ratings," which are based on the statistics obtained from the National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC).

S&P offers several publications, including S&P's Insurance Book, Select Reports and S&P's Insurer Ratings List. For more information, write S&P's Insurance Ratings, 25 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10004 or call 212-208-1524.

● **DUFF & PHELPS.** Reporting since 1986, Duff & Phelps has claims-paying ability ratings on 61 companies. But the company claims that within 18 months it will be rating 90 percent of major U.S. insurance companies.

You can obtain the ratings from the Claims Paying Ability Rating Service or the quarterly issues of the company's Insurance Company Claims Paying Ability Rating Guide. For more information, contact Duff & Phelps Credit Rating Co., 55 E. Monroe Street, Chicago, Ill. 60603 or call 312-263-2610.

● **MOODY'S INVESTOR SERVICES.** Evaluating life insurance companies since the 1970s, Moody's rates 72 companies. The company refers to the ratings as "financial strength ratings."

Moody's offers a variety of publications, including an Insurance Credit Report Service. For further information, contact Moody's Investor Services, 99 Church Street, New York, N.Y. 10007 or call 212-553-0300.

Next week, the series concludes with an article dealing with insurance industry offerings.

Sid Mitra is professor of finance at Oakland University and owner of Coordinated Financial Planning. If you wish to know the ratings of your insurance company by the companies mentioned in this article or would like to know if the type of plan you have lends itself to a transfer or diversification, mail a copy (not an original) of your policy with a self-addressed, stamped envelope and daytime phone number to: Dr. Sid Mitra, 3250 W. Big Beaver, Suite 540, Troy 48064.

clarification

Our Aug. 29 issue reported on the problems of life insurance companies, several of which had gone bankrupt. However, Equitable Life Assurance Society never declared bankruptcy and never declared bankrupt. The article reported that the company is doing OK.

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