

“Hands on Your Future”

Indiana University Southeast 60 second in-theater commercial

Category number and title: 22. Best Video PSA or Commercial Spot — CM

Institution: Indiana University Southeast

Name and contact information for individual submitting entry

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Names of all individuals responsible for entry:

Script Writers: Bob Corum, Graham Gohman, Scott McKenzie, John Weber
Script Editors: Carol Branson, Erica Walsh, Jenny Johnson Wolf
Scheduling & Talent Coordination: Carol Branson, Erica Walsh
Videographer and Post-Production: Scott McKenzie
Production Assistants: Graham Gohman, Lee Staton, John Weber

General description of the entry

Sixty seconds goes fast. In this 60 second ad, IU Southeast’s academic programs and new student housing are introduced to the audience. A black and white, high-contrast spot grabs the viewer’s attention and delivers our core message... your future really is in your hands at IU Southeast because from here, you can go anywhere.

Background

After our first attempt at a fully produced in-theater video ad in early 2008, we learned that the presentation quality varies significantly from theater to theater. Bright house lights, dim projector bulbs and crooked projections all detracted from the communication of our message. To maximize the impact of our spot and help it stand out from the rest of the pack, we agreed on a high contrast format with a mixture of black and white studio shots and full color B-roll. To minimize costs and depict authenticity, we also decided to select real IU Southeast students to star in the spot.

Pulling it Together

After our first officially advertised campus casting call, we selected our group of student talent from the pool. Based on the concept of “students holding the future in their hands”, our student talent held boards of black and white foamcore. They were directed to push and pull the boards to and from the camera at designated points in the script. In post-production, we replaced the center of the boards with full-color motion video and used digital match moves to create the illusion that they were holding TV screens.

In the final edit, the boards are pushed to full screen and pulled back a few times, revealing different student talent holding the virtual TV screen. The spot concludes with a hand (from the audience’s point-of-view) holding an iPhone as the student announcer delivers the call to action, which is to send a text message about applying or to visit our website. In line with the theme, the announcer tells the audience that “the future is in your hands”.

Goals and objectives of the project:

From the beginning of this project, the goals were clear. We were going to produce a creative and engaging video to be played in movie theaters across our service area throughout spring and summer. The video would speak to our target market of 18-24 year old prospective students. Branding was important, but the primary focus was a call to action: to get the prospective students to visit campus and/ or apply to IU Southeast.

Description of how project fits into overall institutional and/or advancement goals

As part of the new integrated marketing campaign for the campus, this ad is helped us prepare to achieve four of our marketing goals for the 2010 – 2012 academic years:

Goal 1: Establish IU Southeast as a first choice school for 29% of our prospective students by 2012.

Goal 2: Increase undergraduate Fall applications each year by 1%.

Goal 3: Increase the number of students enrolled each Fall by 50.

Goal 4: Generate enough housing applications to exceed capacity before July 15 each year, beginning Summer 2012.

Audience: 18 – 24 year old prospective students in our 13 county service region in Southern Indiana and Louisville.

Total number of professional and support staff who worked on the program; please note the use of freelancers, outside agencies or volunteers:

A team of nine full time staffers assisted with the projects. No outsider agencies or freelancers were used.

Program budget and unit costs where applicable. Do not include staff salaries or postage in calculating total cost and cost per unit.

Total Production Budget: \$15

Although this spot was produced entirely in high definition with complex digital match move effects, the only expenses were the \$15 foamcore boards our student talent held in the studio. Our Digital Media, Web, and Marketing teams fused to form a fully functional production staff, moving from shoot to delivery in just two weeks. The “actors” and “actresses” were unpaid volunteers (and real students). The props were borrowed. University staffers wrote the scripts, recruited the talent, managed the props, shot and edited the video.

Total Ad Placement Budget: \$62,208.75

This placement included four months of placement at 8 theaters on a total of 111 screens daily. Because we kept our production budget unbelievably low (YES! \$15.00 total; that’s not a type-o) we were able to expand our reach to a total of 111 movie screens each day.

Any special circumstances or challenges faced

Since we relied on student talent, our biggest challenge was trying to schedule shoots during normal business hours when students are either in class or at work. We also had difficulty finding locations in our residence halls that were authentic (showed lived-in rooms) and photographed well (without laundry all over the floor).

Documented results, measurements of effectiveness

The call to action on the in-theater spot was twofold: text apply to the number given or visit our Web site. The preferred response method was clearly Web. Web traffic at ius.edu, the University homepage, continues to be strong (averaging more than 290,000 homepage visits each month during the summer). With the debut of the "Hands on Your Future" in-theater spots, we saw a SIGNIFIGANT increase in our homepage traffic, with April, May and June visits to the homepage **increasing by 10, 15, and 22 percent** (respectively) each month compared to homepage traffic one year earlier.

Text message responses to the ad continue to trickle in. Although responses are limited, weekly text responses averaged four per week all summer long.