

New Computer App Allows Ford to Learn What Buyers Like and Don't Like in a Car

by Jim Stickford

Designing toy cars isn't kid stuff any more.

Tiny Toy Car of Bloomfield Hills and 360 brandmachine of Troy have joined forces to help launch a new widget, sometimes referred to as an app that allows computer users to design the superhero car of their dreams.

Tiny Toy Car – a digital content and advertising strategy studio that specializes in the car industry – was founded by former Jalopnik.com editor Ray Wert.

The marketing collaborative 360 brandmachine draws on experienced industry professionals from advertising, marketing, research and information technology.

"I was working with these two companies separately," said public relations specialist Mike DeVilling. "I found out what they were doing and thought it would be a great idea to bring them together. What they do really complements each other."

The two companies are currently working on a project with Gawker Media and Team Detroit's "Fiesta Hero" for Ford.

Wert said that Team Detroit is part of Ford's Fiesta Movement project.

"Ford has given 100 social media influencers a Ford Fiesta," Wert said. "They get to drive the car for eight months and create their own original web content. That can be videos or blog entries."

"This content is then posted on Ford's fiestamovement.com web site for the public to view."

Each of the agents participate in different missions, Wert said. Ford and Team Detroit reached out to various different web publishers for ideas for missions. That's where Gawker comes in. The publishers run several different web publications, including lo9 and Jalopnik, which have a combined audience of about 10 million.

As part of fiestamovement, the two sites agreed to use 360 brandmachine's Virtual Voice software that will allow participants who log onto pages on

the two sites to digitally design a Fiesta for a superhero.

Kevin Smith, principal of 360 brandmachine, said, "The Build Your Fiesta widget, powered by 360 brandmachine's Virtual Voice is an interactive digital design tool that allows people to develop a potentially unlimited range of customized designs and share those creations via social media."

"The concept was first introduced at the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance, when 360 brandmachine helped auto enthusiasts develop updated concept vehicles based on classic Lincoln designs from the '40s, '50s and '60s."

"... this tool allows people to imagine what their superhero car would look like."

– Kevin Smith

The widget is easy to download, Smith said. And it's "super-light in terms of software, meaning it doesn't take up a lot of space on memory."

When asked why anyone would download the widget from the lo9 and Jalopnik web pages and use the program to design superhero-themed cars, Smith said the answer was really very simple – fun.

"If you're passionate about anything, including car design, this tool allows people to imagine what their superhero car would look like," Smith said.

"They then can share their designs via social media – twitter, Facebook. This is the way Gen Y likes to create and consume content on the Internet."

The Fiesta Hero program takes

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the Concours d'Elegance idea and extends it beyond people who attended a special event a couple of years ago. Now, anyone can participate and the widget page is expected to be up for a long time, Wert said.

"This was launched on Oct. 11," Wert said. "We're still counting the number of people who have downloaded the widget, but we couldn't be happier with how things are going. The responses have been overwhelmingly positive."

Smith said the entire program helps Ford in a couple of different ways. It uses the latest social media platforms as a way of getting people to look at and think about the Fiesta.

In short, it creates brand engagement, which is the name of the game in this fast-moving Internet society.

People actually use a special widget to play with and design the looks of Ford Fiestas, so it gets them thinking and talking about the product, and they get to share their designs on social media with their friends, said Smith.

It gets people doing the marketing job for Ford, and they're having a pretty good time doing it as well, he added.

And, Smith said, it gives the company a sense of what people are looking for in the cars of today.

"We're only scratching the surface in the ways this tool can be used," Smith said.

"It allows consumers to tell us what they like or don't like in a car."

"And it can be used for other consumer-friendly industries such as fashion or durable goods."

Faurecia: Corporation of Year

Faurecia was honored with two awards at the annual recognition program held by the Michigan Minority Supplier Development Council (MMSDC).

The company earned Corporation of the Year in the Manufacturing – Level II division, and Harold Cook, senior global commodity buyer at Faurecia, was named as Corporate Buyer of the Year in the Local category.

The awards were presented at the 30th annual MMSDC awards program, held Oct. 1 at the Fox Theatre in Detroit. The event was attended by more than 1,000 business leaders from industries such as automotive, healthcare, construction, education, information technology, and consumer products.

Faurecia's supplier diversity efforts were recognized by the MMSDC as the company earned Corporation of the Year in the Manufacturing – Level II division, in part for its joint venture with Rush Group, Detroit Manufacturing Systems. Announced in 2012, the joint venture has created hundreds of jobs in Detroit and

was a factor considered by the MMSDC for the achievement.

"Faurecia's winning of the prestigious Michigan Minority Supplier Diversity Council Corporation of the Year Award is a true message to our customers and communities that Faurecia understands the value diversity plays in our continued growth," said Charles Perkins, director, Diversity Management at Faurecia. "This award is confirmation of the value we place on a diverse, extended enterprise that reflects our employee and customer base."

Cook, a former university instructor of Business Management, has more than 30 years of experience in the industrial and manufacturing industries with companies such as Petromin and Ashland Oil, including nearly 15 years in the automotive industry with Faurecia and another Tier I supplier.

He has been developing diverse suppliers and adding them to Faurecia North America's MRO supply chain for the last seven years.

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