



2007 Gold Effie Winner & Grand Contender

Montana Meth Project “Not Even Once”

Category: **Small Budgets**

Lead Agency: **Venables, Bell & Partners**

Media Agency: **OMD**

Contributing Agency: **Wirestone**

Client: **Montana Meth Project**

Strategic Challenge

Rural America is facing a crisis of epic proportions: Methamphetamine. It can be made cheaply with ingredients readily available in every American household. It is a non-discriminating drug. People of every age, race and income have fallen prey.

However, what's most concerning is that many young people in this country think of meth as a non-threatening party drug. A drug that washes teenage angst away with a quick snort, pop or hit. What kids don't know is that meth is more addictive than heroin (97% addiction rate after first-time meth use), and that it's guaranteed to quickly decay their bodies from the inside out.

This issue is no more real than in the state of Montana. Montana is currently facing one of the highest percentages of teenage meth use in the country.

- *65% of Montana youth report that meth is readily available and easy to get.
- *44% believe that meth helps you lose weight.
- *33% say they have been offered meth in the last year
- *24% see "little or no risk" in trying meth.
- *23% have a close friend who currently uses meth.

Enter Tom Siebel, long-time Montana resident and founder of Siebel Systems. Tom knew that something needed to be done, so he founded the Montana Meth Project. His brief to us was very

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focused. Since the likelihood of becoming addicted is extremely probable and once addicted very few people ever recover, rather than trying to tackle addiction, he asked us to help him prevent first time use. And to do it in a way that sparked a dialogue.

Hence, the objectives were twofold:

1. Help to significantly reduce first-time meth use among teens in Montana.
2. Raise meth addiction as a social issue worth talking about.

**Source: MMP Quantitative Survey of Montana Teens and Parents*

The Big Idea

Obviously, we knew we needed to talk to the kids. So we packed our bags and flew to Montana. We conducted everything from one-on-one high school tours, to friendship focus groups, to accompanied visits to the local teen hot spots. We also knew we needed to understand the dark underbelly of meth addiction, so we traveled the state to interview teens in juvenile detention centers. This exercise, while emotionally painful, clearly illustrated to us why we had been tasked with discouraging teens before they ever tried meth.

Coming out of this eye opening research we had four key conclusions.

- 1) While it seemed somewhat obvious to us that we would want to target kids in high school, we didn't realize how young they get started these days. We heard 13 year olds talking about going to parties and being offered drugs and alcohol. We found that there is a fine line between the innocent 12 year old and the overly curious 13 year old, so we knew we would have to catch them young. **Conclusion #1: Age 13 is the tipping point.**
- 2) We were also reminded that teens are a tricky lot. They are invincible, or at least that's what they tell you. They have a hard time imagining the long-term. Two years down the road seems like an eternity. Therefore, they often do not understand the consequences of their actions. **Conclusion #2: We had to communicate in "the now".**
- 3) Montana teens like to take risks, but by no means do they want to jeopardize their future, especially if it means staying in small town Montana for the rest of their lives. When it comes to meth, they don't know any better. They equate it with trying a little pot or even cocaine. However, what they need to understand is that meth should bring the same words to mind for them as heroin: "scary", "addictive", "for junkies". **Conclusion #3: We were going to have to make meth as scary as heroin.**
- 4) Finally, we learned that teens are sold to all the time. They are over stimulated and desensitized. When it comes to what they shouldn't do, they get those messages more than anything else. We realized that whatever we said would need to sound like it was coming directly from them, and in their real world. It needed to feel real and totally tangible. **Conclusion #4: It would have to feel real - like teens talking to teens.**

In the end we decided our job was to, ***jolt teens into understanding the dangers of meth in the moment of temptation.***

Our big idea was to treat meth as a consumer product. Only unsell it.

Source: MMP Qualitative Focus Groups, MT Teens, Ages 12-17

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Bringing the Idea to Life

We went big. Tom Siebel put his personal finances behind the cause and helped us deliver a strong media presence in the state of Montana. We chose high profile media on purpose: TV, radio and outdoor boards.

If we were going to get kids' attention we needed to reach them on the couch, in the car, and on their way to school.

We tailored each medias' message to its particular strength. For example, we used radio to convey true teen testimonials of kids who are struggling with an addiction to meth. We knew from qualitative research that testimonials on TV 1) didn't break through the clutter and 2) made the problem seem either more or less severe than it actually is. If the teen giving the testimonial was too strung out we heard kids say things like, "I've seen people take meth. That didn't happen to them." Conversely, when the teen giving the testimonial looked even moderately healthy we would hear them say things like, "Well he/she doesn't look that bad. Maybe you could do meth." However, when testimonials were given on the radio it left something for the target to imagine. They could decide what the speaker looked like. They could imagine how severe their story must have been. With TV we took the opposite approach. We knew we could use TV to put together more graphic yet relevant footage. TV was a great way to make an emotional and visual impact.

Lastly, we used the Web as a source of information. We knew that using purely factual information in the TV and radio concepts would lead to the tune out effect on the part of teens. They are used to being preached to, so we helped create a website that felt as if it could have been made by teens like them. It not only contains the facts kids need, but also allows them to engage with other teens and pass content along virally.

Results

Objective #1: Help to significantly reduce first-time meth use among teens in Montana.

The good news for us is the campaign is working. Not only have the ads changed teenage opinions in Montana about meth, they have broken through the clutter in a tremendous way.

"It makes me think that if that's the outcome of meth that it's definitely not worth doing."-Montana Teen, Montana Meth Project Post qualitative research

"It shows it will have a huge effect even if you do it once, so I wouldn't do it. It puts a picture in your mind."-Montana Teen, Montana Meth Project Post qualitative research

After a community protest about the graphic nature of the ads, kids wrote in to their papers saying that the ads are important and to please not take them down.

"The advertisements have inspired poems and raps. High school groups have replayed them in place of morning announcements and devoted newspaper issues to them. Students readily quote dialogue and characters from them and cringe..." -The New York Times, Feb.16 2006

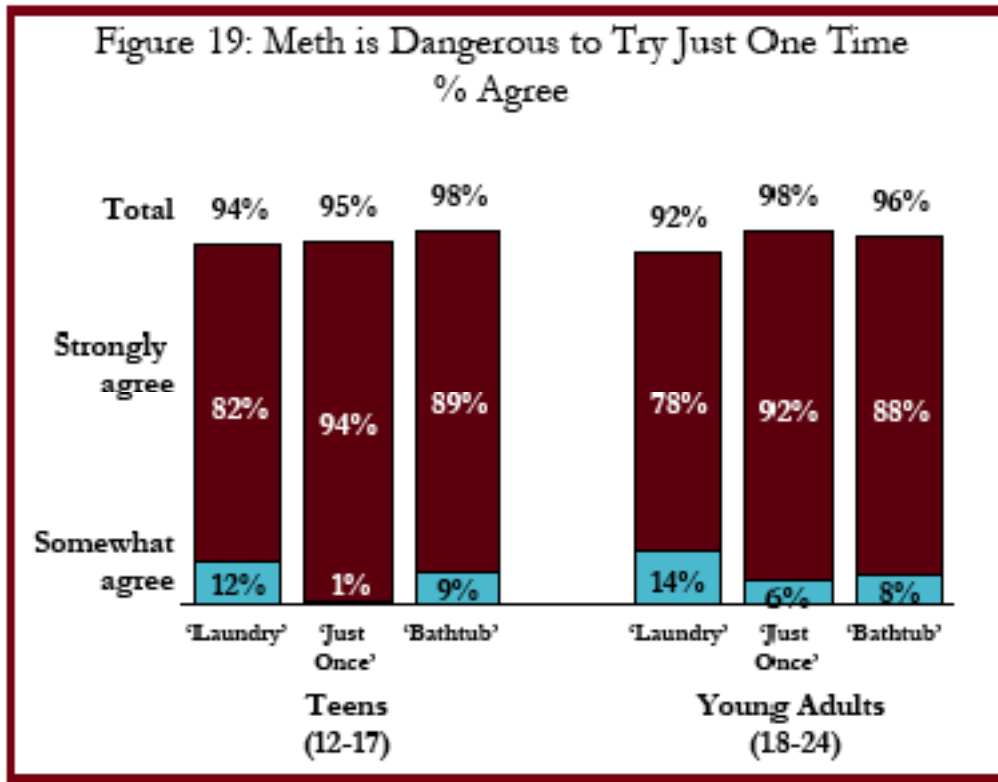
Quantitative research results were equally compelling. A statewide study of teens (12-17), young adults (18-24), and parents was conducted to monitor attitudes about methamphetamine in relation to the advertising. 1,460 people, across the state of Montana were surveyed. The study

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demonstrated the success of the campaign in several key ways.

- A) In the best performing ad, 98% of teens agreed that it strongly gave the impression that meth is dangerous to try even once. The worst performing ad was still at 94%.

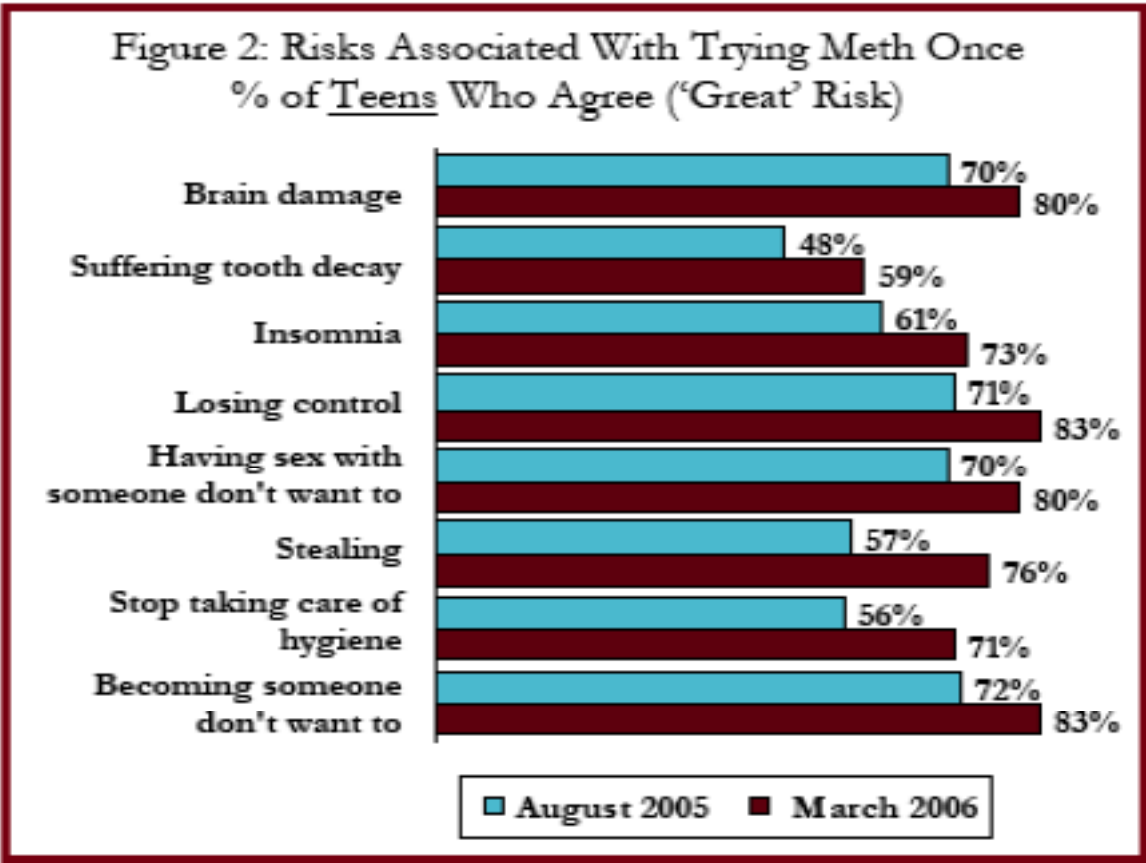


Montana Meth Project quantitative Post Wave

- B) 8 of the 14 significant risk factors associated with trying meth even once rose by more than 10%, including, brain damage, unwanted sex, lack of personal hygiene, and losing control.

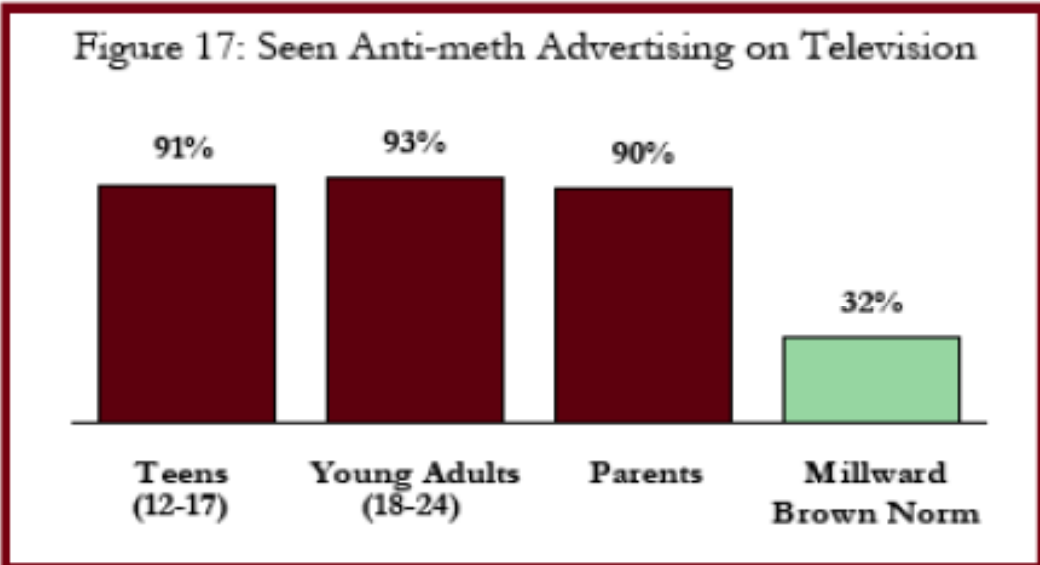
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(Pre-wave) (Post-wave)

C) We heard unprecedented ad recall in focus groups. But even more impactful, the quantitative research proved awareness levels have far surpassed the norm for anti-drug messaging.

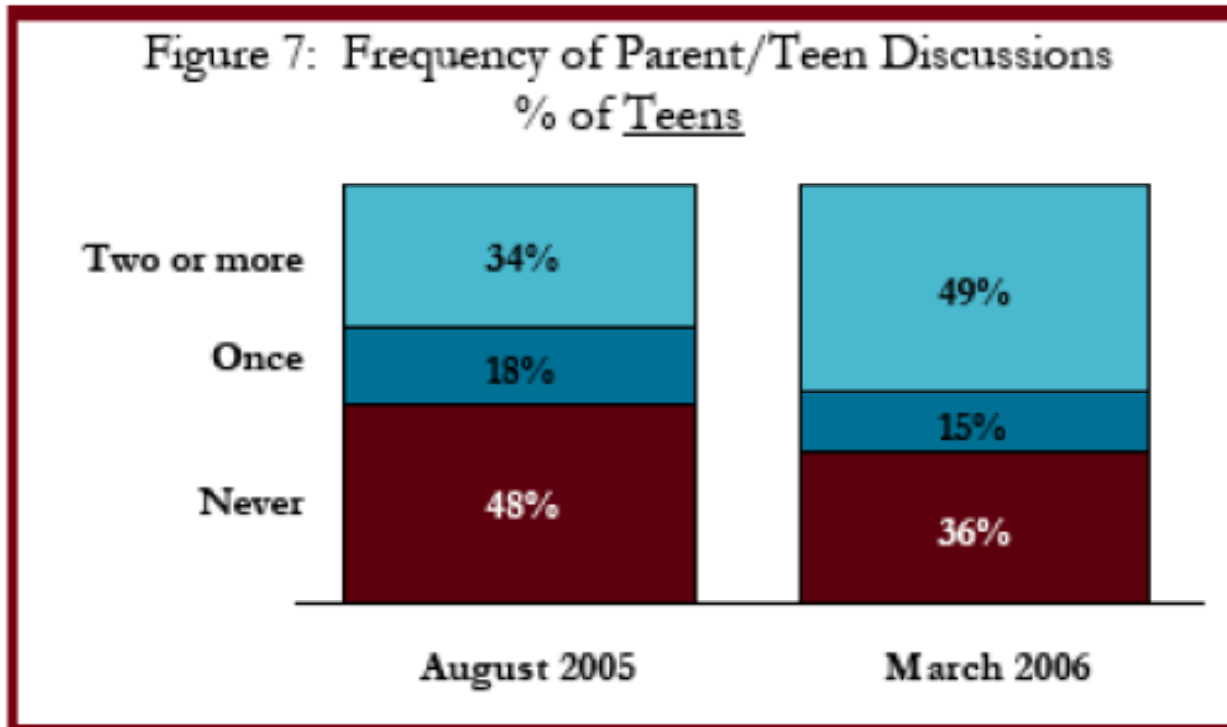


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Objective #2: Raise meth addiction as a social issue worth talking about.

We were glad to learn that even though they were not the direct targets of this campaign, half of Montana parents (49%), have now had two or more conversations with their children about meth. This is up from 34% prior to the launch of the advertising.



What's more, we were thrilled to find out that not only had we caught the attention of teens in Montana, but we had also garnered national attention among both legislators and the news media.

From National News Media:

The Montana Meth Project TV and radio advertising were showcased on/in the following national media: CNN, Good Morning America, NPR, The New York Times, MSNBC.

From Legislators:

- US Democratic & Republican Senate leaders were briefed on the Montana Meth Project, resulting in a Senate level meth caucus founded by Senator Conrad Burns (R-MT).
- Tom Siebel's recent Washington DC meetings have generated 20+ city/counties across the US interested in licensing the ads.
- Sen. Conrad Burns introduced a bill that would take the Montana Meth Project's advertising and prevention campaign nationwide.
- Anti-meth legislation was included in the USA Patriot Act that passed on March 9, 2006.
- Finally, the White House Drug Czar, John Walters, cited the Montana Meth Project as a model for the nation:

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"The Montana Meth Project is a key component of a balanced strategy against meth and is an extraordinary example of the results we can achieve when we combine the power of advertising with the dedication and expertise of the leaders of this community. The meth project is a critical prevention campaign that keeps Montana's young people safe from the dangers of meth. We commend the Montana Meth Project for mobilizing the citizens of Montana to rid their state of this destructive drug.

The program truly is a model for prevention efforts nationwide."- John Walters, Director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy

Budget: \$1 to under \$2 million

Campaign Reach: Regional

Media Channels: TV, Radio, Newspaper, OOH, PR, Interactive/Online

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