



**Mercury Award
Category 1 –
Community Relations**

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BMW Manufacturing Co.
Landfill Gas Paint Shop

SCPRSA
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Purpose

Landfills are the largest human-made methane source in the United States, produced as waste decomposes. When released into the air, it is a greenhouse gas and contributes to local air pollution.

Spartanburg, S.C.-based BMW Manufacturing Co. announced in May 2006 that it would become the world's first automotive manufacturer to use recycled landfill methane gas to provide energy to its paint shop. The purpose of using landfill methane gas was threefold: 1) It reduced pollution in the community. 2) It took a product that was being wasted and turned it into energy. 3) It provided the factory with a guaranteed fuel source at a set rate.

Research and Planning

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) first approached BMW about recycling landfill methane gas. BMW was able to utilize its research and also undertake research of its own. From a PR perspective, BMW and Jackson-Dawson researched what publicity recycled landfill methane gas had received and what the best communication discipline was to disseminate this story. We learned that major publicity had not been received on recycled methane gas, much less a project of this magnitude. It was also learned that BMW Manufacturing would be the world's first automotive paint shop to utilize landfill methane gas. Prior to completion of the research, a large and expensive media tour and event was the leading communication vehicle. Following the research, we felt that a well-placed feature story that focused on key messages was the most cost-effective communication tool. Planning was simple: we scheduled interviews and photo shoots, wrote and honed the feature and then began placing it in top trade publications. The first story was published in Sept. 2006.

Execution

Through planning and research, BMW Manufacturing and its agency, Jackson-Dawson concluded that a feature story was the most cost-effective way to get this message out to the public. We wrote the feature, shot supporting photography and pitched: 1) Local news outlets and selected environmental and manufacturing trade publications, 2) Statewide media outlets, 3) National media outlets and finally, 4) Automotive publications.

Budget

With an investment of \$2.5 million in the entire system, and the current high costs of energy, the company expects to see a return on its investment in less than two years. The PR budget was less than \$1,000, which showcases the importance of public and media relations.

Results/Goals Achieved

Community and PR results are phenomenal. Three cover stories and numerous articles have been generated worth tens of thousands of dollars in advertising equivalency. BMW has also become a leader in this innovation and has received numerous calls from companies around the world interested in utilizing landfill methane gas as an energy source. The main result, however, has been the positive influence it has had on the community, such as:

- BMW Manufacturing was able to reduce area emissions of carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas, by approximately 60,000 tons and recover enough energy to heat 15,000 homes per year.
- The use of methane gas also reduces greenhouse gases the equivalent of driving a car around the globe 4,300 times, or more than 100 million miles.
- Sixty-three percent of BMW Manufacturing's energy is now provided by this renewable resource, saving the company at least \$1 million per year in energy costs.
- BMW is a charter member of the EPA's National Environmental Performance Track that recognizes companies for their environmental stewardship and performance.
- BMW is a member of the South Carolina Environmental Excellence Program.
- BMW is on the Dow Jones Sustainability Group Index, which rates environmentally friendly companies.

BMW Manufacturing Co. Landfill Gas Paint Shop

100-Word Summary

Entry in the 2007 Mercury Awards Competition

Category 1. Community Relations

BMW Manufacturing became the world's first automotive manufacturer to use recycled landfill methane gas to provide energy to its paint shop in May 2006. The project reduced pollution in the community, took a product that was being wasted, turned it into energy and provided the factory with a guaranteed fuel source at a set rate. By utilizing the previously unused energy from landfill gas, BMW Manufacturing was able to reduce area emissions of carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas, by approximately 60,000 tons and recover enough energy to heat 15,000 homes per year; the equivalent of driving a car around the globe 4,300 times, or more than 100 million miles. Sixty-three percent of BMW Manufacturing's energy is now provided by this renewable resource, saving the company at least \$1 million per year in energy costs.

BMW Manufacturing's recycling of landfill methane gas as energy has bettered not only the local community, but also the entire Upstate region. It can be argued that it is having national and worldwide effects due to the publicity it has received. Numerous companies from North America and overseas have contacted BMW for details on this project.