# Silver Wing Award
# Category 14 –
# Feature Stories

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*BMW Manufacturing Co.*
*Landfill Gas Paint Shop*

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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 the feature story was to communicate BMW's key messages: 1) The project will help reduce pollution in the community. 2) It takes a product that is being wasted and turns it into energy. 3) It provides 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

The goal of the feature was to showcase BMW's innovation as a company and good corporate citizen, as well as generate two cover stories. Results and goals have superseded expectations. Three cover stories and more than 50 articles have been generated worth tens of thousands of dollars in advertising equivalency. BMW has also become a leader in this innovative technology 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 the feature has had on the community:

- 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 2007 Silver Wing Competition
Category 14. Feature Stories

In May 2006 BMW Manufacturing became the world's first automotive manufacturer to use recycled landfill methane gas to provide energy to its paint shop. After research, it was decided that a feature story was the most cost-effective communication vehicle to tell BMW's story. Its impact was remarkable:

A number of cover stories and lead articles in newspapers have been generated that talk of BMW's Landfill Methane Gas Paint Shop project helping to reduce pollution in the community, taking a wasted resource and turning it into energy, and providing the factory with a guaranteed fuel source at a set rate for years to come. By utilizing previously unused energy from landfill gas, BMW Manufacturing is 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 (63%) of BMW Manufacturing's energy is now provided by this renewable resource, saving the company at least $1 million per year in energy costs.