



Best Workplaces for CommutersSM Phone Forum Creative Strategies to Increase Your Visibility as One of the Best Workplaces for CommutersSM

November 6, 2003

Available exclusively to Best Workplaces for CommutersSM, phone forums provide cutting-edge information on a range of topics related to commuter benefits. Moderated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), these forums feature experts on key topic areas.

On November 6, 2003, Best Workplaces for CommutersSM held a phone forum to inform employers about strategies to promote their Best Workplaces for CommutersSM designation. Patty Klavon, EPA forum moderator, provided opening remarks and introduced the featured participants.

Featured Participants

Amy Lane, Academy for Educational Development (AED)

Amy Lane, marketing and communications specialist for AED, provided comments on targeted marketing of an organization's Best Workplaces for CommutersSM designation. First, Ms. Lane explained the importance of formulating a "big picture" strategy of how an employer's Best Workplaces for CommutersSM designation can benefit them. The designation has a great deal of value, including both recognition from EPA and the value perceived in the marketplace by other audiences, including the community, shareholders, consumers, employees, and competitors. Ms. Lane explained that marketing is about understanding your customer, and in this case, it is important to make sure that the appropriate audiences are aware of your organization's designation as one of the Best Workplaces for CommutersSM.

When you convey this message to your audience, it is important to associate Best

Workplaces for CommutersSM with ideas that your audience values, such as getting home on time to be with their family or avoiding the additional stress associated with commuting. In addition, consider how Best Workplaces for CommutersSM fits into your established brand and use the designation to promote your organization as one with a forward thinking attitude and a great deal of concern for your employees.

Julie Colehour, PRR

Julie Colehour, co-president of PRR, discussed specific creative strategies and tactics that Best Workplaces for CommutersSM can use to promote their designation. First, Ms. Colehour emphasized the importance of media relations. Best Workplaces for CommutersSM is a newsworthy designation, and your organization can benefit from having the media cover your designation, as it is less expensive and more credible than advertising. The following are five tips for getting media coverage:

- Pick a focused list of media targets.
- Know your reporters and what stories they cover.
- Realize that recognition events only make good media events if you have good visuals.
- Pick a spokesperson who can really sell the story.
- Make sure the story is newsworthy by focusing on what your organization brings to the table, including the unique aspects of your organization's commuter benefits program.

Ms. Colehour also discussed media strategies and tactics for promoting your

Best Workplaces for CommutersSM



Best Workplaces for CommutersSM designation. These strategies include:

- Incorporate the Best Workplaces for CommutersSM message into brand advertising messages.
- Consider using advertising efforts to announce the designation to the community by taking out an ad in your local newspaper.
- Conduct employee outreach efforts in newsletters, emails, or any other way your organization routinely communicates with employees.
- Announce the designation to stakeholders and shareholders by including the designation in a press release or on the news wire.

Organizations can also highlight their designation in company newsletters and shareholder annual reports.

Finally, Ms. Colehour discussed the following tactics for using your Web site as a key communication tool:

- Post an announcement of your designation on your Web site.
- Highlight your designation in the employment section of your Web site.
- Include any media coverage your organization has received on your Web site.
- Post information—both program information and contacts—in the press room section of your Web site.

Open Discussion

Following the featured speakers' presentations, other forum participants asked questions and provided additional information on some of the points discussed.

- Cena Swisher from ERG, an EPA contractor, explained that ERG is talking to employers to find out how they have been externally marketing their programs and Best Workplaces for CommutersSM designation. She shared the following tips with the group:
 1. When speaking to the media, be prepared to answer off-topic questions and bring the answer back around to your overall message.

2. Educate the media on the voluntary aspect of the program.
 3. Use employees who are excited about the program as spokespeople.
 4. Advertise your commuter benefits when participating in job fairs.
- David Lieb from Cornell University explained that, as a new employer, he plans to do a press release promoting their designation as one of the Best Workplaces for CommutersSM. Amy Lane from AED suggested that David also think about ways to inform students about the university's designation.
 - Marci McGuire from Bishop Ranch Transportation Centre mentioned that they use the public comment period at city council meetings and the Chamber of Commerce's nonprofit recognition events to spread their message. She has also put the Best Workplaces for CommutersSM logo on their Web site and is getting stickers made to use for promotion.
 - Patrice Thornton from EPA explained to employers that when joining the program, they may immediately begin using the service-marked Best Workplaces for CommutersSM designation. Ms. Thornton also mentioned that Best Workplaces for CommutersSM campaign areas have a logo that those employers may use.
 - Patty Klavon from EPA emphasized the importance of tying Best Workplaces for CommutersSM into your organization's general environmental message.
 - Eyedin Zonobi from San Jose State University explained that he is working with the Bay Area Air Quality Management District to get out the Best Workplaces for CommutersSM message.
 - Amy Lane from AED recommended that as organizations join Best Workplaces for CommutersSM, they should work with their communications staff to think about the key messages they would like to focus on.

- Eleonore Price from the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services indicated that their commute trip reduction program is included on their new sustainability plan.
- Ron Gonzales from Raytheon Missile Systems informed the group that he sent out a press release and did a 30-minute television interview when Raytheon was designated as one of the Best Workplaces for CommutersSM. In addition, the logo was shared throughout the company and information on the designation will be included in the company's environmental stewardship report.
- Sally Carlson-Bancroft from Best Buy Co. explained that she recently participated in a panel discussion relating to gridlock in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area, in which she mentioned Best Workplaces for CommutersSM. Ms. Carlson-Bancroft also asked if anyone had suggestions on how to best advertise their designation, recognizing the fact that only those employees at their corporate campus are currently covered by commuter benefits. Best Buy has plans to extend these benefits to the company's retail employees, but does not want those employees to be confused or upset in the meantime.
- Patrice Thornton from EPA suggested that Best Buy specify that their designation applies only to Best Buy's corporate campus.
- Julie Colehour from PRR emphasized the importance of letting employees know if your program will expand. This is a great way to demonstrate your commitment to commuter benefits

Closing

Patty Klavon from EPA closed by thanking the featured participants for their presentations and thanking the employers for participating in the forum. Ms. Klavon indicated that EPA will send out a summary of the forum to employers and post it on the Best Workplaces for CommutersSM Web site. Employers who have additional questions and feedback, including ideas for upcoming phone forums, can contact EPA at <bwc@epa.gov>.