



**TITLE OF CASE STUDY: IF YOU ARE AWARE OF HOW PREVALENT AUTISM HAS BECOME, YOU CAN THANK THIS CAMPAIGN.**

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### **Autism Awareness – Ogilvy Awards Case Study**

#### Background & Campaign Objectives

America is facing an urgent health crisis as rates of autism have been increasing at alarmingly high rates in recent years. Twenty years ago, 5 in 10,000 children were diagnosed with the disorder – by 2010, that figure has soared to a staggering 1 in 110 – a 600% increase<sup>1</sup>. More children will be diagnosed with autism this year than with AIDS, diabetes and cancer – combined<sup>2</sup>.

Despite the shockingly high prevalence, the majority of parents didn't think of autism or that it could affect their child. Those who claimed to be familiar with the disorder tended to have very limited knowledge, referring to sources such as the movie "Rain Man." Additionally, while all parents want the best for their children, the thought of a developmental disorder with no cure can cause tremendous fear and lead them to tune out important messages regarding their child's health. Mothers who were somewhat aware of the disorder tended to dismiss it as something that "happens to somebody else," even when their own young children showed potential signs of autism. This created a significant hurdle for us to overcome, as most parents shut down before we could even begin a dialogue on the subject. Ultimately, we had to convince parents that autism is something they **needed** to know about, and put it on their radar.

Our objectives were as follows:

1. Raise awareness of autism
2. Educate parents of young children about the prevalence of the disorder
3. Urge parents to take action
4. Capture the attention of the Public Service Directors to increase levels of donated media

#### The Research Story

##### **Sometimes a little knowledge can be a dangerous thing...**

To better understand the current mindset about autism, we needed to talk to moms with young children and gauge their receptivity to messages about the disorder. This research was essential in the development and success of this campaign because it provided us with a better understanding of the emotional obstacles involved in relaying a potentially frightening message to parents. We had to convince these mothers that autism was something they needed to learn and know more about, given its extremely high prevalence.

## **Breaking down the barriers**

We explored a range of ways to communicate the importance of the issue. We found that when we armed moms with statistics about the prevalence of the disorder, they became much more receptive to learning about autism. At the time of the research, the prevalence was 1 in 166 children under the age of 10 diagnosed. Since then, the odds have increased to an astounding 1 in 110.<sup>3</sup>

The prevalence of diagnosis was a surprise to these moms. Not only did it catch their attention, it brought them closer to potentially considering whether it was relevant to their own child. The statistics helped to alleviate the stigma by making it clear just how common autism has become, and encouraged moms to seek out more information.<sup>4</sup>

We embarked on our strategy four years ago, and have continued to talk to moms with young children to validate and refine as needed. While awareness has steadily risen since the days of “Rain Man,” a paralyzing fear still remains among parents as the issue relates to their own child.

*“I don’t know enough about it, but I know my kids don’t have it.”*

*“I know it affects children, but I don’t want to be told that it’s affecting my child.”<sup>5</sup>*

Even as awareness grew, presenting the facts about prevalence remained powerful and motivating and made parents want to know more about autism without offending or directly insinuating that something may be wrong with their own child.

### Creative Approach:

AUTISM IS MORE COMMON THAN YOU THINK.

## **Making the Statistics Hit Home**

We began this campaign by tapping into a simple truth: all parents, at one time or another, see a special ability in their child and wonder if he/she will develop that talent and maybe even become famous for it. The ads cite a statistic related to one of these dreams, like the likelihood that their child will become a professional baseball athlete (1 in 16,000) or top fashion designer (1 in 7,000), and compare it with the far more likely prospect of their child being diagnosed with autism (1 in 110). The Odds concept allowed us to make the message topical, as we highlighted the odds of a child becoming an Olympic athlete (1 in 29,000) alongside the 1 in 110 odds of diagnosis.

The concept proved exceptionally robust, enabling us to expand the campaign by showing parents that the odds can impact anyone. In the first round of creative, we showed the long odds of a child becoming famous; as the campaign evolved, we shifted to depicting two celebrities who beat the odds to achieve fame, yet despite their own successes, they too were impacted by the staggering prevalence of autism.

Toni Braxton is a 6-time GRAMMY® Awards winner and Broadway star (1 in 75 million) who has sold over 40 million records (1 in 15 million). Ernie Els has one British Open Championship and two US Open Championships to his name (1 in 780 million). But even so, they each have a child who was diagnosed with autism, a 1 in 110 chance. The message to parents was clear: if it could happen to them, it could happen to me too.

In print, we re-created Toni and Ernie’s homes to frame each of their personal stories. These ads gave the reader a further, intimate connection with these public figures. The celebrity executions were extended into magazine and newspaper print, radio and online banners.

The key to featuring parents' hopes and dreams as well as likable, approachable celebrities was that despite the diagnosis, there is still opportunity for hope and optimism, shown in the relationship of the parent and child, and through the message that "early diagnosis can make a lifetime of difference".

To capitalize on donated media, we created a full range of executions in a variety of media platforms, to serve two purposes:

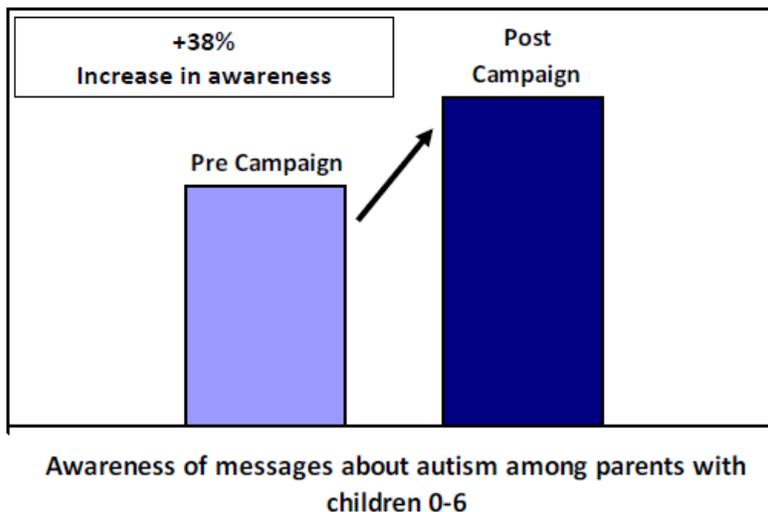
1. To ensure we'd be appealing to a wide range of parents, in various socioeconomic and ethnic groups, as the disorder affects all children regardless of race or financial status.
2. To ensure that Public Service Directors would have a range of work to choose from that was best suited to their format and was relevant to their target audience(s). For example, entertainment magazines could run the "Toni Braxton" or the "Fashion Designer" ads, while sports magazines could feature the "Ernie Els" or "Baseball" executions.

### Results

Throughout the course of the campaign the Ad Council has fielded a tracking study as well as a regression analysis demonstrating the profound impact that the Odds campaign has had on parents.

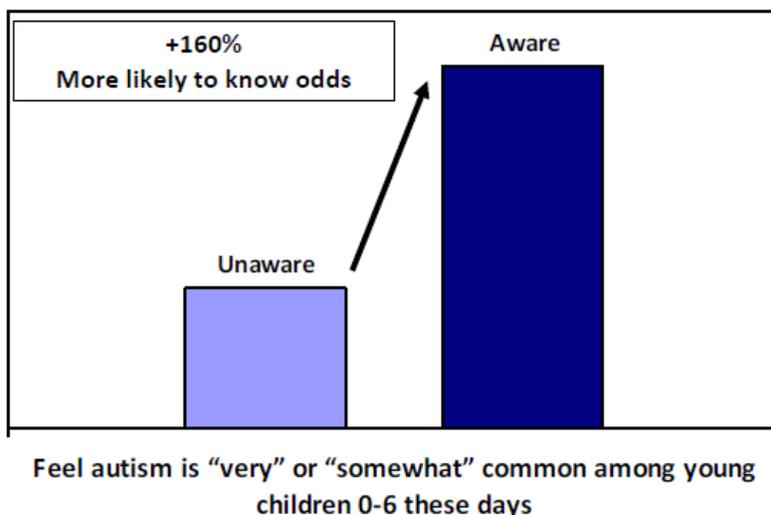
#### **Objective #1: Raise Awareness of Autism**

Since the launch of the campaign, there has been a **38% rise in the awareness of messages about autism**, from 40% → 55%.<sup>6</sup>



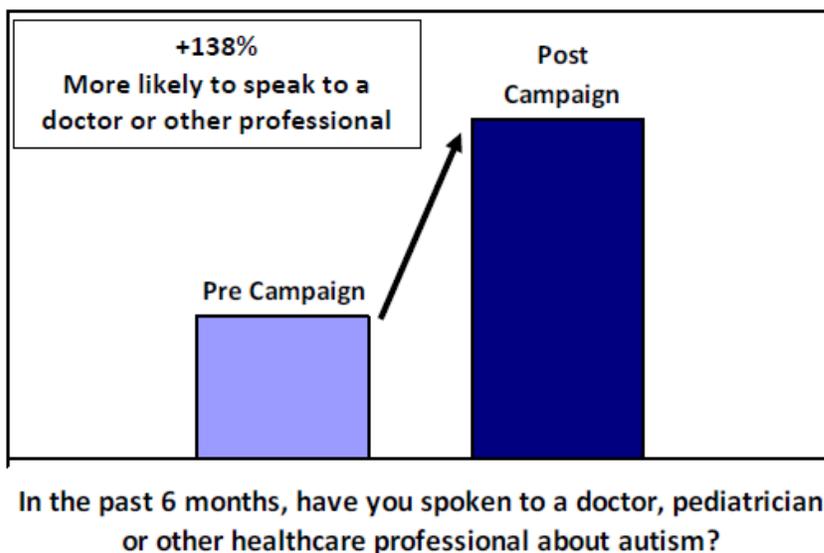
#### **Objective #2: Educate parents about the prevalence of the disorder**

According to a regression analysis conducted by the Ad Council in June 2010, parents who said they have seen or heard at least one PSA were **160 times more likely** than other parents to agree that autism is very or somewhat common.<sup>7</sup>



**Objective #3: Urge parents to take action**

Parents who had seen the "Odds" campaign were more likely to take action, and in June 2010, parents were significantly more likely than they had been at baseline to speak to a doctor or health care professional (8%→19%), discuss autism with friends or family (36%→43%), and visit a website to learn more about autism (16%→23%).<sup>8</sup>



Additionally, since the launch of the campaign, parents were **44% more likely visit a website** to get more information about autism (16% → 23%).<sup>9</sup>

Autism Speaks saw a tremendous spike in traffic to autismspeaks.org, which is the call to action in all of the creative executions. After the initial launch of the campaign, traffic spiked significantly – by 588% – and this traffic has been sustained and in fact, has continued to grow year over year. From September 2009 to August 2010, the number of average monthly visitors increased **29%** from the same period a year earlier.<sup>10</sup>

## **Objective #4: Capture the attention of the PSA Directors**

### **Extremely high levels of donated media**

Last but not least, we needed to get PSA directors to select our campaign over hundreds of other PSA campaigns in order for parents to even see our message. Since its launch in April 2006, the “Odds” campaign has consistently ranked in the top 10 among all Ad Council campaigns and has earned over **\$258 million** in donated media.<sup>11</sup> This has resulted in 40% aided recognition of the campaign PSAs among parents with children 0-6 years old, significantly higher than the awareness of typical Ad Council campaigns among their target audiences (norm is 26%).<sup>12</sup> The campaign most recently ranked **No. 3** in donated media when compared to 57 active Ad Council campaigns, demonstrating how PSA Directors embrace this cause and our campaign.<sup>13</sup>

### **All objectives met**

The PSA campaign has clearly played an integral role in impacting parents’ attitudes and behaviors surrounding autism. This has been demonstrated by tracking studies that show how parents who have been exposed to the “Odds” campaign are significantly more likely than those who have not to find the issue personally important, to be aware of its high prevalence, and to be thinking, talking, and getting information about autism.<sup>14</sup>

As more parents believe that autism is common and fewer claim to have a low level of knowledge about the disorder, it appears that we have been successful in achieving our initial goals of increasing autism awareness and breaking down barriers of communication with parents.

<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Autism Speaks Data

<sup>2</sup> [www.autismspeaks.org/whatisit/facts.php](http://www.autismspeaks.org/whatisit/facts.php)

<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<sup>4</sup> Autism Speaks Qualitative Research 2006

<sup>5</sup> Autism Speaks Qualitative Research 2008 & 2009

<sup>6</sup> Ad Council Tracking Study, June 2010 vs. April 2006

<sup>7</sup> Ad Council Tracking Study, June 2010. Based on a logistic regression analysis of survey data, where the score for the attitudinal statement is the dependent variable, and an array of independent variables, including awareness of the advertising, were tested for their relative correlation to this score. In short, awareness of the campaign advertising seems to have a measurable influence on parents who saw or heard a campaign message, even when controlling for other possible factors. Results are significant at the 95% confidence level.

<sup>8</sup> Ad Council Tracking Study, June 2010 vs. April 2006

<sup>9</sup> Ad Council Tracking Study, June 2010 vs. April 2006

<sup>10</sup> Autism Speaks Data

<sup>11</sup> Ad Council Data

<sup>12</sup> Ad Council Data

<sup>13</sup> Ad Council Data

<sup>14</sup> Ad Council Tracking Study