

Tech Center News

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Local Author to Discuss State's Rivers and Parks

The Warren Public Library is offering a program for residents. On Wednesday, April 17, noted outdoorsman Doc Fletcher will present his canoeing and kayaking program. He will talk about Michigan's rivers, and his adventures on them.

Doc Fletcher has been canoeing Michigan's rivers since 1978, and has written five books on canoeing and kayaking, including *Weekend Canoeing in Michigan* and *Michigan Rivers Less Paddled*.

He will present a slideshow discussing his times canoeing the rivers of Michigan.

Among rivers featured during his discussion will be the Pere Marquette, the subject of Doc's 2013 book.

The program will also focus on the U.P.'s Two Hearted River, a gorgeous river that flows into Lake Superior.

At the end of Doc's program, a free drawing will be held and one person will win a gift certificate good for a free canoe or kayak day trip. Additionally, Doc will have copies of his books available to be purchased and signed.

The event will be held in the main library's conference room from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. To register call 586-574-4564.

Auto Suppliers Drive U.S. Economy

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understand just how much the suppliers add to the economy, Andrea said.

"The classic image of the auto worker is someone working at an OEM's assembly level," Andrea said.

So, while GM is no longer the biggest employer in the country, GM and the other OEMs, through their supplier base, support millions of jobs throughout the entire country.

All told, the MEMA report states that the motor vehicle

Best SUV Commercials Tell Stories, Solve Common Problems

by Irena Granaas

About a dozen business professionals attended the recent Phoenix Marketing International web conference, "Key Trends Among the Top Performing Automotive SUV TV Ads," and learned how the top-performing ads connected with their target audiences and resulted in sales.

GM, Ford and Chrysler all had a notably effective TV ad for an SUV, based on results provided by the marketing analysis firm.

Phoenix performed an online analysis of TV ads tested from January to December 2012, representing more than 70,000 evaluations of 385 TV ads tested online.

SUV ads were divided into luxury and non-luxury categories. Out of five luxury brand ads found to be most effective, Cadillac was the sole domestic brand ranked in the top five. Two domestic automakers, Ford and Chrysler (Jeep), made the top five in most effective non-luxury brand TV ads.

According to Brian Maraone, who leads Phoenix's automotive research practice, Phoenix Automotive is the preeminent source of market information on consumer vehicle purchase motivations. The firm's subscription-based syndicated research studies track product or service usage, purchase behavior, brand perceptions, advertising and publicity impact.

Maraone said webinar participants were able to type in questions to the webinar system during the presentation and ask questions at the end. Phoenix ranked ads based on marketing effectiveness.

Phoenix insights on the most successful ads indicated they used relatable situations, kept viewers engaged and focused on feature functionality or vehicle capability.

Viewers responded favorably to an innovative solution to a common problem. Ads tend to be light-hearted, even talking about a serious issue like safety.

Ford made effective use of humor in a TV spot titled, "One

Foot Forward," which showed a man – with both hands full – reaching forward with his foot to open the liftgate on a 2013 Ford Escape.

Maraone said this is an example of a key TV ad trend people are going to see more of – storytelling.

"Rather than simply listing the features that a vehicle offers, advertisers are demonstrating the features in a way that communicates meaningful benefit," he said.

"This Ford ad does so in a lighthearted way by introducing a particularly common problem – trying to open a liftgate with your hands full – and showing people carrying things and trying to get into their vehicles in real-life situations. The ad introduces the

problem, and then tells a story of a Ford engineer who solves the problem by developing the foot-activated liftgate on the 2013 Ford Escape."

Maraone said the ad is relatable and meaningful to viewers. For example, one person said, "I like how this company thinks outside of the box with coming up with new features in its vehicles."

"Why didn't anyone think of that sooner? Like when I had two small kids and 10 bags of groceries?" commented another individual.

Chrysler scored a hit with a 2012 Jeep ad titled, "No Obstacles." While remaining true to the Jeep brand as an icon for rugged off-roading, it coyly suggests that at times the Jeep might be a bit too capable.

"This ad is slightly different than the Ford ad in that instead of dealing with a feature used for convenience, it focuses on a feature for performance/capability (Select Terrain Dial)," Maraone explained.

"It demonstrates the vehicle's performance by showing the Grand Cherokee driving through heavy snow without effort, and also works in a lighthearted joke. The ad concludes with the line, 'Even heavy snowstorms won't keep you from getting to work. Our apologies.'"

"This ad is also relatable and meaningful to viewers, which came through in the open-ended comments: 'Driving in bad weather is a concern for me. This car would make me feel safe to do so,' said one viewer.

Semi-Autonomous Driving Is 'Right around the Corner'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

behind them when they are backing up, as well as covering a car's blind spot. Radar warns drivers about vehicles in front, in back and on the sides when they get too close. There are technologies that are being tested right now to see how well they can "read" traffic signs.

Whydell said TRW is in the process of developing its third-generation vehicle camera. The company will be able to put in different lenses so that different systems will have different costs. Which one is chosen will be up to the OEM.

"What's good about all of this," Whydell said, "is that we're able to combine all this technology with our brakes and steering systems. We can personalize our offerings to meet individual OEM ideas of how this technology is to be used."

Whydell said the OEMs are all adopting this tech, but each company has its own individual idea of just how it's to be used and in what combinations.

Whydell said semi-autonomous driving is right around the corner. So using radar and cameras connected to braking and steering systems, drivers can be warned when they're drifting between lanes. A vehicle might self-adjust when a driver is changing a lane and a car is in the blind spot. TRW is working with Mobileye of Israel to develop technology to identify people and objects in the path of a car and then make adjustments to avoid hitting the obstacle.

Other factors are affecting the



TRW is developing radar systems in cars to help stop collisions.

adoption of these new technologies, Wilkerson said. OEMs don't want to be "left behind" by not offering it, in addition to the technology helping meet mileage and safety requirements.

And, he said, consumers are more interested in safety and OEMs are better able to use safety as a selling point.

"This is quite different from, say the 1960s and 1970s, when Ralph Nadar was preaching

about safety," Wilkerson said. "Consumers weren't that interested in safety when buying a car. That's not the case right now. Safety, along with price, become important points consumers consider when looking at cars."

Wilkerson said that within the next five years, much of this technology will become standard in just about every new car sold in the country.

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