



Give the Chesapeake Bay Program credit for taking a chance. To curb water pollution that is harming blue crabs in their waters, the CBP (with funding from the Environmental Protection Agency) has launched a campaign with the slogan, "Save the Crabs... Then Eat 'Em!" The billboard pictured below is typical of a multimedia campaign that approaches environmentalism with humor instead of excessively sober, do-the-right-thing messages of the crying Indian variety.

## Campaigns We Love

Dave Clemans and his team at the Academy for Educational Development spent 18 months researching and developing the campaign (visit [www.chesapeakeclub.org](http://www.chesapeakeclub.org) to see more), and the first ads debuted in March. While it's too soon to report results, positive media coverage and a flood of requests for T-shirts and other paraphernalia associated with the campaign are cause for optimism. More importantly, environmental groups around the U.S. that have been looking for new ways to connect with their audiences may want to keep an eye on this unorthodox effort. ■



## An Eye for Opportunity

Using Google AdWords, some inspired ad-libbing, and an ad hoc budget of only fifteen dollars, Oceana made the most of an opportunity that has helped reduce ocean pollution worldwide.

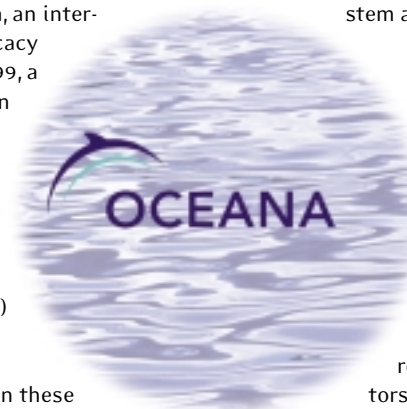
Operators of luxury cruise ships like to brag about all the amenities they offer, but they tend to be less expansive about the pollution generated by their immense floating cities. According to Oceana, an international ocean advocacy group founded in 1999, a single cruise ship can generate one ton of garbage, 25,000 gallons of sewage, and 143,000 gallons of graywater (i.e., discharge from showers and laundry) in a typical outing.

Properly treated, even these massive amounts of waste can be funneled into the seas without excessive harm, but when a vast ocean can conceal bad behavior, proper treatment is often forgotten. Between 1993 and 2003, cruise ship operators were cited for more than 300 instances of

illegal dumping, unleashing tons of bacteria and other nasty substances that can sicken people and kill marine life. Government regulators issued more than \$50 million in fines for these violations, but that has done little to stem a swelling and toxic tide.

Dissatisfied with essentially toothless regulations, Oceana initiated direct talks with Royal Caribbean. If an industry leader embraced greater environmental responsibility, Oceana reasoned, other operators might follow suit.

But when friendly conversations led nowhere, the advocacy group decided to act, and Oceana's innovative maneuvering online demonstrates what persistence, creativity, and a little empowerment can produce when opportunity knocks. ►



**a goodman**

GOOD IDEAS FOR GOOD CAUSES

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Newsletter edited by Carolyn Ramsay.

► In July 2003, Oceana launched its “Stop Cruise Pollution” campaign, attacking Royal Caribbean on several fronts. The campaign team, led by Dana DuBose and Dawn Winalski, approached potential customers with a petition requesting pledges *not* to cruise with Royal Caribbean until the company dealt with its pollution problems. The petition attracted more than 80,000 signatures nationwide.

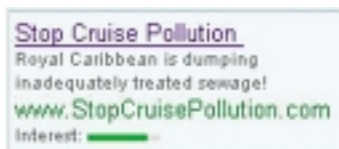
Oceana also staged demonstrations and press conferences in port cities all over the U.S. and Canada, and arranged for a plane to fly a banner over numerous ports (including the company’s home port in Miami) reading, “Got sewage? Royal Caribbean Dumps Daily.”

Even potential investors were brought into the fray. Press releases about the ongoing campaign routinely included Royal Caribbean’s stock ticker symbol, RCL. This helped attract coverage by Yahoo Finance, Bloomberg, and other financial news services. Suddenly, Royal Caribbean’s activities were scuttlebutt among brokers and investors, too.

In January 2004, Jason Lefkowitz joined Oceana as its Manager of E-Activism, and he was eager to bolster the Internet’s role in the campaign. An experience from a previous election season provided the necessary inspiration. While searching for a particular candidate’s web site, Lefkowitz found that entering the candidate’s name on Google produced links to a site for that candidate’s *opponent*. And that was all Lefkowitz needed to devise a new way of roiling the waters for Royal Caribbean.

He immediately contacted Google’s advertising department and purchased two groups of AdWords. The first group

included the name “Royal Caribbean” as well as generic phrases such as “cruise ship” or “cruise vacation.” Any individual typing those words into Google’s search box would see an ad on the right-hand side of the screen reading:



The second set of words Lefkowitz purchased included general terms such as “ocean,” “dolphin” and “conservation.” Individuals searching for these terms would see an ad linking them to Oceana’s main web site. By offering to pay a few cents every time someone clicked on either of these advertisements, Oceana ensured that its ads would appear on the first screen to pop up after any search involving its AdWords.

On February 6th, Lefkowitz tested the system: he entered “Royal Caribbean” into Google’s search box and his ad appeared—a lone voice of protest amidst all the friendly come-ons from travel agents. Visions of hijacked cruise customers danced in his head until three days later when a terse email from “The Google AdWords Team” arrived, reading:

After reviewing your account, I have found that one or more of your ads or keywords does not meet our guidelines... Google policy does not permit the advertisement of websites that contain language that advocates against Royal Caribbean.

Oceana’s AdWords were summarily deactivated, including those that linked to the group’s main web site. Lefkowitz checked the advertising guidelines posted on Google’s site and could not find any viola-

tion. When his email protesting the apparent censorship received a bland reply essentially restating Google’s position, he huddled with DuBose and Matt Littlejohn, VP of Communications and Constituency Building, to find a way through this logjam.

On February 11th, Oceana took its censorship story to the media, issuing a press release with the headline, “Google Stifles Oceana Anti-Pollution Message.” Like a ton of garbage dropping into the sea, the release made a large splash. CNN Headline News interviewed Andy Sharpless, Oceana’s CEO, and the story also appeared in *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, *The Miami Herald*, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, and dozens of media outlets around the world. “This was, by far, the biggest media hit our organization ever got,” reports Littlejohn.

Traffic to Oceana’s web sites surged from roughly 2,000 unique visitors each day to nearly 10,000. Awareness of the campaign also increased, and because the media focused on the Google versus Oceana angle, reporters didn’t bother to contact Royal Caribbean to hear its response to

charges of illegal dumping and corporate irresponsibility. The charges just kept getting repeated from story to story to story. Within two months Royal Caribbean contacted Oceana with an offer to renew discussions, and in May 2004, the cruise line agreed to install advanced wastewater purification systems in all its ships.

Oceana paid only \$15 for its AdWords click-throughs (before Google pulled the plug), and thanks to prompt action by the campaign team, an apparent setback was turned into fodder for a media feeding frenzy. Littlejohn is quick to point out this was no accident. “We didn’t have to go to some committee to get an approval,” he says of the moment when Lefkowitz had the inspiration to purchase a bunch of AdWords. “We just did it.”

By organizing itself into campaign teams, Oceana—with operations in no less than three continents—deliberately stays nimble, giving its staff members the freedom to be creative and act on their own good judgment. As a result, the Stop Cruise Pollution team was able to move swiftly when opportunity knocked, achieving a memorable victory at sea. ■

