

Amer1ca

A public relations campaign to improve U.S.-Mexico relations

PHOENIX RELATIONS

Prepared for Prof. Steinhorn

Parker Wishik

December 1, 2011

Executive Summary

Phoenix Relations is excited to join forces with the Mexican government and work together to achieve our goals of introducing a new Mexico—the true Mexico—to the American public. The campaign will attempt to overpower existing stereotypes of Mexico and Mexicans, negative publicity regarding drug-related violence and crime, and the connotations associated with Mexico when considering immigration issues in the United States to establish a greater relationship between the two countries and their populations. The **Amer1ca** Campaign (spoken as “One America”) will target specific primary audiences with media and communication tactics, evaluate the success of these tactics after an initial two-year active campaign period, and look into the sustainable stewardship value of these programs following completion of the campaign.

Situation Analysis

Mexico is a country rich in culture, history and personality. It is a major world player in a number of economic categories, a top tourist destination, a vaunted opponent in several international sports, home to some of the world’s most famous and interesting ancient cultures, and the artist of one of the world’s most noted (and delicious) cuisines. It is a creative, religious and family-oriented nation.

However, Mexico faces the stigma of negative public opinion against what is considered by many who stereotype to be an inferior, cheap, unclean, uneducated and unsafe country. Much of this is likely due to the rise in Hispanic immigrant populations in the United States and the prominence the immigration issue plays out in the American political scene; the widespread and sometimes graphic publicity of the drug-based violence in parts of Mexico, some near the U.S. border; the perceived spread of disease and the Spanish-English language barrier preventing the free flow of communication between the two countries. Despite the unfortunate current events and

aforementioned attitudinal barriers, the two countries enjoy not only a lengthy geographic border but also boundless opportunities for collaboration, growth and success.

Our campaign will attempt to propel Mexico beyond these factors in hopes of establishing a new status quo perception of the country in the eyes of its northern neighbor. The campaign will base its foundation not on the frills and gimmicks of advertising but on establishing strong bonds and relationships between the citizens and leadership of both countries—to tear down the divide of perception and stereotypes and create a world in which one symbiotic America exists.

Research

Secondary Research

Existing data confirms that there is room for improvement in Americans' perceptions of Mexico. A Gallup poll from 2010 identifies that Americans are almost as likely to have an unfavorable opinion of Mexico as they are to have a favorable one, and 2010 was the first year since 1993 when fewer than half of Americans held a favorable view. This marks a dramatic decrease from the 74 percent high marks achieved in the early and mid-2000's and can likely be attributed to the coverage of swine flu outbreaks and drug warfare.¹ On the latter note, Gallup has done research on the perception of drug warfare prevalence in Latin America, and despite extensive and prominent news coverage of Mexican violence, the country actually ranks at the Latin American median, though reporting of illicit drug sales in Mexico has increased 5 percent since 2007.²

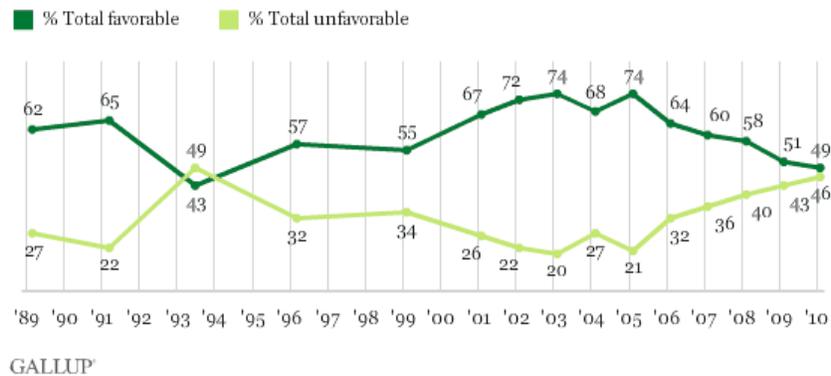
Another double-edged finding by Gallup in February shows that only 50 percent of Americans feel that what happens in Mexico is vitally important to the U.S., while 34 percent chose "important but not vital" and 15 percent "not too/not at all important." However, despite the

¹ Saad, Lydia. "In U.S. Canada Places First in Image Contest; Iran Last." Gallup.com. February 19, 2010. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/126116/Canada-Places-First-Image-Contest-Iran-Last.aspx>

² Ray, Julie and Crabtree, Steve. "Many See Drug Trafficking Widespread, Rising in Latin America." Gallup.com. May 7, 2010. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/127739/Drug-Trafficking-Widespread-Rising-Latin-America.aspx>

factors mentioned above and the focus on illegal immigration, this number is an 8-point increase from 2007. There is potential to continue this momentum and to turn the trend from an increase due to negative factors into an increase due to positive factors.³ The campaign will expand research of existing data beyond these findings, including content analysis and analysis of other public polls.

Americans' Overall Views of Mexico



Primary Research

Our campaign will benefit from engaging in original primary research to determine the true breadth, depth and extent of common assumptions for our target audience based on the secondary findings. The campaign will execute a series of focus groups (contracted with an outside agency) and personal interviews (likely with high-profile individuals like tourism officials, local elected officials, Hispanic American organizations, etc.) to determine generalizations of opinions regarding a number of topics. These will include the most common images called to mind when considering Mexico; the positive and negative opinions of Mexico; association of Mexico with violence, drugs, criminal activity and others; understanding and awareness of Mexico's cultural identity and more. We will then commission a respected national polling agency to project our focus group findings across the entire population using a random probability sample survey. This poll will establish

³ Newport, Frank. "China Tops List of Countries Vitially Important to U.S.; Egypt 9th." Gallup.com. February 9, 2011. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/146039/China-Tops-List-Countries-Vitially-Important-Egypt-9th.aspx>

cross tabulations and the relationships between a variety of factors (cuisine, culture, crime, etc.) and Americans' opinions of Mexico.

From our initial findings, we will craft messaging and engage in another series of focus groups to test the viability and receptiveness of our target audiences to that messaging, as well as potential strategies and tactics for achieving the outlined objectives.

Audiences

Our target audience is a broad one, including a number of stakeholder groups. Not all messages will be pertinent to all target audiences. Primary target audiences include:

- **Children/ high school students:** the best way to alter attitudinal perceptions of Mexico is to prevent negative opinions from taking root early on. We will try to foster a positive recognition of Mexico in our young children today, in hopes they will retain it tomorrow.
- **American political figures:** the client explicitly mentions that it laments that American politicians seemingly only pay attention to its migrant population during election time. The campaign will target American politicians on local, state and national levels to effect an attitudinal shift in the way these politicians view their southern neighbors—not just votes to be hustled come election times, but rather partners and trusted colleagues at all times.
- **Young professionals:** these are ambitious, worldly and energetic people who are driven by a desire to succeed and a yearning for exploration. These are the people who will not only reach out to travel and participate in international discourse but who are also dominating exchanges in the marketplace of ideas, notably in social media and blogging. Soon, this group will have the status, income and power to be America's decision-makers and opinion leaders and can craft a new status quo for Mexican-American relations.
- **American journalists:** specifically, we will target journalists generally covering world and international news, travel, immigration and political beats relevant to Mexican-American relations. These are the gatekeepers of information not only for the general public and our secondary/ancillary audiences, but also for the bulk of our primary audiences. Additionally, the media are among the primary instigators in exacerbating negative perceptions of Mexico with repeated coverage of drug-related violence, despite Mexico's moderate drug

problem relative to the rest of Latin America. We wish to infuse coverage with positive messaging. This group also includes bloggers covering art, food, culture, travel and general topics.

- **The general public:** obviously it will be difficult to tailor specific/niche programming for the general public, but each individual program is geared toward receiving recognition within the public and/or media coverage to achieve reaching the public. The end goal is to have the campaign on the minds of everyday Americans in everyday situations, called to mind in lieu of negative stereotypes of Mexico.

Secondary target audiences include college-aged students and their parents, working adults, Hispanic Americans (especially Mexican-Americans), teachers and professors, library patrons and book clubs, travel agents, history buffs, professional organizations and others.

Messaging

The theme of the campaign will be **Amer1ca**, which is read “One America.” The rationale behind this is that, together, Mexico and the United States comprise “one America.” While the two countries are understandably culturally, geographically, economically and politically distinct, “One America” is meant to refer to the deep relationship between the U.S. and Mexico. We share a continent, we both deal with the implications of North American events and situations, and we both have an investment in the security and future success of the other. The goal behind **Amer1ca** is to strengthen not only the perception of the actual existence of this relationship but also the connotation with which this relationship is considered. Americans should view Mexico and Mexicans as their neighbors, friends and critical partners to achieve success.

The campaign will adopt the following messages and attempt to gain as much reach as possible under the overarching **Amer1ca** theme:

- Mexico is a rich nation. Rich in economic worth, but more importantly, rich in the culture, lifestyle and values of its families, its individuals, its communities and its history.

- The Mexican people are as uniquely cultured, family-oriented and sophisticated as we are. While different, we share important values in a number of areas.
- Mexico and the United States are critically invested in the future success and well-being of the other and can be valued partners to achieving each other's ultimate goals.
- Despite extensive coverage to the contrary, Mexico is a safe and sophisticated country, though, like any other country, it has its own share of problems. Mexico is aware of the problems it faces and is prioritizing improving these conditions.
- References to a three-pronged relationship with Canada are certainly not unwelcome; however, the campaign will not emphasize the placement or utilization of this message.

Objectives

The primary objective of the strategic campaign is to foster in American communities, politicians, culture and the general public a more positive, worldly and fact-based opinion of and reception to their neighbor to the South. We will design the campaign to forge a sort of tangible relationship between the countries that is more explicit than the simple geographic border. We will attempt to group the countries into "one America" with shared goals, implications, concerns, emotions, desires and ambitions. Our goals are:

- Create and execute a recognizably-branded, positively-received awareness campaign with staying power and viral potential.
- Increase Gallup/national poll favorability statistics to 55 percent within two years.
- Increase U.S.-Mexico tourism levels by 5 percent within two years.
- Secure favorable coverage of the **Amer1ca** campaign on every major American television network and cable news channel, every major American newspaper and in a piece by the Associated Press.
- Establish positive working relationships between American and Mexican national legislators and government officials beyond those that currently exist.

Programming

The **Amer1ca** Campaign at the outset will include, but is not limited to, the following interactive and strategically-designed strategies and tactics. More ideas may be included following continuing discussions with the client regarding campaign objectives and messaging.

Strategy #1: Initiate a branded, recognizable campaign.

Tactic: The **Amer1ca** Campaign

All campaign strategies, tactics and collateral will be branded under the **Amer1ca** tagline for efficiency and consistency purposes. **Amer1ca** is read as “One America” and is so-designed for its ease of recognition, its relatable nature and its dual simplicity and complexity. The “i” in “America” has been replaced by the number “1” to establish the dual meaning. The “1” will be emboldened and colored red—a shared color in the national flags of both Mexico and the U.S.

Tactic: **Amer1ca** campaign collateral

The **Amer1ca** campaign collateral will include brochures, letterheads, postcards, bookmarks, envelopes, posters, T-shirts and other items. Leave-behind and novelty items including key rings, stickers, flags, banners, pennants, buttons and other items may also be designed. Artistic contributions, to be discussed in later strategies, can also be adapted for use on collateral pieces.

Strategy #2: Create avenues for Mexicans and Americans to join together in productive and direct relationships.

Tactic: “Amigos por Correspondencias” Pen Pal program

The pen-pal program is designed to reach our school-age children audience. This audience will be strategically targeted to “nip in the bud” exposure and vulnerability of the next wave of working Americans to adopting negative stereotypes of Mexico and the Mexican people by establishing direct relationships with their Mexican counterparts through a letter-writing campaign. With the help of local and state governments in both countries, we will secure

partnerships with an identical number of public school districts in the U.S. and Mexico to participate in a pen pal program. The program will start with students entering the first grade (both countries' primary education systems begin at the same ages, around age 6). American schools will each be paired with a corresponding Mexican school, and individual students with Mexican counterparts, and will begin exchanging letters on a monthly basis.

Granted, the content and structure of the letters will be elementary at first, but we will design the program to continue throughout the students' primary educations, during which every effort will be made to ensure the same children are paired together throughout the process, culminating in either sixth grade or middle school (to be determined in later stages of the campaign). Effectively, the children will grow up together.

Tactic: Amer1ca Sister City Campaign

Similar to the pen pal campaign, we will identify a number of communities across the United States, particularly in areas outside of the Southwest/border region (potentially in areas with high prevalence of observed undesirable reactions or impressions of Mexico, or in areas where populations do not have a prevailing opinion) to enter into "sister city" agreements with similarly-sized cities/towns in Mexico. These sister city arrangements will represent all regions of each country and will be conduits through which the cities can share their cultural identities, initiate community service partnerships and educational exchanges, host public events and other tactics to promote the Amer1ca theme and introduce Mexican culture directly to the American people. This will give Americans a true glimpse of the culture, free of connotations and stereotypes.

Tactic: Legislative Retreat

The campaign, with the help of the Mexican and U.S. governments, will host a multi-day retreat in the Federal District in Mexico City for members of both the Congress of the Union (Mexico) and the U.S. Congress to meet, discuss global politics and U.S.-Mexico relations, in addition to providing the opportunity for the U.S. officials to experience the Mexican capital, cuisine and

culture and interact with the Mexican people. The retreat will include time set aside for leisure, workshops and seminars, keynote speeches, presentations of the latest Mexican advances, cultural exhibitions and a dinner and ceremony honoring the participants. Our celebrity partners may participate as well. Understandably, not all lawmakers from either country will be able to attend, but we hope for enough participation to 1) establish friendships and relationships among members of both bodies and 2) secure media coverage favorable for the campaign in high-profile outlets in both countries and worldwide. Ideally, the presidents of both countries will have the opportunity to attend and participate in some fashion.

Strategy #3: Cultivate a deeper awareness and appreciation of Mexican culture by fostering an exchange of ideas, creativity and expression.

Tactic: Commission Unique Cultural Artist Designs

The **Amer1ca** Campaign will research and identify a select number of American and Mexican artists of varying styles of expertise and commission original works of art with them. The works—to include paintings, sculptures and other media—will represent these artists’ visions of what “One America,” in the context of U.S.-Mexico relationships, means to them. These works of art will be displayed in museums, public places like libraries and galleries, government functions and buildings, etc. The artworks can be depicted on a series of collectible posters and postage stamps. The artworks will also be converted into formats available for public purchase that contain the **Amer1ca** logo and taglines. Ideally, these works will be viewed as collectible items, both expanding the impact of the campaign messaging and granting the campaign visible staying power (a poster or sculpture on display in a home or office will continue to reach eyes indefinitely).

Tactic: Cultural Exchanges, Festivals and Expositions

The **Amer1ca** Campaign will strategically target a number of events, holidays and celebrations in which to participate via a booth, display, interactive activity and other tactics. These will include dates of significance for the American public (i.e. Thanksgiving, July 4th)—not just

Mexican events like Cinco de Mayo—to show that Mexico is appreciative and affectionate to its northern neighbor and appreciative of the cultural uniqueness it enjoys.

Tactic: Viral Video Series (title to be determined)

The **Amer1ca** Campaign will recruit a handful of ideal celebrity spokespeople from both the United States and Mexico and produce a viral video series in the style of TED Talks and Sundance’s “Iconoclasts,” to be posted on the website. The videos involve a collaborative meeting of the minds and sharing of perspectives between the Mexican and American celebrities on any number of topics, including lifestyle, religion, professional matters, expressiveness, art, etc. These videos will be shown at public events, posted online and may also be made available for purchase on DVD.

Strategy #4: Capitalize on media coverage and attention of campaign to further the established messaging.

Tactic: Mexican Media Tour

This campaign tactic will afford strategically-identified members of the media a chance to experience Mexico first-hand, aside from the typical tourist destinations. Invitations will be extended to a select group of print, broadcast and Internet media personalities to travel to Mexico, all expenses paid, and experience a number of strategically-selected sites. These can include but are not limited to a typical Mexican school, Mexican factories, Mayan and Aztec ruins, shopping centers, government proceedings, musical and artistic performances, authentic Mexican cuisine and more. This trip is designed not as a tourist excursion but as an open window for these media members into the day-to-day lives of Mexicans and the Mexican mentality, to afford them an understanding of the Mexican culture and way of life. The tour will be a week long and feature stops in Mexico City, Tijuana, Monterrey, Leon, Guadalajara, Cancun, Merida and others. Ideally, the trip will result in media coverage at the participants’ respective outlets, in the form of columns and blog posts.

Tactic: Engage in Traditional Media Relations

The **Amer1ca** Campaign will dedicate time and staff on a regular basis to engage in traditional media tracking and media relations for all facets of the campaign. This includes clip tracking of coverage of **Amer1ca** media coverage, strategically placed letters to the editor and op-eds, print media buying as budget allows, press release and feature release pitches, editorial board visits and more.

Tactic: Create a campaign website, blog and social media materials.

The **Amer1ca** Campaign will feature an interactive website, a regularly updated blog featuring commentary on all campaign activities, and an active social media presence on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and other platforms to promote the exchange of ideas and information and stoke the conversational fire about the campaign, U.S.-Mexico relations and topics in general.

Evaluation

The evaluation stage of the campaign is critical to determine the success of the initial two-year run, identify any changes that might be necessary to continue the program and identify attitudinal shifts that may or may not have penetrated the status quo for future campaigns. Evaluation will closely mirror our initial research phase. We will conduct personal interviews with the same subjects as before to as great an extent as possible. We will also conduct a series of focus groups to identify the reach of the **Amer1ca** campaign and the connotation with which it was received (we will determine at a future date if it is a reasonable expectation to meet with the same participants as before) and follow-up surveys to determine our success. For the tourism objective, we will observe available travel statistics to determine any uptick in travel.

Stewardship

This campaign is not designed to be a “one-and-done”—or, since we are basing evaluations on a two-year period, a “two-and-through”—campaign. The results we seek are of a lasting nature across the lifetimes of our target audiences (of course barring future contingencies involving the two countries which we cannot plan for). It is important that we design our strategies and tactics to be executable within our tangible timeframe, but the tactics are so designed as to be sustainable for much longer periods of time.

The campaign collateral is lasting and will ideally become conversational pieces: someone wearing a “**Amer1ca**” T-shirt will elicit questions from their friends about the campaign. The **Amer1ca** website will remain live and serve as a hub for all media coverage and blog posts referencing the campaign, publish photo galleries and recordings of campaign events and provide testimonials of campaign participants.

We have high hopes that the relationships established between the elected officials through our leadership symposium and retreat will continue at the benefit of both communities, and we would be ecstatically pleased if the children participating in the pen pal initiative were to remain friends for life, perhaps even travelling to visit one another during their college years or even in their adult lives, introducing one another to their families. The growing reach and popularity of social media platforms and Web interaction exponentially enhance this potential. We will keep in contact with the participants of these programs to determine the viability of the relationships established and successes of the programs. The relationships between the sister cities should be established with an interminable goal from the get-go, and the results, if successful, will be easily perceptible. It is through relationships like these that we truly hope to translate “**Amer1ca**” from words on paper into a way of life for citizens of both countries. After all, the continent isn’t going anywhere for some time. We’re neighbors for the long haul.

Conclusion

We at Phoenix Relations are ecstatic to be considered for this partnership with the Mexican government and are excited at the prospects of being the facilitators in a cultural renaissance between the United States and Mexico. With hard work, strategic planning and a creative, emotional message, we can help establish better relationships not only between our two countries as nation states, but also on an individual level between the people that comprise our beautiful cultures.