

## Cracker Barrel

### Problem

How does an annual OOH campaign keep up with a fast-growing brand?

### Solution

Carefully evaluate every OOH location and its ability to generate exposure for nearby restaurant locations.

### Background

Cracker Barrel Old Country Store has 562 restaurants in 43 states, with a majority of the locations along interstate highways. OOH has been the primary promotional strategy for the roadside brand. As the brand grew across the U.S., acquiring an outdoor board near an interstate exit was simple enough.

Different challenges exist today. Managing a 1,500+ outdoor board portfolio is a complex assignment amidst intense demand for highly-visible, high-quality boards. A proliferation of new units and board owners in some regions and consolidation in others adds another variable. Additionally, nonuniform pricing, posting and maintenance issues from board to board, and a lack of centralized data to help manage the purchasing and renewal efforts all further complicate the OOH campaign.



### Objective

Cracker Barrel must engage consumers with its OOH displays through emotionally-enhanced messages that also generate positive brand associations. The messages must be relevant and enticing to both interstate and local commuters and multi-generational families – the overall target. And the creative must provide directional information on how to access the brand.

At the same time, the OOH strategy can only work across such a large volume of postings as long as key board locations – based on proprietary metrics and performance characteristics that are strictly followed – are identified, acquired and renewed on a store-by-store basis.

### Strategy

Through GeoTrak, a proprietary management system, the entire Cracker Barrel outdoor program is managed with real time client access. Maintenance, contracts, images, quality scoring, and even desired board upgrades are all available through this integrated, web-based system.

Every potential location within certain mileage of a store is analyzed and graded regardless of availability of the unit. Lighting, foliage, structure quality, high-rise signage readability, market maturity, DOT coverage, pending construction and other considerations are taken into account on every board for every restaurant. All of this data comes from hyper-accurate field intelligence which is stored in GeoTrak.

GeoTrak is then used to create long-term market plans for each restaurant location. Plans address existing and potential board upgrades relevant to the store, and track and anticipate all requirements for negotiating acquisitions and renewals for both short- and long-term periods.

The ultimate objective is a collection of boards within a given store's market plan that cost effectively provides the necessary exposure and pre-emptive messaging to create and deliver traffic and sales requirements.

In 2006, a new creative campaign was also developed that utilized brand appropriate, iconic images to evoke a connection to Cracker Barrel's distinctive, country heritage. To remain unique to Cracker Barrel as well as provide enhanced visual appeal, copy, backgrounds and icons were chosen for their unique brand association.

All were carefully married to have high visual impact as well as instant Cracker Barrel recognition. Typical locator copy was also prevalent as part of board design strategy.



## Plan Details

Media flighting is ongoing, with all 562 locations supported 52 weeks a year by a combination of bulletin, bulletin rotary and poster rotary units.

## Results

The 2006 campaign won the 2007 American Business Awards for Best Outdoor Advertising Campaign. Cracker Barrel has been named "America's Favorite Family Restaurant" by Restaurants & Institutions magazine for the past 17 consecutive years. Outdoor has helped drive growth of the brand from less than 20 locations to 562 in 43 states and revenues of \$2.6 billion. Most remarkable, virtually all of this growth has taken place in expansion markets outside of Tennessee where the original Cracker Barrel Old Country Store locations were established.