

In New Ads, Ford Says It's 'Built to Lend a Hand' To Coronavirus-Affected Customers.

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In an example of a major advertiser adapting its messaging for the COVID-19 outbreak rather than simply pulling its ads, Ford has launched a new campaign describing how it is responding to the pandemic. In place of regular ads marketing its vehicles, the new flight explains how the automaker is giving Ford Credit customers some relief on their auto loans.

According to AdAge, the campaign includes two new spots, "Built to Lend a Hand" and "Built for Right Now," which play off the automaker's regular tagline, "Built Ford Proud."

Ford quickly collaborated with agency Wieden+Kennedy New York to turn around the new creative in a matter of days, which is lightning fast in the TV world. That started last week when Ford execs realized their normal marketing message would no longer resonate with Americans as the virus outbreak changed almost every facet of everyday life.

"Thursday morning of last week, it became clear we were at a tipping point where we expect typical messaging in the marketplace isn't going to work the same way," Matt VanDyke, Director Of U.S. Marketing for Ford Motor Co., told AdAge. "It's important to be reassuring right now and not trying to say to people 'Rush into your car dealership for a sales event.'"

The campaign plays off Ford's century-old history and how the Detroit-based company built planes and tanks during wartime and has offered payment relief to consumers impacted by hurricanes, tornadoes and fires.

"Ford is committed to lending a hand to the people who rely on us," Mark LaNeve, VP of U.S. marketing, sales and service, said in a press release issued Monday. "The peace of mind of our Ford and Lincoln customers is our top priority as we work through the developments of this outbreak."

Existing Ford Credit customers in the U.S. affected by COVID-19 who purchased or are leasing vehicles are being encouraged to contact Ford Credit to discuss options if they're having difficulty making payments. For example, they may be able to change a payment due date or delay a payment. The ad campaign is designed to build awareness for the new program.

In addition, Ford's philanthropic arm, the Ford Motor Company Fund, is providing assistance to nonprofit organizations meeting critical community needs.

As an initial step, Ford Fund is directing more than \$500,000 to help nonprofit groups in southeast Michigan and will support delivery of food to senior citizens and to thousands of children who do not have access to school meals while schools are not in session.