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THE QUELL GROUP
Integrated Brand Communications

Insights

Media Event

How a supplier stole the spotlight on a national automotive stage



Every winter when auto show season begins, cities like Los Angeles, Detroit, New York and Washington, D.C. become pitched battle grounds for car companies. Each one brings their "rock star" executives, sexy new products and breakthrough technologies to town and showcase them in press conferences and multi-million dollar displays that rival what you might see at a U2 concert.

Consequently, there's not much room at the party for the auto suppliers and the engineering firms that actually invent many of the technologies that separate hit vehicles from also-rans.

But with the right technology, clear and compelling messages and a well-crafted media strategy, it's possible for suppliers to compete and win on these stages, garner national headlines and do it affordably. That's what The Quell Group and Ricardo, Inc. proved together at the 2010 Washington Auto Show.

Quell and Ricardo traveled to the capitol to launch Ricardo's innovative Ethanol Boost Direct Injection (EBDI) engine and left with headlines in *USA Today*, scores of clean energy, automotive and business

with better affordability and no-compromise performance. We encapsulated all of this into a simple phrase: "Ricardo Cracks the Code."

Strong relationships: Quell engaged the show organizers early and they immediately recognized how well Ricardo's news dovetailed with their theme, "Change Happens Here." That helped turn them into advocates for Ricardo and secure us a highly-visible, prime press conference slot. Quell also recognized that budget cuts at media companies might keep some Michigan-based auto reporters home, so we organized an embargoed technical briefing the week before the auto show. This attracted more than a dozen writers and helped expand our reach.

Compelling visuals: Rather than invest in a costly and elaborate stage set, Ricardo stuck to its core message and built a meticulously detailed prototype engine. Quell photographed it, along with the truck it will power. Thanks to superior photography, nearly every story ran with a photo, and the engine itself became a great teaching tool.

Powerful speakers: Ricardo President Kent

media, and with promising new business leads.

We did it by executing a strategy that put Ricardo center stage – with its press conference bracketed by GM and Ford – instead of lost in a corner of the convention center’s lower level with other suppliers.

The keys to cutting through the clutter and grabbing attention:

Clear messages and real news: Ricardo's engine burns a homegrown fuel, cuts CO2 emissions, improves fuel economy and delivers diesel-like torque

Niederhofer and former NATO commander Gen. Wesley Clark (ret.), the chairman of Growth Energy, Ricardo’s partner in the EBDI program, addressed issues like energy security and global climate change head on, which created a sense of urgency and underscored the importance of the technical challenges Ricardo solved.

The next steps for Ricardo and Quell: completing the build-out of the truck and EBDI engine, and begin engineering – and media – test drives to build on our early momentum.

For complete details on this program or to learn how to successfully execute one of your own, contact: [Mike Niederquell](#) or [Jim Cain](#)

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