



THE QUELL GROUP
Integrated Brand Communications

Insights

Media Event

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Toyota's Missed Opportunity for Bold Moves

By James R. Cain
Senior Vice President, Strategic Communications



In less than 100 days, Toyota has gone from juggernaut to media poster child for bad corporate behavior and the target of congressional hearings, NHTSA investigations and class-action lawsuits, all thanks to recalls involving throttle and brake issues on millions of its vehicles.

Trust and confidence in the company have taken a body blow, they're likely to get worse before they get better, and sales will suffer—despite the company's impressive track record of product quality, value, environmental leadership and community support.

If any company deserved the benefit of the doubt on quality and safety, it's Toyota. But it lost the ability to leverage its sterling reputation because it made a critical communications mistake: It failed to arm its dealers with the tools necessary to respond to fearful consumers in the early days of the storm. This failure to communicate effectively with the company's grassroots constituents helped spur lawyers and legislators into action, ostensibly to protect the interests of Toyota drivers.

In a crisis, the public expects leaders to be bold. That's why our prescription for Toyota would have been straight talk and a concrete promise along these lines: "We've got a problem with some of our vehicles. It's very rare. We're working like hell to fix it quickly, and anyone who is concerned about the safety of their Toyota can trade it in for a new model or receive a rental car voucher at our expense."

How many consumers would have taken advantage of such an offer? It's impossible to say. But at least dealers and consumers would have had information—and empowerment. The price tag could have been steep (perhaps as much as Ford's tire bill in 2001). But it also would have reduced the negative financial impact on Toyota's sales, market capitalization, brand equity and

Quell News

Jackson to Address Digital Branding at Michigan PRSA Conference

Quell's Curtis Jackson, SVP, will speak about digital branding strategies at Michigan's annual PRSA conference in April.

Quell Elevates Haiti Earthquake Relief Benefit for Ann Arbor Art Gallery

Quell donated its services to the [Pierre Paul Art Gallery](#) in Ann Arbor for a Haiti earthquake relief benefit featuring Haitian artwork to start a foundation for continuing the culture of art in Haiti. Quell secured pre-event print and radio interviews, along with local coverage of the fundraiser. The successful event earned more than \$50,000 in donations.

Quell Boosts DreamGates with Strategy and Logo



Quell donated strategy and logo development services to New York-based nonprofit DreamGates to support the launch of "InTune," its six-week music experience program that

creates personal and cultural awareness through musical storytelling.

Cain Delivers Crisis Communications Advice to Japanese Media

NHK, Japan's sole public television network, interviewed Quell SVP Jim Cain on crisis communications and the steps Toyota can take to rebuild its reputation for quality and safety. Cain has been featured in multiple national outlets including *The New York Times*, regarding the Toyota recall.

Client Work



Automotive Web Site Brought into the Digital Age

Quell helped AutoBeat Group to re-engineer its popular daily automotive digest for the digital age with a Web-based solution. Check it out [here](#).

Quell Develops Interactive Multimedia Tool Billhighway wanted a high-tech communications tool to explain the features and benefits of its complex group financing services. The Quell Group

resale values. More importantly, it would have reinforced Toyota's commitment to its customers and given third parties a decisive, honorable and selfless action to report. These should be goals of any crisis response.

A crisis does not need to rise to the level of a nationwide safety recall to warrant bold leadership and a proactive communications plan. In this digital age of instant communications, even a local issue can severely damage your company's hard-earned reputation if the concerns of your customers and other constituents aren't addressed quickly, clearly and honestly. The communications experts at The Quell Group can help you prepare for and respond to almost any crisis situation. If you would like to discuss the critical needs of your business, please contact us at (248) 649-8900.

New Additions to Quell



Andrea Draves
Production Specialist

With nearly 10 years of experience in the communications field, Andrea Draves joins The Quell Group as a production specialist. Andrea specialized in print production working on international projects at BBDO Detroit in Troy, Mich. She also was an account executive in

Traverse City at WPBN-TV. Andrea's new role will expand on her past production experience with the incorporation of multimedia projects. She has a bachelor's degree in advertising from Michigan State University and can be reached at adraves@quell.com or 1.248.519.2059.



Rebecca Amboy
Assistant Account Executive

Rebecca joins The Quell Group as an assistant account executive with extensive social media knowledge. Rebecca will assist Quell's account team in all aspects of strategic communications. Rebecca has extensive internship experience, most recently with The Rossman Group in Lansing, Mich., as well as with Rachel

Dalton Communications in Dublin, Ireland, and Capital Area United Way in East Lansing, Mich. She has a bachelor's degree in advertising with a specialization in public relations from Michigan State University and can be reached at rebecca@quell.com or 1.248.519.2061.

New Business

Quell Manages Communications for Tecumseh Products

Quell has been retained by Tecumseh Products Company, a publicly traded manufacturing company based in Ann Arbor, Mich., to manage corporate and financial communications.

developed an interactive, multimedia flash presentation geared toward both college students and professionals and featuring multiple actors, video, site pages and sign-up capabilities. View the demo [here](#).



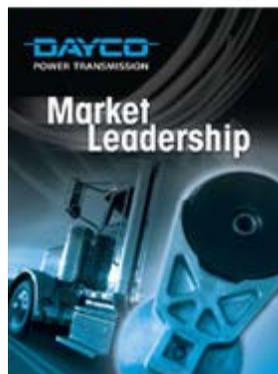
Quell Launches Nexteer Automotive

Quell worked with Delphi's 100-year old Saginaw Steering to launch its new brand and company—[Nexteer Automotive](#)—as the only Tier One supplier exclusively committed to wheel-to-wheel

steering. Quell's services included a Website that emphasizes a revitalized, high-performance culture and innovative focus on electric power steering.

Ricardo Commands National Attention with Energy-Efficient Technology

In January, Quell took Ricardo to the Washington D.C. Auto Show to announce a new engine technology that reduces CO2 emissions. In addition to a presentation, show logistics and a press conference, Quell delivered nationwide media coverage, including a feature in *USA Today*.



Dayco Emerges with Successful Customer Event

Emerging from Chapter 11, Dayco looked to re-enter the North American light-duty market. Quell produced a two-day customer event to introduce Dayco's new tech center. Quell organized all aspects of the event, including media relations, event management, graphics, displays and marketing. The event was well attended and built internal relationships between Dayco NA and its

European operations.

Cardiac Rehabilitation Videos Developed to Educate Beaumont Patients

Cardiac rehabilitation is a critical element of recovery for patients undergoing heart procedures. Beaumont Hospitals turned to Quell to produce a video to educate patients not only about the benefits of rehabilitation, but also about Beaumont's specialized facilities and trained medical staff, which make it the clear choice for rehab.



TI Automotive

TI Automotive Identity Strengthened

Led by a new president and CEO, TI successfully restructured and re-engineered the company for a strong future. Quell helped communicate the stronger [TI Automotive](#) with a new logo and identity built around TI's core service of fluid distribution and storage.

On-Site Quickly Emerges in Highly Competitive Market

With little name recognition in a highly competitive market, Quell developed an aggressive five-week advertising and marketing campaign for On-Site Specialty Cleaning & Restoration. We aimed to quickly build consumer awareness with a 30-second radio spot, a microsite with an easy-to-remember URL (floodinmyhouse.com), and a Google AdWords campaign.