

'\$20 on the 20th' Promotion Makes Impact in Aiken

By Michael Gibbons
Managing Editor
Aiken (S.C.) Standard

The [Aiken Standard](#) is a daily in South Carolina with a circulation of around 17,000. While we all battle an economic and industry crisis, we are looking for new ways to position ourselves.

This project allowed us to bring in ad revenue, report on the economy and be community leaders, all at once. What we did was simple: We asked every reader in Aiken County to spend \$20 on April 20th. We asked economists and store owners what would happen if they did. (The most interesting part we found was that each dollar spent translated into much more than that from an economic impact.) Economists and business leaders alike agreed that it could have a snowballing psychological impact. Just as negative consumer confidence held markets back, positive consumer confidence could help them surge forward.

Our ad staff sold ads for \$20 each to run in the Sunday paper. For an additional \$10, the ad ran Monday (the day of the event), too. More than 50 businesses advertised. We ran 1A news promotion on Saturday, and stories on Sunday and Monday.

The results were pretty amazing. We found that it was definitely THE topic in stores, from both customers and store staff. Many of the retailers had posted a cut-out of the Sunday front and were greeting customers with, "Are you here to spend your \$20?" It was a popular chatter point on Facebook. Several TV stations have called asking about the initiative. The mood of the shoppers was definitely a positive one that hasn't been seen in a while.

The project has been so successful we are going to have a second 20 on 20 in May. The ad department is going to distribute "I spent \$20 on the 20th" stickers for merchants to pass out (a la "I Voted" stickers).

From a news angle, we will address the impact of the previous 20 on 20, real and perceived, and talk to business owners on the changing climate of the economy. While this is certainly a different union of news and advertising, it is without a doubt a positive one, one that is beneficial at all angles. News can report on the economy.

Advertising can sell ads. Advertisers can come back to the printed page at nominal costs. And the community can get a sense of taking back control of the local economy. It wins all around. And it shows the power of the local newspaper, and that our relevance should not be written about in the past tense. We do still make a difference, and we need to remind ourselves and our readers that.

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