GAS-POWERED EVERYTHING

Jay Chiat Awards for Strategic Excellence 2012
Campaign for an Existing Brand

NISSAN

SUMMARY

Following the early-adopter-focused launch of the 100% electric Nissan LEAF, Nissan was keen to sow the seeds of mainstream consideration. We needed to challenge gas as the dominant form of automotive power.

People were immediately dismissive of electric power's appeal, claiming it was just too new. Yet nearly everything they depended on in their daily lives was electrically powered – their phone, toaster and toothbrush. In this context, electric was perfect for them: easy, convenient and quiet. The non-car environment was a safer space for the electric discussion.

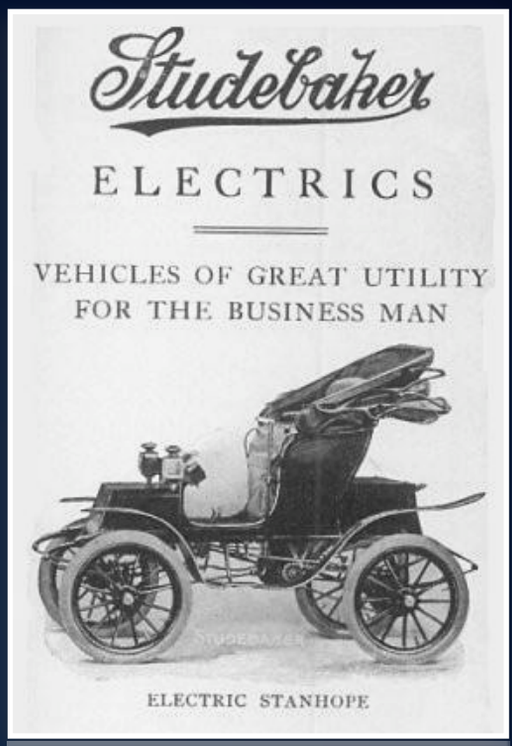
The power of changing the context was clear and we aimed to challenge perceptions of gas in the same way. The refueling routine has made gassing up a routine and unquestioned act. Removed from the automotive context though, people could face its absurdities. In lawn mowers and leaf blowers, gas sucked – it was loud, dirty and dangerous.

To bring this absurdity to life, we created a gas-powered world, where hair dryers, alarm clocks, iPods and copiers were reenvisioned with gas engines, spewing noise and pollution into the air.

The ridiculous gas-powered world pushed people to rethink gas and helped reframe electric as a fuel for today.

AFTER 80 YEARS, GASOLINE IS UBIQUITOUS

Minus a few curious blips, gasoline vehicles have ruled the roads for the last 90 years. It wasn't always this way – in the early 1900s, a battle raged between various technologies, all vying to replace the horse and buggy. One of these technologies was electric cars. They were initially popular – their lack of noise, vibration and odor made them appealing alternatives to gas-powered cars. In 1911, the electric future burned bright, when a *New York Times* headline declared them the ideal transportation, based on their clean, quiet and economical operation. Despite the clear advantages of electric, winning the battle for auto-energy supremacy would prove tough. The one-two punch of domestic oil discoveries and Henry Ford's mass production of gas cars lowered fuel prices and democratized gas car ownership. Within 15 years, gasoline cars alone had achieved critical mass, pushing electric cars out of sight, out of mind and eventually right out of production.



In 2009, Nissan decided to restart the long-dormant energy battle, announcing its plan to become the first automaker to mass-produce an affordable electric vehicle (EV). In late 2010, Nissan began production of its 100%-electric, five-door hatchback – the Nissan LEAF.

FINDING A NEW WAY

For the launch of the Nissan LEAF, we had successfully focused on selling the benefits of electric – cleaner, greener, smarter, cheaper. But the reality was, anyone who liked this message had already heard it. We needed to reach a new audience and sew the seeds of mainstream consideration. We had to engage the people who weren't interested in an "alternative" to gasoline. Continuing to sell electric vehicles as the upstart, green alternative to gas only helped fuel perceptions that EVs were the cars of tomorrow, rather than today.

A more immediate approach was required – one that challenged gas as the dominant form of automotive power. In the automotive platform war, gas had won the 20th century. We had to make the 21st century the electric century.

PEOPLE DISMISS THE APPEAL OF ELECTRIC POWER

In research into vehicle attitudes, we found people were instantly dismissive of electric power's appeal. They might complain about gas prices, but refueling was familiar and safe – a trade-off they were more than willing to live with. For them, electric cars raised too many questions: where to recharge, how far a car would go on a charge, whether it was safe and so on. They understood electric power was greener and more technologically advanced, but it was just too new.

We needed a way past this defensive wall. When we talked to people about electricity in their lives, it changed the conversation. Nearly everything they depended on day in and day out was electrically powered – their phone, toaster and toothbrush. In this context, electric was perfect for them: easy, convenient, quiet and efficient. Clearly, the non-car environment was a safer and less threatening space for the electric discussion. The power of changing the context was clear and it sparked a thought – could we do the same for gas?

The refueling routine has made gassing up a routine and unquestioned act. Removed from the automotive realm though, gas would likely face a more critical eye. So we asked our group: "What if the other things in your life ran on gas – your phone, toaster and toothbrush?" People were incredulous – the inconvenience of these devices running on gas was incomprehensible. As people contemplated the gas-powered tools they already used, stories of unhappy days spent behind gas lawn mowers and leaf blowers filled the room. Respondents condemned gas, calling it loud, dirty and dangerous.

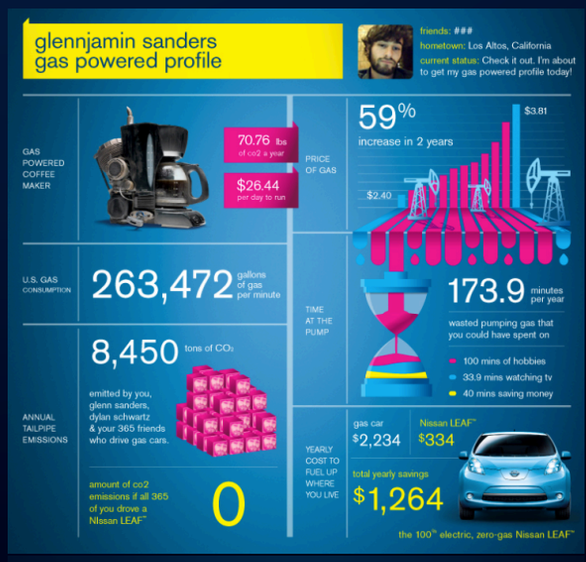
Suddenly gas sucked. This insight reframed our approach: focusing on the positives of electric power wouldn't challenge people's comfort with the status quo. We needed to make gas vulnerable – and only by taking gas outside the routine automotive context would people see its absurdities. The battle for automotive dominance would take place in a deliberately car-free environment.

THE BRIEF:
WHAT IF EVERYTHING RAN ON GAS?

We set out to turn the dominance of gasoline on its head – highlighting the forgotten compromises inherent with gasoline power by asking a simple question: what if everything in your daily life ran on gas? Hair dryers, alarm clocks, iPods, copiers and even a dentist's drill were reenvisioned with gas engines, spewing noise and pollution into the air. This change in perspective reframed gas as dated, dirty and gross, with electric power enjoying the positive familiarity once owned by gasoline.

Images of these smoke-spewing devices started appearing online and in print, teasing the idea of a gas-powered world. Soon after, video vignettes with the devices in action began appearing, all of which drove to gaspoweredveverything.com. The site housed an interactive Facebook hub that brought the gas-powered world to life in all its absurd glory, with video that showcased people attempting to make do with gas-powered devices in their daily life. Soon after, the same video debuted on the NBA finals, bringing the gas-powered world to an even larger audience.

In addition to video content, the Facebook hub also housed an app that helped people understand their own gas-powered world. Based on a user's unique profile, the app delivered a personalized infographic that showcased their C02 emissions, annual spending on gas and more. Gas Powered Everything had personalized the absurdities of gas, helping chip away at its long dominance.



PEOPLE RETHINK GASOLINE

Within a day of the spot airing online, the volume of LEAF conversation skyrocketed. People found the ad thought-provoking and challenging, claiming it pushed them to rethink gas and consider electric the next time around. People who saw the TV ad were nearly 60% more likely to tell their friends about the LEAF while intention to visit a dealership jumped 80% (vs. prior Nissan advertising). By putting gas into a fresh context, electric was reframed as a fuel for today.