The Wall Street Journal Wants You to ‘Read Yourself Better’

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The Wall Street Journal released a new brand marketing campaign today.
The Wall Street Journal
The Wall Street Journal wants you to read “better” and will temporarily remove its paywall in an effort to convince you to pay for its journalism.

WSJ dropped its first widespread brand campaign on Nov. 4 in an effort to attract new subscribers by encouraging them to “read yourself better.” As part of that effort, WSJ’s paywall will be lifted, and readers can view an unlimited number of articles on the site for three days, from Nov. 9-11.

It’s the first major brand campaign to come from WSJ after a 2017 spot that featured hard-working women and encouraged readers to “Read Ambitiously.” In 2015, WSJ’s campaign to “Make Time” featured celebs like will.i.am, Tory Burch and Martin Sorrell, who all made time to read The Journal.

This time around, WSJ focused on encouraging readers to turn to quality and trustworthy news for their information. A narrator encourages you to read past the hashtags, misinformation, angry comments, “troll armies” and overall noise in the 90-second spot. “Because no one ever did anything big by reading small. Read yourself better,” the narrator says as the ad closes and a woman begins walking across the street reading The Journal.

Ending the ad with a print copy of the newspaper was a symbolic nod to the more than 130 years of history at the foundation of the brand, said CMO Suzi Watford. “We were really clear that everything we create—the quality and the positioning of it—has to be that premium nature. That’s why we spent the time and effort that we did,” she said.

WSJ again worked with The&Partnership on the campaign, which took about a year to come together. The spot, which has 30- and 90-second versions, will run on local and cable networks, like NBC and CNN, among others.

Out-of-home ads will also appear throughout the country in

L.A., Denver, Philadelphia and New York encouraging readers to “Read yourself past the hashtags,” “Read yourself to your own opinion,” and “Read yourself out of your comfort zone.” New York will also have two murals related to the spot. The spot will run across social and digital platforms, and a print ad will appear in Fortune magazine.

The campaign is meant to drive subscription rates, which reached more than 2.6 million subscribers in both digital and print as of last quarter. “It’s less about commentary on the political undertones and more commentary on an age of misinformation,” said Agnes Fischer, president of The&Partnership.

Other leading publishers have used their own brand campaigns to show their reporting processes, such as The New York Times’ recent “The Truth Is Worth It” campaign. The Washington Post’s ad during the Super Bowl paid tribute to journalists on the scene of major historical events.

“The best work is work that you look back on and it’s still relevant today. … What’s enduring, and how do we deliver that in a really timely fashion?” asked Justin Ruben, executive creative director of The&Partnership.

CREDITS:

Client: The Wall Street Journal

Clients: Suzi Watford, Chief Marketing & Membership Officer; Karl Wells, GM, WSJ Membership, Clients: Paul Plumeri, VP of Global Marketing WSJ

Creative Agency: The&Partnership New York
Executive Creative Director: Justin Ruben Art Director: David Tomkins
Copywriter: Simon Philion

Designer: Veronica Jeronimo
Head of Integrated Production: Kevin Wilson
Producer: Niki Polyocan

President: Agnes Fischer
Chief Strategy Officer: Colm Murphy
Business Director: Ryan Colet Account Supervisor: Matthew Connelly

Production Company: MJZ
Director: Juan Cabral
Executive Producer: Emma Wilcockson
DOP: Roman Vasyanov

Production Partner: Labhouse
Managing Director: Flora Fernandez Marengo
Producer: Natalia Mussolana
Production Manager: Patricia Rzeznik
1st AD: Esteban Gomez
Art Director: Micala Saeigh
Art Director: Maria Battaglia
Stylist: Florencia Tellado

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