

# Walmart's New Ad Wants to Make You Cry

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When Adweek spoke to Walmart's executive vice president and chief customer officer earlier this year, Janey Whiteside said she wanted to forge emotional connections with customers and focus on more purpose-driven elements.

Now, the retail giant has an ad that marks a move in that direction.

Created with advertising agency FCB Chicago, the 60-second spot is rife with Americana, featuring a montage of associates in yellow and blue vests and parents shopping with and/or for their kids, along with scenes of small-town America, disaster relief, birthday and holiday celebrations—and lots and lots of hugs.

The spot also includes a billboard from El Paso, Texas, which was the site of a mass shooting in August 2019, just days after a shooting at another store in Mississippi. This ultimately prompted Walmart to amend its ammunition and handgun sale policies.

As to why Walmart chose to reference the shooting within the ad, Whiteside said, "It's been so much on our minds this year ... and because it's ... such a large and tragic event, it was appropriate to have to a moment [of remembrance]."

It also speaks to the uncertainty of the times we live in with a voiceover heavy on references to "spark."

Walmart's logo includes a six-pronged yellow symbol known as a

spark, which the Walmart Museum says is composed of individual “sparklets” that reflect its values and principles: customer, respect, integrity, associates, service and excellence.

Walmart named a 2018 last-mile delivery pilot in Nashville, Tenn. and New Orleans, Spark Delivery, after this spark. Whiteside, however, said Walmart wasn’t necessarily leaning in to the spark symbol intentionally.

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Janey Whiteside, evp and chief customer officer, Walmart

“‘Spark’ could be the yellow spark, but when we started to dig in to what people were doing ... it seems like an apropos word and tied to Walmart sparking those acts,” she said. “We like to be that spark, that catalyst to create a better community and help solve a particular issue.”

Walmart also hopes to strike an emotional chord with viewers.

“It perhaps sounds cheesy, but we hope this ad evokes a degree of emotion,” Whiteside said. “It has been a labor of love to show the world not just what we do [but] what we stand for—and what we stand for is to champion people who work to make the communities in and around our stores better.”

That’s in part why the soundtrack is Elton John’s Rocket Man.

“Walmart wanted a track that would be recognizable, would help inject beautiful emotion into the film and would feel positive and hopeful,” a spokesperson said. “Rocket Man was the right song that helped us celebrate the sparks that we see every day across America.”

There’s also a new tagline: “Live Better. Together,” which Whiteside said is “about, really, how do we think about being better together.”

This messaging will appear across all paid channels except for print, including movie screens at AMC and Regal theaters. The

ad itself will debut during the Thanksgiving Day matchup between the Buffalo Bills and the Dallas Cowboys, which will air on CBS at 4:30 ET.

In addition to this particular spot, Whiteside said Walmart's messaging will include more traditional holiday spots featuring products and Black Friday deals.

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