



BP Ad Airing Only On Cable And National TV, Not Gulf Markets

By Sam Stein

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The much discussed and criticized ad campaign launched by BP as a way to refurbish its image in the wake of the oil spill seems designed to appeal more to opinion makers in the nation's capital than the communities affected in the Gulf.

The spot, which has an estimated \$50 million behind it, has thus far been only placed on network and cable news networks according to Evan Tracey, the founder and chief operating officer of Campaign Media Analysis Group. None of the spots purchased by the company have been in local markets in states like Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi or Florida.

The ad-purchase strategy is a telling one for the oil giant to make. While the national networks still draw audiences from regions and states throughout the country (including the Gulf), the vast majority of cable news viewers reside inside the Washington D.C.-New York City corridor. For BP to spend money advertising on this venue suggests that its penance is meant to be conveyed to lawmakers and national consumers as much as to those closest to the crisis.

"They are still getting the Gulf by doing it nationally," said Tracey. "But the majority of the ads are on the news and public affairs shows and on the cable side. I suspect that this is an effort -- because there is so much bad news for BP -- to get the unfiltered message out there to customers."

"They could have gone and bought in the local markets down there," Tracey added. "But they are still getting them by buying national. But they are also getting the rest of the country that way. And they are still selling a commodity product."

So far, Tracey said, only \$2 million of the \$50 million pledged for the spot has been spent. BP has taken some heat for the price tag, with critics questioning the rationale for spending that much money when funds will be needed to rebuild the Gulf coast and repair the economic damage created by the spill. In the spot, CEO Tony Hayward acknowledged the gravity of the crisis and promises the company's resources in stemming it. He also, tellingly, makes a direct appeal to Gulf coast residents themselves.

"To those affected and your families," he said. "I'm deeply sorry. The Gulf is home to thousands of BP employees and we all feel the impact. To all the volunteers and to the strong support of the government: Thank you."