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### Ford Is Counting on Army of 100 Bloggers to Launch New Fiesta

Automaker Lends New Models to Trendsetters for Six Months as Part of Huge Social-Media Push

by Eric Tegler

Published: [April 20, 2009](#)



NEW YORK (AdAge.com) -- In an aggressive social-media program that goes far beyond what Ford has done in the past -- and reaches beyond just the marketing department -- the automaker is counting on 100 bloggers to introduce its new Fiesta, which is set to reach U.S. dealers in early 2010. The idea behind [Fiesta Movement](#) is to get the model's target audience to drive and, hopefully, chatter about the car for months to come.



THE MOVEMENT: Ford hopes to build buzz for new Fiesta among target audience.

low acquisition cost, high fuel efficiency and cues that appeal to young consumers.

Ford is loaning 100 German-built Fiestas to social-media trendsetters for six months. The 100 "Fiesta agents," chosen from 4,000 who applied online, will share their experiences behind the wheel, completing monthly, themed missions from travel to social activism; posting videos; and updating their friends and followers on YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and elsewhere. The participants begin training with their Fiestas in late April, and they will begin receiving the cars in the first week of May.

The Fiesta is Ford's global subcompact vehicle and was designed in Europe, where it's been on sale since August 2008. The diminutive hatchback (a sedan will be launched here) seeks to provide stylish transportation in a small package with

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The idea was born last summer when Ford VP-Marketing Jim Farley rhetorically asked Fiesta Product Manager Sam De La Garza, "What could we do with 1,000 [Fiestas] in the U.S.?"

Considering the car's target audience and the likelihood of extra production capacity from the European Fiesta launch, Mr. De La Garza and the company's brand and content alliance team asked Ford's coordinating agency, JWT, to brainstorm a social-media campaign. JWT contacted think tank Undercurrent, and the pair devised the Fiesta Movement as a 100-person test drive.

**Product trust**

"We realized that the message is increasingly out of our control and that we have to roll with it," Mr. De La Garza said. "For us it all rests on the quality of this product. We've all driven the Fiesta, and we felt so confident about the car that we could start this. We're going to allow people to tell the story [of the Fiesta] from their lives."

Faith in a product or no, trusting it enough to unleash 100 to regular consumers and ask them to offer honest thoughts and reviews is a leap for most marketers. It will require a new kind of corporate responsiveness and flexibility, said Scott Monty, Ford's director-social media.

"No matter how well you plan for something like this, something else always comes up," he said. "This is not only an experiment for Ford in terms of a marketing program; it's an experiment for us in terms of how we react to how the market picks up on it."

Early signs indicate a ripple effect from simply signing agents to the Fiesta Movement. Mr. De La Garza said several of those selected have already gotten interviews with regional newspapers or TV stations based on their acceptance into the program.

The Fiesta Movement extends beyond marketing, since the company had to modify the 100 European-built vehicles to meet U.S. emissions and safety requirements. Both Ford and the EPA will use data gathered from the program, such as city and highway miles per gallon, for future manufacturer global platform launches. Ford is building the Fiesta as a "global" car that can, with minor tweaking, meet differing requirements in the U.S., Europe and Asia.

"The scary thing is we're opening the door for European-based car companies to say, 'Ford did this [with a Euro-spec car]; let's do it too,'" Mr. De La Garza said.

According to Scott Monty, JWT will undertake the bulk of reviewing/posting online content generated by Fiesta agents, while mining data with the new metrics made possible through social media. Attributable Fiesta sales will definitely be a yardstick for success. So, too, will the life of the Fiesta Movement beyond the test drive.

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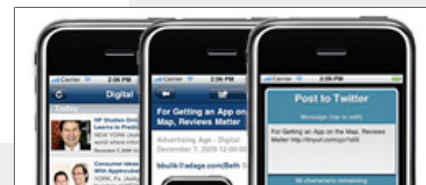
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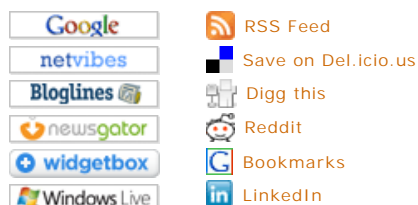
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