



## MEMORANDUM

TO: Kristin Morris  
Brogan & Partners

FROM: Richard Czuba  
Glengariff Group, Inc.

RE: Drugged Driving Focus Group Memorandum

DATE: June 17, 2017

## METHODOLOGY

The Glengariff Group, Inc. conducted four focus groups for the Office of Highway Safety Planning and Brogan & Partners. Two groups were held on June 13, 2017 in Grand Rapids, Michigan at West Michigan Advantage Research at 5:00 pm and 7:00 pm. Two groups were held on June 14, 2017 in Southfield, Michigan at Michigan Market Research at 5:00 pm and 7:00 pm. A total of 39 respondents participated in the four focus groups. (A fortieth respondent was dismissed in Group 2 due to illness.)

Respondents were screened for male respondents aged 18-35 years of age. Each respondent was screened for having used stimulants, pain killers or marijuana (either legally or prescribed) in the past year. 24 of 39 respondents used multiple variations of these drugs in the past year.

A standardized protocol was used for all four focus groups. The order of creative concepts tested in the four groups was rotated in each group. Respondents were paid a \$75 incentive for participation in the focus groups which lasted approximately 75-90 minutes in duration.

## **DRUGGED DRIVING**

Respondents were asked if they had ever heard the term ‘drugged driving’. 33% of respondents had heard the phrase.

Respondents were asked what that phrase meant to them. The verbatim responses are below:

*“Driving while high” “Driving on drugs” “Driving under the influence of a ‘drug’ that may impair motor skills or sight.” “Under the influence of alcohol, meth or something that doesn’t let you think right.” “Under the influence of any narcotic or mind altering substance while operating a vehicle.” “Driving under the influence of prescription or non drugs.” “The act of driving under noticeable influence of one or more psychoactive compounds.” “Driving drugged.” “Anything under the influence of drugs/alcohol.” “Driving while using drugs.” “Driving under the influence of mind altering substances such as prescription or illegal drugs.” “Using a motorized vehicle while under the influence of drugs.” “Driving while high.” “Driving under the influence of drugs to the point where you driving is affected in some manner.” “Driving an automobile under the influence of a substance, example driving while high on weed or heroin.” “Pill driving.” “Driving under the influence of narcotics, possibly not by choice.” “Driving under the influence of any controlled substance that causes significant impairment of a vehicle.” “Under the influence of drugs while driving.” “Driving intoxicated, liable to cause an accident.” “Any form of substances that may impair driving.” “Being high on a substance while driving.” “Under the influence of drugs.” “Someone under the influence of drugs.” “Driving under the influence of alcohol, marijuana, etc...” “Unsafe” “Driving under the influence of drugs.” “Driving under the influence of a non-alcoholic substance” “Driving under the influence of various drugs.” “Driving while high on something.” “Driving while under the influence of drugs.” “Under the influence of narcotics.” “Driving while impaired on some sort of drug or stimulant.” “Under the influence of drugs and not alcohol so driving while you are high.” “Doing drugs while driving around.” “Driving while impaired on drugs.” “Someone driving under the influence of mind altering drug.” “High from drugs while driving.”*

When asked if they had taken stimulants, pain killers or marijuana and driven within two hours, 97% of these respondents said they had used one of the three drugs and driven shortly thereafter.

## **DANGERS OF DIFFERENT DRUGS**

Respondents were read the three different drug categories and asked if they thought it was dangerous to drive after taking that drug.

- 97% of respondents said it was dangerous to drive after taking pain killers.
- 26% of respondents said it was dangerous to drive after taking stimulants.
- But only 7% of respondents said it was dangerous to drive after using marijuana.

When asked which of the three was most dangerous when it came to drugged driving:

- 92% of respondents said pain killers were most dangerous.
- 7% of respondents said stimulants were most dangerous.
- NO respondents said marijuana was the most dangerous.

There was a wide spread belief among respondents that prescription drugs were a greater threat to drugged driving than marijuana.

*“Prescription is the hard core stuff.”*

When it comes to stimulants like Adderall and Ritalin, there is a limited amount of knowledge about the effects of these drugs unless the respondents are taking them. Those respondents said there was a benefit to them to being prescribed and taking stimulants – and they felt like they could function normally while taking those prescribed amounts.

*“In controlled amounts, it’s ok.” “Depends how you use it. If you follow the prescription.” “I wouldn’t relate it to being high, it’s meant to help.” “I take Adderall every morning and go.” “I’m a lot more focused when I drive.”*

When it came to stimulants, respondents felt the concern was from more hard core stimulants.

*“What kind of stimulants you talking about? Cocaine is a stimulant and it’s dangerous. Smoking crack while driving?” “I take Adderall, and it’s prescription pill with a slow release.”*

But nearly every respondent felt that pain killers were a far greater worry when it came to drugged driving with the greatest threat being drowsiness and falling asleep at the wheel. But even with agreement that pain killers were the most dangerous for drugged driving – there were respondents who immediately felt the need to qualify the risk saying it depends on the person’s tolerance, dosage levels, and ‘everyone reacts differently’.

*“I would be fully asleep.” “You would be falling asleep at the wheel.” “You’re so numb you don’t feel the gas pedal.” “I was f-ed up.” “I t was always too much for me.” “You fall asleep.” “I’ve seen the effect of falling asleep at the wheel.” “Everyone knows someone that uses them, and they’re out of it.” “Depends on the dosage.” “Everyone reacts differently.” “It always makes me tired.” “Gives you slow reaction times, easily distracted.” “I’m fine on Vicodin. It depends on you.” “Affects everyone differently.” “It depends on your weight.” “Makes you drowsy.” “Opiates will mess you up.” “Downers are the most dangerous for driving.”*

## MARIJUANA IS NOT VIEWED AS DANGEROUS

Only 7% of respondents said smoking marijuana and driving was dangerous. Perhaps no single quote sums up respondent attitudes towards marijuana more succinctly than the one below:

***“I don’t know anyone that’s gotten in an accident from smoking weed.”***

Respondents simply do not believe marijuana use and driving are a dangerous combination. Marijuana users, in particular, argue that the effects are benefits – not dangerous – and that unlike alcohol marijuana’s high is ‘capped’.

*“Do you ever pass out when you smoke weed? No.” “Smoking weed is a lot different than pain killers.” “I drive and smoke at the same time. So many people are more functional when they’re doing it.”*

*“I smoke a joint and have a beer or two before driving.” “There’s a difference between a daily smoker and non-smokers. Daily smokers it doesn’t phase them.” “I’ll smoke a bowl when I get up and just go to work.”*

*“Marijuana is capped – you can only get so high.” “You know what your limit is.” “You know when you’ve gone too far....you just know. It’s just a feeling.”*

The most often repeated comments from respondents that used marijuana was that they were better drivers, more productive, and more focused when they were high.

*“I drive better high because I’m focused.” “I’m a better driver when I’m high.” “I drive better because I don’t have any anxiety.” “I get 100% on my driving tests.” “It makes me better.” “I know a lot of stoners who think they’re geniuses.” “I’m more paranoid, so I’m a better driver. You won’t pass out.” “I can concentrate better.” “Weed doesn’t affect me the way it effects other people, but I wouldn’t drive after drinking.” “I’m more cautious, more focused.” “You don’t get road rage.” “I’m confident in myself.” “It makes me focused.” “I’ve got anxiety, when I smoke a bowl, it takes that anxiety away and lets me concentrate.” “I get focused, becomes really easy to follow the lines.” “Makes me feel like relaxed, chill, more in control.” “Weed can make you more productive.” “I pitched a one hitter high. It makes me more productive.” “I can smoke, take a dab, and I’m fine. May even be more focused.” “Pot even marginally improves your driving.”*

Respondents did acknowledge, however, that there were variables to being high and driving. One key variable was the individual’s experience with marijuana and tolerance from usage.

*“All depends on the person.” “It’s experience, there’s a tolerance.” “If it’s the first time you smoked or you hardly do, than yeah, you’re gonna be messed up.”*

Two other key variables of marijuana usage were the ‘type’ of usage (smoking, edibles, dabs) and the quality of the marijuana. Smoking marijuana was seen as the least harmful when it came to driving. But edibles and dabs were seen as something that led to far less personal control – and those more experienced said they would likely not drive after doing dabs.

*“Depends on how good it is.” “Depends on how much.” “Depends on which strains.”  
“I wouldn’t do dabs and then drive.” “If you eat it? No, you don’t drive. Smoke it, it’s not a problem.” “Edibles are slower released, more uncontrollable. It’s more of a body high.” “Dabs man will mess you up.” “If I take an edible, I plan it so I don’t have to drive for a number of hours. It’s like you plan for it. It’s being responsible about it.”  
“Depends on the weed you’re getting.” “The quality you’re getting.”*

Respondents also reinforced they were better drivers because they drove slower and were more focused. It was all about their personal ‘confidence’ in handling driving high. And they rationalized driving high with the fact that anytime you get behind a wheel you take a risk. But they only view the risk as their own – not to those around them.

*“I compensate by driving five miles under the speed limit.” “You get tunnel vision.”  
“You’re just chill, but you can focus.” “Man I drive all day. Sales. If I get into miles of traffic I’m mad. But if I’m high, I’m like chilled about it.” “I know where I’m at – kind of maybe an age thing.” “It’s a confidence with it.” “I’m confident I can handle it.”  
“There are people who are and aren’t good drivers, and it has nothing to do with drugs.”  
“Anytime you get in a car you’re taking risk – whether you’re high or not.”*

There was widespread agreement among respondents, however, that alcohol was a far greater risk in general than marijuana.

*“Alcohol can only make things worse.” “Never wake up next to someone I don’t know from weed, like alcohol.” “Weed is way more beneficial than alcohol.” “Alcohol gives you the dumb decisions.” “I can smoke, or do a bump, and I’m fine. But just one beer impairs me.” “Anytime you’re drinking it’s dangerous.”*

## **THE RISK**

Respondents were asked how many would say there is a risk to them of drugged driving. 100% of respondents said there was some risk to them.

Respondents were asked what the greatest risk was to them, personally.

- 46% of respondents said the greatest risk involved the ramifications of a DUI.
- 28% of respondents said the greatest risk was death of themselves or others.
- 15% of respondents said the greatest risk was a crash or accident.

The verbatim comments below are broken down by category.

*“Having a DUI on my record.” “Getting caught by the police.” “Incarceration and being taken from my kids.” “Falling asleep. Getting taken away from my family.” “If I got caught doing that it would go on my record, and there goes my degree and job.” “Going to jail.” “Getting pulled over, going to jail, and losing my job. Incarceration is an automatic job lose and I really like my job it pays well.” “Jail” “Biggest risk is being caught with marijuana.” “Losing my car/job.” “Getting harassed by the police.” “Getting pulled over and arrested.” “Get pulled over to go to jail, lose job, and family.” “Maybe bumping a car and having the cops called and somehow they find out I’m baked.” “Car smelling like pot.” “Getting in an accident even if it wasn’t my fault and then have the cops come and notice I’m high.” “Losing my family and jobs.” “Going to jail for possession.”*

*“My life. My daughter’s life.” “Hurting others.” “Impairment of my motor skills and my ability to focus on what’s going on around me and the possibility of injuring myself or others.” “Killing someone innocent.” “Death” “Having kids in the car with me.” “Death of me and/or others.” “Killing myself, family or someone else.” “Killing someone or myself.” “Getting into an accident and harming someone.” “If my family told me I had a problem.” “Killing a bystander.”*

*“Crashing” “Accident. Law suit.” “Crashing” “Falling asleep and injuring others.” “Pain killers making me drowsy and crash.”*

*“Biggest risk is just my judgment” “If I am not at full attention to my driving and can’t stay focused.” “My reaction time to pressing the pedals or how hard. Sometimes I am going ten under the speed limit.” “Biggest risk is making a driving situation harder than it needs to be because of how impaired I am.” “Falling asleep, zoning out.” “Short attention span”*

## **COMPARING THE CONCEPTS**

Respondents were presented four unique television ad/billboard concepts. The order of presentation for these four concepts was rotated in each of the groups. In addition, respondents were shown two final billboard concepts. After each presentation, respondents were asked if the concept would get their attention if they saw it – prior to any comments or the discussion of the concept.

Several crucial trends developed through the four focus groups that help underscore what made a message effective – and how a message got dismissed.

- Respondents have been seeing ‘Don’t Do Drugs’ ads all their lives. The formula for getting dismissed is to use paid actors to deliver a message and deliver what they view as a ‘propaganda’ anti-drug message. Concepts that used paid actors in scenarios failed to pass the ‘cheesy’ test.

- Effective messages were blunt, graphic and got to the point of consequences. They immediately dismiss ads they view as ‘corny’ or ‘try to hard’ to deliver a message.
- If you single out marijuana use in any way, marijuana users immediately dismiss the message as propaganda. The most effective messages to reach marijuana users coupled marijuana use with other drugs or alcohol – or simply referred to all drugs. As one respondent said *“We all know what a drug is.”* Marijuana users are highly sensitive to the stigma of marijuana users being seen as losers.
- The most effective message reminded respondents that the people around them could become a victim of THEIR choice. The imagery of innocent children was particularly effective.
- Any use of green lettering was seen as an attack on marijuana.

## TOE TAGS

- 92% of respondents said ‘Toe Tags’ would get their attention.

‘Toe Tags’ was by far the most successful concept at getting respondents’ attention, and making them think twice about driving while drugged. This concept is effective because it is blunt, simple, and to the point. Respondents reacted very positively to both the graphic appeal of the message and the bluntness of the message.

*“On point.” “That’s deep.” “We know what it does – makes us aware there are consequences.” “Teaches us about the consequences, and doesn’t just say don’t do it.” “These paint the picture for us, show us the consequences.” “It puts a scenario in your head.” “Feet don’t have people – use your imagination more.” “Much more graphic.” “Very blunt.” “Grabs you, smashes it in your face.” “It shows the end result.” “Straight to the point.” “Simple, and deliver the message.” “It shows the effect of what would happen.”*

The most effective point of the concept was moving to the child’s toes at the conclusion of the ad.

*“The kids toes.” “The billboard should show the baby’s feet.” “No one wants to see a kid.” “Kids.” “I’ve got four kids at home.”*

Without saying anything, the concept helped respondent understand that they were not the only potential victims of driving drugged.

*“It’s more succinct and comprehensive.” “We are not always the victim.” “You’re responsible for putting the tag on someone – it gets straight to the point.” “That tag – most people will say I drive every day and it doesn’t affect me.”*

Respondents also did not feel ‘threatened’ or ‘under attack’ for being marijuana users despite the toe tags mentioned marijuana in combination with alcohol. The term drugged driving worked for them here – and did not single any type of drug use out. The toe tag combination was an effective way to get marijuana into the conversation without feeling like respondents were being singled out for marijuana use.

*“You don’t have to say it. Everyone knows what a drug is.” “Those scenarios, the combinations.”*

## MEMORIALS

- 67% of respondents said ‘Memorials’ would get their attention.

While ‘Memorials’ was generally well received by respondents as a concept, it was the least successful in capturing attention because respondents felt like it was aimed at an older, wealthier target audience.

*“This is more heartfelt. I have a kid.” “In general, it’s more relatable – more sentimental.” “There’s more of a focus on what it could cause.” “It’s about the choices you make.” “You could be looking at life in prison from one bad choice.”*

*“The advertisement talked about being in pain – she’s not necessarily abusing it.” “Targets more upper class drug users – not just trash folk.” “I only see pills. Pills will kill you.” “Drugged doesn’t apply to anything but pills.” “A lot of people get prescribed things.” “This seems to be targeted more at older people.” “That mom has an issue if she’s keeping pills in the cup holder.”*

But marijuana users reacted sharply negative to the closing line that included marijuana usage. For marijuana users, they immediately turned off the message when they heard marijuana use singled out.

*“Sounds like something Nancy Reagan would say.” “If you smoke weed, you’re gonna die. You’ll get laughed off.” “Fu\*k you with that, it’s stupid.” “I would still get high and drive.” “So much of this stuff they lie to you.” “When I hear marijuana, they just lost me. They’re saying you’re a loser of a human being. There’s a stigma out there attached.” “I feel like there’s a stigma.” “Green letters are subliminally targeting weed. Loses me.”*

The billboard concept was the most unsuccessful single portion of any concept we tested due to the ‘wreath’ looking like a happy Christmas wreath.

*“Looks like a happy billboard.” “Oh, it’s Christmas.” “That’s a dumb tag line.” “The eye goes straight to the Christmas wreath.” “Too Christmasy.” “It’s a Christmas wreath.” “Is that a memorial? Because it’s too festive – it’s a party.” “Kind of pretty.” “It’s like drugs are a party.”*



## DELAY

- 77% of respondents said ‘Delay’ would get their attention.

While ‘Delay’ was effective at getting respondents’ attention, it lost that attention almost immediately because it focused on marijuana use. Marijuana users laughed at the ‘delayed conversation’ tactic used in the ad arguing that the crash was not caused by drug use, but rather caused by a bad driver.

*“Cheesy.” “We get the effects, we grew up with this stuff.” “I might laugh and smoke a bowl.” “Stop lumping weed into it.” “Targeting weed users only.” “He’s just a shitty driver.” “It comes down to a shitty driver.” “It’s funny.” “It’s targeting weed specifically.”*

Some respondents, however, were willing to acknowledge that it was a recognizable scenario of going through a drive through when high.

*“That more relatable to us.” “I can see me and my friend after midnight.” “Everyone has been there and got through a drive through. It can really happen.”*

But other than the ‘Toe Tags’ concept, the billboard concept associated with ‘Delay’ was the most effective element of any of the other concepts because it fit the respondents needs to get to the point, be graphic, and not single out marijuana.

*“The billboard is effective.” “Short sweet, you get it.” “It’s shows an actual car.” “Shows the result.” “Gets straight to the point.”*

## GAME OVER

- 72% of respondents said ‘Game Over’ would get their attention.

‘Game Over’ was moderately effective at getting respondent attention.

*“Goes from fun and games to reality – until reality kills it.” “Hits close to home.” “The scene with the friend gets me.” “Says there’s no reset button – it’s not a game.”*

But respondents appear to focus largely on the video game aspect of this concept. If the respondent was a ‘gamer’, they found the concept attractive and it caught their attention. If the respondent was not a ‘gamer’, they would have ignored the concept. Overall, however, respondents felt this concept was geared at young gamers that were 18 years old.

*“I’m a gamer, so I would pay attention.” “I like gaming.” “I hate video games, I would have turned the channel.” “The video game caught my attention.”*

*“It’s trying too hard to appeal to young people.” “I think it’s a game.” “Looks like a good time.” “Some take it as a game challenge when they tell them not to drive.” “It’s geared to 18 year olds.” “More geared to people of a younger generation who are gamers.”*

But the concept failed in passing the ‘cheesy’ test. It used paid actors to deliver a message many respondents viewed as propaganda making it look similar to the messages they have been seeing all their lives.

*“Corny.” “Dialogue seems like sophomores.” “Cheesy” “Not relatable to me.” “It’s a cool concept, but not a powerful message.” “Cheesy, silly.” “Just propaganda.” “Actors make it more cheesy.” “We’ve been seeing these stuff all our lives, it’s cheesy.”*

In the Grand Rapids groups, respondents had a problem with the tag line of ‘Don’t Drive Drugged’ suggesting that it should be ‘drive high’. But in Southfield, respondents had no such problem with the ‘driving drugged’ language.

*“Don’t drive drugged just sounds silly. Nobody refers to themselves as drugged.” “Drive drugged? Should say drive high.”*

## **DUI BILLBOARD**

Respondents were split on the effectiveness of two different billboard concepts saying there were three ways to a DUI.

- Overall, respondents reacted far better to the pill bottle image than the pill image.
- A number of marijuana respondents reacted negatively to the use of the marijuana leaf believing marijuana was not dangerous. However, their rejection of the marijuana leaf was tempered by it being lumped in with alcohol and prescription pills. The reaction to these billboards highlights the need to ‘mix’ the marijuana message with prescription drugs and alcohol so marijuana users do not feel threatened or stigmatized for using marijuana.
- For respondents who said their greatest risk were the ramifications of getting caught, this billboard drove home the point that they could get a DUI from any of these choices.

## WHAT WOULD STOP YOU FROM DRIVING ON DRUGS

At the conclusion of each group, respondents were asked to write down what would be the most effective way to stop them from driving after having used drugs.

- 26% said having family or children in the car and 18% said having a passenger in the car. Combined, 44% of respondents said having someone else in the vehicle would stop them.
- 26% said if they had a feeling or some knowledge that they were not capable of driving. It is absolutely crucial to point out that after 90 minutes of conversation, a quarter of respondents would still rely on their 'gut intuition' at the time they were impaired as to whether they should drive or not.
- 10% of respondents said police presence or better technology would deter them while 8% said having alternatives to driving would deter them.

The verbatim responses are listed below by category.

*"Knowing if I put someone else's life in danger." "Knowing or seeing the family I could be killing." "Having someone in the car with me. I take responsibility for my own life." "Good friends." "People who love me and are concerned about me." "Someone in car my car." "Thinking about killing someone." "Death" "If I was about to endanger someone else."*

*"The ramifications of getting caught" "My kids." "Losing my job or family or friends. The only time I don't drive under the influence is when I'm drinking because I can't control that high feeling." "Kids" "My daughter in the car." "Family with me." "My kids" "Younger cousins" "If I had children that were going to be in the car." "Passengers"*

*"If I know I'll fall asleep." "If I know that I can't safely get to where I'm going, I would not drive." "My own judgement." "Knowing that I can't complete my mission or reach my destination." "Physical feeling." "Not feeling comfortable to drive." "If I knew I couldn't do it. I'm very aware of how I function and I know my limits. If I know I'm a danger to others." "If I didn't feel completely 100% confident in my ability to do so." "If I wasn't confident I wasn't going to hurt others/ myself nor damage anything than I wouldn't drive." "Knowing my limit."*

*"Getting paranoid to getting pulled over." "New police technology that detects driving while high." "If there were a ton of police out at that time." "Seeing a copy watching my car."*

*"Money" "If I had a better option for getting home to my comfy home when I feel able." "Convenient options made available (self-driving cars)." "A place to sleep."*