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## Nationwide Revives Classic Tagline in Bid to Show Its Comforting Side

### Insurer Joins Ranks of Advertisers Seeking to Soothe Amid Recession

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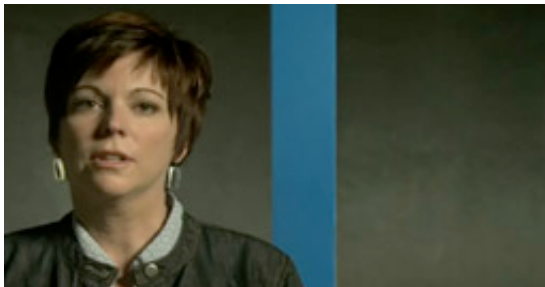
CHICAGO (AdAge.com) -- Nationwide's on your side again -- and so are a lot of other marketers these days.

With recession-weary consumers apparently less inclined to laugh, Nationwide is trading in its humorous "Life comes at you fast" for the tried-and-true tagline "Nationwide is on your side." It's hardly alone in making a change, as a host of marketers from Home Depot to Visa and Nationwide rival Allstate switch to more-comforting messaging while the downturn grinds on.



Nationwide is putting its \$176 million budget behind a documentary-style campaign that features its insurance agents discussing how they help clients, with the tagline "I'm on your side."

"If you told me eight months ago that we would be doing an educational and testimonial campaign, I would have jumped off a bridge," said Steven Schreiber, Nationwide VP-advertising and brand management. But he said with consumers losing faith in financial-services marketers and the like, Nationwide wanted to strike a more reassuring note.



While "Life comes at you fast," which showcased Sanjaya Malakar, Kevin Federline and Fabio, "did a really good job of putting Nationwide on the map," he said, humor has become less of a point of difference as the commercials have been parroted and parodied in the past five years.

**Documentarian**



### 'NATIONWIDE IS ON YOUR SIDE':

Documentary-style ads features agents discussing how they help customers.

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The goal was to stand out in a sea of reassuring insurance messages and get noticed in a price-driven category. (Nationwide is outspent more than three times by Geico, which laid out \$612 million in measured media spending last year, excluding internet and spot radio, according to TNS Media Intelligence.) So the insurer began by hiring documentarian Errol Morris, who won an Academy Award for "The Thin Blue Line," which tells the story of a man on death row for a murder he didn't commit. Mr. Morris spent several

hours with each of 20 handpicked Nationwide employees to get their unscripted stories. Mr. Schriebman said the idea was to keep pauses, eye rolling and flubbed words.

Mr. Schriebman said the company is doing whatever it can to facilitate the new campaign "going viral," including a "making of" video that will be posted on the company website. The agents themselves may also serve as vehicles for the campaign. Some of the 20 featured in the upcoming spots have presences on Facebook and Twitter. They'll be allowed to post videos and act as brand ambassadors to the extent they want to. Nationwide's creative agency is TM, Dallas.

Of course, Nationwide is only one marketer seeking to soothe in this environment, saying it's there to help consumers in tough times. Ford, Hyundai and General Motors Corp. are all offering plans that in some way offer to pay for your new car if you lose your job. Allstate went so far as to mention the verboten word "recession" in its ads, which aim to reassure consumers by touching on the company's founding during the Depression. Visa recently adopted a new global tagline, "More people go with Visa," and ad campaign with the goal of persuading consumers to use electronic-card payments instead of cash or checks. Charles Schwab changed its tagline to "I've got a lot less cash and a lot more questions. Talk to Chuck." Target is touting consumer-friendly prices. Home Depot is sporting a new tagline from agency the Richards Group, Dallas -- "More saving. More doing" -- that's similar to Walmart's.

And while General Mills is not running new advertising, it recently produced retro cereal boxes for Target to bring people back to more-comfortable days.

Such shifts in messaging are getting more common as the downturn goes on, said Robert Passikoff, president of Brand Keys. "I'm not sure it works from a strategic brand perspective, but from a creative engagement perspective, it's probably the right positioning for the current environment." While a reassurance strategy may not affect sales in the short term, he said, it will build up a reservoir of goodwill for the brand.