Navy to Launch New Branding Campaign, Tagline at Army-Navy Game

Story by Navy Recruiting Command Public Affairs

The Army-Navy football game is one of the oldest and most storied contests in the history of collegiate athletics. On Saturday, December 9, in Philadelphia, the U.S. Navy will use the occasion to tell a new story about itself, as it launches a new, multifaceted branding campaign aimed at attracting a new generation of recruits. The launch will also mark the debut of the Navy’s new tagline, “Forged by the Sea.”

“The Army-Navy game is one of the most revered and watched contests in college sports, and we wanted to take advantage of this unique opportunity to introduce the new brand and tagline on an occasion where the spirit of competition and military service are being celebrated,” said Commander, Navy Recruiting Command Rear Adm. Pete Garvin. “We’re proud and excited to be a part of such a great event.”

“Sea to Stars,” the first TV commercial featuring the new tagline and branding, will air on CBS during the second quarter of the Army-Navy game, as well as on the video screens in the stadium. A second commercial, “Game,” will also air in-stadium. The new commercials can be viewed on the Navy Live blog at http://www.navy.mil/forged.

There will also be a wide range of innovative social media initiatives before, during, and after the game, including five augmented reality filters on the Navy Recruiting Command’s Facebook platform that allow fans to creatively celebrate the Navy, the game, and the new tagline. Facebook Live will be used to create an Army-Navy gameday show that will provide an exclusive second-screen experience for fans watching the game at home. Called “Sea It Live,” the show will be hosted by two active duty Naval Academy Alumni, and will feature 10-15 segments throughout the day of the game. In between segments, the Facebook page will be populated with unique content that highlights Sailors and their unique stories.

After the game, a street team will capture Sailors’ reactions and feelings about the new tagline and commercials in real time, and post on NRC’s Twitter page, while calling on followers to share their own thoughts.

Garvin said the game-day launch represents only the first wave of an integrated marketing campaign
that will include a steady level of advertising on digital and social media platforms during the winter, before a full rollout in March. Additional marketing elements will debut throughout the year.

“The Navy is now recruiting young men and women of the Centennial Generation, who have different goals, expectations, and information-gathering habits than their Millennial predecessors,” said Garvin. “As such, the Navy recognized the necessity to develop a new marketing campaign and media strategy that more effectively reach, educate, and inspire the best-and-brightest prospective recruits.”

**Reaching Centennials**

The genesis of the new campaign was in the spring of 2016, when the Navy selected a new marketing agency, known as the Navy Partnership –led by Young & Rubicam (Y&R) – and directed it to create an enduring and authentic brand identity, tagline, and unified marketing strategy to inspire and motivate potential recruits to join.

In the summer of 2016, the Navy Partnership began a series of immersion trips, interviews with current and former Sailors, and qualitative and quantitative research with 17-21-year-olds – members of the emerging Centennial Generation – in cities across the country.

The research helped the Navy gain a deeper understanding of the mindset and career goals of Centennials, their perceptions of the Navy, and what might motivate them to choose the Navy as a career.

“What we found was that there was nearly 100 percent awareness of the Navy, but zero percent understanding of the Navy’s full mission, reach, and influence,” said Ken Dowling, head of the Navy Partnership and Managing Director at Y&R Memphis. “Centennials saw the Navy’s purpose as one dimensional and strongly tied to defense and combat. The things that set the Navy apart from other branches of the military weren’t well-defined, and there was limited awareness of the wide range of career opportunities the Navy offers.”

The research also showed that Centennials who were interested in a Navy career were looking for meaningful adventure, a creative and innovative environment, and the strength that comes from being a member of a unified team.

**“Forged by the Sea”**

Armed with its research, the Navy Partnership began the creative process, considering a variety of brand identities and thousands of taglines before eventually narrowing the options to six. The taglines and brand elements were tested not only with Centennials but also current enlisted Sailors, officers, Navy veterans, and key influencers.

According to Garvin, getting the support of current Navy personnel and veterans was essential to creating a genuine brand identity and tagline “Forged by the Sea” was overwhelmingly selected as the new tagline by the various focus groups. It effectively communicates that the Navy has evolved in response to the sea, and that Sailors are tested and shaped by the Navy and their sea experience, becoming better versions of themselves.

Garvin said the Navy has tried to remain nimble when it comes to evaluating and enhancing its marketing and communications efforts to recruit new generations of Sailors. While the Navy has
consistently met or exceeded its annual recruiting goals, the market is tightening and recruiting goals and standards are trending upward.

“Over the years, we have changed our tagline several times to capture everything our great Navy represents in just a few simple words,” said Garvin. “After much research and creative development, we emerged with a deep understanding of our organization’s purpose and potential — all of which tie back to the sea. For more than 200 years our Sailors have been tested and shaped by the sea. Our new tagline perfectly captures the transformative impact the Navy and the sea has on our Sailors.”

The Best Is Yet to Come
The introduction of “Forged by the Sea,” the national airing of “Sea to Stars,” and the other marketing initiatives centered around the Army-Navy game will serve as the first taste of a major brand rollout and fully integrated marketing campaign that will launch in March 2018.

The campaign will represent a media strategy shift for the Navy, as it will be viewed prominently on the online and social media platforms most popular with prospective recruits, ensuring the Navy is reaching the right audience, at the right time, on the most appropriate media platforms to maximize impact. The increased emphasis on digital and social media marketing will also enable the Navy to more precisely measure the campaign’s effectiveness.

“Traditional TV and print advertising will continue to play an important role in the media strategy, generating wide awareness of the new Navy brand, and enhancing perceptions of the Navy with older influencer groups” said Dowling. “However, with the digital shift, those with more traditional media consumption habits will see fewer Navy TV commercials and print ads than in years past. At the same time, the primary target audience will see many more Navy messages, and in contexts that resonate with them and are more effective at motivating them to become a qualified Navy lead.”

From mid-December to early March, NRC will run a steady advertising campaign on a range of digital and social media platforms. The campaign will feature “Sea to Stars,” “Game,” a series of six-second commercials, and a variety of banner advertisements.

In March, two additional commercials and digital and social media components will be completed, www.navy.com will be updated, and NRC will launch its fully integrated campaign.

“Our new brand platform, tagline, and marketing strategy would not be possible without the incredible participation of Sailors, veterans, and other key stakeholders who participated in the research, creative development, and testing. The access and feedback were invaluable as we forged our new brand,” said Garvin. “Their contributions will help ensure that “Forged by the Sea” and our future marketing efforts resonate with the Navy community and prospective recruits for years to come.”

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