

Announcer ([00:02](#)):

You are listening to the Safety Moment Podcast by Utility Safety Partners. Safety is always a good conversation and it's a click away. Here's your host Mike Sullivan.

Mike Sullivan ([00:16](#)):

It's April, it's finally here. That means the snow is melting. We can see the grass. Well, it kind of looks like grass, not quite like grass yet. And yes, there's still plenty of snow around because this is Alberta, but it is finally spring and in our business, April is also dig safe month. Yes. The digging season is finally upon us and in our contact center, that's the hub where we receive and process all those click before you dig, locate requests. It's like flipping on a light switch. We go from dark to light very, very quickly. And this is a time of year where all the efforts to improve our processes, improve our outreach. They all come to home to roost. And this is something that we've done some really interesting work the last couple of years with Atco Gas in particular. And it's an online campaign that has provided some really interesting results. Results that we probably couldn't have foreseen or even realized in the traditional campaigns of the past. And joining me today to talk about this campaign is Sandra Quadra. She's a marketing and communications advisor, natural Gas and electricity utilities with Atco. Sandra, thanks for joining me today. I really appreciate it.

Sandra Cuadra ([01:40](#)):

Thank you, Mike. Thank you to your invitation and I'm happy to be here with you

Mike Sullivan ([01:44](#)):

Today. Oh, this is fun. So I'm, we've been meeting with each other on teams meetings over the last couple years. We've never met in person. We haven't done that yet, but we're meeting each other on teams meetings for the last couple of years on this campaign and it's been really interesting. Can you tell me a little bit about your job at ATCO?

Sandra Cuadra ([02:02](#)):

Okay. I am a marketer and communications at ATCO. I've been with ATCO for about five years. My day-to-day work in ATCO is helping with communications and marketing strategies, how we communicate our messages to our audience, to our customers, how we reinforce our brand. And as a tough leadership in the market. Talking about the safety month, Mike Safety is one of our core bus core values in our business. Safety is in everything we do is the first priority for us whenever work we do in our day-to-day operations decisions, we have to know the safe, we follow the safety and health requirements in for all the work we undertake.

Mike Sullivan ([02:49](#)):

Well, ATCO does a tremendous job. I mean, I have to commend you and your team and ATCO is one of our 850 members. We have a lot of members, but as the gas, the primary gas distribution company and also pipeline and electricity for the province of Alberta, there is a lot that you get involved in and you personally and ATCO in general. And this campaign has been something different for us. I mean Alberta, sorry, almost did it. Utility Safety Partners is we have our own campaign, but when we were approached by ATCO a couple of years ago to do this joint campaign, it was new territory and I'm always interested in trying something new. And had we not gone down this path, I don't think we would've realized some

of the outcomes, positive outcomes we've seen. But before we get there, now we are talking about promoting awareness in general and in this case, this joint campaign.

(03:53):

But before we get into the details of the campaign, I want to look at public awareness the way it used to be in general and how that's changed over the years. We used to promote awareness on in newsprint, trade magazines and pamphlets, billboards, radio, television and some of these things we still do. They're very relevant today, but today now things are moving to digital and social media and geofencing. I want to talk about that later because I get it, but I don't get it. I'm going to, I guess some of our listeners don't either. And all of these things that we used to do, the trade magazines and newsprint, it was almost like a passive type of assessment of effectiveness. So we do the campaign and we said, okay, well how effective was it? Well we have this many of impressions on this radio station or this many listeners, this many readers, this many number of cars pass by this billboard every day. So based on that, we have a general idea of what the awareness levels are. But today we can get a lot more granular. So this is where this campaign really was focusing on, right?

Sandra Cuadra (05:05):

Yeah. The chief traditional advertising methods, as you mentioned, my billboards printed ads to a purely digital campaign represents a significant change in the marketing landscape. With digital you, you can track on the performance very tailored on all the campaign. And I guess one of the reasons that digital technology is increasing is because the facility that we have to access digital devices right now, there is a lot of digital services in the market as well. The ability to track and measure the effectiveness of the detailing with greater position is very important. We know how to target the right people at the right time with the right message, with traditional methods you put there and don't know who going at. So with digital your routings, you can pick for all the data bases in the world, the platforms, all the channel have the platform you can choose and pick like drag. I want people who live in Alberta, I want people who work in Edmonton. I want people who are doing things in safe war or doing visiting those kinds of stores. And you have to form your audience and that that's it. You go your message, you go your message to your relevant audience. And this is the difference

Mike Sullivan (06:26):

You can really pinpoint. I mean, you really can pinpoint exactly who your target audience is. Whereas before it was like, okay, we think there's people over here, they're going to do it and we're going to put a billboard And no, it's fascinating. I mean I've, I've been in this business for a long time and never before has there been, well I shouldn't say it's easy, but has it become so possible, I won't say easy but possible to determine your target audience and reach them and really, and not only reach them but find data on what happens when they've been reached. The goals of this campaign, obviously there was the homeowner contingent, there was the digging community contingent. But let's talk about the objectives for a moment is going back, it was really shifting calls to clicks, which was something we've been doing for a long time. And because ATCO has been a tremendous partner here that shifting calls to clicks is important because we know that locate requests online, reduce damages, full stop. That's a good thing. So the more we can get online, the better it's going to be. The less damages there'll be then, then that was a key objective. But then to see the actual results were fascinating. So I mean just beyond that, shifting calls to clicks, what were some of the campaign goals that ATCO was looking for?

Sandra Cuadra (07:51):

Our conversion conversion rate of the last campaign we launched last year was 58%. That means that more than half the people who sit at clicking it and also engage with it, that means they like our content, they don our pdf. If we'll have they go and put a click locate request to the website and this is amazing, like 58% for a digital campaign. And you see the results because we have the data to prove it online traditional method that the data is very superficial and could be too a bias like bias

Mike Sullivan ([08:26](#)):

Information. Well I think the homeowner campaign, if I'm not mistaken, there were 1.3 million more impressions in 2022 than there were in 2021 and there were 5.1 million impressions in 2022. So I mean it's a huge increase. And then the conversion rate, like you said, we saw locate requests by homeowners finally go over that 50% for the year. And that's the target audience. That is probably the toughest to reach because they dig maybe once every 10 years, maybe once in a lifetime. And that call before you dig language vernacular is so ingrained with people that they don't think about the web and we're trying to get them to think about the web. Whereas the digging community, they are 98, 90 9% on the web already, which is great. I mean we want to keep them there, we want to keep them there. But when we look at the impressions, like you said, the conversion rate, we saw it, we saw it in the contact center month to month we saw an increase in locate requests, percentages from homeowners and we had to be able to attribute that directly to this campaign. There are other campaigns, obviously radio and everything else, but this campaign was solid.

Sandra Cuadra ([09:44](#)):

I guess this campaign was very successful for homeowner because we reach our audience in the place they are. For example, we gather devices of people who visiting home improvement stores and we know that those people is going to do maybe some doing yourself work in their backyards. We targeted them and we serve the apps to that audience. This person also searches on Google search for example, doing yourself landscaping work or they also visit us on the stores online and we have the technology to track all of these activities and start serving our ads. This, this person later goes to our rental equipment shop to rent equipment for digging. We know that and we start sending the messages and I know that this is continuity. You see the ads here in the website, then you go to the store and you see your app on the messages on your app, on your phone. And the most fascinating thing is that when you go to your house and put your own, you connect to your wifi, all the people that are in the same house, that you are sharing your same wifi esteem. That experie our wish huge hugely. This is amazing technology.

Mike Sullivan ([11:03](#)):

No, it absolutely is. I know there's people out there thinking, well how do I turn this off? I feel like big brothers watching me, but this is the world we live in. The technology isn't nearly interested in you as the person. It's interested in your behaviors. And in this case the behavior is we think you're going to be doing some digging in a home project and we want to keep you safe. And that's really what it comes down to. But it's not an infringement on privacy. We don't know the person's name or whatever. We just want to know the behavior and be able to influence a positive behavior. It's really what it comes down to, right?

Sandra Cuadra ([11:40](#)):

Yes. We never have personal information of any device. We only know the location that they went to the store where we don't know their names, we don't know their age, we don't know nothing personal regard to their, we know that this kind behaviors or interests are common in this group and people like

this, we can target the same messages to people that share the same interests last you that is looking for backyard landscaping that is a passionate about doing yourself work that go to home owners, home improvement stores. And we target the same ads to people that act and have the same interests like you. But we don't know who are you in particular? We don't know anything personal that,

Mike Sullivan ([12:29](#)):

So this is really what I think we're getting into geofencing, right? This is kind of what it is. I mean can you explain that to me a little bit? Cause the way I've looked at geofencing is geofencing turns the lights on when you enter the room and turns 'em off when you leave. I mean that's a really simplistic way of looking at geofencing, but can you describe to me how that works?

Sandra Cuadra ([12:51](#)):

Well geofencing is like meaning gathering all the devices by device IDs, like all devices that are in a certain area in physical location, you can put a beacon as a techno. Those a little technology, I dunno how to say that, that gather all the value frequencies of the cellular that they say and they capture the device id, the cellular id and then start sending the ads and promotions. But also Google have a key offensive technology is you put the addresses or areas. For example, I want to target people living in this area and you can pin it with postal coder in series or towns and they start targeting those people who connects to Google search on those areas. They know how many people search for digging tips on Grand Prairie and they know who many people search for those terms on drum heller for example. And you can start building your campaign very tailor it and personalized just we put in your requirements and the technology that Google shares is amazing. Google is the key. We're

Mike Sullivan ([14:03](#)):

Running our lives is

Sandra Cuadra ([14:04](#)):

What I doing.

Mike Sullivan ([14:05](#)):

Yeah, it really is. Yeah, this is like Star Trek stuff. I mean really when it comes down to it never before, people in our business that are, they're to promote awareness, have had this type of ability at our fingertips. I mean we did things before, well whether it was contract or breakfasts or again the billboard advertising. We hope that we think this is going to work and now literally we can find somebody who's going to dig before they dig and let them know that hey, you have to do this and keep everybody safe. Yes. You look at a new community for example, communities are expanding all the time. There's new homes being built all the time. Is that helping? I mean because those, I'm putting in a deck, I'm putting in a fence, I'm doing landscaping. I'm looking to think about my own son who has a new home in a new community and this year he's going to be doing all these things and so are all his neighbors.

([15:03](#)):

So when a person who lives in that area is going online, like you said, with their mobile device or whatever they have and they're, they go back home on their wifi and everybody else is looking at the same thing, now they're being influenced by the same ads. Does that start to roll out to the community as well? Cause let's say this, my son goes on to the community Facebook page and that's a habit as well, but the community is all brand new. Does that start to the ripples and you know, throw a stone into a

lake and all the ripples start to go out from there? Is that kind of what's happening too? Or is it just limited to the homeowner?

Sandra Cuadra ([15:44](#)):

This could be two ways. Is you good? For example, in Facebook, I want to target all the data that this person does on the internet and start serving ads to the communities they visit. We can do have that. What if we just say no, only target the people on this location, on this device and the people on his family on the same way five, the other page that they visit, we didn't have that ad. Or every time he went to another website or listen, he will have to see the ads because it's his phone.

Mike Sullivan ([16:23](#)):

It's April, I'm going to hit this hard. It is dig safe month. Yes, there's still snow on the ground but it's disappearing. If you are going to be doing any digging project, know what's below and click before you dig, all you have to do no matter where you are in North America is go to [www.clickbeforeyoudig.com](#), select the province or state where you are working and living and begin to submit your locate request online. You can do it 24 7 365. It's easy. It takes minutes. Click before you dig.com.

([17:07](#)):

When we look at this, the ability to pinpoint, so the geofencing allows us to do that. If there was an event, let's say at McMahon Stadium and we wanted to target as many people in McMahon Stadium with geofencing, we could do that obviously. Wow. And then when they go home, then that goes out to their people on their, wow, that's incredible. That really, it's kind of mind blowing. And I can understand why people would might think that, oh, my privacy is being infiltrated, but again, I don't believe that it is. If people are worried about below, then turn your phone off. I guess let's turn your location off, turn your location off, then you don't have to. But in this case here, now let's go back to these are all the things we did. And I want to go back to the actual campaign itself. The creative of the campaign was don't dig blindfolded. And it was simple. It was really simple and it was images of people, whether there was a digging community, they're in heavy equipment and they were digging, they had a blindfold on or a homeowner using a shovel and they had a blindfold on that really seemed to resonate with the audience. And was this, and I can't remember and I shouldn't remember, was this and was this Atco that Kane came up with us, this campaign, I can't remember how we even did that.

Sandra Cuadra ([18:35](#)):

Yeah, we have different ideas. We hire a creative agency to show us and put on our ideas like okay, we are thinking about this. We want about avoid complacency in this community. I know my war, I know how to do it so I can go on there because I am the expert and I'm making this the same thing for 25 years so I know my business. So we want to avoid that. And we told, what is police acting like? They know their work. How can you do your work? You are blindfolded. That was one of the big triggers that we have to do this campaign. So we were digging into this idea, but we were hesitant a little bit because of people with different liabilities. So we engage our diversity and inclusion committee and ATCO and show the campaign and they told us it's different is you put no to the blindfold, it's different to dump the blind. So it would be a different message. So we go ahead with this concept and start developing the creative and I guess it really speaks to the complacency of the world. Oh, I'm very, yeah, I right. Well

Mike Sullivan ([19:47](#)):

And you're right. I mean obviously whatever is buried is buried. You can't see it obviously. Whereas if you have above ground utilities, you can see them if you look. But we can develop that unintentional blindness, but you know, see the same thing every day that off every while, you just won't see it because it's there. But buried utilities, you don't see them. They could be there, they probably are there. And without knowing what's below clicking before you dig, then you're digging. Don't dig blindfolds really it comes down to,

Sandra Cuadra ([20:19](#)):

And the of the ground, everything changes. The line will be there, but with the ocean and the wire, rainfall, air start to move in,

Mike Sullivan ([20:28](#)):

It does. I mean nothing stays in the same place and it does move. And this again, that don't dig blindfold. And when I look at the data around that, especially I think it was a homeowner campaign more than anything, it really resonated with the target audience and they got it. They got it. I started, we saw the uptick on locate requests from homeowner groups, the category. And we saw the uptick going from not just locate requests general, but from calls to clicks, which was important. And the last three years of operations have been the three busiest years in our entire history. And in terms of locate requests, now thankfully we've modified some of the software and the data so the notifications to industry are going down because there's a lot of triage to do. But the fact is the word is getting out and we're seeing this conversion and it's changing behaviors, it's changing behaviours.

Sandra Cuadra ([21:34](#)):

Talking specifically about the homeowners campaign that we did, the conversion rate for that campaign was 76% more than, oh my god, 76 people seeing our ads. It click it on it and interact with it. Yeah.

Mike Sullivan ([21:52](#)):

Oh, it was phenomenal. It really was. Yeah. So now this year, so we've done this in 20 21, 20 22, let's talk about the 2023 campaign because if you're on a good roll, you might as well keep going. And here we are again. We're going to do this again. What does the 2023 campaign look like? Is it a lot more the same? We are

Sandra Cuadra ([22:11](#)):

Going, yeah, we going to leverage the same technology that we did last year. Yeah, we are also using the same creative because we launched the new ads, the new last year, and we need that in, need to be in the market for about two, three years more to consolidate and really gather the results we want. We are also going to use social media or the digital technologies. We're going to use fencing. We also will include the new subdivisions so that have construction work so we can gather the people working on those areas as well. We also are going to target excavation rentals, shops to reach contractors and home, improve ministers to reach homeowner. Basically we're doing the same boat with mortgage

Mike Sullivan ([22:59](#)):

Today. The, it's not just a communication push, but it's also a communication pull. The homeowner or the audience, they also have a voice, is that correct?

Sandra Cuadra ([23:13](#)):

Is that correct, Mike? Nowadays the customer has the power, they have the option to do whatever they want to follow with the company. In the past was the company was the only one who send the message to the public. And that's all they have. Doctor people. Now the customer have the power to decide with social media to follow which apps to download, how they can engage with our content and and demand and ask for a better services right now than in the past. The company just put the message and that's all. You didn't hear about your customers, you didn't hear about what the needs are, you didn't know nothing. Just we send the message, that's all what we need to do.

Mike Sullivan ([23:57](#)):

And now they can engage. Now they can engage, right? Yeah, I mean we do it too with our social media. We have engagement. I mean there's people out there that they have an ax to growing now they have a voice, but we also receive information which is really valuable and allows us to manipulate or manage our outreach accordingly. So I think it's a good thing.

Sandra Cuadra ([24:17](#)):

Yeah, we need to listen our audience now, yeah, we need to listen our social media channel, what are they asking? What are they looking for so we can build tailored services for them

Mike Sullivan ([24:26](#)):

And make it better. Where do you think this can go? I mean compared to where we were 10, 15, 20, 30 years ago, where do you think this is all going to go? I mean we're still in our infancy here in terms of managing awareness through technology and digital technology. Where do you think this can go? I have no idea.

Sandra Cuadra ([24:51](#)):

I dunno, with all these artificial intelligence thing happening right now with the metaverses, maybe we just start here. A companion of Metaverse. Yeah. I

Mike Sullivan ([25:01](#)):

Dunno. I'm not real by the way. I'm actually artificial intelligence. So we've switched over completely. So yeah, no, not yet. But I mean I've tried that chat GTP and I have, it's amazing what it can do and it's just pulling data from existing sources. But yes, artificial intelligence could definitely lead the way. We can ask it, what should we do next? And it might tell us,

Sandra Cuadra ([25:26](#)):

Yeah, artificial intelligence, you treat like a source of information, not as a source of truth.

Mike Sullivan ([25:33](#)):

Exactly. Yeah, no,

Sandra Cuadra ([25:35](#)):

We still need the human knowledge to differentiate what is good, what is not on how to make it better. It's a tool for us. It's not like they are going to resolve our



Mike Sullivan ([25:45](#)):

Problems. When it comes down to data, I know

([25:47](#)):

Out it comes down to data and crunching that data and the results on establishing your objectives and looking at the results. Did we meet our objectives and this campaign? Absolutely. We are meeting our objectives and I'm, from my perspective and my team at Utility Safety Partners, we're so happy to collaborate with ATCO and to work with you and your team and everybody at ATCO is top notch people to work with. When I look at a campaign like this, yes, obviously risk and consequence comes into it. The risk of damaging buried utilities in an urban setting becomes higher because of population density and the amount of activity and the sheer number of buried utilities within a certain area where you may be digging, but the consequence also factors into that. And the of hitting a gas line or electrical line is far more dire than hitting perhaps another utility that doesn't have that immediate type of consequence. So I get it that not all buried utilities are attacking the awareness campaigns with the same kind of energy that ATCO is. I get it. But what if they were, and can you imagine if everybody was doing a little bit of what ATCO is doing today, just how much better the results would be.

Sandra Cuadra ([27:19](#)):

Yeah, I know that we have almost reached to zero damages in our infrastructure we

Mike Sullivan ([27:25](#)):

Would reach, I think you're right. We probably would reach zero damages if everybody is doing the same thing. And the cost of this campaign compared to what we used to do. Again, I'm kind of picking on billboards here, but when I first came to Alberta, one call our previous name, the amount of money we spent on billboards was enormous. And when I look at the amount of money we're spending on a campaign like this, it's maybe 15 or 20% of what we spent before on just billboards. And the assessment of effectiveness tells me is far greater. This is a far greater tool we're using today than what we're using before

Sandra Cuadra ([28:11](#)):

Is more cost effective also, can you imagine changing a printed ad like a billboard? If you have a campaign like its driving the results you want, you can change it in a goal. With a digital campaign, you can make changes as we go instantly. But to change and print it app is, can you imagine that? How much money, how many resources, a lot of things to your change add maybe. And if you are running with lock like in two weeks you can change your app of that printing and going there and installation and all of that. Also with digital campaign, you can have the ability to test your message, you can do AB testing. And when I say AB testing, I mean you have a version A of your, for example, a blue font and you have a version B with the other guide, for example, a green font. And you can launch the two together and then you can see which one is getting the worst engagement and the one that is getting the more engagement, you keep it and launch it to the whole allowances. And you can do this in when we to weeks exchange, the ads change, the test change, meaning change channels, change networks, change everything as we go while we printed at is going to be a little more

Mike Sullivan ([29:34](#)):

Complicated



Sandra Cuadra ([29:35](#)):

And

Mike Sullivan ([29:35](#)):

More costly. Oh, AB for absolutely. I remember a number of years ago receiving a printed document that was going out to a whole bunch of homeowners landowners. I was working for a pipeline company at the time and when we received it, the phone number for Alberta one call actually was wrong. And so what did we have to do? We had to print stickers and go every top of everything and something like this. Now you change it on the go you, it's real time management. The cost of doing that is next to nothing. And it was something that a dozen eyes had seen and a dozen eyes had missed.

Sandra Cuadra ([30:15](#)):

Yeah. Can you imagine, because we are with this digital, with this campaign campaign, we also have ads in other languages to reach new Canadians. Can you imagine having three builders at the same time? One in English, one in Spanish, one in Chinese. It's not possible.

Mike Sullivan ([30:34](#)):

And it's interesting utility safety partners, we do advertise in esl English as a second language. And I saw an ad today on LinkedIn. We promote in Cantonese and in Punjabi and other languages as well because it's important they're not, everybody speaks English that's not, or French, they're, we have a lot of people from around the world who call Canada home proudly and they own homes. They dig too and they have the potential to cause damage if they're not aware. So again, thanks so much for working with us. This has been a really interesting project working with Adco on this campaign and 2023, if we've gotten to where we are in just two years, I can't imagine where we're going to be in five. And this is, we're only at the halfway mark here. Oh, not even quite the halfway mark. I'm, I'm really interested to see where this goes and I thank you for joining me here today and thank you for your leadership and making this work. It's been a really interesting campaign and quite an interesting journey. I have a lot of learning on my part for sure.

Sandra Cuadra ([31:48](#)):

Thank you Mike. As you know, safety in the first consideration, everything at, we are very grateful for your leadership in protecting our underground utilities to communicate these message to the people even in Alberta on how to prepare, on how to be safer working around transmission or distribution lines. So I guess it's important and we really appreciate your work.

Mike Sullivan ([32:14](#)):

Well thank you. I have the honor of leading a tremendous team of people that we just click but play on words there, but we really do. And again, thanks so much. This has been wonderful having you on. I can't wait to see where this goes next

Sandra Cuadra ([32:35](#)):

We,

Mike Sullivan ([32:39](#)):

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That's going to wrap things up for this episode of The Safety Moment. I'd like to thank our producers Stories and Strategies. If you have an idea for an episode, please email us@infoutilisafety.ca and just put podcast in the subject line. If you like what you heard, I hope you'll choose to subscribe to the Safety moment and you'll receive first notification of new episodes when you do so. We'd also love it if you gave us a rating on whatever directory you're listening on or perhaps even a written review. You can also follow us on Twitter at Utility underscore Safety. I'm Mike Sullivan, the president of Utility Safety Partners. And remember, one click costs you nothing. Not clicking could cost you everything and its dig safe month.