

MULTICHANNEL

BMW boosts CSR via renewable energy program

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By TRICIA CARR

BMW of North America is partnering with Green Mountain Energy Company to give its corporate social responsibility a boost and let its electric vehicle drivers buy renewable energy certificates.

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BMW ActiveE drivers who are participating in the automaker's "Electronauts" program can now purchase renewable energy certificates from Green Mountain to cover the electricity used to charge their vehicles. The Electronauts program put 700 ActiveE vehicles on the road with leases to private consumers to let BMW test an emission-free model, and feedback from the program will help it build and launch the electric BMW i3 next year.

"BMW of North America has an efficient dynamics strategy as it relates to power of performance and sustainable energy," said Monty Roberts, product, technology and motor sports specialist at [BMW of North America](#), Woodcliff Lake, NJ. "This partnership supports clean energy for the use of the vehicles and gives our customers a viable option for long-term sustainable fuel in keeping with that strategy.

"Our efficient dynamics strategy covers the entire BMW line, but this is the second tier of the electric mobility program," he said. "The ActiveE vehicle is a test vehicle and a prerequisite for the i3 so that we are able to gather information on its practical everyday

usage.”

“Many customers of the ActiveE are very active in green technology as far as their interests.”

Emission-free

BMW is using its partnership with Green Mountain to strengthen its relationship with affluent consumers who are interested in a sustainable lifestyle.

There are currently 700 ActiveE vehicles leased to U.S. consumers.

Lessees could sign up for the chance to become a driver in January. BMW raised awareness for the program through marketing and advertising in channels including green media.

Consumers can follow the ActiveE trials at <http://bmwactivatethefuture.com>.



BMW ActiveE

Green Mountain is letting ActiveE drivers purchase renewable energy certificates so that the estimated amount of electricity used to charge a vehicle during the two-year lease period is replaced with renewable energy. The certificates are \$48 each and last the duration of the lease.

Drivers who power their vehicles with renewable energy for the estimated mileage used during the lease usage will offset 9,900 pounds of carbon dioxide. This equals a savings of 11,000 miles compared to a conventional gas-powered car, per BMW.

Meanwhile, there are 1100 total BMW ActiveE vehicles in use in the United States, Europe and China.

BMW of North America will raise awareness for the renewable energy certificate program via its Facebook, Twitter and blogs. Green Mountain will also promote it via digital channels including a microsite at <http://www.greenmountain.com/ActiveE>.

ActiveE drivers will be alerted via channels such as mail and email.

The automaker hopes to continue the long-term partnership with Green Mountain, per BMW.

Green thumb

Like BMW, luxury automakers that participate in emissions-reducing programs could get a boost among affluent consumers who favor an environmentally-friendly lifestyle.

“The strategy for this promotion seems to be to generate favorable publicity in the short term, to reinforce the BMW image for environmental and sustainability concerns, and perhaps to create a foundation for a more comprehensive future partnership that can be expanded and accessed by a larger number of consumers,” said Ron Kurtz, president of [American Affluence Research Center](#), Atlanta.

“Affluent consumers are in the best position to afford the premium costs usually associated with environmentally-sensitive products and they tend to be more educated and concerned about the related issues,” he said.

Previously, BMW steered away from the ActiveE vehicle itself to strengthen its lifestyle appeal. It offered drivers an approximately 35 percent discount on solar panels for their homes.

Before the ActiveE lease program, BMW established a similar initiative for 600 drivers to test its Mini E electric cars and provide feedback.

In addition, BMW helped to deciphered consumers’ driving habits to determine whether or not they were compatible with an electric car by introducing a mobile application that tracks the miles they drive per day ([see story](#)).

Audi is also pushing its sustainable initiatives this year. The automaker’s U.S. division began a driving program in February that focuses on its new electric vehicles and allows engineers in Germany to get instant feedback and data on driving conditions where the cars are used.

Audi of America is also getting customers involved in the discussion through a hashtag campaign ([see story](#)).

“Every company wants to be perceived as a good corporate citizen, especially in a political era where capitalism is under attack,” said Al Ries, chairman of marketing consultancy [Ries & Ries](#), Roswell, GA.

“By itself, I do not think the Green Mountain deal will attract affluent consumers, but rather, I think the publicity about the deal will make such consumers aware that BMW has an electric vehicle,” he said. “The idea of buying renewable energy certificates removes one reason for not driving electric cars.

“In other words, when you factor in the carbon generation that takes place in power plants providing the electricity, electric vehicles do not help the environment as much as a consumer might think, but the Green Mountain deal removes this factor.”

Final Take

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