



American Express' OPEN Small Business Network sought to encourage five vertical segments – homebuilders and renovation contractors, music tour managers, dentists, dermatologists, and plastic surgeons – to manage the financial aspects of their businesses using an American

Express Card, which offered services tailored specifically to them. Audience-specific programs and events demonstrated the Card's "benefits-of-action" in order to drive acquisition, activation and usage.

AMERICAN EXPRESS OPEN

Shifting brand perceptions,
generating new card
applications, and increasing
usage among select vertical
audiences



OPEN from American Express is focused on U.S. businesses with revenues between \$50-\$100 million. They hold approximately 50% of the U.S. small business card purchase volume, which is eight times larger than the next issuer. In addition, spend per card is nearly 100% higher than both Visa and MasterCard business cards average.

By focusing on trade shows, events, and face-to-face selling, Amex would gain growth and exposure among the professional audiences and limit increasingly ineffective direct mail programs to office managers and accountants. They sought to further establish brand affinity by maintaining the emotional “badge” benefits that only American Express can provide: exclusivity and prestige.

The main theme of the campaign was “OPEN – The Card That Builds Your Business.” To drive interest and applications among individual professions, OPEN created branded moments at trade shows and exhibits that expanded the target professional experiences either by sponsoring private educational programs or exclusive, invitation only events. The initial effort was focused on dermatologists, with an exclusive charity event at the Giorgio Armani boutique in San Francisco. Events like this were designed to cultivate the vertical segments, build brand awareness, and drive spending.