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Valvoline Offers Engine Guarantees

by Karl Greenberg, Thursday, June 4, 2009, 3:52 PM

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Valvoline is offering something new in the motor oil category: a guarantee. Not for the motor oil, but for the engine. Through its "Valvoline Engine Guarantee," the Ashland division will give consumers who use Valvoline motor oil products, and who register to participate at Valvoline.com, an engine guarantee for up to 300,000 miles of use.

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Intended in part to sidestep product-claim brinksmanship in the motor oil segment, the program offers different levels of participation, depending on the Valvoline product one uses. If one registers to use Valvoline Premium Conventional motor oil, he or she gets a guarantee up to 150,000 miles, assuming the products are used as prescribed; MaxLife or DuraBlend guarantees up to 225,000 miles; and SynPower or MaxLife synthetics covers one engine for up to 300,000 miles.

Valvoline is promoting the offer with TV, radio, print and online ads, in-store elements and other outreach efforts. The campaign includes a series of 15-second ads that play on the various, complex claims that motor oils make around their synthetics and engine protection. The ads play on the increasingly sophisticated and baffling chemistry of synthetic motor oils. One spot has a befuddled guy at an aisle-cap



display for unnamed motor oil. The display touts the product for "nano-molecular viscosity quotient" engine-protection properties. Another display touts a different motor oil for "Anti-Sludge Force-Field Technology." The voiceover is the guy's thoughts: "Nano ... molecular ... force field that prevents sludge? Sheesh."

Pete Demko, director of marketing, global brands for Valvoline, says the offer is fundamentally different from traditional product-satisfaction warranties in which dissatisfied customers have to prove product failure. "There is a lot of clutter and clamor around claims, so we are making it simple," he says.

As part of the registration process, consumers can use a maintenance log on Valvoline.com to enter scheduled oil changes -- which serves, initially, as demonstration of maintenance. "And if they have an engine problem, we audit proof of purchase on the back end," he says.

Also, if customers who register for the guarantee program get service at a Valvoline Instant Oil Change store, their records are automatically updated.

Demko says multiple spots will run nationally on network and cable, with an emphasis on sports programming. "It's fairly broad because we are trying to reach people who maintain their vehicles, and that's a wide demographic."

He says all of the TV spots are 15 seconds, because "we found that the message was simple enough to deliver in those units; it kind of gets back to the fact that we aren't trying to make a complex claim --it's pretty direct and straightforward. When we did research that was feedback we got -- people loved that it was straight to the point." Print will run in books like *Sports Illustrated*, *ESPN Magazine*, and lifestyle and auto buff books.

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