

HOW ONE IRL BILLBOARD TURNED A CODING PUZZLE INTO A GLOBAL TECH STORY

IRL creativity designed for the right audience, not the biggest audience

Listen Labs, an AI research company focused on improving how organizations identify and interview talent, took **an unconventional approach to recruiting with a minimalist IRL billboard displaying only a string of numbers formatted like AI tokens.** To most passersby, it looked cryptic and meaningless. But for the AI engineers the company wanted to reach, the signal was clear. Decoded through a tokenizer, the numbers revealed a URL leading to a coding challenge modeled after the company's own algorithm. The billboard wasn't meant to reach everyone. **It was designed to reach exactly the right people,** and once the puzzle was solved, the campaign quickly spread across the tech community online.

STRATEGY & EXECUTION

- **Market:** San Francisco
- **IRL Formats Used:** Posters
- **Creative Excellence:** The billboard broke nearly every traditional advertising rule. Instead of explaining the brand or message, Listen Labs leaned entirely into intrigue with a cryptic string of AI tokens as the only creative element. The simplicity forced the right audience to engage, transforming a static billboard into an interactive challenge and the first step in the recruiting process.

OUTCOME

- **Client Success:** The campaign gained traction within the AI community after an OpenAI researcher shared the billboard online. The puzzle quickly spread across developer networks and social media, generating widespread discussion and coverage from major technology outlets including [VentureBeat](#), [Forbes](#), and [CBS News](#).

SOURCE: LISTEN LABS

DISCLAIMER: OF COURSE, THE RESULT OF ANY CASE STUDY ARE SPECIFIC TO ITS FACTS. WE CAN'T GUARANTEE THAT ANY OTHER CAMPAIGN WILL DRIVE SIMILAR RESULTS, INCLUDING INCREASED TRAFFIC, END-USER ACTIVITY (CLICK-THROUGH OR SECONDARY-ACTION RATES), OR REVENUE.

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Listen

RESULTS

\$69M+

SERIES B FUNDING ANNOUNCED FOLLOWING THE VIRAL MOMENT

5M+

SOCIAL IMPRESSIONS GENERATED

10K+

PEOPLE DECODED THE AI TOKENS

1K+

ENGINEERS ATTEMPTED THE CODING CHALLENGE

60

CANDIDATES SUCCESSFULLY SOLVED THE PROBLEM AND RECEIVED INTERVIEWS