

Cassies 2006 Cases

Brand/Case: Holiday Inn – The Long Good Night

Winner: Events, Seasonal & Short Term—Silver

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Crossover Notes: All winning cases contain lessons that cross over from one case to another. David Rutherford has been identifying these as Crossover Notes since Cassies 1997. The full set for Cassies 2006 can be downloaded from the Case Library section at www.cassies.ca

- Crossover Note 1. What a Brand Stand For.
- Crossover Note 2. Brand Truths.
- Crossover Note 10. Conventional Wisdom—should it be challenged.
- Crossover Note 11. The Eureka Insight.
- Crossover Note 18. Keeping it Simple.
- Crossover Note 27. Share of Mind. Share of Voice. Spending.
- Crossover Note 33. Changing the Target Audience.

To see creative, go to the Case Library Index and click on the additional links beside the case.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Business Results Period (Consecutive Months): September 1 – December 31, 2005
Start of Advertising/Communication Effort: September 1, 2005
Base Period for Comparison: Historical data

Holiday Inn is an iconic brand that draws its image from the simpler times when families loaded up the Chevy wagon and took summer vacations on the road. However, with the family leisure travel stagnating, Holiday Inn needed to get a greater share of the business travel market.

The problem, of course, was that Holiday Inn's strength in "family" was a weakness in "business." How do you attract business travelers without losing the leisure traveler?
[Crossover Note 33.](#)

This case demonstrates that a simple proposition, with an arresting execution, made business travelers reconsider Holiday Inn – with excellent business results. All other elements of the marketing mix were constant, making us confident that a new campaign was the driving force of this success.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

Holiday Inn began as the vision of Kemmons Wilson (1913-2003) in 1952 on a road-trip gone bad. On a family vacation, he grew frustrated at roadside motels. Dingy and dusty may have been satisfactory at one time, but he was sure that the interstate-age would call for air conditioning, restaurants, in-room telephones, and—most of all—standardization. Within a year, he commissioned blueprints from his hand-drawn diagrams. The designer, Eddie Bluestein, wrote “Holiday Inn” on the plans after seeing a Bing Crosby film. The name stuck. The first Inn, built on Summer Avenue in Memphis, was so successful that Wilson followed with identical ones on three other roads leading into Memphis. By the 1970s, Wilson's 300,000 beds outdistanced his nearest competitor more than three to one.

Companies like Quality Inn, Howard Johnsons, and Ramada Inn had to match Holiday Inn step by step. The results are apparent even today, with each room in every motel looking pretty much the same. This entrenched Holiday Inn in the leisure travel market.

However, with sky-rocketing oil prices, family road trips declined through the end of the last century and hoteliers found that profitable growth came from the business traveler. They generate more stays, and tend to be less budget conscious than the leisure traveler.

But how do you get business travelers see Holiday Inn as right for them, with a media spend equating to a 7% share of voice? [Crossover Notes 1 and 27.](#)

STRATEGY & INSIGHT

All travelers want to be comfortable. But that's not insight; it's observation. Nevertheless, it's the basis of most of the effort against the business traveler—a plethora of ads showing happy business people enjoying comfy beds. [Crossover Note 10](#).

We had to stand out in this sea of sameness.

While Holiday Inn offers the same amenities as the competition, we couldn't win by being the same. By conjoint analysis of different services, we learned that Holiday Inn's free high-speed internet had two advantages. First, it signaled commitment to business people. Second, since many chains charge for the connection, it echoed Holiday Inn's heritage of honesty and good value. We concluded that this feature had the potential to improve the brand's salience and drive business. This was confirmed in research [information was supplied], and the decision was made to focus on this one feature. [Crossover Note 18](#).

However, we still needed to communicate this in an insightful, memorable, *unignorable* way, to compensate for the limited media budget.

The insight? Express "comfort" in the business traveler's language. It isn't just fluffy pillows; *it's staying connected to their business*. [Crossover Notes 2 and 11](#).

EXECUTION

Business travelers are a tough audience to reach quickly. And with only \$1.3 million for a national 8 -12 week campaign, a heavy prime time GRP buy wasn't sensible or possible. Instead, Holiday Inn's AOR Media Experts chose sports, news and special interest programming on specialty networks (TSN, SportsNet, CTV Newsnet, RDS, Discovery, Canal-D, Canal-Z and Bravo). Print augmented the TV via Maclean's, MoneySense, Financial Post, ROB, L'actualite, and Les Affaires. Banners and leaderboards went up on Yahoo, Sympatico, Globeandmail.com, thestar.com, yellowpages.ca and cnn.com.

The TV spot, titled the Long Goodnight, shows our business traveler shutting down his laptop, climbing into (a comfy looking) bed. He then says goodnight to all of his colleagues...all of whom are either on the bed, or sitting in his room! The spot wraps with a simple mnemonic of an Ethernet cable clicking into the Holiday Inn logo. Print and on-line used the same mnemonic. This commercial won a Gold and Best in Show at the 2006 Bessie awards.

BUSINESS RESULTS

Because of the lag period between when a reservation is made and when room-nights (number of nights a hotel room is booked) and revenue are captured, it is critical to look at the time period (approximately 2-4 weeks) immediately following Marcom activity.

Room-nights were up 27% vs. the same period year-ago in a category growing at less than 10%. Revenue was up 14% in a category growing at less than 5%. Holiday Inn had not seen such growth in the past three years. Even number of stays, (generally more sluggish to respond to Marcom investment) was up +8%.

As for ROI, it is Holiday Inn's policy not to release specific profit information, but we can state that the \$1.3 MM Marcom investment has delivered significant ROI, and the campaign has been implemented again in Spring 2006).

CAUSE AND EFFECT BETWEEN ADVERTISING & RESULTS

There are several ways to connect the advertising investment with the sales results:

1. No other variables in the marketing and service mix changed during this time. The free internet service had been in place for than two years prior to advertising activity commenced. No other business travel promotional activity was in place prior, during or after the advertising campaign.
2. The overall hotel category was tracking at less than 10% growth on room-nights and less than 5% growth on revenue indicating that Holiday Inn's success was not driven by industry growth.
3. Creative testing placed *The Long Goodnight* well above norms on purchase intent, recall and message impact. [data were supplied: for example "good for business travelers was at 83% versus a 63% norm, and brand linked recall was at 56%, versus a 22% norm.]