

Cassies 2006 Cases

Brand/Case: Rickard's

Winner: Off to a Good Start—Bronze

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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 2. Brand Truths.
- Crossover Note 9. Turnarounds.
- Crossover Note 10. Conventional Wisdom—should it be challenged?

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): July 2005 – March 2006
Start of Advertising/Communication Effort: July 2005
Base Period for Comparison: Year Ago

The mainstream beer market in Canada is shifting away from Molson Canadian and Labatt Blue. There are several reasons for this. 1. The easing of advertising restrictions on hard liquor and energy drinks. 2. The movement by some mainstream drinkers to put super premium imports (Stella, Heineken and Grolsch) in their repertoire. 3. Acceptance, by some, of discount-priced beers.

Rickard's is priced between Molson/Labatt and the super premium brands. This made it Molson's best-suited brand to capitalize on the market trend.

This case is about a campaign that moved the needle on brand linkage, intrusion and awareness. In addition, volume sales, which had been declining at 8%, turned around, averaging +13% over the Results Period. **Crossover Note 9.**

SITUATION ANALYSIS

a) Overall Assessment

Rickard's was a little known west coast brand founded 26 years ago. It was the # 1 red beer in Canada, but it was under pressure. Contributing factors included:

1. *We were a premium product that was not rich in brewing history or heritage.*

In trying to communicate a premium product message, we did not have a brewing heritage story to tell.

2. *We were better than premium mainstream but not quite super premium*

From a pricing and a perception point of view Rickard's landed squarely between premium mainstream beer and super premium beer. We had to get our volume from mainstream beer drinkers without being mainstream in our communications. We also had to be considered somewhat premium in order to justify our price.

3. *We were mainly known for Rickard's Red*

Although our portfolio consisted of Red, Pale Ale, Honey Brown, and White Ale we were known almost exclusively for Rickard's Red. In fact, it was Canada's number one selling red beer.

4. *We had well-heeled competitors*

The fact that we were an "in-between" brand meant our competition came from both ends of the spectrum. Our premium competitors, Keith's and Sleeman's, had much larger budgets and years of mass media under their belt. Our mainstream competitors had gargantuan budgets in mass media and with licensees.

b) Resulting Objectives

Qualitatively, we had to score well on measures such as intrusion, brand link, enjoyability and uniqueness. Quantitatively we had to improve sales profitably, moving the needle on:

- Packaged beer (home consumption)
- Draught (licensee sales)
- Maintaining Rickard's Red leadership in the "red" category

STRATEGY & INSIGHT

According to research prior to the campaign, basic awareness of the brand was quite high but consumer understanding was limited, resulting in a shallow emotional attachment.

Rickard's was known as a red draught beer that belonged in the pub. We needed to:

- Be unexpected
- Appeal to mainstream drinkers while enticing them to step up a level
- Work for both mass media and licensee promotions

We decided the best way to move the needle on Rickard's was to:

- Focus on the liquid in an interesting way that implied quality
- Avoid beer clichés to ensure we remain distinct from mainstream beers
- Draw from the essence of the brand and take creative license with it

Taking each of these in turn:

Rickard's was not about "chugging" beers back with the boys. It was a more distinctive and flavourful beer experience. Our challenge was to appeal to the mainstream drinker with a premium message that did not speak above them. We had to make the "step up" feel natural and unpretentious. We had to be a smart but accessible premium beer.

As for beer clichés, Rickard's did not want to be seen as typical, because frankly it is not. It's a small pub-based draught known for its red beer. It is a bit quirky but it's not silly or juvenile. It does not have scantily clad babes clinging off its shoulders. Yet it's a social beer. We would challenge beer commercial conventions. [Crossover Note 10](#).

This involved drawing on the essence of the brand. Rickard's was born in the pubs of Western Canada. It did not have 100+ years of brewing heritage, but we still decided to focus on what made Rickard's Rickard's. It was simply better beer.

To reach our target we focused on two insights of mainstream beer drinkers in Canada:

- They don't just drink beer, they are in *love* with it
- The pub is a holy ground

Rickard's is not about lifestyle emulation. It is not about frustrated men wanting to be more manly. It is not Stella, drawing on 100 years of history and pouring rituals. It is not about beer stereotypes. [Crossover Note 2](#).

Rickard's is about the reverence of a better liquid. A liquid you wait for in great anticipation. The pour from the bar tap is a spiritual or religious experience. You lust after the distinct colours in anticipation of the great flavour. This is a beer that is meant to be savoured, not chugged. This is not just a drink, it's holy water worthy of great praise.

This led to the Big Idea—*In Praise of Better Beer*.

EXECUTION

The creative celebrates Rickard's in all its glory. A Rickard's drinker walks up to the bartender and orders a pint of Rickard's. As the bartender pulls back the tap, a heavenly ritual ensues. A full Rickard's branded choir begins singing the high praises of the liquid as it is being poured.

The follow-up spot reinforces this campaign theme. Our main character again walks up to the bar and orders a pint of Rickard's. However, this time it is not just the Rickard's choir singing the praises of the liquid. The heavens open, complete with the horses of the apocalypse. A heavenly light shines on the perfectly poured pint of Rickard's and the tagline "A pint of glory" appears.

Whether it was outdoor, in-bar, bathroom ads, beer coasters, TV, live stunts or retail - all the communications showed the Rickard's liquid in all its glory. The tagline sums it up: "A Pint of Glory". We took the idea across Canada. The choir, in robes emblazoned with the Rickard's trademark "R," performed at licensees—much to delighted crowds who remembered the TV ads.

BUSINESS RESULTS

Before the launch of this advertising, Rickard's volume was declining at 8%. Across the Results Period (July 2005 – March 2006) volume is up 13% -- a significant turnaround. In addition, momentum is building, with sales in Q1 of 2006 up 20% versus year ago.

CAUSE & EFFECT BETWEEN ADVERTISING AND RESULTS

In the case of Rickard's, it is very easy to isolate the business results to the effectiveness and quality of the communications. The brand did not have any mass media effort for five years prior. Increases in key qualitative and quantitative measures followed almost immediately after the launch of the new campaign.