

Cassies 2007 Cases

Brand/Case: Auto Trader ‘Come meet your match’

Winner: Off to a Good Start—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 2007 can be downloaded from the Case Library section at www.cassies.ca

- Crossover Note 2.** Brand Truths.
- Crossover Note 9.** Turnarounds.
- Crossover Note 11.** The Eureka Insight.
- Crossover Note 16.** When a campaign stumbles.

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Results Period (Continuous Months): September 2006 – November 2006, March 07 – June 07
Start of Advertising/Communication Effort: September 11, 2006
Base Period for Comparison: August 2006

Used car sales is possibly the most stigmatized and mistrusted category in the world, epitomized by the image of the slippery used car salesman. Little wonder consumers are intimidated by the prospect of buying or selling a used vehicle. Fear of being ripped off; the negative associations of the category and the perception that it's a complex and laborious process all combine to make it one of the most challenging categories to market. Sadly, marketers in the category are their own worst enemy. Advertising has done nothing to improve the negative perceptions.

However, the category is heating up. Empowered by the web a raft of used car "classifieds" are emerging, including Globeauto.com, msnautos.com, ebay, Craigs List and Star Classifieds, and all are stepping up their efforts to attract used car buyers and sellers.

This is the environment that Trader Corporation's Auto Trader faced in the spring of 2006: A category rife with mistrust and a confusing choice of new competitors.

This case will demonstrate that the "Matchmaker" brand idea, and an integrated campaign, re-invigorated the brand. Over the span of the campaign, Autotrader.ca unique visitors grew well ahead of baseline growth and expectations. It was the top online destination for automotive information among men 18-34. And brand health dimensions have shot up in the key areas of awareness, uniqueness/ difference and relevance. **Crossover Note 9.**

SITUATION ANALYSIS

a) Overall Assessment

The used car dealer is considered by many as untrustworthy, unprofessional and out to make a buck. In contrast, people want a process that is as simple as possible and leaves them with the confidence that they have found exactly what they're looking for.

There is an abundance of choice for buyers and sellers to look at. They'll look at daily newspaper classifieds, plus Lease Busters, and Buy and Sell. Online entrants such as msnautos.com, globeauto.com and driving.ca are also gaining force. As well, generalist sites like Craigs List and kijiji are out to attract private online sellers (online generalist users have doubled in the past year and a half from three to six million). And new car dealers are becoming more and more aggressive with their financing and used car deals.

Auto Trader was not getting its fair share of online growth. **Crossover Note 16.** They were losing private online sellers to online competitors at a much faster rate than to print competitors. In Ontario, Auto Trader's private seller market share remained strong for print at 83%, but print/online combined was at only 61%.

b) Resulting Business Objectives

We had to take drastic action to reinvigorate the brand with a whole new identity, create top of mind awareness, contemporize it and connect buyers and sellers on a more emotional level. In doing so, the business goal was to significantly grow online visits and sale postings, something Auto Trader was losing to the competition.

c) Budget Range/Share of Voice

Budgets were limited, at \$2.5M for a national fall campaign and \$1.5M to cover off the busy spring season. And in the online world, Autotrader.ca was outspent by competitors with ingrained histories (vs. Auto Trader's history in magazine).



* 2006 offline not yet available. Measured in thousands.

STRATEGY & INSIGHT

a) Analysis and Insight

Auto Trader needed an overhaul—taking it from folksy, cluttered classifieds to a new contemporized brand. We needed a proposition for Auto Trader that could drive all effort for the brand and further cement it as the leader in used cars.

The first step was to better understand the consumer, their attitudes, beliefs and motivations. For many Canadians, a car is more than a mere possession; it's our lifeline. It's what connects us to our world, and despite environmental efforts, there is little chance of decreasing our dependence on our 4-wheeled friend.

But finding the perfect car can be a challenge. Our target, as defined by a psychographic segmentation study conducted by the agency, is practical and self-reliant. He's more car involved than average and willing to make more effort to find his own vehicle. However, his mistrust of the category creates a catch-22. If Auto Trader could satisfy this guy's quest for simple efficiency and emotional satisfaction we could break the stalemate.

Through qualitative research and metaphor elicitation, we discovered that the relationship a man has with his vehicle, new or used, can be as positive and emotional as the ones he has with the opposite sex. **Crossover Note 2**. If we could leverage this and connect it to Auto Trader we would be on to something big.

b) Communication Strategy:

Society believes in pairing people off—that there is someone out there for us. We extended this romantic idealism to people and their cars: one person’s junker is another person’s dream. And Auto Trader increases the odds of matching buyers and sellers all in one place. Like a great match making service, Auto Trader connects buyers to sellers, and creates the perfect love affair. **Crossover Note 11.**

Now we had to bring the idea to life. In a category characterized by functional hard sell advertising, we saw an opportunity to engage our primarily male target in a way that would resonate emotionally.

CREATIVE EXECUTION

The “Matchmaker” idea was expressed through the following comparison:

Online dating is exploding because it is considerably more attractive than the old way of dating – cruising expensive single bars where you hope you might meet your soulmate. This is why Lavalife, eharmony, and match.com are now household names. And when you think about it, Auto Trader is just like those matchmakers. It enables you to skip the thousands of cars you’d never want to go home with and hook up with the handful you might. It’s far better than scouring classifieds and dealer lots. And a smarter way to meet your match.

A fully integrated campaign launched in September 2006. It spoofed the online dating world by saying that finding your perfect match in life is like finding your perfect car. TV (:30 and :15s), out-of-home (billboards, transit shelters, specialty digital boards) and online all worked to support the new brand positioning.



This ad shows a woman with a tough attitude beside her recently purchased used truck. She's saying that she had big needs, but nothing that a heavy duty truck can't take care of. We see her get very enthusiastic, clapping her hands together and laughing. We then hear her cough due to her excitement. The ad ends with the print/website product name.



This ad shows guys giving testimonials on how it was difficult for them to find the one. One guy says that he has tried many matchmaking services but couldn't find what he was looking for. Another guy says that he started to think that maybe there's no such thing as 'the one', while another guy says that he was ready to give up. We then see an announcer saying to imagine a process that takes your unique needs and matches them with the perfect car. We then see the guys with their perfect car and expressing how happy they are with their match. The ad ends with the print/website product name.



This ad shows a guy leaning on the hood of his recently purchased used car. He talks about how it was love at first sight and that he has a connection unlike any others he has had before. He then says that he is now taken and off the market. The ad ends with the print/website product name.



This ad shows a man leaning on his recently purchased used car. He says that most honeymoons last a week. He then looks at his car with passion and says that this one will last a life time. The ad ends with the print/website product name.

Betty :15, Ben :15, Come Meet Your Match :30, Honeymoon :15

OOH – following the same direction as TV, the OOH used pick up lines. The magazine cover also acted as the sign off, bringing the publication front of mind.



Electronic Superboard



20 x 10 Billboards

Due to the success of the fall campaign, it was a natural fit to extend Matchmaker to Spring 07. With more limited budgets, we continued to run the TV campaign and introduced Metro newspaper with small spaced ads to reach subway riders.



Metro newspaper ads

MEDIA EXECUTION

We launched a fully integrated campaign in September 2006, with TV (30 and 15s), out-of-home (billboards, transit shelters, specialty digital boards) and online all working to support the new positioning.

TV was for mass awareness with our predominantly male audience using music, news and reality TV. OOH was used to communicate in a simple, arresting way to a target on the go. And to create buzz we introduced a superboard at prime locations in Toronto (the Gardiner) and Montreal (heading out of downtown on Fort St.) Digital numbers changed twice a day to show how quickly cars were being sold on Autotrader.ca.

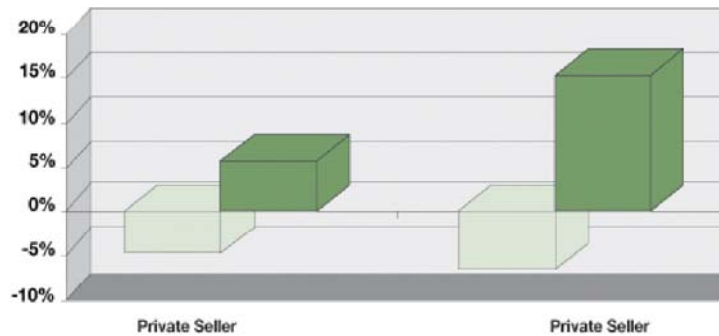
As noted above, we replaced OOH billboards in the spring with a Metro daily remnant buy. (76% of Metro readers own a vehicle and 23% intend to purchase a vehicle in the next year.) The campaign was followed up with specialty digital boards and online support.

BUSINESS RESULTS

The success of the new campaign was based on:

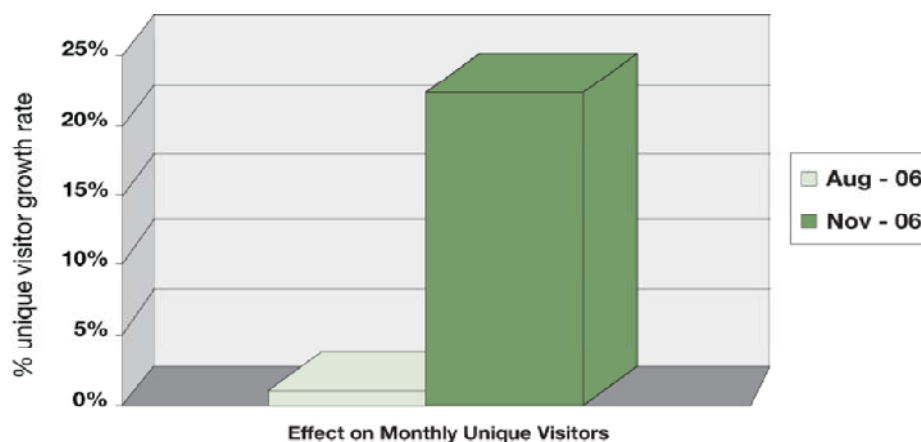
- For buyers, increasing the number of unique visitors to the site
- For sellers, increasing the number of both private and professional sellers

With the launch of the Matchmaker idea in Fall 06, there was an overwhelmingly positive effect on sellers.



Private sellers, which were at -5% in Aug 06, reversed declines and grew at +6%, an 11ppt turnaround. Professional sellers who had been at -7% in August grew to +16% by November, a 23ppt change. (The spring campaign continued the growth. Private sellers grew by +2.2% from February to May and professional sellers grew 12.3% in the same timeframe.)

Meanwhile, Autotrader.ca unique visitors grew on average 20% from August to November and 15% from January to April. This was no small feat given that Autotrader.ca had already been in market for 8 years.



In addition to this, research conducted in March by ComScore Canada shows that Autotrader.ca was the top online destination for automotive information among men 18-34, with household incomes of more than \$60,000.

Website (URL)	% Reach
1. Trader Corporation (autotrader.ca)	22.7
2. Ford Motor Company (ford.ca)	8.3
3. eBay Motors U.S. (motors.ebay.com)	8.0
4. Honda (honda.ca)	6.7

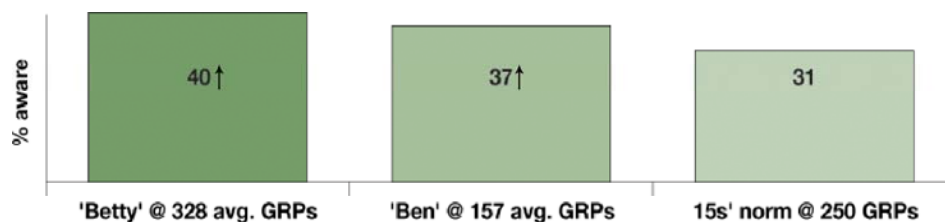
Source: ComScore Canada.

CAUSE & EFFECT BETWEEN ADVERTISING AND RESULTS

Other than the launch of ‘Come meet your match,’ there were no other changes to the Auto Trader environment that would account for changes in results. No changes to either the online or magazine product. No changes to merchandising. No changes to pricing. No changes to distribution. It was the perfect controlled experiment.

The only thing that changed was the advertising. And the link between the advertising and Auto Trader’s brand health scoring further proved the success of the campaign. The brand recall scores were significantly above Ipsos Reid norms. All key strategic attributes tracked grew during the campaign’s duration.

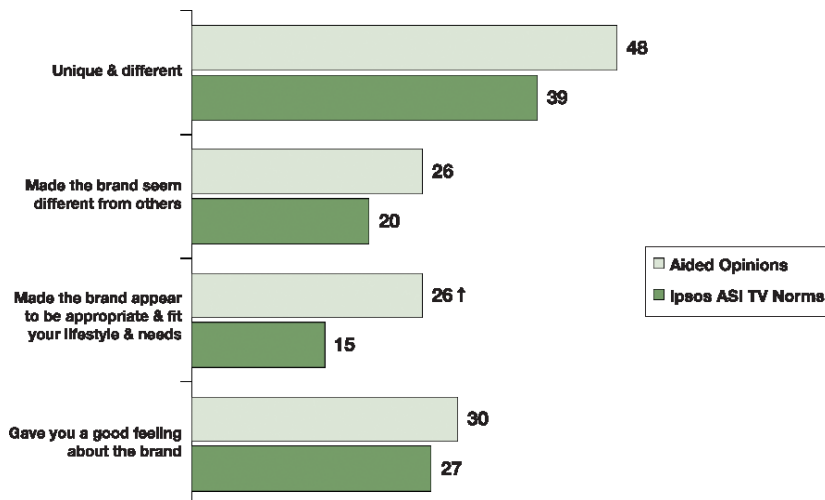
TV campaign - Have you seen this on TV?



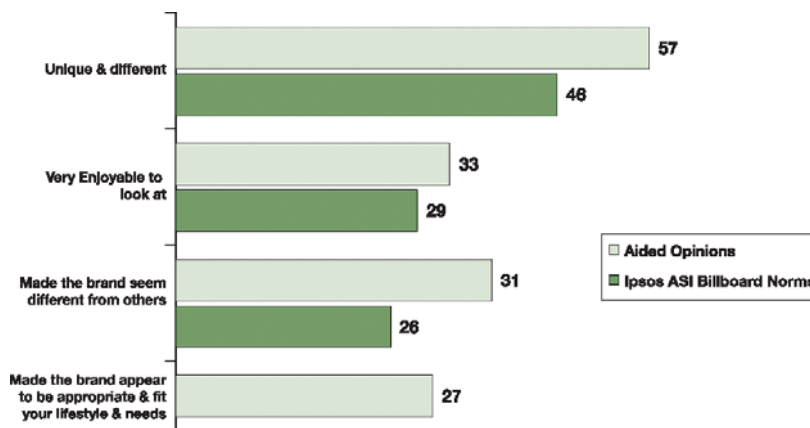
Source: IPSOS-Reid Post Tracking

Both TV and OOH creative outscored norms on the key communication goals:

TV campaign - Aided Opinions



Billboard campaign - Aided Opinions



Tracking also demonstrated significant growth in key measures:

Top of Mind awareness:

- +7 ppt amongst previous users to 69%
- +40 ppt amongst non-users to 71%

Intent to visit/refer to:

- +7 ppt amongst users to 96%
- +18 ppt amongst non-users to 75%

A MUST for shopping used vehicles:

- +3 ppt to 83% amongst users
- +18 ppt to 67% amongst non-users

With a fresh take on used cars, Auto Trader is well on its way to reinventing what was once a stigmatized and unpleasant category.

INTRODUCTION TO CROSSOVER NOTES — CASSIES 2007

[For Auto Trader]

Each year I update these Crossover Notes. If you've read this cover note before, you can skip it. If not, it's worth a quick read.

My career started with a seven year sentence in brand management at Procter & Gamble. Then I clambered up the ladder at O&M, becoming President and later Vice Chairman, all of this in Toronto. Then I set up as a consultant.

P&G and O&M were passionate about "lessons learned" from advertising effort, and so was I. All the Cassies cases have great lessons in them, though at the pace we work today these lessons are not necessarily easy to find.

I was thinking about this as I was editing Cassies 1997, and I had the idea for Crossover Notes. They started as bite-sized footnotes pointing out lessons that "cross over" from one case to another. Then, as time had gone by, they've evolved to what we have today.

You can use Crossover Notes in two ways. Although they weren't designed as a crash course in advertising, they are worth reading as a whole. You can also dip into them selectively. The headings on the next page will help you choose.

I've tried to be even-handed on controversial issues, but here and there you will sense my point of view. For this I thank the Cassies for not editing their Editor.

We now have close to 200 published cases. And I hope I've helped pass some of the learning on.

David Rutherford

Toronto: January 2008.

For more on brand-building see *Excellence in Brand Communication*—by leading Canadians from across the marketing and advertising spectrum. See also *Vulcans. Earthlings and Marketing ROI*, commissioned by the ICA, and published by Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

See www.ica.adbeast.com.

INDEX OF CROSSOVER NOTES FOR CASSIES 2007

All Cases		Auto Trader
1.	What a Brand Stands For.	
2.	Brand Truths.	✓
3.	Core Equity versus Price & Promotion.	
4.	Business Strategy dictated by the Brand Positioning.	
5.	The Total Brand Experience.	
6.	Should the product be improved?	
7.	Fighting for the Same High Ground.	
8.	Classic Rivalries.	
9.	Turnarounds.	✓
10.	Conventional Wisdom—should it be challenged?	
11.	The Eureka Insight.	✓
12.	Changing the Goalposts.	
13.	Immediate vs. Long-Term Effect.	
14.	Refreshing a continuing campaign.	
15.	Baby with the Bathwater.	
16.	When a campaign stumbles.	✓
17.	Turning a liability into a strength.	
18.	Keeping it Simple.	
19.	Great minds think alike.	
20.	Emotional versus Rational.	
21.	Likeability.	
22.	Humour in a Serious Category.	
23.	Problem versus Solution.	
24.	Tough Topics.	
25.	Brand Linkage (when should the brand name appear).	
26.	Awareness Alone.	
27.	Share of Mind, Share of Voice, Spending.	
28.	Media Learning.	
29.	Pre-emptive Media.	
30.	Reach and Frequency versus Large-Space Impact.	
31.	Transcending Advertising.	
32.	Internal Marketing.	
33.	Changing the Target Audience.	
34.	Longer and Broader Effects, and A Closing Thought.	

The Notes for this case are marked ✓ and come next.

Note: Cassies uses “advertising” in its broad sense. It not only stands for advertising through the main media of broadcast, print, out of home etc. Where appropriate, it also stands for Direct Marketing, PR, Interactive Marketing, Buzz Marketing, Event Marketing, Product Placement etc.

AUTO TRADER CROSSOVER NOTES FOR CASSIES 2007

- 2. Brand Truths.** Successful advertising (in fact all successful communication) resonates with its audience. As a marketer, you may want people to believe that you have the best-tasting coffee, but simply saying, “I have the best-tasting coffee” will not usually get the resonance you need. One school of thought believes in saying the obvious as loudly and even as crassly as you can. We could call it the Bad Boy syndrome. Another has led to the idea of Brand Truths. These operate on a deeper level than simple claims. One of the top UK agencies described the process as “we interrogate the product until it confesses its strength.”

I was once the Brand Manager on Tide, and when we were asked, “What does Tide stand for” we said, “Superior cleaning. Not whitening. Not Brightening. Not Fabric Care. Superior *cleaning*.”¹

Superior cleaning was the religion on Tide, and Tide delivered, despite the cliché that all detergents are alike. But this was only a glimmer of the Brand Truth. If you “interrogated” Tide the most startling truth was the *intense belief* of Tide users. This came to life in the immensely successful “Two for One Swap” campaign. Hidden cameras watched as women who had just bought Tide were offered two boxes of another good detergent in exchange. They adamantly refused, delivering off-the-cuff endorsements that no copywriter could ever have written. The campaign ran for years, and only came to an end because of its success—women knew it so well that the “candid camera” interview became impossible. Many Brand Truths are also insights, and for a list see [11. The Eureka Insight](#) and [12. Changing the Goalposts](#).

- 9. Turnarounds.** There are a number of these in the Cassies:

Cassies I, II, II, 99

- Crispy Crunch. Molson Canadian.
- Pepsi. Quebec. Listerine. Quebec.
- Oh Hungry? Oh Henry. Dove. “Litmus.”
- Molson Canadian. “I AM.”
- Philadelphia Cream Cheese.
- becel. “Young at Heart” Eggs. Wonder Bread
- Sunlight. “Go Ahead. Get Dirty.”

Cassies 2001 and 2002

- Kraft Dinner.
- Lipton Chicken Noodle
- BMO Quebec.
- Campbell’s Soup. Listerine.
- CFL. Pro•Line.
- Easter Seals Relay.
- Sleeman Quebec.

Cassies 2004

- Cottonelle.
- Gaz Metro.
- Kit Kat.
- Milk (Quebec and Prairies).
- Toyota Sienna.

Cassies 2005

- Crescendo.
- Energizer Lithium.
- Toyota Tacoma.
- Eggo French Toast Stix.
- Twix. Hubba Bubba. Juicy Fruit.
- Coricidin II.
- Moores and Harvey’s.
- Quebec Lotto 6/49.
- Pepsi – Quebec and Quebec Milk.

¹ P&G defined “what the brand stands for” by a document they called the Creative Strategy. In those days, if anyone dreamt that the Tide Creative Strategy should include whitening, brightening etc. it was seen as an offence against all that was holy. Since then, P&G has changed its views, and now takes a broader view—as recent Tide advertising for fabric care and Tide-with-Febreze attest.

Cassies 2003

- Aero. Bait Cars.
- Crown Diamond Paint.
- Dodge SX 2.0. Motrin.
- Pro•Line. Super 7.
- Université de Montréal.
- VodKice.

Cassies 2006

- Gatorade. Eterna.
- Wonderbread
- Couche Tard
- Grolsch
- Rickard's
- Trident

11. The Eureka Insight. These feature in many cases. Some examples:

- Oh Henry! Gut-fillers had tried to own hunger. Cassies II and *Crossover Note 7*.
- Buckley's. Rather than side-step their bad taste, Buckley's relished it. Cassies III.
- Chrysler. Used *emotion* as the key to an immensely successful launch. Cassies III.
- Philadelphia Cream Cheese. Creating "permission to indulge." Cassies III.
- Richmond Savings. Creating the "Humungous Bank." Cassies III.
- Eggs. (See also *12. Changing the Goalposts*.) Farmers brought "natural" to life.
- Sunlight. Getting dirty is fun. This is diametrically opposed to the conventional wisdom, dominated by Tide, that clean is good and dirt is bad. Cassies 99.
- Fido in Cassies 99. In an echo of Apple vs. IBM, Fido saw that consumers needed the human touch. See also Clearnet and "the future is friendly" in Cassies 2001.
- Diet Pepsi in Cassies 2002. The "forever young" campaign.
- Listerine in Cassies 2002. Healthy gums, after a century of bad breath.
- Pro•Line in Cassies 2002. Appealed to non-experts with "Anyone can win."
- Aero. Saw the power of "melting" in Cassies 2003.
- Super 7. Ignored the political correctness of being tasteful. Cassies 2003.
- Quebec Milk. Saw the obvious. Asked people to drink more. Cassies 2004 and 2005.
- Toyota Sienna. Realized that the answer lay not in what SUV buyers do. Cassies 2004.
- Irving's Cruisin' to Win. Saw the power of *small* prizes. Cassies 2005.
- Crescendo. Like Oh Henry! saw unoccupied high ground. Cassies 2005.
- Butter. Saw a way to use "natural" to connote taste and health. Cassies 2005.
- Anti-Smoking. Saw the power of "Stupid." Cassies 2005.
- Jergens Ultra Care. Saw a way to reposition skin. Cassies 2005.
- Whiskas. Saw things from the *cat's* point of view. Cassies 2005.
- Moores. Used the fact that their target audience hates shopping. Cassies 2005.
- Harvey's. Realized the significance of The Grill. Cassies 2005
- Quebec Lotto 6/49. Realized that 6/49 winners are generous, so be nice to them.
- United Way. Saw power in the Hand icon. Cassies 2005
- CIBC Run for the Cure. Saw the power in the Pinnie idea. Cassies 2005
- Juicy Fruit. Saw how to build a new image by destroying the old one. Cassies 2005
- Yaris. Realized that you *could* use aspiration in the sub-compact category. Cassies 2006.
- WestJet saw the power in the "owners" idea. Cassies 2006 and 2007.
- Monster saw the power in the "best boss" idea. Cassies 2006.
- Dove. Saw the leverage in the Self-Esteem Fund. Cassies 2007.
- Brita. Changed how we think about tap water for ever.
- SpongeTowels. Brought absorbency to life, almost literally.
- Benylin. Realized what we really want to do!
- Newfoundland. Realized that the problem was the opportunity.
- Plus virtually all the cases in *Crossover Note 10*.

16. When a campaign stumbles. This might be a momentary stutter and (if we were clairvoyant) we would make whatever minor fix was needed. But it might be the first clue that something is going off the rails. In this situation, the pressure can lead to snap (and wrong) judgments. The best answer usually comes from a blend of experience, judgment, intuition, vision, and research. Here are some pointers.

1. **Dig deep into trends and tastes.** You could be on the wrong side of a tectonic shift. “Made in Japan” used to mean a cheap, shlocky, knock-off, and North American business took years to recognize the threat that was coming from Japan. Consider Listerine. The famous slogan “Always a bridesmaid, but never a bride” started life in a Listerine advertisement, reflecting a bad breath positioning that had been in place for as long as anyone can remember. But Listerine saw the shift towards the idea of a healthy mouth. (See Cassies 1995 and 2002). Something similar happened in toothpaste. At one time, Pepsodent (“you’ll wonder where the yellow went...”) was the leader, and whitening was the high ground. Then Crest came with fluoride (and dental association endorsement), and Pepsodent slid into history. Then, over a generation, cavities stopped being the problem they once were.² The market shifted towards “mouth health” and Colgate got there first with Colgate Total, knocking Crest off its #1 perch. Crest responded with Crest Complete—and now the whole market has come full circle with a furious battle for whitening again.
2. **Look at the goalposts.** If they really haven’t changed, then it’s likely that you just have a short-term stutter. But if they have, try to envisage the new game. See *11. The Eureka Insight*, and *12. Changing the Goalposts*.
3. **Think through the change needed.** See *6. Should the product be improved?* and *14. Refreshing a Continuing Campaign*.
4. **Change for the right reasons.** It’s broadly true that long-running campaigns—kept fresh and relevant—are great brand-builders. And it’s sadly true that new people, wanting to make their mark, change things for change’s sake. But once in a while, major change is needed. Molson Canadian (Cassies I) was a niche player when it launched “What Beer’s all About” in the late 80s. This campaign helped turn Canadian into a mainstream beer, and it displaced Labatt Blue as market leader. They kept going with “What Beer’s all About” for a few years. But they also stayed alert to the need for change, in particular watching the appeal ratings with the younger legal-age drinker. This led them to launch the “I AM” campaign (Cassies III). This was successful, but eventually it ran out of steam. They re-incarnated with “Joe’s Rant” (Cassies 2001). But this, in the words of the 2006 Molson case, turned out to be a glorious one off as Molson—along with other mainstream brands—ran into the onslaught of the “24 for \$24” crowd.

Separately, though this time the need for change more obvious, Juicy Fruit (almost literally) destroyed its former squeaky clean image with the guitar-smashing campaign. (Cassies 2005.) And in Cassies 2007, Benylin realized that the “trooper” attitude in all its competitors could be challenged.

² Ironically, Crest helped make this happen by virtue of its sustained “no cavities” marketing.