

Cassies 2007 Cases

Brand/Case: SpongeTowels (English Canada)

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 1. What a Brand Stands For.
- Crossover Note 3. Core Equity versus Price and Promotion.
- Crossover Note 6. Should the product be improved?
- Crossover Note 11. The Eureka Insight.
- Crossover Note 16. When a campaign stumbles.
- Crossover Note 21. Likeability.

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Results Period (Continuous Months):	October 1, 2006 – May 12, 2007
Start of Advertising/Communication Effort:	September 25, 2006
Base Period for Comparison:	October 2, 2005 – May 13, 2006

"It is not a matter of what is true that counts, but a matter of what is perceived to be true."

Henry Kissinger

The SpongeTowels brand team knew this too well.

Blind testing showed that consumers preferred SpongeTowels on a number of functional measures, but Bounty dominated perceptions for quality and efficacy year after year.¹

As the SpongeTowels brand embarked on its first campaign following the transition from the ScotTowels name, market share was disappointing, and it was time to take on these misconceptions and target Bounty's superiority once and for all.

This would not be easy given the brand equity and resources that Bounty had at its disposal. We had to find a way to break through.

The resulting advertising campaign added close to a full share point during its first 8 months, with volume sales up 7% in a flat market. While this increase may not at face value appear to be overly significant, it represented incremental sales of \$2.2MM in just 8 months: a real accomplishment given the challenges facing the brand. In addition, there were strong and encouraging shifts in brand attributes and imagery.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

a) Overall Assessment

Kimberly-Clark had licenced the ScotTowels name to Kruger Products in Canada, but this agreement would expire in June 2007. Consequently, by the Spring of 2006, Kruger had transitioned the ScotTowels brand to SpongeTowels.

At the time, there were two main branded competitors: Bounty and SpongeTowels (though Kimberly-Clark might also choose to bring ScotTowels back in 2007).

The strength of the Bounty brand was indisputable. Repeated blind tests showed that consumers preferred SpongeTowels on a number of measures, including overall performance. However, when the brands were identified, Bounty always outperformed SpongeTowels. Bounty also dominated top of mind awareness at 55%, versus 19% for SpongeTowels. Claimed usage also netted out in Bounty's favour with 61% of consumers claiming to have used Bounty in the past 6 months, versus 47% for SpongeTowels.

¹ Various Authors, Paper Towel Consumer Use Research, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006

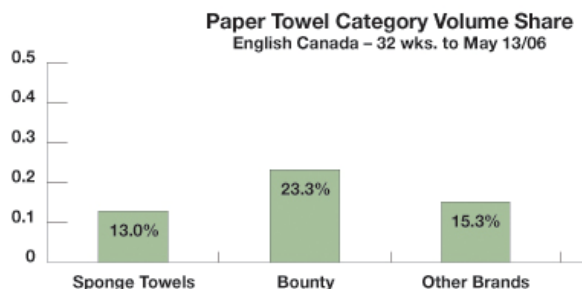
This dominance was the result of a few factors. Bounty had always had product efficacy as the basis of their advertising. Side-by-side demonstrations for strength, thickness and absorbency ran year after year—supported by their calling card, the “Quicker, Picker, Upper.”

Secondly, Bounty had technical superiority on a number of levels, and was perceived to be the leader for innovation. **Crossover Note 6**. Product news came via side by side demonstrations of superiority on key attributes, and through the introduction of line extensions like Bounty Glass & Mirror. Much of the time this “news” was based on simple changes like an adjustment in embossing pattern, or positioning the brand for specialty use, but it played a role in building Bounty’s perception as the gold standard.

Finally, Bounty had an overwhelming share of voice. It had been heavily supported in the U.S. before the launch in Canada in the 1980s—leading to significant awareness even before it was available. Additionally, U.S. spillover supported the Canadian Bounty message. We estimate that the \$75MM - \$85MM annual US advertising budget translated into \$1.5MM to \$2MM in value in Canada. That was on top of a healthy 52-week media presence originating in Canada, and it would translate into a 65% -70% share of voice.

Just before the start of this new SpongeTowels campaign, Bounty had a 23.3% share of volume in English Canada, versus SpongeTowels at 13.0%. This was concerning given that only 3 years earlier the brand (then ScotTowels) had been the share leader.

Separately, we also had to take account of the fact that Private Label had a 47% share. For many consumers price trumped all else. **Crossover Note 3**. This was supported by research conducted by Kruger in March of 2006. It showed that Private Label was much better than branded competitors at converting sales at the point of purchase. The same study amplified this by finding that the shopping time of the category was only 11 seconds.²



ACNielsen Markettrack, Sales Tonnage Equiv. Case, English Canada, 32 wks ending May 13, 2006

² EnviroSell, Bathroom Tissue and Paper Towel Shopping Behaviour Highlights, March 2006

From an advertising point of view, SpongeTowels had historically tried to differentiate itself by being the “real life” solution provider. Where Bounty was the “clinical, scientific, fabricated demonstration brand,” SpongeTowels was the “we take on real life messes that you have actually experienced” brand—using lighter, more entertaining ways to communicate product efficacy.

Consumers liked the brand and its messaging (Crossover Note 21), but this was not getting SpongeTowels on par with Bounty for perceptions of quality. Crossover Note 16. Further, there was a problem of message attribution. Because of Bounty’s dominance consumers would attribute SpongeTowels messages to them, making it even more of a challenge for Sponge Towels to change perceptions.

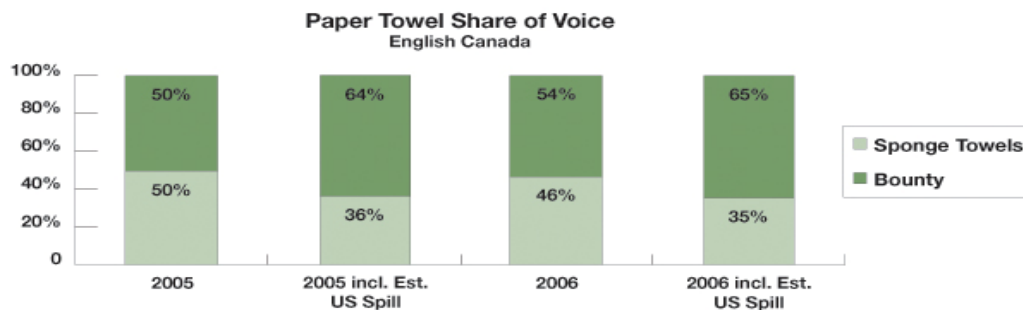
The time was ripe to revisit the creative strategy and take a more aggressive tack—while lightening up a bland and boring category.

b) Resulting Business Objectives

- Drive volume and share through aggressive, differentiated communication targeted at Bounty.
- Reinforce the SpongeTowels name through a demonstration of its uniqueness.

c) Budget Range/Share of Voice

Spending in this category was approximately \$3.9MM in English Canada in 2005. In 2006, it increased to \$4.7MM driven primarily by Bounty. As indicated earlier, U.S. spill also played a significant role. The net result was that SpongeTowels was outspent, as indicated in the chart:



Source: Nielsen Media Canada and USA. (U.S. Spill estimated at 5% of U.S. National Television spend and 4% of Magazine spend.)

STRATEGY & INSIGHT

Consumer research and segmentation helped us learn that a significant number of women 25-54 were not necessarily motivated by the Bounty story. They were too busy enjoying their lives to be concerned with whether a soaking wet paper towel could hold eight billiard balls or scrub a crusty pan. Those weren’t “real” scenarios.

Since Bounty was all but defining the category on functional benefits, we felt there was an opportunity to own the hearts of women 25-54 by entertaining them and connecting more with their lives. However, we also had to demonstrate our product quality and efficacy in a more aggressive and ownable way.

The SpongeTowels name was a good place to start. It came from a little-communicated descriptor for ScotTowels: “sponge pocket embossing.” [Crossover Note 11](#).

As one of the more important attributes in the category, absorbency was an opportunity for focus. Additionally, we knew it was a strength because of the unbranded research referred to earlier. SpongeTowels had a 46/30 preference over Bounty. [Crossover Note 1](#).

The challenge was to bring this to life, and it was out of this that the “Sponge Pockets” were born.

CREATIVE EXECUTION

The advertising started at the end of September with a 30 second TV ad. “Jug” featured a little girl with the daunting task of carrying a full juice pitcher from the refrigerator to the kitchen counter. It’s a recipe for disaster. As anticipated, the pitcher hits the floor and a bevy of chubby Sponge Pocket guys pounce on the spill to clean it up. We then connect the guys with the embossing pattern and hence the performance of the product.



In early 2007, we ran two 15 second commercials in rotation with “Jug.” “Water Cooler” featured a single Sponge Pocket guy demonstrating absorbency by emptying a water cooler in one gulp. “Tub” featured a different Sponge Pocket taking a bath, but having difficulty filling the tub because he absorbed the water as quickly as it came in.

Both 15-second spots ended with the same animated sequence in “Jug”, connecting the Sponge Pockets with the embossing pattern, to connect the functional benefit with the product. They also closed with a more aggressive tagline, “Nothing Absorbs Like It.”

Water Cooler :15



Tub :15



In-store shelf banner advertising was also developed to reinforce the television message and take advantage of the point of purchase in converting the sale. The creative featured our Sponge Pocket characters eagerly anticipating a spill supported by the copy line: “SpongeTowels. The only one with Sponge Pockets.”

MEDIA EXECUTION

With a limited budget, television and in-store were the focus. Television was critical in bringing these characters to life. In-store recognized the importance of triggering top of mind awareness at shelf to have an impact on purchase decision.

“Jug” went on air in late September. “Water Cooler :15” and “Tub :15”, went on air in early February in rotation with “Jug”. The in-store shelf banners ran in two 4-week flights in October and December.

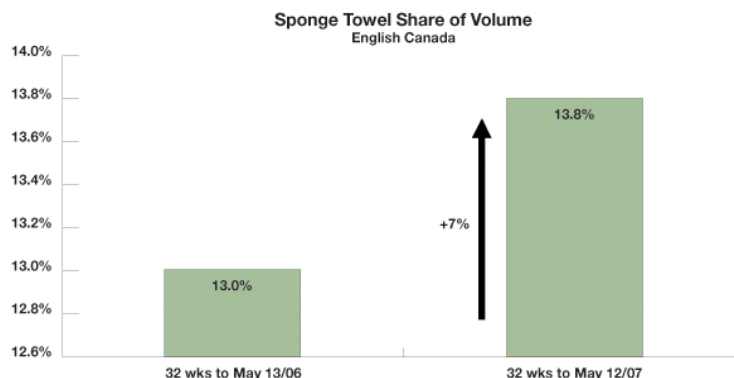
BUSINESS RESULTS

In order to be deemed a success, the advertising would have to positively impact the following areas of the business:

1. Sales and Share
2. Product Quality Perceptions versus Bounty
3. Brand Name Awareness and Differentiation

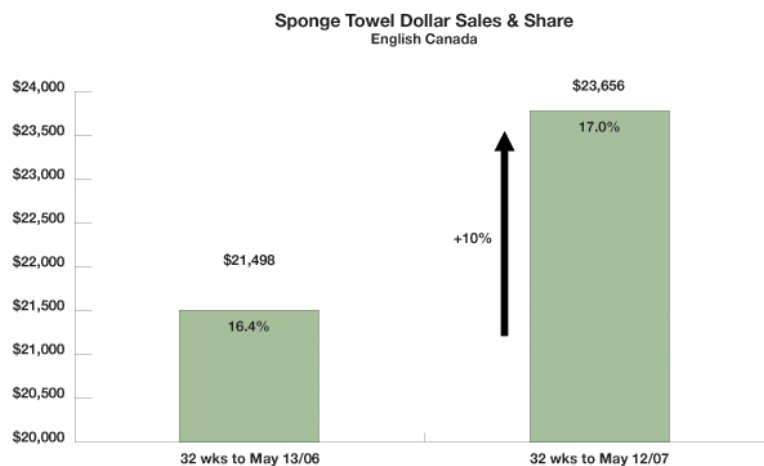
1. Sales and Share

During the 8 months after the launch of the advertising, SpongeTowels volume sales were +7% versus the same period the prior year while the category was flat. While this increase does not at face value appear to be significant, it represented incremental sales of \$2.2MM: a real accomplishment given the challenges facing the brand:



Source: ACNielsen Markettrack, English Canada, 32 wks ending May 13, 2006 and May 12, 2007

This growth represented a 10% growth in dollar sales over the 8-month period. This means that the gains in volume were accompanied by an increase in average price, which is impressive given the price sensitivity of the category.



Source: ACNielsen Markettrack, 32 wks ending May 13, 2006 and May 12, 2007

2. Product Quality Perceptions versus Bounty

In creative testing 89% of respondents exposed to “Jug” said that it gave them a positive opinion of the brand and 80% said that their opinion of the brand improved after watching the spot. This research found that the advertising “communicated that the product was a high quality, highly absorbent towel that was competitive with Bounty.”³

³ Camelford Graham Research Group, SpongeTowels Adlab, February 2006

Additionally, after only 6 months of advertising, national tracking demonstrated a marked improvement in quality perceptions overall and relative to Bounty. (See Exhibit I)

SpongeTowels increased the average performance rating across the four key attributes by 15% during the first 6 months of the campaign, and the brand's ratings relative to Bounty also increased, reducing the gap in perceived product quality from 1.2 pts to 0.5 pts.⁴

Exhibit 1	Fall 2005	Gap vs. Bounty	Spring 2007	Chg vs. yago	Gap vs. Bounty
Overall Quality	7.3	-1.0	8.2	+12%	-0.6
Thickness	7.1	-1.2	8.3	+17%	-0.5
Absorbency	7.2	-1.3	8.4	+17%	-0.5
Strenght	7.2	-1.2	8.1	+13%	-0.7
Average	7.2	-1.2	8.3	+15%	-0.5

Source: Burak Jacobson, Paper Towel Tracking Research, Fall 2005 – Spring 2006

Bearing in mind how difficult it had been for SpongeTowels to get credit for its advertising up against Bounty, this break through was of tantamount importance.

Creative testing of “Jug” also showed that the spot delivered the “whole package,” with ratings that were significantly above norms for emotional response and uniqueness/brand impact.⁵

Above Norms 61st Percentile or Higher		
		Percentile
Emotional Response	Overall Reaction	86
	Overall Liking	95
	Enjoy Watching >1	95
Uniqueness and Brand Impact	Look & Feel Unique	91
	Capturead Attention	94
	Held Attention	95

Source: Camelford Graham Research Group, SpongeTowels Adlab, February 2006

⁴ Burak Jacobson, Paper Towel Tracking Research – English Canada, Fall 2005 – Spring 2006

⁵ Camelford Graham Research Group, SpongeTowels Adlab, February 2006

Tracking research following the introduction of “Jug” showed that brand link with the advertising had improved over previous campaigns from 30% to 39% and the brand’s association with the Sponge Pockets had more than doubled, going from 25% to 55%.⁶ Clearly, the uniqueness and emotional resonance of the advertising was contributing to strong gains in branding and differentiation.

G. CAUSE & EFFECT BETWEEN ADVERTISING AND RESULTS

As indicated earlier, SpongeTowels had dollar sales growth greater than volume growth (10% versus 7%). This indicates that the product was being sold at a higher price point than in the previous year, negating the impact of price promotion. Further, there was no price increase during this period that would have impacted sales.

Additionally, creative research showed above norm purchase intent with 76% of those exposed to the ads indicating that they would definitely or probably buy SpongeTowels the next time they bought paper towels.⁷

Also, despite the fact that Bounty substantially increased spending during this period, (which would have offset our advertising to some extent), we were able to improve brand awareness, distinctiveness, and quality perceptions.

All in all, this case demonstrates that entertaining, unignorable advertising that resonates with consumers can make an impact in even the driest, most commoditized of categories.

It also illustrates that you don’t need to be serious to communicate quality and drive sales.

Most importantly it shows that a brand that appears disadvantaged versus the competition can take a powerful product-linked story and use it to change long standing perceptions in a very short period of time.

⁶ Burak Jacobson, Paper Towel Tracking Research, English Canada, Fall 2005 – Spring 2006

⁷ Camelford Graham Research Group, SpongeTowels Adlab, February 2006

INTRODUCTION TO CROSSOVER NOTES — CASSIES 2007

[For Sponge Towel – English Canada]

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.

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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.

SPONGE TOWEL, ENGLISH CANADA CROSSOVER NOTES FOR CASSIES 2007

1. **What a Brand Stands For.** People in real life hardly give the deeper meaning of brands a second thought. They know that some appeal more than others. They may have a sense that brands jostle for their attention. But that's about it. They certainly don't agonize over the *essence* of this, or the *brand truth* of that.

That said, branding goes deeper than we in marketing may realize. Before marketing was even thought of, branding was part of life. Everything from national flags, to coinage, to the uniforms of soldiers, boy scouts and Supreme Court judges, to the plumage on peacocks (human and otherwise), is a form of branding. Business had an early example in the 1800s when Harley Procter of P&G heard a pastor quote a biblical text about ivory palaces. Goodbye Procter & Gamble White Soap. Hello Ivory. More recently, Tom Peters published *A Brand Called You*. And Tony Blair tried to re-brand the UK as "Cool Britannia."

A brand, in the fullest sense, is hard to define. Dictionary definitions tend to focus on the trademark aspect, and yes, branding does involve some sort of identifying mark. But this misses the point. What makes a brand valuable?

*The answer is The Advantage of Belief.*¹ Charles Revson of Revlon famously said, "In the factory we make cosmetics. In the store we sell hope." In other words, a brand is not a product; it's what people *believe* about a product. These beliefs can be immensely powerful. The most astonishing is the placebo effect. In clinical trials, many patients respond to the "sugar pill," even when they have serious diseases. We see the same thing with blind and identified product tests. With a strong brand, the preference jumps. (See *What's in a Name* by John Philip Jones.) And when the Advantage of Belief takes hold, it leads to a long list of benefits:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| a) Customer loyalty | e) Facilitating brand extensions |
| b) Higher price | f) Withstanding competitive attack |
| c) Higher cash flows | g) Motivating staff and attracting new talent |
| d) Higher long-term profitability | h) Potentially augmenting the stock price |

This doesn't, of course, answer the question, "how do you build these beliefs?" There are widely varying notions, but most people agree on the basic principles: (1) stake out what the brand can and should stand for (2) stick with this over time (3) evolve to account for lessons learned and market changes.²

This can't be done by empty promises. We have to assess what consumers want against what the product delivers—and tell the story better than competitors do. We have a melting pot of perceptions and reality to work with. All the "brand" ideas are there to help—Brand Image, Equity, Personality, Character, Essence, Relationship, Footprint, Truth, Soul, Identity, and so on—along with old faithfuls like Positioning, Focus of Sale, USP, Features, Attributes, Benefits and Values. Whatever the terminology, though, the brand has to stand for something relevant and different in the consumer's mind. See also *Crossover Note 26*.

¹ This is a phrase of mine, though the idea that a brand is "more" has been described by many authors.

² How do you do this? See *Excellence in Brand Communication*: www.ica.adbeast.com

- 3. Core Equity versus Price & Promotion.** From a financial point of view, a brand is not an abstract notion. It has to make good money, and it has to be valuable if you want to sell it. If a brand is under price and promotion pressure you have to make tough decisions. If you don't fight fire with fire, you lose business in the short term. But if you don't invest in brand-building, you're likely to lose more over the long term.

This is the choice between a "clear and present danger" and a "worse but less immediate one." It's hard to get it right, and we probably succumb more than we should to short-term pressures. Fido in Cassies 99; Clearnet and KD in Cassies 2001; Nautilus and Sidekicks in Cassies 2002; Molson's Bubba, Dodge SX 2.0, Manitoba Telecom, MINI, Sola Nero and Toyota Matrix in Cassies 2003; Cottonelle, Réno Dépôt and Toyota Sienna in Cassies 2004; All Bran, K&G Stores, Energizer Lithium, Hubba Bubba, Moores, Stouffer's Bistro and Familiprix in Cassies 2005, and Telus and Honda Quebec in Cassies 2007 all faced this issue. All emphasized brand value, rather than price and promotion.

Note: "Core Equity" is one of those terms with more than one meaning. One relates to the "bundle of meanings" in the audience's mind. The other is the equity in financial terms. This is a developing area, and for more information contact the ICA about the publication *Measuring And Valuing Brand Equity*, and the book *Vulcans, Earthlings and Marketing ROI*.

- 6. Should the product be improved?** Some years ago it was an axiom that your product, functionally, had to have an advantage over competitors. In packaged goods, it was considered foolish to launch a new brand unless it was a blind test winner over its major competitor—ideally overall, and at least for a desirable benefit.³

That thinking has shifted, and it's commonly said today that it's impossible to sustain a functional advantage for very long; that competition can match you in a matter of weeks or months—or even days with some technological products.

This has had a paradoxical effect. Some people are almost frenzied in their desire to keep their product (or service) improving, fearing that if they don't, they will be left behind. Others go into a slipstream mode—letting others tackle the headwinds, then matching what they do.

John Philip Jones (the Professor of Communication at Syracuse University) is vocal in saying that we do *not* live in a parity world—that imitators may try to match the innovators, but they often don't quite succeed. His view (and I share it) is that it is dangerously complacent to assume that functional parity is the way of the world.

Another danger is the belief that "marketing" can compensate for a weak product. This led to the debacle a decade or two ago when North America systematically under-invested in product. The Japanese, and later the Europeans and others, did exactly the opposite—and carved out the market shares we see today.

There's no question that the cost to upgrade can be daunting. Nevertheless, many cases reflect the investment. For example:

³ There was always the "pre-emptive" possibility i.e. staking out a convincing claim for a parity benefit before anyone else did. But, in general, having a product edge was seen as important

- Listerine in Quebec in Cassies II, with an improved taste.
- Chrysler with the NS Minivan, and Pontiac Sunfire in Cassies III.
- St Hubert in Cassies 99, upgrading their entire operation.
- Sunlight in Cassies 99, with improved cleaning.
- Home Furnace and Lipton Sidekicks in Cassies 2002.
- Irving Mainway Coffee, Source Yogurt, MINI and Motrin in Cassies 2003.
- VodKice in Cassies 2003, remodelling the Boomerang portfolio.
- Cirque du Soleil in Cassies 2004, by adding Zumanity to their portfolio.
- Kit Kat in Cassies 2004, keeping Original the same, but launching Chunky.
- Toyota Sienna in Cassies 2004, with multiple upgrades.
- Coricidin II in Cassies 2005. (Re-launching after the original brand had been withdrawn.)
- Penaten, Hubba Bubba, Stouffer's Bistro, & Juicy Fruit line extensions in Cassies 2005.
- Wonderbread and Trident in Cassies 2006.

Still others achieve their gains with no change—though the existing product is in all cases good, and sometimes better than the competition. These cases include:

- Crispy Crunch and Pepsi Quebec in Cassies I.
- Oh Henry! in Cassies II.
- Buckley's, Dove, and Philadelphia Cream Cheese in Cassies III.
- Eggs, becel, and Wonderbread in Cassies 99.
- Kraft Dinner and Lipton Chicken Noodle in Cassies 2001.
- Campbell's, Diet Pepsi, Listerine, and Pro•Line in Cassies 2002.
- All the major beer winners over the years.
- Aero, Dodge SX 2.0, Familiprix, Super 7, in Cassies 2003.
- Cottonelle and Milk in Cassies 2004.
- Crescendo, Jergens Ultra Care, Whiskas, Twix, Energizer Lithium, Moores, and Familiprix in Cassies 2005.
- Chocolate Milk, Gatorade, Listerine, Baileys in 2006.
- Brita in 2007.

Technology cases usually have improvements. Services usually improve as part of the "total brand experience." Some cases (e.g. Clearnet in 2001 and Lipton Sidekicks in Cassies 2002) say that if your functional advantage is going to be matched, you'd better develop an advantage through brand personality/character/equity.

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.⁴ 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.

⁴ Ironically, Crest helped make this happen by virtue of its sustained "no cavities" marketing.

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.

- 21. Likeability.** Nowadays, it's generally felt that advertising should be *likeable*, as part of the need to "engage" people. But there was a time when the opposite school of thought had a strong following. The poster-child for this was the "Ring around the Collar" campaign for Wisk—highly disliked *and* highly effective.

Dissonant views on likeability, in part, reflect the long-running feud between creativity and selling power—do they work together, or does creativity get in the way? Cassies winners demonstrate that *they work together*, and we can hope for the day when this ancient vendetta is put to rest.

It may seem strange now, but likeability was not especially top of mind, until a paper in the mid 80s by Alex Biel. Later, in the early 90s, the Advertising Research Foundation caused another stir with its ARF Copy Research Validity Project.⁵ The results showed that the then major copy tests had some modest predictive ability on shipments and share, but no technique did particularly well. This caused a blizzard of rebuttal from the research firms. But it also caused a surprise. Likeability, which until then had been seen as a bit of a non-issue, was (apparently) one of the better predictors of in-market success.

⁵ The idea was simple. Find commercials that had proven their effectiveness – or not -- via split-cable test markets – and submit them to the major quantitative pre-testing techniques. The techniques would then "predict" effectiveness, and this could be compared to what had actually happened. For technical reasons, the test required pairs of commercials for the same brand (to remove the "brand" effect). It was hard to find these pairs, but eventually five pairs were validated. The small sample caused some concern, but other than that it was an extremely rigorous test.

A bandwagon started. For a lot of people their mental model is that advertising has to (mostly) entertain to do its job. They seized on the “entertaining” meaning of liking. Others pointed out that “liking” is more complex than this. Alex Biel found that it is closer to “meaningfulness” than “entertainment.” Others say that it is a combination of positives (Entertaining, Relevant, Newsworthy, Empathetic) and/or the absence of negatives (Unfamiliar, Confusing, Alienating). In other words, it’s simplistic to assume that likeability is a synonym for “entertaining.”

In the Cassies, much of the advertising is likeable in the ordinary sense of the word, but some (Big Brothers Vancouver, Dove Litmus, Ethical Funds, Pfizer’s ED, SAAQ’s anti-speeding, Canadian Blood Services, Motrin, United Way, Leucan, Run for the Cure) could only be called likeable in the “meaningful” sense.

And then, as with so much in advertising, there are exceptions. Tim Broadbent, in his speech at Cassies 2004 showed an unsettling UK winner from the 2003 IPA Awards. Lennox Lewis, the former heavyweight boxing champion, talks about wife abuse. He smoulders with repressed rage in a very disturbing (but effective) commercial for police recruitment.

For myself, I’ve found the best approach is to think of liking on the broader lines of meaningfulness, as described above.

For more, see such papers as *Love the ad. Buy the product?* Alexander Biel. Admap 1990, *Do our commercials have to be liked?* Colin McDonald. Admap 1995. *Like it or Not, Liking is not Enough.* Nigel Hollis. Journal of Advertising Research 1995.