

Cassies 2008 Cases

Brand/Case: Touchdown Sticks!

Winner: Business to Business—Silver
Best Use of Media—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 2008 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 & Promotion.
- Crossover Note 7. Fighting for the Same High Ground
- Crossover Note 10. Conventional Wisdom—should it be challenged?
- Crossover Note 11. The Eureka Insight.

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): February 2007 – July 2008
Start of Advertising/Communication Effort: February 2007
Base Period for Comparison: 2005 – 2006 growing seasons

“A rose is a rose is a rose.”

When Gertrude Stein made that declaration at a literary soiree in the modernist Paris of early 1900s, Canadian agriculture, crop protection and the commodization of glyphosate technology were the furthest from her mind. Yet, a hundred years, scores of scientific discoveries, and billions of tons of glyphosate tolerant crops later, Canadian farmers were paraphrasing her wisecrack - “a glyphosate is a glyphosate is a glyphosate.”

Glyphosate is an aminophosphonic analogue of the natural amino acid glycine. It is a non-selective systemic herbicide, absorbed through the leaves and used to control weeds, especially perennials.

Touchdown is a premium brand of glyphosate manufactured by Syngenta Crop Protection Canada. Touchdown competes in a very crowded category – there are 25 major branded and generic glyphosates available in Canada.

Touchdown sales had remained flat for several years and competition from generics in the recent years put additional pressure on sales. The brand faced a choice – either to compete with generics on price, or build product preference on a differentiating attribute and keep the premium price. The Touchdown marketing team chose the latter. **Crossover Note 3.**

This case will demonstrate how we found a way to make Touchdown stand out in the sea of sameness. We found something truly unique and made Touchdown famous for superior absorption into a weed – in other words “stickiness.” We made “Touchdown Sticks!” part of the vernacular and increased on the ground sales by 18% in one year without lowering the price. At the same time the perception of “absorption” become one of the top five most important performance indicators for the entire glyphosate category.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

a) Overall Assessment

Glyphosate controls most major weeds and is the most commonly used chemical on a farm. It has been used in crop production since introduction by Monsanto in 1996. Once it came off patent, all major manufacturers of branded products started marketing their own versions. Soon, several generic manufacturers (mainly from China and India) jumped in – and currently there 25 branded and generic glyphosates available to Canadian farmers. **Crossover Note 7.**

Touchdown sales and share had been flat for several years, and with added pressure from more generics the loss in revenue seemed inevitable.

As noted, the brand faced a choice – either compete with generics on price, or build a product preference on a differentiating attribute and keep the premium price.

b) Resulting Business Objectives

Retain sales of Touchdown in the face of competition from branded products and generics.

c) Budget Range

The media budget for Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba was \$450,000, production budget was \$75,000.

STRATEGY AND INSIGHT

In the past, advertising for Touchdown had focused on a number of product attributes expressed in very technical language - absorption, translocation, localization. We believed that we had to focus on a single-minded message. And express it in language that made the product story easier to understand and more memorable.

Upon speaking to Dr. Ravi Ramachandran, Manager in the Biology Development Group at Syngenta, we discovered that one of the key ingredients in Touchdown was a corn-based adjuvant that made it stick to weeds better, resulting in improved effectiveness. And farmers would certainly understand this notion of “stickiness.” [Crossover Note 11](#).

So, coming from the product itself – and an ingredient that differentiated it from competition – “Touchdown Sticks” was born. [Crossover Note 1](#).

CREATIVE AND MEDIA EXECUTION

We wanted to dramatize the idea of Touchdown Sticks in as many innovative and impactful ways as possible. So, in agricultural trade publications, we stuck two pages together and only when the reader tried to separate the pages was the message “Touchdown Sticks” visible on a small strip between them.

We also created a page of humorous, must-read editorial onto which we glued a business reply card. Again, when the reader tried to remove the card to read the article, only the edge could be pried loose and the message Touchdown Sticks was revealed.

In radio, we created humorous scenarios that demonstrated how well Touchdown Sticks through a series of analogies. A Touchdown “spokesperson” attached a leech to someone’s eyeball, “glued” a hapless hiker to a sappy tree in bear country and let a ravenous hyena loose on the meat-filled tail of an annoying children’s show mascot.

For retail locations, we developed a number of P.O.S. materials:

- Touchdown Sticky notes
- A see-through poster showing an anvil hanging off a very sticky piece of paper applied to the window with Touchdown
- Fake, oversize glue sticks that contained Touchdown product information

BUSINESS RESULTS

Sales volume data shows that in 2007 Touchdown not only retained sales, but saw an 18% increase VYA.

Interestingly, according to Stratus Market Research, the importance of absorption (for which “stickiness” is vital) as a key product attribute for the entire glyphosate category increased – to become one of the five most desirable performance indicators. Not surprisingly, those who used Touchdown rated the importance of absorption or stickiness much higher than the ones who never tried the product.

CAUSE AND EFFECT BETWEEN ADVERTISING AND RESULTS

During the campaign period there were no changes in Touchdown pricing. The field force support for Touchdown did not differ significantly from previous years, and the intensity of competitive activities did not decrease – on the contrary, several new competitive skus were launched.

This case demonstrates that a product which appears to be a “me-too” fish in the sea of sameness can make a name for itself based on a single interesting differentiating product feature and not just retain, but increase sales.

And it shows that you don't have to be all business in a B2B category to communicate quality and efficacy and drive sales. **Crossover Note 10.**