

Agency: Cossette Communication - Marketing

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Bell Canada: 'Monsieur B' campaign

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Bell Canada has been offering its customers optional telephone services since 1972. And by the early 1990s, ten services were available in Quebec. Bell's sales efforts were being concentrated on the three most promising: Call Display, Call Answer and Call Waiting.

By 1994, sales objectives for Bell's optional phone services needed an aggressive campaign to increase revenues by selling more services to more customers and, just as important, promoting the retention of these optional services by existing subscribers.

Thus, the advertising had four objectives:

1. Relaunch Call Answer service (home voice mail), which was the last service offered by Bell.
2. Increase the penetration rate of Call Display service, which displays the phone number of the caller.
3. Maintain the penetration rate of Call Waiting service, which allows you to know that a second call is coming in when you are already on the phone.
4. Launch Call Display's Name Display Option an upgrade feature that displays both the name and number of the caller.

Communicating the useful benefits of these telephone services and stimulating subscriptions required a unique strategy, one that could encompass the variety of products available. The nature of the services (which could be quite abstract for many new customers) dictated a simple message structure: One service = one benefit = one message.

The advertising campaign broke all established records in the public appreciation category. According to Dominance (a monthly advertising poll in Quebec), Bell's campaign more than doubled the 9% appreciation and top of mind awareness rate that Pepsi achieved in its 1991 Claude Meunier campaign. Bell's campaign set records - in December 1993 with 23%, and nine months later in September 1994, Bell reached a 33% rate of appreciation and awareness and, in December 1994, it broke its own record with a 45% rating.

This broad awareness translated directly into results. In 1994 the sales targets for all three service features exceeded 1993 sales figures with increases ranging between 17% and 52%.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

In the early 1990s, Bell was offering its residential customers a wide array of optional phone services including Call Answer, Call Display and Call Waiting.

Although a good number of Bell's customers were aware of the various services, many did not really know how the services worked or what benefits they offered. However, since a number of studies have proven that the subscription to services is directly related to what the customer knows about them, it became urgent to define an approach that would answer two fundamental questions:

- 'How does this service work?' (demonstration)

- 'What can this service do for me?' (benefit)

The creative approach had to be simple and allow for both a clear demonstration of the service and the customer benefit.

STRATEGY AND EXECUTION

We faced the challenge of proving the services' simplicity while recognizing that many potential customers would see them as more complex than they actually were. There was a danger of providing too much information and creating confusion. To avoid this conflict, we based our communication strategy on the simplicity principle: One service = one benefit = one message.

In order to communicate the simplicity of the services to the customers, we created a character who would, throughout the different executions, clarify the services and their benefits.

The communications had to be clear, concise and focused on the services. We did not want the background environment to deflect customer attention from the core message. So we set our character in a bare, white environment. The efficiency of the advertisement could then only be attributed to the content and its delivery. Monsieur B was born.

Monsieur B is the creation of a young, and at the time unknown comedian, Benoit Briere. The first campaign executions aired in September 1992. But it was only a year later, at the end of 1993, and in 1994 that the campaign became a true success.

As the number of television and print ads increased and the campaign moved into its second and third years, the character needed to evolve. Monsieur B could no longer present the services alone. With the character now established, it was time for Monsieur B to begin interacting with others in his life. After all, the phone is a communications tool. As a result, we came to introduce Monsieur B's social circle: his son, his mother, his lady-love. Monsieur B and his family could take turns at presenting different service features.

In order to enhance the credibility of our demonstrations, we gave each character a personality, a place and a function within the Monsieur B family. The adolescent son who talks on the phone for hours. The good mother who always needs to know more about her son's private life. His love interest who surprises him every time she calls. These situations were written so viewers could relate to the service benefits. Bell was able to develop a very unique and personal way of promoting phone services to Quebec households. Twenty-four executions later, the uniqueness and appeal of the campaign were elevated to 'mini-series' status. Viewers were actually waiting and anticipating new commercials.

The efficiency of each campaign relies not only on great creative work, but also on the media mix which could be altered and augmented depending on the service offered. 'Pizza' (Call Display) and 'Plombier' (Call Waiting) employed a mix of television, newspapers, phone bill inserts and point-of-purchase advertising. '*Fini les répondeurs*' (Call Answer) used television, bus panels, phone bill inserts and point-of-purchase advertising. '*Mal de dents*' (Name Display option) added direct marketing to the regular mix of television, phone bill inserts and point-of-purchase displays.

THE RESULTS

The results of the 1994 Monsieur B campaign surpassed all expectations in terms of sales, penetration rate and appreciation.

In December 1993, Bell shattered previous records set by the Pepsi Meunier campaign in the monthly Dominance survey prepared by Info Presse Communications. The popular poll asks Quebec consumers to vote for their most preferred and most noticed advertising. Bell has been at the top of the poll every month with rates normally fluctuating between 23% and 27%. However, the campaign set two records, one in September (33%) and another in December (45%) 1994. This meant, by the end of the year, that almost half of Quebecers spontaneously thought of Bell when asked the questions: 'Which advertising did you notice this month?' and 'Which advertising do you prefer?'

As a result of the 1994 campaign, Bell's Quebec phone services sales increased significantly. During the Call Waiting and Call Display promotion, which took place in March 1994, sales increased 52% over 1993. The May promotion, which featured Call Answer service, generated a 17% increase over the previous year. The September promotion, to launch Call Display's Name Display Option, generated a 42% rise in sales. See [Figure 1](#) and [Figure 2](#).

CLIENT

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NOTES & EXHIBITS

FIGURE 1: PERCENTAGE OF SUBSCRIPTIONS/1 TO 4 SERVICES

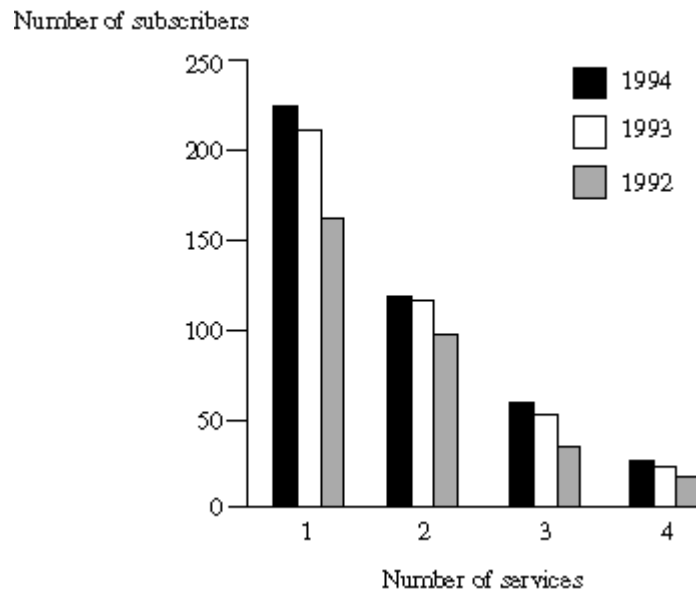


FIGURE 2: SALES

