

Canadian Advertising Success Stories 1999

Clearnet Mike

Agency: Taxi Advertising & Design
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Giving technology a friendly face

In 1996, Clearnet faced its first challenge of introducing a new high-tech communications product to a market inundated with technological products. Adding to the challenge: a significant segment of the target users for this state-of-the-art device were not necessarily technologically savvy.¹

This case – in Ontario and Quebec – will show the solution that gave this technology a 'face' that the target users could warm up to.

As with many successful personalities, MiKe became a celebrity overnight. We'll introduce you to a voice that immediately broke through, creating notoriety, relevance and a connection with the target. We'll show how advertising made prospective user calls surpass ambitious objectives. We'll also review how a highly successful launch has evolved into sustained business growth.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

Clearnet's debut into the digital wireless world was a state-of-the-art communication tool for business. It integrated a 2-way radio feature (referred to as MiKe's Direct Connect™), a digital phone, paging, and data communications – all in a single handset.

The market was inundated with technological offerings. And our hurdle was higher because many in the target were not technologically savvy. They were primarily team workers in blue collar occupations. They were familiar with pagers, two-way radio, and analogue cell phones – and carried a collection of them. They were less concerned about state-of-the-art technology. Their focus was getting the job done.

Advertising funds were extremely tight. We needed an effective and efficient launch to pique the interest of prospects, and demonstrate to investors that Clearnet could make a big impression on the market with its first brand entry, and deliver a strong return on marketing dollars.

STRATEGY AND EXECUTION

We had a clear read on our potential users. We had to raise their interest in MiKe for workday needs, without scaring them off by being too fancy technologically.

Unlike our mission for Clearnet's PCS offering – which would enter the market a year later – we needed to create a brand with a task-oriented personality, concerned first and foremost with improving the bottom line by saving time and money. This brand needed to be intelligent and tough minded, much like

its potential subscribers.

Our solution was to give the technology a name and face to warm up to. MiKe would make the technology accessible, user-friendly and easy to understand. This struck the right balance of brains (technology) and brawn (work ethic of the target group). MiKe had a personality and voice that immediately broke with the target.²

A methodically laid out plan for Ontario and Quebec wove diverse media together.

At launch – October 1996 – teaser print posed provocative questions in an amusing tone.³ Subsequent insertions answered the questions, with MiKe as the answer. Television quickly followed, with MiKe hosting a call-in talk show. The last of these shows pulled consumers into MiKe's next venue, on radio. Print ads in vertical publications drove the message home on a deeper level to prime prospects e.g. in construction and transport.

TAXI also developed all collateral, design elements, and brochures for the integrated launch.⁴

RESULTS

In the first 3 months of advertising, the number of potential user enquiries was 23% above objectives.

The key measure of business success is the number of hand sets sold and activated. During the first 6 months of the launch, Clearnet signed up over 15,000 subscribers to the MiKe Network. This created a unique segment of the digital market that Clearnet continued to expand with the MiKe brand through 1998 – as shown in [Figure 1](#).

ISOLATING ADVERTISING AS THE VARIABLE

Advertising was the only broad promotional force driving the new MiKe brand. MiKe had no presence at retail, as it was sold only through dealers and direct sales reps. Nor did it benefit from Clearnet branding spill over, because this was prior to the launch of PCS. And, as previously noted, media spending was limited. Table 1 shows an example of a radio advertisement.

TABLE 1: MiKe RADIO, 'ECONOMICS DOCTOR': 60

Music:	Up and under
VO:	You're on the MiKe network.
MiKe:	Hi, I'm MiKe. I'm a cell phone, a two way radio and pager. All in one handest. Today's topic is mon-eeey. How your business make sit. Toronto, you're on the air.
Professor:	Hi, MiKe. I'm a doctor of economics. I've been examining your effect on Canadian business.
MiKe:	So, ah...what's up doc?
Professor:	Very interesting. Your digital two way radio creates 'micro work pods.'
MiKe:	You mean my group call feature makes teamwork easy.
Professor:	Correct. Your marginal increment approach to revenue generation eliminates non-utilised service.
MiKe:	Yeah, I bill by the second, not the minute. Sound fair?
Professor:	Yes, Michael. Not to mention the effect of declining prices for mobile communications.
MiKe:	Ya, talk for as little as ten cents a minute.
Professor:	Well, OK, if you have to simplify things. I was thinking of 'measuring labour productivity aggregates in a post humanist, post capitalist work environment paradigm variable.'

MiKe: So what you are saying is use me. I'll make your company more productive and I'll save you money.

Professor: But money is such a superficial word.

MiKe: Or, on can say money is a prsychosensorial motivator that produces moments of glee.

Professor: But I – excuse me?

VO: Get your business on the MiKe network.
Call 1-888-CLEARNET.

In the first two weeks of December, two months after launch, we took a quick research snapshot to measure the effectiveness of launch creative among our target consumers. Bearing in mind that MiKe was unknown just two months earlier, the awareness results were extremely encouraging. Clearnet and the MiKe brand registered at 34%. The advertising registered at 41%, and 'MiKe network is unique' at 42%, see [Figure 2](#).

From these results, we are confident that advertising was the main driver of the launch. We can also say that subsequent evidence shows that the advertising has continued to reach a growing number of subscribers through the evolution of MiKe communications.

(Editor's note: some additional information in these last two sections has been edited.)

CROSSOVER NOTES

1. Emotional versus Rational. Another example of the decision that is often needed between these two. See also [becel](#) Crossover Note 2, and various brands (Chrysler, Philadelphia Cream Cheese, Budweiser, Disney, Goodwill, and BMG) in CASSIES III.
2. Creating a 'tangible' brand. For a similar challenge, in an entirely different category, see the [ABC CANADA literacy campaign](#) in CASSIES III. They had to create a 'tangible' brand for their audiences, and came up with. 'Look under Learn in the Yellow Pages.'
3. Humour in a Serious Category. It would have been easy for someone to say that the audience uses MiKe for serious business, and that the message should be serious too. See [Reactine](#) Crossover Note 2 (which refers to many similar examples in CASSIES III).
4. Integration. As more and more media choices bombard consumers, an integrated message and campaign becomes more and more important.

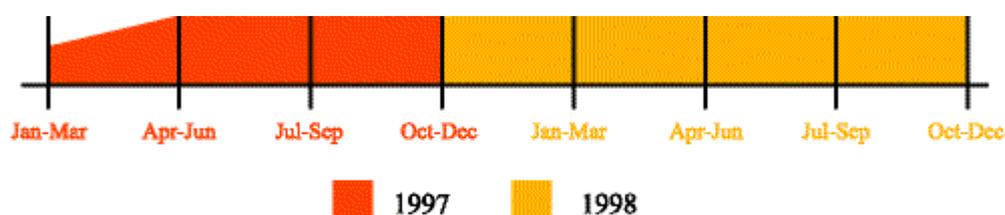


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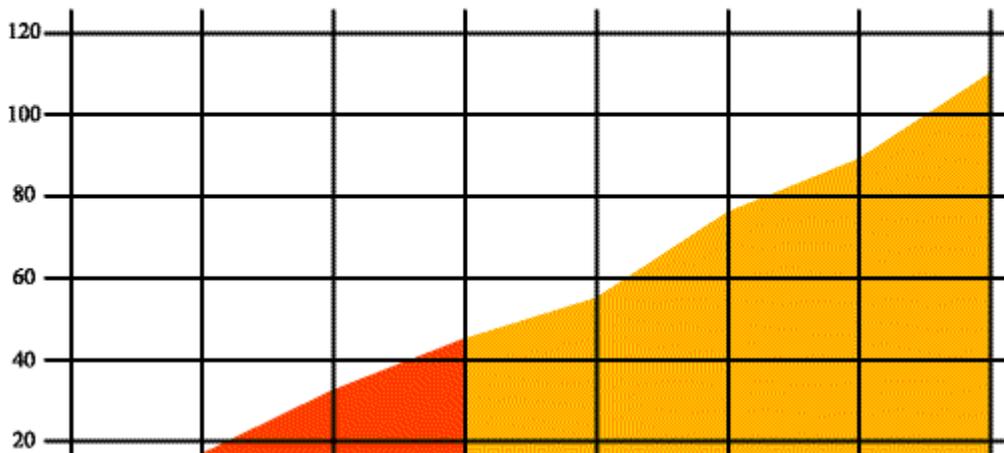
NOTES & EXHIBITS

FIGURE 1



Source: Company Figures

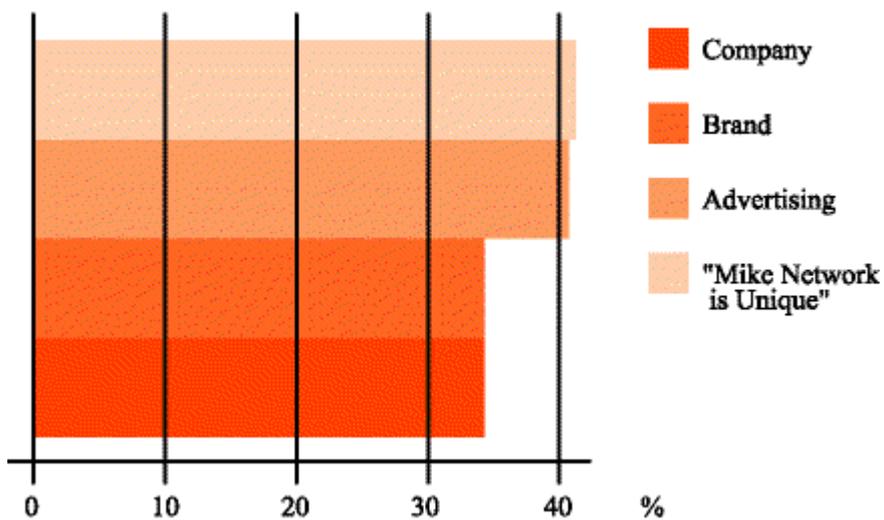
MiKe Subscribers



Note: in addition to its effect on consumers, the campaign had a huge motivational lift on the sales force and dealers.

FIGURE 2: % TARGET CONSUMER AWARENESS

% Target Consumer Awareness



Source: Q5 a-i / Brand Awareness Survey, December 1996

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