

Cassies 2005 Cases

Brand: Irving Cruisin' to Win Campaign

Winner: Events & Seasonal—Gold

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Crossover Notes: All winning cases contain lessons that cross over from one case to another. The notes for this case are as follows, and are attached. The full set can be downloaded from the Case Library section at www.cassies.ca

- Crossover Note 7.** Fighting for the Same High Ground.
- Crossover Note 10.** Conventional Wisdom—should it be challenged?
- Crossover Note 11.** The Eureka Insight.
- Crossover Note 12.** Changing the Goalposts.
- Crossover Note 17.** Turning a liability into a strength.
- Crossover Note 21.** Likeability.

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): June 2003 - August 2003.

Start of Advertising/Communication Effort: June 02 2003.

Base Period for Comparison: June 2002 - August 2002 (same-store retail sales figures).

In the summer, promotions flood the market, as gasoline outlets and their convenience stores try to attract traffic. But these promotions do little to differentiate themselves.

In reality, Irving's Cruisin' to Win contest was itself no different from other promotions. It featured multiple ways to win, and prizes included everything from RVs and Sea-Doos to bottles of juice and chocolate bars. The challenge was to find a way to stand out from the clutter. The case shows how this was achieved with fantastic success.

- Cruisin' to Win racked up double-digit year-over-year increases in same-store sales.
- Irving saw a flow of new customers in key opportunity/non-user segments.
- The buzz was exceptional. The campaign got customers talking inside the store, and building relationships with front-line staff.
- Irving saw a real lift in top-of-mind awareness, brand liking and personality. (Imagine: building brand equity with a sales promotion.)
- The campaign was recognized at multiple prestigious award shows.
- More importantly, Irving was named Atlantic Marketer of the Year.

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

a) Overall Assessment

Summer is peak season for gasoline and convenience store sales because the warm, hospitable temperatures get people out on the road, and bring in the tourists. It's also the time when promotions flood the media.

It's difficult to stand out, because most promotions do little to differentiate themselves. Even though most include small prizes, they focus on big-ticket items. Like a chance to win 1 of 40 free gasoline fill-ups for a year (Ultramart.) Or a trip for 2 anywhere an airline flies (North Atlantic Petroleum.) Or a chance to win 1 of 4 cars (Esso.) Or a chance to win free gas for life (Petro-Canada.)

Irving's Cruisin' to Win contest was no different. So where was the opportunity? The following propelled the strategy:

Key Challenges:

- **Mature Industry.** The market was mature and static; annual growth in the industry was about 3% over the past decade
- **Intense Competition.** The battle for the convenience store dollar was becoming a lot tougher. Supermarkets and drugstores continued to extend their hours and offer the same products at lower prices, and discount gasoline programs were being set up in the grocery, mass, and club channels
- **High Price of Gasoline.** Gasoline prices were trending upwards. And as gas prices climb, people drive less
- **Proliferation of Summer Promotions.** [Crossover Note 7.](#)
- **Consumer Inertia.** In summer, consumers tune out because of other interests
- **Lack of Irving Brand Advertising.** With the exception of a coffee campaign in 2002 Irving had never advertised its convenience stores, and really never had a voice in the market

The Dilemma:

Irving research showed that consumers are attracted to convenience stores by the ease of location, the friendliness of the staff, and the cleanliness of the store. Sales promotions in themselves do not generate more traffic because they don't especially drive consumers to the store. Success hinged on jarring consumers out of this inertia.

The Opportunity:

Use advertising to turn the promotion on its head. [Crossover Notes 10, 11, 12, and 17.](#)

b) Resulting Objectives

- Move the contest away from the hundreds of 'big ticket' promotions
- Increase year-over-year convenience store sales by 10% during the campaign
- Attract new customers to the store – particularly women and younger professionals
- Increase share of wallet of existing customers
- Build a favourable image of Irving convenience stores, and contribute to brand equity.

STRATEGY & INSIGHT

Rather than focus on the big ticket prizes, we saw the opportunity to turn the formula for promotions on its head. We would jolt people out of their inertia by talking up the instant gratification of pop and chips, rather than SUVs or Sea-Doos. This had two advantages.

First, it was different.

Second, there would be lots of prize-winners, and we could use that to make news.

EXECUTION

We avoided the cheesy and shrill advertising of sales promotion. Instead, we used parody. 60-second radio featured apparently live calls to unsuspecting ‘big’ winners from Kathy Greenwood. As one of Canada’s top improvisers, her enthusiasm and tongue-in-cheek humour made for very entertaining advertising. The phone rings. There’s Kathy on the line, enquiring how your life has changed since winning the big prize.

“Some people say that the first two weeks after a big win are the toughest. Is your family being a little over protective?”

“I don’t know...what...” you stumble, synapses firing a mile a minute.

“Does the word ‘Irving’ or ‘Salt and Vinegar’ ring a bell?”

“It was...just a...bag of chips” you offer up lamely.

“Just a bag of chips? Sounds like you’re still in shock. Perhaps we should give you a little time for the whole thing to sink in.”

A few days pass. Driving downtown, you hear Kathy on the radio asking Morris if he planned to share his big win – a hot dog. Half an hour later, Scott, another big winner, tells Kathy that, no, he has no plans to quit his job. *“It was only a bottle of water.”*

Print featured dozens of Irving customers who won – not the RV – but the iced tea. It was an unexpected, fresh, and funny way to build momentum and excitement throughout the campaign and it allowed Cruisin’ to Win to stand out and to have some fun.



The media strategy was critical in turning the promotion on its head. Radio reached consumers in their cars during critical drive and purchase times. It included twelve 60-second ads in all major markets, including St. John's, Charlottetown, Halifax/Dartmouth, Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint John. Ads ran from June 2 to August 17, 2003.

Print delivered high reach and frequency and reached consumers at home. Small space ads ran, with 2-4 ads per newspaper per day, 2-4 days a week. The ads featured photos of real winners displaying prizes like a bag of chips, with quirky headlines like, "To me, victory tastes a lot like salt and vinegar" and, "I said, I'm going to win an iced tea, and I won an iced tea." The campaign ran in all major markets from June 26 - August 9, 2003.

The campaign also had a strong presence at Irving's 200 Atlantic Canadian convenience stores—with curb signs, pump toppers, window posters, ceiling danglers, newspaper rack inserts, and intrusive, custom door clings on the exterior doors.

BUSINESS RESULTS

a. Increased Sales Revenue

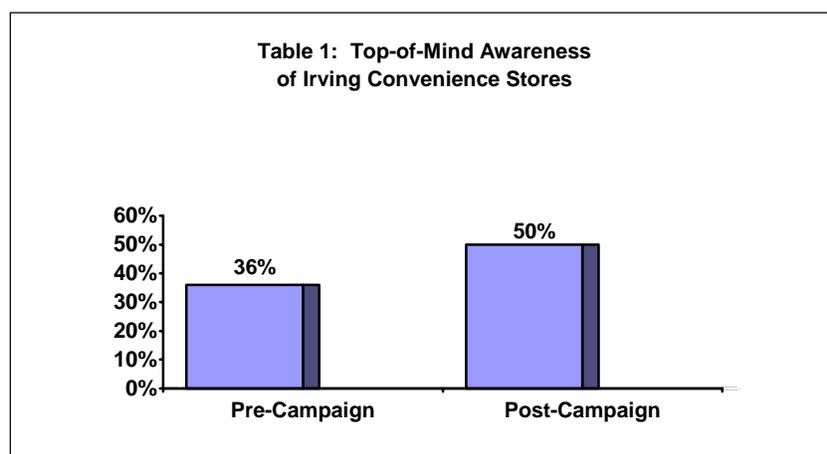
The objective was to increase store sales by 10%. In fact:

- Sales increased 15.3% in June 2003 over June 2002
- Sales increased 17.9% in July 2003 over July 2002
- Sales increased 9.8% in August 2003 over August 2002

These results are more remarkable when taken in context that (a) the market is mature, and (b) Irving is the market leader – which means that sales are compared to a substantial base – and therefore have less room to grow.

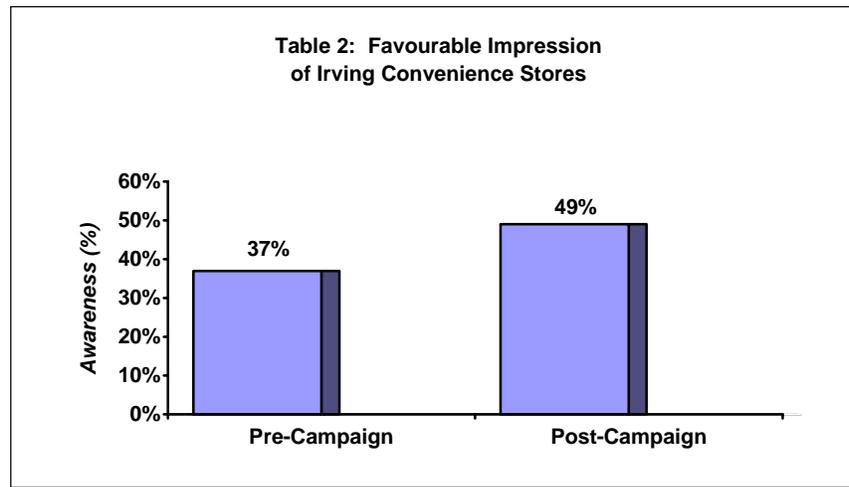
b. Increased Brand Equity

Top-of-mind awareness increased from 36% to 50%¹.



¹ Source: Irving Cruisin' to Win Advertising Campaign Assessment.

Brand Liking: The advertising created a favorable impression of Irving's stores. Overall liking increased from 37% to 49%. **Crossover Note 21.**



c. Key Advertising Measures from Ad Tracking

Ad Recall

Radio: from 8% to 42%.

Print: from 13% to 30%.

Any Media (Net): from 18% to 52%.

Ad Breakthrough

Unique and different – 61% versus 43% norm. Also, 55% of people in Atlantic Canada reported hearing the radio (radio norm @ 1,500+ GRPs is 34%).

d. New Customers

The campaign generated new traffic to the stores. Including women, younger age groups, and professionals.

e. Increased Employee Motivation

Unlike other promotions, Cruisin' to Win built employee motivation leading to improved customer service, better relationships, and improved brand loyalty.

f. Buzz in the Market...and in the Store

Customers were walking up to the counter and telling the cashier – in a perfect mimic of Kathy – that “winning a bag of ketchup chips would be a life affirming event.”

g. Industry Recognition

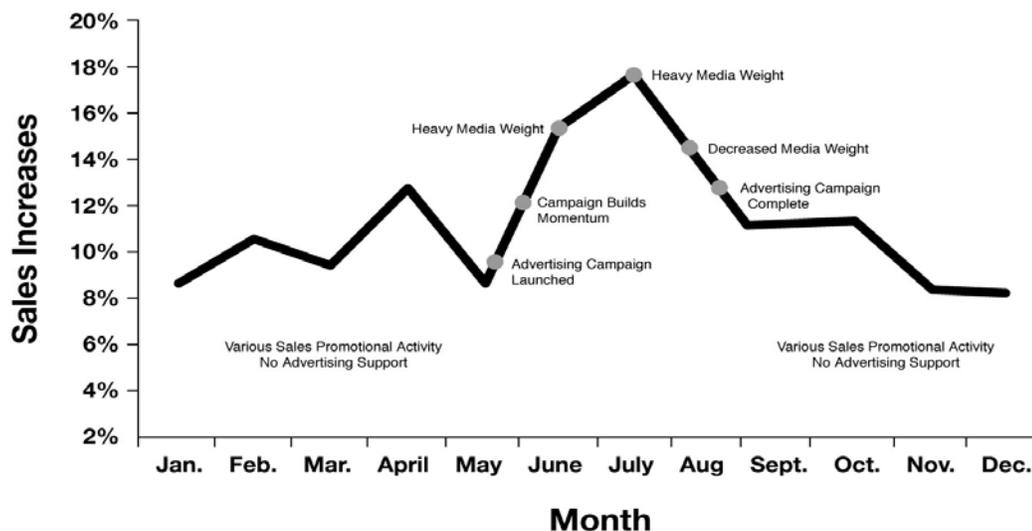
Two Bronze Cannes Lions Radio, finalist status at The One Show and London International, four Marketing Gold, two Ad & Design Club of Canada Gold, and Best of Show at the ICE and Crystals awards. More importantly, Irving was named Atlantic Marketer of the Year.

CAUSE & EFFECT BETWEEN ADVERTISING AND RESULTS

The impact of the advertising is clear-cut. The campaign can be easily isolated as the most significant factor contributing to increased sales. First, the sales increase directly mirrors the timing of the advertising.

The actual media spend is confidential, but the chart demonstrates when the campaign ran and gives some perspective to media weight by month. It is clear that during the heaviest media weight of the campaign (June and July), the largest increase in store sales occur, and the decreased media weight in August results in smaller sales increases. Also, Irving ran sales promotions in the months preceding and following the campaign without media advertising, and did not achieve any significant sales lift.

Chart 1: The Effect of Advertising on Monthly Sales



Second, there was no other factor that could have impacted Irving's convenience store sales during the period that the campaign ran:

- Pricing and product mix did not change
- There was no brand advertising to create a positive halo
- There was no unexpected market growth
- There was, if anything, downward pressure from supermarkets and drugstores
- Competitors continued to promote at high levels [Details were supplied.]
- Gas prices were high [Details were supplied.]
- The weather, if anything, was inclement [Details were supplied.]
- Tourism was down [Details were supplied.]

Despite all this, the promotion was an outstanding success. Zigging while others zag can be a powerful marketing strategy.

End of Case. Crossover Notes follow.

INTRODUCTION TO CROSSOVER NOTES — CASSIES 2005

[For Irving Cruisin' to Win]

Crossover Notes have been going for several years, and now run to 28 pages.

We used to attach a full set to all cases, but to save a few trees, we now include only the Notes particular to any case.

The idea of Crossover Notes occurred to me while I was editing Cassies 1997.

I was a consultant by then. Before that I had reached the category manager level at P&G (what they quaintly called the Associate Advertising Manager). I had then clambered up the ladder at O&M, eventually becoming President and later Vice Chairman—both in Toronto. P&G and O&M were both passionate about “lessons learned,” and so was I. In those days (it seems hard to believe now) we felt rushed off our feet. But we did have time to study if campaigns were working or not, and come to conclusions about why.

There are lessons, like gold dust, in all the Cassies cases. So in 1997 I decided to extract them. This started with bite-sized footnotes about lessons that “cross over” from one case to another. And the idea kept growing. It is still anchored to winning cases, but I also draw on other thinking for more complex issues.

You can use Crossover Notes in two ways. Although they didn't start out 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 over 150 published cases. They're a growing body of experience. I hope I've helped pass some of the learning on.

David Rutherford

Toronto: December 2005.

For advice on brand-building see *Excellence in Brand Communication*—authored by leading Canadians from across the marketing and advertising spectrum.

It is published by the ICA. See www.ica.adbeast.com.

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

CRUISIN' TO WIN. CROSSOVER NOTES. CASSIES 2005.

- 7. Fighting for the Same High Ground.** Some people feel that a brand should not fight for high ground already held by a competitor. It comes out as “our positioning has to be unique.” This sounds so right, how can it be wrong? Consider Cassies III. Lever wanted to pre-empt the arrival of P&G’s Oil of Olay bar from the US, and decided to kick-start Dove sales via new advertising. They had a spectacular product demonstration. Dove is not a soap, and when it is subjected to litmus paper, the colour does not change. With soaps—including Ivory—the paper turns an ugly blue. But this is essentially a mildness demonstration, and Ivory owned mildness. Some heavy hitters in international management (at the client and agency) predicted disaster if Dove took on Ivory. But Dove attacked anyway. At the start of the case, Dove and Ivory had the same dollar share. Four years later Dove’s dollar sales were up 73%, and Ivory had dropped to half of Dove’s dollar share.

And how do you decide whether to attack or not? On winnability. Yes, Ivory held the mildness position, but with “litmus” Dove had a superb claim on that territory. The key is how you think about distinctiveness. It does *not* have to come from positioning. Consider Duracell and Energizer. Duracell was the first brand to stake out “lasts longer,” and Energizer (believing they could not attack this high ground) languished in other territory for years. Eventually they decided to attack, and the Energizer Bunny has been going and going ever since. Both brands have the high ground positioning. They get their distinctiveness from execution.

One last variation on this theme. Sunlight wanted to attack Tide on cleaning, but decided that a frontal assault on such a powerful brand would fail. They still attacked, however, but they re-defined “clean” as the joy of getting dirty. This brilliant insight helped them win the Grand Prix in Cassies 99.

I’m not saying you should always attack a competitor on the high ground. There are many Cassies successes based on side-stepping or re-defining the high ground. Cottonelle, Desjardins, Gaz Metro and Réno Dépôt did this in Cassies 2004. Cruisin’ to Win, Crescendo, Whiskas, Twix, Moores and Lotto 6/49 did this in Cassies 2005. Even so, I think the high ground is still one of the first places you should look.

- 10. Conventional Wisdom—should it be challenged?** Conventional wisdom will sometimes be right. But it can also be a roadblock. When US Pepsi executives first saw the Pepsi Challenge, they apparently said, “that’s not Pepsi,” and rejected it. The Dove Litmus campaign (*Crossover Note 7*) ran into a fusillade of disapproval at client/agency global head offices—and only survived because the Canadian team stuck to their guns. Here are others that went against the tried and true:

From Cassies I, III, 99, 2001:

- Crispy Crunch, making a virtue of greed—a taboo in confectionery.
- Richmond Savings, poking fun at the Humungous banks.
- Sunlight, saying it’s OK to get dirty.
- Fido and Clearnet, using dogs and frogs.
- Various financial accounts—so many that humour has almost become the new conventional wisdom: AGF, Clarica, BMO Quebec (and Scotiabank in 2002).

From Cassies 2002:

- Bud Light, not going after the young, legal-age, male heavy drinker.
- CFL, against younger viewers, accepting they might alienate the core franchise.
- ED, going high-profile with a taboo topic.
- Five Alive, switching from Moms to young males.
- Irving Home Furnaces, using age as a plus for attracting attention.
- Labatt Bleue, breaking the Christmas “Happy Holidays” tradition.
- Pine-Sol, breaking the conventions of household cleaner advertising.
- Sleeman in Quebec, embracing the English heritage with “honest frenglish.”
- Sloche, rejoicing in being politically and nutritionally incorrect.

From Cassies 2003:

- Bait Cars, talking directly to criminals.
- Crown Diamond Paint, advertising that men hate painting.
- Familiprix, using humour to sell health products.
- Irving Mainway Coffee, making a virtue of the caffeine hit.
- Toyota Matrix, breaking all the Toyota “rules.”
- Sola Nero, could not be further away from wine snobbery.
- Super 7, reveling in the excesses of the super-rich.
- Université de Montréal, with no smiling students and ivy covered buildings.

From Cassies 2004:

- Cirque du Soleil, breaking convention as a corporate philosophy.
- Elections Ontario, resisting the temptation to use social responsibility.
- The Miller campaign, throwing out the conventions of political advertising.
- Réno Dépôt, investing in the brand, rather than “price and item.”
- Toyota Sienna, with their “cool minivan” thinking.

From Cassies 2005:

- Cruisin’ to Win, thinking small.
- Crescendo, moving away from “delivery/takeout” as the high ground.
- Energizer Lithium, ignoring the conventions of battery advertising.
- Baileys, breaking out of the liqueur cabinet.
- Hubba Bubba, using brand thinking in a merchandizing category.
- Moores, redefining the way to look at men shoppers.
- Familiprix, selling health products hilariously.
- The Anti-smoking campaign, also being hilarious in how it talked to teenagers.

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

- Oh Henry! None of the gut-fillers had tried to own hunger, even though it was the high ground for the category. Cassies II. See also *Crossover Note 7*.
- Buckley's. Rather than side-step their bad taste, Buckley's relished it. Cassies III.
- Chrysler. Minivans were "my most expensive household appliance." Even so, *emotion* was the key to an immensely successful launch. Cassies III.
- Philadelphia Cream Cheese. In research, people often do not own up to what they really want, which in this case was "permission to indulge." Cassies III.
- Richmond Savings. Almost everyone hated banks, but it still took insight to turn this into the "Humungous Bank." Cassies III.
- Eggs are natural, but in word-association tests, consumers did not say so. (See *12. Changing the Goalposts*.) The farmer campaign 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. They found a way to be youthful without being too young in the "forever young" campaign.
- Listerine in Cassies 2002: healthy gums, after a century talking about bad breath.
- Pro•Line in Cassies 2002: Appealed to non-experts with "Anyone can win."
- Aero. Saw the power of "melting" in Cassies 2003.
- Crown Diamond. Used the fact that men hate to paint in Cassies 2003.
- Super 7. Ignored the political correctness of being tasteful. Cassies 2003.
- Cottonelle. Talked to women as women, not as "family." Cassies 2004.
- Quebec Milk. Saw the blindingly obvious. That just asking people to drink more milk might cause it. Cassies 2004.
- Toyota Sienna. Realized that the answer lay not in what minivan buyers do, but 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.
- Quebec Lotto 6/49 saw that if 6/49 winners are so generous, it makes a sense to be nice to them.
- United Way saw power in the Hand icon.
- Leucan realized that there is still hope, despite childhood cancer.
- CIBC Run for the Cure saw the power in the Pinnie idea.
- Juicy Fruit saw how to build a new image by (almost literally) destroying the old one.
- Quebec Milk saw power in the obvious—if one glass is good, two are better.
- Plus virtually all the cases in *Crossover Note 10*.

12. Changing the Goalposts. Some insights come from seeing what was always there to be seen. (Sunlight's Cassies 99 joy of getting dirty is an example.) Others re-frame the problem, such as:

- Cow Brand Baking Soda's extended usage.
- Johnson's Baby Shampoo's re-positioning against adults.
- Cereals trying to get eaten as a late night snack.
- Baileys (2005) going against wines and beer occasions.

Insights can also spring from what is *not* being said. Eggs in Cassies 99 is an example. Word-association tests played back benefits, but did *not* identify that eggs are natural. Somehow, this caught the agency's eye. They made "natural" into a powerful campaign using real farmers, and turned around a 17-year decline.

Purina is another example. At one time, everyone sold dog food on taste and nutrition. Not surprisingly, consumers played these back as the important benefits, reinforcing conventional wisdom. The team at Scali/Purina saw the significance of the unspoken (and deeper) truth—that a dog is part of the family. This led to the immensely effective "helping dogs lead longer lives" campaign.

This also points up another way to get insights—to look beyond Canada. PAL dogfood in the UK had earlier arrived at similar thinking, and produced the famous "prolongs active life" campaign.

17. Turning a liability into a strength. Some examples:

- Buckley's—Tastes awful but it works. Cassies III.
- Irving Home Furnaces—Made a virtue of age. Cassies 2002.
- Listerine—Was seen as "Margaret Thatcher" and displaced this image with the Action Hero campaign. Cassies 2002.
- Pine-Sol—Far too strong. Softened this with "thorough clean." Cassies 2002.
- Sleeman in Quebec—Took an Anglo-heritage beer in a declining category and re-vitalized it with "honest frenglish." Cassies 2002.
- Pro•Line—Made the un-knowledgeable sports fan realize that anyone can win. Cassies 2002 and 2003.
- Crown Diamond—Appealed to men who hate painting. Cassies 2003.
- Super 7—Made a virtue of excess. Cassies 2003.
- Cirque du Soleil—showed eroticism without really showing it. Cassies 2004
- Gaz Metro—Made the (feared) gas flame the hero. Cassies 2004.
- Short Film Festival—Made a virtue of brevity. Cassies 2004.
- Irving's Cruising to Win—Made a virtue of *small* prizes. Cassies 2005.
- Moores—Found a way to appeal to men who hate shopping. Cassies 2005.
- Juicy Fruit—Destroyed the oh-so-sweet Juicy Fruit jingle. Cassies 2005.
- Johnson's Baby Shampoo—Used mildness to reposition against adults who wash their hair every day, and took over as market leader, despite being a blind test loser to adult shampoos.
- Heinz ketchup—Made a virtue of s-l-o-w.

21. Likeability. Nowadays, it's generally felt an advertising should be *likeable*. But there was once an opposite school of thought. The poster-child was "Ring around the Collar" 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 the day may come when this ancient vendetta is put to rest.

Likeability hit the headlines in the mid 80s, with a paper by Alex Biel. Later, in the early 90s, the Advertising Research Foundation caused another stir. The ARF Copy Research Validity Project² examined major copy tests. The results showed 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.

A bandwagon started. For quite 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" means different things to different people. 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 liking just means "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 come to mind) could only be called likeable in the "meaningful" sense.

And then, as with so much in advertising, we must also be alert to exceptions. Tim Broadbent, in his speech at the 2004 Cassies, showed a very unsettling UK winner from the 2003 IPA Awards. Lennox Lewis, talking about wife abuse, 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 defined 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.

End of Cruisin' to Win Crossover Notes

² It tested commercials that were known to be effective (or not) to find out if copy tests could pick winners from losers. This required pairs of commercials for the same brand (to remove the "brand" effect). The commercials also had to have shipment/share results (good or bad) over at least a year in split-cable test markets. It was hard to find these pairs of such commercials, but eventually five pairs were validated. The ARF replicated the major techniques, and "pre-tested" each commercial. The results, while modestly positive, did not show especially strong predictive ability for any technique.