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PACKAGED GOODS FOOD GOLD

Unilever Canada

Lipton Chicken Noodle

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

You've got a brand that's well known, well liked and well distributed. You're laughing, right? Well not exactly, because the brand has also been in a slow decline for 13 years. You don't have any news, and you have a limited marketing budget. You have one chance to turn sales around.

What would you do? (Crossover Note 1).

That was the situation facing Lipton Chicken Noodle soup in 1999. This case will describe how the 'Kids don't get bored with what they like' campaign drove volume growth three times greater than overall soup category growth for the same period.

And it will demonstrate the power of a simple, relevant insight brilliantly executed.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

Lipton Chicken Noodle soup was introduced to Canadian families over forty years ago. Since then, the brand has become well known as the soup with the tangy, yellow broth and fun, firm, little noodles that children of all ages love.

But advertising support has been inconsistent over the years. By 1999, Lipton Chicken Noodle's penetration and volume had been in slow decline for 13 years. A turn-around became a top priority given its importance as the flagship of Unilever's dry soup business.

The soup market itself had been flat over the same period. Virtually all Canadian households (99%) use soup, and most (94%) buy store-bought soup at least occasionally. This category has always been dominated by the canned segment—and specifically by Campbell's canned soups with a 58% share. By 1999, Campbell's had started to encroach on traditional Lipton territory—kids' playful enjoyment of soup.

We needed to keep Chicken Noodle relevant and even more importantly, we needed Moms to serve it more often. We had no product news to work with. Our challenge was to create an advantage for this very familiar brand by talking about it in a new way (Crossover Note 2).

We would do this with a new campaign that broke in April 2000.

STRATEGY & EXECUTION

Traditionally, Lipton Chicken Noodle advertising had been based on the benefit 'taste that appeals to kids.' But, as noted above, this had not stemmed the decreasing sales trend.

Ethnographic research gave us insight into Mom's lunchtime decision. She decides what to serve for lunch by considering:

- Is it quick and easy to make?
- Do I have it on hand?
- Do my kids like it?

We knew that we had the first two criteria covered. The Lipton name is equated with quick and easy convenience by our consumer—Moms with pre-teen children. Further, penetration data suggested that most family households had LCN in stock at home. We set about digging deeper into 'Do my kids like it?'

Research uncovered the fact that kids LOVE Lipton Chicken Noodle soup—much more than their Moms knew. Kids love slurping the tangy yellow broth and playing with the slippery little noodles. So why weren't Moms serving it every day? Because, even though they knew their kids liked Lipton Chicken Noodle, they worried that their kids might get tired of it (Crossover Note 3).

We needed to rectify this. We had to convince Moms that they couldn't serve Lipton Chicken Noodle soup too often. But how? (Crossover Note 4).

Any parent will tell you that kids never tire of stuff they like. We hear the stories constantly from coworkers and friends. We experience it at home. They watch 'Little Mermaid' a 1,000 times. Fake barf is endlessly funny. Bubble wrap? They just can't get enough. So our creative approach was simple. Remind mums that when their kids like something, they like it a lot. We would reassure them that there's no need to worry about serving Lipton Chicken Noodle too often.

The campaign idea was summed up by the statement:

Kids don't get bored with what they like (Crossover Note 5).

Once we had the creative idea, there was no stopping the real life examples. It was creative ground rich in anecdotes from coworkers, friends, and our own dinner tables.

Getting the truest examples—ones mothers could completely identify with—was crucial since Lipton's advertising dollars were limited and Campbell's had a traditionally dominant share of voice (68% vs. Lipton's 18% in 2000, according to AC Nielsen). Ultimately, we developed four TV spots. They portrayed the typical Lipton kid, a bit mischievous, gleefully doing the same thing over and over and over again. 'Whoopie' showed an impish little boy pulling the whoopie-cushion joke on every member of his family ([Figure 1](#)). 'Ice Machine' captured a child's endless fascination with the icemaker on the family refrigerator. With 'Honk' a little girl can't get enough of the car horn ([Figure 2](#)). And with 'Drums' we see dad's reaction to on-going (and going and going) drum practice.

Mothers in focus groups were completely charmed by the creative. They felt that the spots depicted real kids, with their repetitive quirks, in a way that was uniquely Lipton. 'Made me think of my own little troublemaker. My older one is an angel now, but when they're little like that kids do get into mischievous things' (Crossover Note 6).

We added print in 2001. The full-page ads conveyed the creative idea through simple objects that kids can't get enough of: door stops ([Figure 3](#)) and elevator buttons.

THE RESULTS

After one year of 'Kids Don't Get Bored', LCN saw an 11 point turnaround in tonnage from -2% to +9%. This was the first such growth in 14 years. Market share also turned around ([Table 1](#)).

Encouragingly, there was also an 8% increase in Household Penetration, indicating that not only were current users using more, but more people were buying ([Figure 4](#)).

ISOLATING THE CAUSE AND EFFECT OF THE ADVERTISING

Several measures illustrate the causal effect of the 'Kids Don't Get Bored' campaign on Lipton Chicken Noodle's turnaround:

- Quantitative research (Burke International RCR testing) confirmed that 'Whoopie' scored consistently above-norm on several key measures ([Table 2](#)).
- Advertising Tracking by Tandemar showed the effectiveness of this campaign in achieving above-norm scores on the key messages ([Table 3](#)).
- Other than the advertising there was no extraordinary activity by Lipton or Campbell's during this period.
- Media spending was not a factor.
- All of the above is validated by the 'Baseline Tonnage.' These are the non-promoted sales (at regular price, with no discounts, promotions or coupons) that AC Nielsen is able to measure through its Market Track Service. They reflect the underlying strength of the brand, and they grew steadily to +10% over the course of the campaign ([Figure 5](#)).

CROSSOVER NOTES FOR LIPTON CHICKEN NOODLE

1. Turnarounds. Pre 2001, the turnarounds—or significant makeovers—include the following:

- Pepsi. The Quebec 'Meunier' campaign in CASSIES I
- Crispy Crunch. The 'Someone Else's' campaign in CASSIES I.
- Listerine. The 'Oncle Georges' Quebec campaign in CASSIES II.
- Oh Hungry? Oh Henry! in CASSIES II.
- Molson Canadian. The 'What Beer's All About' campaign in CASSIES I, and the first 'I am' campaign in CASSIES

III.

- Dove. The 'Litmus' campaign in CASSIES III.
 - Philadelphia Cream Cheese and the 'Angel' campaign in CASSIES III;
 - becel. The 'Young at Heart' campaign in CASSIES 99.
 - Eggs. The 'Real-Life Farmers' campaign in CASSIES 99.
 - Wonder Bread and 'Childhood' in CASSIES 99.
 - Sunlight. The launch of 'Go Ahead. Get Dirty.' In CASSIES 99.
2. No Change in Product. The need to revitalize a brand, with no product change, is a continuing theme in the CASSIES. For more, including a comment on the danger of relying on inferior product, see Personality versus Product under Clearnet.
3. Consumer Insight. These have a profound effect on advertising, but come with a challenge. Often (at least on first blush) they are not that earth-shattering. For example, to say that Moms worry that kids will get tired of something hardly seems new. This makes insights easy to overlook, and finding them a rare talent. There are repeated examples of this throughout CASSIES 2001. A selection follows from earlier CASSIES:
- Oh Henry! (CASSIES II). Astonishingly, none of the gut-fillers had tried to own hunger until Oh Henry! launched Oh Hungry? Oh Henry!
 - Chrysler NS Minivan (CASSIES III). People in focus groups referred to their minivan as 'my most expensive household appliance' but the team had the insight to ignore this pragmatic attitude—and create a launch campaign with immense emotional pull.
 - Buckley's (CASSIES III). We know that bad-tasting medicine is supposed to be good for us. Rather than ignore this (because it is negative) Buckley's has a famously effective campaign.
 - Philadelphia Cream Cheese (CASSIES III). Frequently, people will not own up to what they really want in a brand. The team realized that their consumers wanted 'permission to indulge.'
 - Richmond Savings (CASSIES III). The intense feelings against banks were always there, but it took insight to turn this into the famous 'Humungous Bank' campaign.
 - Sunlight (CASSIES 99). It was a brilliant insight to realize that although people want their clothes clean, getting them dirty is fun. This was diametrically opposed to the conventional wisdom dominated by Tide, that clean is good and dirt is bad.
 - Fido (CASSIES 99). The big competitors were 'technological' and were fighting on promotion and price. In an echo of how Apple positioned itself against IBM, Fido saw that consumers were missing a feeling of humanity, and positioned themselves as a user-friendly part of everyday life.
 - Eggs (CASSIES 99). Egg marketing had been complicated by cholesterol, and a clutter of claims about taste, nutrition, and versatility. In word-association, consumers did not relate eggs to 'natural.' Even so, the team realized that 'natural' (and the real-farmer campaign that brought it to life) would be the key to turning around a 17-year decline.

Note: there are many definitions of insight and some of these examples will not pass muster with everyone. I have used the

broad idea of discovering something about the audience (often overlooked or against conventional wisdom) that unlocks the way to persuade them that one brand is preferable to the others.

4. Brand Truths. Over the years, everyone on Lipton Chicken Noodle knew that 'kids like it' was a brand truth. However, there's a risk that brand truths become superficial. Advertising starts to give them lip-service, rather than finding deeper ways to strike a chord. The Molson Canadian case makes this point, where (before Joe's Rant) Canadian-ness was being portrayed as nothing more than 'patios, cottages and road trips.' Of course, 'kids love it' is very different from 'kids like it.' One of the top UK agencies created the credo 'we interrogate the product until it confesses its strength.' I'd like to suggest that we continuously interrogate brand-truths until they confess their deeper meaning.
5. Changing the Goalposts. Notice how the insight has shifted from food to behaviour. Changing the goalposts is often the key to a great insight, and I'll repeat here a Crossover Note from CASSIES 99: Some insights are triggered not by what consumers say, but by realizing the significance of what they don't say. At one time, the conventional wisdom in dog-food was to sell on taste and nutrition. Consumers reinforced this by playing back taste and nutrition in research. The Scali/Purina team then suddenly saw the significance of the unspoken-and far deeper- truth that a dog is part of the family. This led to the long-running and immensely successful 'helping dogs lead longer lives' campaign.

(Editor's note: Similar thinking also led to the venerated 'prolongs active life' campaign for PAL dog-food in the UK-which reinforces the point that other markets, if we can only find the time to study them, can be a rich source of insights.)

6. Showing the Obvious-Yes or No. A conspicuous thing about the LCN advertising is that it does not spend a lot of time showing 'kids loving the soup.' I don't know if this sparked debate in real life, but this sort of issue often does. The battle lines get drawn over showing consumers 'what the brand is promising' versus not showing them 'what they already know.'

In the LCN case, the advertising is true to the insight-it spends all but the end-shot on the mentality of the kids, not the soup. I was once witness to a furious agency/client debate over whether a Minute Rice commercial should cut to a clock on the wall to show the passing of the famous five minutes. (The clock was put in.) There is an opposite example with Dove's 'Litmus' advertising in CASSIES III. Since time began, all Dove advertising had included the creamy liquid pouring into the bar, with the slogan 'Contains 1/4 Moisturizing Cream.'

Dove is a global brand, and this pour-shot was regarded as mandatory by the international client/agency powers that be. Despite this, the Canadian team decided to leave it out, arguing (correctly as history would show) that it got in the way of the litmus story.

This is a complex area, too complex to be covered by the anecdotal points I have made here. My suggestion, though, is to try to think each issue through using first principles and common sense, and not perpetuate (undeserved) conventional wisdom.



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NOTES & EXHIBITS

FIGURE 1: WHOOPIE CUSHION



SFX: Whoopie cushion



SFX: Whoopie cushion



Sister: Groans



Boy: Giggles
Singer: Yummy, yummy, yummy.

FIGURE 2: HONK



SFX: Car Horn blaring (repeated)



Music up and under



Singer: Yummy, yummy, yummy.

FIGURE 3: DOOR STOPPER



**Kids never get tired of
what they like.**

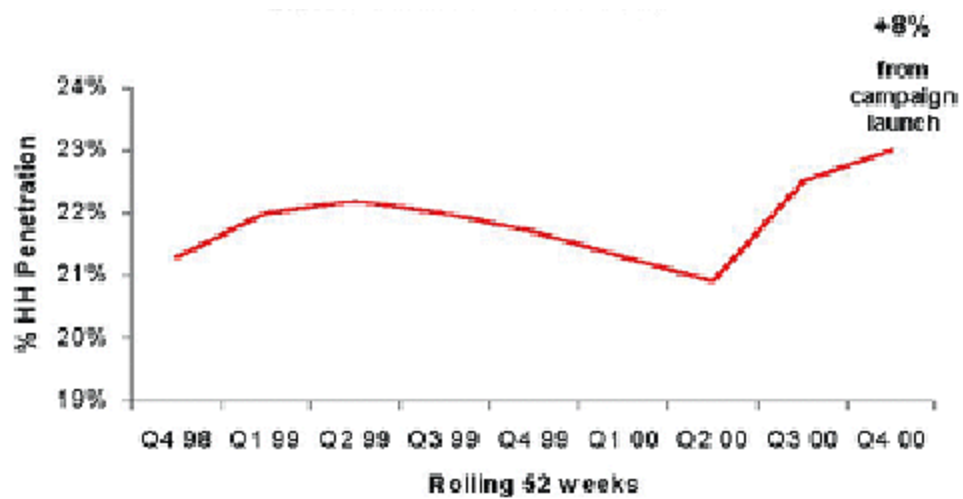


TABLE 1:

	Base Year	Results Year	Change
LCN Tonnage	-2%	+9%	11 point swing
Market Share	4.4	4.7	+7%

The + 7% figure reflects +9% tonnage in a market up +2%.

FIGURE 4: LIPTON CHICKEN NOODLE SOUP HOUSEHOLD PENETRATION %



Source: AC Nielsen Market Track, rolling 52 week national data, Q4 1998 – Q4, 2000

TABLE 2:

	Whoopie	RCR Norm
Related Recall	33%	29%
Commercial Recognition	78%	65%
Unaided Brand Recall	25%	21%

Related Recall: The percentage who claimed to have seen the ad and could describe it.

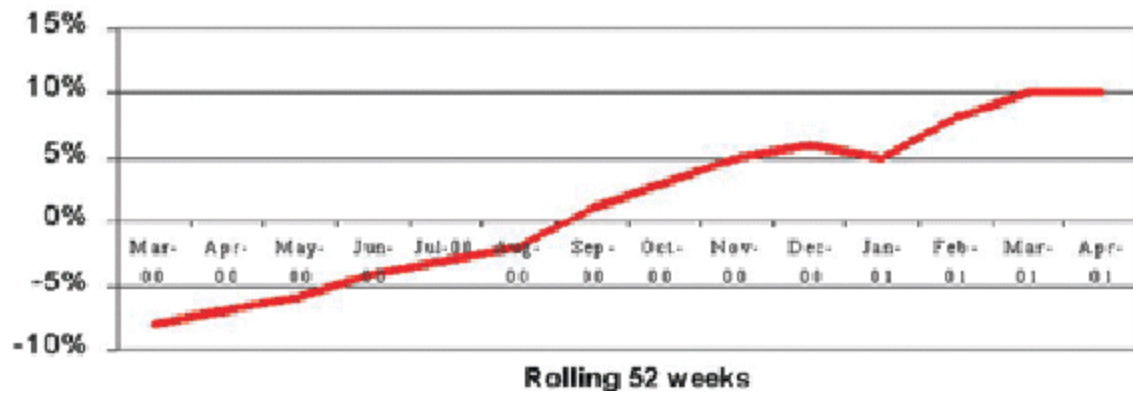
Commercial Recognition: The percentage who recognized a description of the ad.

Unaided Brand Recall: The percentage who recognized the ad was from Lipton.

TABLE 3:

	Kid's Don't Get Bored	Key Message Norm
Kids think the brand is great tasting	69%	55%
Kids don't get bored eating this soup	64%	55%
Ads are unique and different	63%	39%

FIGURE 5: LIPTON CHICKEN NOODLE SOUP BASELINE TONNAGE % CHANGE



Source: AC Nielsen Market Track, rolling 52 week national data, March, 2000 – April, 2001
