

CASSIES 2001 CASES

Brand: The Weather Network

Advertiser: The Weather Network, Mississauga, Ontario

Agency: Holmes and Lee, Toronto

Winner: Small Budget Gold. Services General Silver.

Credits: The Weather Network, Mississauga, Ontario

Rick Ridgway - Executive VP & COO

Perry Myles - Marketing Manager

Credits: Holmes and Lee, Toronto

John Lee - President

Peter Holmes - Creative Director

Crossover Notes:

These highlight the learning in CASSIES 2001, and “cross over” to the accumulated learning in CASSIES I, II, III, 99. They are listed at the end of the case. [Crossover Notes were not part of the submitted case. I have added them after the event—David Rutherford.]

Executive Summary

The Weather Network is in an intensely competitive category. People get weather information from a number of different sources. With television as the lead source, every television station has its own weather report, and each tries to become a daily destination for the viewer.

The Weather Network has a strong forecasting product—a category-dominator in fact—but one that has been unknown and under-appreciated by the general public. Audience figures were not attracting advertisers, and The Weather Network was not selling its full airtime complement.

Crossover Note 1.

In 1998, the decision was made to commit to a simple and direct outdoor advertising campaign, and the business felt immediate and lasting positive impact.

Currently, The Weather Network is the standard in the industry, with 52% of English Canadians choosing it as their definitive weather information resource. (The next closest network, CTV, has 12%.) Also, as of the week of December 11, 2000, The Weather Network was the #1 specialty network in Canada, based on cumulative audience delivery.

Over the duration of the advertising campaign—November 1998 to November 2000—The Weather Network has shown a 60% increase in the full-rotation audience, a 90% increase in the morning audience, a 30% increase in minutes tuned, and average weekly reach up by 16%.

The Weather Network is now in a sold-out situation for the first time in its ten-year history—with a substantial increase in the number and quality of new clients and national advertisers, and a commensurate increase in revenue and profit.

The product remained at its consistently excellent level throughout. The advertising campaign (recipient of 30 major Canadian and International awards in 1999, 2000 and 2001) was the only factor of significant change. *Crossover Note 2.*

As Bill Bernbach said, “Nothing kills a bad product like a good ad.” It would seem that the reverse is true as well.



Situation Analysis

The Weather Network was introduced to Canadians in 1991. A Specialty television network, it provides weather forecast and analysis, 24 hours a day.

Canadians want consistently accurate weather information. While they can get this from newspapers and radio, television is their primary source. All the major networks and affiliates dedicate a personality to deliver the weather. These reports are a staple of Canadian television.

The Weather Network had historically focused on providing the most accurate weather reporting. Its “forecasting engine” is proprietary and delivers consistently accurate forecasts. TWN will not publicly state that its engine is better than the Federal model—but it is.

However, Canadians were not generally aware of The Weather Network’s forecasting accuracy, and had not been tuning in. Audience delivery numbers—full rotation and the crucial morning slot—were low. As a result, advertising airtime was not selling strongly enough. There were attempts to sell long-term packages to national advertisers and agencies, but TWN was also forced to try regional/local advertisers for short-term financial sustenance.

In effect, The Weather Network had no clear long-term positioning.

Senior Management decided to invest in an advertising campaign. The primary target would be the consumer wanting consistently accurate weather information, i.e. most adult Canadians. The trade—agencies and advertisers—were a crucial secondary target.

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DIRECTED BY GOD.**



Strategy & Execution

Canadians want accurate forecasts, and The Weather Network had the superior forecasting engine. The strategic thrust therefore became:

Present The Weather Network as the definitive source of accurate weather information.

How would this be delivered? The Weather Network had expected TV. From the very start, however, the agency recommendation was outdoor. For two reasons.

First, the outdoor message was... out of doors. Perfect for discussing the forecast. Messages would be set against the sky, with all postings on top of buildings or on raised hustings—never directly against buildings.

Second, the budget was only approximately \$300,000 per year for the 1999-2000 national campaign. To maximize efficiency with this budget, the media company—Gaggi Media, working in concert with the agency—drove the markets of the Greater Toronto Area, Calgary, Vancouver, and Montreal to choose prime locations. This included Transit Shelters as a secondary medium on high-traffic corners in Toronto, in GO Stations, and in the billboard-free Vancouver market.

Crossover Note 3.

For creative, we needed a clear brand identity to differentiate TWN from all television networks/stations, and all other sources of weather information.

Billboards used black type against a yellow background. The colour combination is extremely effective in attracting attention in all conditions (witness its use in construction signage). We also picked a strong, authoritative typeface.

Then there was the attitude behind the highly distinctive messages. The Weather Network would assume the mantle of leadership. Everything it did and said would reflect this confidence. We showed this through wit and humour. *Crossover Note 4.* We also crafted the messages to make sense even when the weather changed.

For launch timing, we chose winter, when people are most concerned about the weather. This would be the best time to establish TWN as the category leader.



The Results

Canadians saw the advertising, tuned in, saw the quality of The Weather Network's forecasting, and slowly became regular viewers:

1. Over the duration of the campaign (November 1998 to November 2000), Average Minute Audiences for The Weather Network's full day schedule have increased by 60%. (Monday to Sunday 6am-6pm - all persons 2+ Source: Nielsen Media Research)
2. Over the same period, morning prime time Average Minute Audiences have increased by 90%. (Monday to Sunday 6am-12noon - all persons 2+. Source: Nielsen Media Research)
3. Over the same period, total minutes tuned per week are up 30%, and average weekly reach is up by 16%. (Monday to Sunday 6am-6am - all persons 2+. Source: Nielsen Media Research)
4. The CBC Canadian Media Quality Rating Survey (QRS) 2000, stated TWN provides the best weather forecast on TV by a wide margin. (52% of Anglophones 18+ with cable or satellite TV rated TWN the best, with the next closest TV service at 12%.)
5. During the week of December 11, 2000 The Weather Network was the #1 specialty network in Canada, for the first time. (Source: Nielsen Media Research)
6. In Fall 2000, The Weather Network was in a sold out situation for the first time in its history. ROI figures from The Weather Network are confidential, but TWN believes the initial investment of approximately \$300, 000 in media and production support returned more than three times the revenue.
7. As a result of this success, the business-to-business campaign against agencies and advertisers was cancelled. The billboard campaign was drawing so many calls from agencies and advertisers directly that the funds for B2B were channeled into production of additional billboard executions.
8. The Weather Network campaign has been recognized by award shows in Canada and internationally. [Editor's note: details were supplied.]

Isolating the Cause and Effect of the Advertising

We recognize that there can be many factors involved in the success of a campaign—beyond the advertising itself. However, in this case, we (client and agency) believe the advertising was the main “factor of change” in delivering the results.

Given that we were keeping spending to a minimum, we do not have conventional tracking studies to show consumer awareness, but the direct calls from agencies and advertisers are a strong indication that the message was getting through.

In addition, the price and distribution of The Weather Network product did not change. The sales force remained constant. The product we offered on television did not change. And the competition certainly did not let up.

In summary, after several years of below-par performance, the new campaign is the only reasonable explanation for The Weather Network's dramatically improved performance.

CROSSOVER NOTES FOR CASSIES 2001

Introduction.

Please take a minute to read this introduction. It will help you get maximum value out of the Crossover Notes.

Practical Points.

- CASSIES I and II ran in 1991 and 1993.
- Longer & Broader is identified by its current name: Sustained Success.

Overview.

The best way to use these notes is to compare and contrast how they apply to different cases.

Please do not read them with the idea that they contain “rules”, but with the idea that broader knowledge leads to better decisions. Also read them with an eye to the issue of risk.

Risk is a complicated subject. Society admires those who boldly go where none has trod before. On the other hand, despite the rhetoric about breaking out of the box, a lot of advertising decisions are governed by the tried-and-true.

I remember the first time I heard an agency say “there are no rules.” I was at Procter & Gamble, and we stiffened in disagreement. This sounded like anarchy.

Bill Bernbach said it best when he pointed out that there are no rules, but there are principles.

In many advertising situations, there is often a tried-and-true precedent. But the tried-and-true also carries a risk—that because of familiarity it has become the expected-and-ignored.

The CASSIES show clearly that taking a well-judged risk pays off.

The CASSIES also confirm that “there are no rules” in the sense that we see some success stories that follow conventional wisdom, and even more striking ones that fly in the face of it.

Compare and Contrast.

Some Crossover Notes apply to several cases. Others apply to just one or two. To help you browse through how they apply to different situations, see the following Index.

David Rutherford.

INDEX OF CROSSOVER NOTES FOR CASSIES 2001

- An Integrated Case.* i-wireless.
- Aging Franchise.* St-Hubert.
- Baby with the Bathwater.* Molson Canadian.
- Battling for the Same High Ground.* St-Hubert.
- Brand Essence.* Molson Canadian.
- Brand Value and Stock Price.* Molson Canadian, Clearnet, Clarica, Manitoba Telephone, i-wireless.
- Brand Linkage.* Molson Canadian.
- Brand-Building.* Clearnet.
- Business Strategy.* Dictated by the Brand Positioning. Clearnet, i-wireless.
- Brand Truths.* Lipton Chicken Noodle.
- Changing the Goalposts.* Lipton Chicken Noodle.
- Classic Rivalries.* Molson, Sunlight, workopolis.com.
- Consumer Insight.* Lipton Chicken Noodle, Kraft Dinner, i-wireless.
- Conventional Wisdom. (Staying In the Box.)* Molson, Sunlight.
- Core Equity.* Molson, Clearnet, Kraft Dinner.
- Creating a Brand from the Concept Up.* i-wireless.
- Emotional versus Rational.* Clearnet, St-Hubert.
- Familiar but Fresh—Building a Campaign.* Clearnet, St-Hubert, Sunlight, Tourism New Brunswick.
- Fixing the Product, then Pulling in the Customers.* St-Hubert.
- Handling Multiple Audiences.* i-wireless.
- Humour in a Serious Category.* Clearnet, Clarica, workopolis.com, Manitoba Telephone, Weather Network.
- IPA Cases.* Kraft Dinner.
- Keeping it Simple.* Clarica, Tourism New Brunswick, Manitoba Telephone.
- Likeability.* Clarica, Manitoba Telephone.
- No Change in Product.* Weather Network, Lipton Chicken Noodle, i-wireless.
- Not TV.* Weather Network.
- Out of the Box Thinking.* Molson Canadian.
- Personality versus Product.* Clearnet, Weather Network.
- Pre-emptive Media Timing.* Tourism New Brunswick, i-wireless.
- Portfolio Management.* Manitoba Telephone, Kraft Dinner.
- Positive or Negative Sell?* workopolis.com.
- Problem versus Solution.* Sunlight.
- Reach and Frequency versus Large-Space Impact.* Tourism New Brunswick.
- Re-branding and Re-Naming.* Clarica, workopolis.com.
- Showing the Obvious—Yes or No.* Lipton Chicken Noodle.
- Spending Weight versus Idea Weight.* Molson Canadian, Tourism New Brunswick, Manitoba Telephone.
- Strategic Choices.* Kraft Dinner.
- The Total Brand Experience.* Clarica.
- Transcending Advertising.* Molson, Tourism New Brunswick, Manitoba Telephone.
- Turnarounds.* Sunlight, Lipton Chicken Noodle.
- Undercut by Pricing/Promotion. (See also Brand-Building.)* Kraft Dinner, Clearnet.

Crossover Notes for The Weather Network

1. **Personality versus Product.** In most “personality versus product” situations the product is at parity with its main competitors, or somewhat weaker* and companies have to make difficult decisions about how much, if anything, to invest in the product. It’s quite rare to have a superior product that consumers are not aware of.

*For more on this subject, including its dangers, see Clearnet on Personality versus Product and St-Hubert on Fixing the Product. These point out that three of the Grand Prix winners fixed their product—Listerine in CASSIES II, Chrysler in CASSIES III, and Sunlight in CASSIES 99—but Pepsi in CASSIES I and Molson Canadian in CASSIES 2001 did not.

The Sustained Success winners—Dove in CASSIES III and becel in CASSIES 99— also built their business with no change in product (though they already had a superior/excellent product when their new advertising was launched).

2. **No Change in Product.** As just noted, re-vitalizing a brand that already has an excellent product is similar to the pattern that we saw for Dove and becel.

3. **Not TV.** Non-TV examples from CASSIES III, 99, and 2001 (with various combinations of Radio, Outdoor, and Print) are Buckley’s, Claritin, Richmond Savings, Outward Bound, Mr. Big, Wonder Bread, The Weather Network.

4. **Humour in a Serious Category.** The weather is perhaps not a totally serious category, but it is easy to imagine that the objective of presenting The Weather Network as the definitive source of accurate weather information could have led the creative in a serious direction. Other CASSIES winners that used humour unexpectedly are Richmond Savings, Buckley’s, Claritin, and Goodwill in CASSIES III; Fido and AGF in CASSIES 99; Clearnet, Clarica, Manitoba Telephone, and workopolis.com in CASSIES 2001.