

DISPATCHES™

Insights On Brand Development From The Marketing Front

AT P&G, THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS "BACK" TO BASICS

We've never been shy about recalling our earliest days as marketers working for Procter & Gamble. Our longtime readers know only too well the many proven principles, quality processes, and best practices that we espouse--and attribute to our P&G training, experiences, and successes. Though we haven't been under their employ for well over forty years, we continue to marvel at the many, many fundamentals--the basics--that Procter & Gamble's big, leading brands sustain in their advertising. Truly, at P&G, marketers never have to consider going "back to basics" in their communications because they never abandoned them in the first place.

Our nearly ten months of at-home Covid living offers us a vivid illustration of this determined as ever, disciplined stick-to-it-iveness. One need only take a closer look at those household-name leading brands, Tide Detergent and Bounty Paper Towels, that thanks to our sheltering so long, have become much more akin to lifestyle brands than mere product performance brands. Lord knows, each brand has been running TV as well as non-traditional ads at consistently high reach and frequency. Looking more closely at the campaigns the two brands have been running has made us smile, made us head nod and think, "There they go again, employing one of their proven communication basics...that have always kept them dominant leaders and organic volume growers." Here are 4 of those basics we've been smiling and nodding with reverence to, ones that though updated for today's more diverse consumer marketplace, look and work almost exactly as they did in the 1950's, 60's and 70's.

Basic #1: Make perfectly clear what consumer behavior you want.

The switching behavior that Tide promotes in its current Tide Pods Ultra Oxi ads is most cleverly executed. Both opening and closing shots depict the Pods Ultra Oxi pack placed in front of a Tide Liquid pack (or packs). Accompanying this visual is voiceover copy that goes: "Tide Pods Ultra Oxi one-ups the cleaning power of liquid." When we first saw these spots, in passing, it seemed the brand was promoting an *internal* switch, or *trade-up*, to current Tide Liquid users. But after viewing the spots a few more times and listening more carefully to the "more cleaning power than liquid detergent" (**not** "Tide Liquid Detergent") copy, it's clear that the brand really seeks *external* switching from competitive liquid detergents as much as, if not more than, it does internal switching. Why feature Tide Liquid so prominently, and not some competitive liquid brand, as the foil then? The fine print substantiating the "one-ups" claim answers that: "2 Pods vs Large Load Dose of Tide

Original Liquid.” Clever, clever. They have no data-based claim against other brands of liquid detergent; so they use their own brand as facsimile for the liquid segment. Probably doubly smart because Tide Original Liquid is simultaneously being consciously one-upped by Tide Liquid Ultra Oxi. But: either way, the switching behavior the brand desires could not be more crystal clear.

Basic #2: Drive super-premium pricing by driving better value.

Some years back, we devoted a weekly DISPATCHES to a brief history of P&G’s considerable success running what they termed “value copy.” Such advertising was typically housed in full, thirty-second demonstrations of a P&G brand’s significantly (a) more uses per pack or (b) better efficacy per amount product used. Such copy is not run much these days. But both Tide and Bounty brands still insert the brand’s value advantage into some of their line’s ads. Tide Liquid Ultra Oxi, for example, exposes that “bargain liquid detergent is mostly water, and that doesn’t work as well on stains.” So, Tide Liquid UO advises, “don’t pay for water, pay for clean...and Tide Liquid Ultra Oxi has 3 times the cleaning ingredients.” Better efficacy for the money. As for Bounty, in its often aired “Pirate” spot, the brand claims “each sheet (of Bounty) is more absorbent, so you can use less,” this visualized via a familiar side-by-side demo of Bounty’s liquid absorption versus the “Leading Value Brand.” More uses per pack. So, the value copy of the 1950’s and 60’s--executed not much differently that it was back then--rolls on!

Basic #3: Demonstrate to dramatize the benefit.

The classic side-by-side, timed demonstration of Bounty’s quicker and more completely contained absorption of spills has just been noted. Actually, there are two versions of the “Pirate” TV spot: one demonstrating superiority against the Leading Value Brand and the other against what is labeled “the Leading Ordinary Brand.” The former aims for quickness superiority, preventing a spill from damaging a nearby delicate (like a fabric seat just under the kitchen counter). The latter aims for better containment, showing how six sheets of Bounty on a saucer can completely contain liquid (poured from overhead); whereas as six sheets of the leading ordinary brand allow easy spillover from the saucer. Both deliver the demonstrable Bounty advantage in a short, dramatic, and credible fashion--just as the brand has done for decades.

For Tide’s newer line extension, Tide Hygienic Clean, P&G marketers have turned to another classic demo type. Not the more common side-by-side of P&G brand versus a competitor, but the equally dramatic, if less commonly used, “before & after” demonstration of solving for a previously unknown or under-appreciated need. For Tide Hygienic Clean that need is deep-down dirt, hard to reach dirt within the fibers of a fabric. And to visually convince consumers that only Tide HC can reach and remove this deep, “invisible” dirt, the brand has worked up an ultraviolet light test against a “before and after” T-shirt. A simple way to illustrate where unhygienic stuff lurks--a topic all the more timely given our current pandemic.

Basic #4: Stick with sticky Key Copy Words.

With the possible exception of the DeBeers Diamond Brand's "A diamond is forever," no other brand we know of has more steadfastly stuck with its theme line, tagline, or what we prefer to call Key Copy Words than has Tide. What began many years ago as "If it's got to be clean, it's got to be Tide," has over time shortened to simply, "It's Got to Be Tide." Whatever laundry problem needs addressing (stains, fabric care, sports odors, deeply hidden dirt, and so on), if the consumer wants superior results, it **does** have to be Tide. Yet even that original version of the KCW's sometimes gets reprised. In the aforementioned Tide Hygienic Clean, which obviously promises the deepest, most thorough clean possible, the line is exactly as in the original. Then there is Bounty's who-hasn't-heard-it line: "Bounty. The Quicker Picker-Upper." That one in use now for not merely many years, but for decades. Words really **do** matter. As does, once you've got them, sticking with them as ever-powerful memory notes to relentlessly deliver (1) the Brand name and (2) the Brand's overriding benefit--ad infinitum if possible!

For marketers who are today, say, under thirty or forty years of age, the longevity of P&G's commitment to these communication basics might understandably go unnoticed. But to us, for so long now watching brands in every category and class struggle to merely comprehend (let alone *practice*) such basics, well, what we saw P&G big brands doing way back then and still doing today is simply something to admire.

Get the basics right to make your marketing matter more. Read AVOIDING CRITICAL MARKETING ERRORS: How to Go from Dumb to Smart Marketing. Learn more here: <http://bdn-intl.com/avoiding-critical-marketing-errors>

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