



CONTAGIOUS

Creative Hunger /

This article appeared in Contagious issue Sixteen.

Contagious is an intelligence resource for the global marketing community focusing on Non-Traditional Media and Emerging Technologies.

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thought appeared naked before I saw Jamie Oliver's UT TV show), the Australian version of Innocent called Nudie, and FCUK - French Connection United Kingdom. 92% of us still read FCUK with an assumed inversion of the first two letters. And we never forget the name. But, having established the crowd-pleasing, attention-grabbing name, how does an entrepreneur, with no budget, spread the brand message? Here's test two for the corporate-creatives.

Let's imagine that you own a local pizza store. It's moderately successful, as corner stores go. But your ambitions are immoderate. One store - that's not enough. You want to conquer the region. You want a chain. But with just \$5,000 in your marketing budget, what would you do?

Let's look at a pizza shop owner from my home country, Denmark. Some ten years ago, he decided to place an ad on the local radio station. The message was simple: 'Dear customer. Grab your Yellow Pages and turn to the pizza section. Rip out all the pages under "Pizza" and bring them with you to our store. In return for the pages, we'll give you a free pizza.' That day, nearly all his competition disappeared. Overnight, competitors' phone orders stopped coming in and an aggressive, but inventively economical tactic, managed to secure increased market share.

Premium Purity

I've learned that great brands seldom have to be associated with outstanding products. Don't get me wrong. A brand's products must never let the consumer down. But, honestly, there's not a lot of difference between Vittel, Evian and Volvic water. So, what strategy might you adopt if you were in charge of, at least according to you, the greatest water in the world? This time, let's say your budget is higher than the pizza guy's \$5000. But far below those budgets worth hundreds-of-millions on which Evian and Vittel survive.

One answer can be found in Norway. Norway has something which only a handful of other countries can lay claim to: it's a country associated with the purity of its environment and natural assets. And that was exactly the foundation for the water brand known as Voss. Yet the young entrepreneurs who founded Voss knew this wasn't enough. Ole Christian Sandberg and Christopher Harlem wanted to achieve unique packaging design that distinguished itself as artwork and virtually demanded a place on the stylish tables of socialites and in the hands of high-profile super models. Their search ended at Neil Kraft.

On the Voss website, Kraft explains that he, Sandberg and Harlem combined their creative powers to 'create a personality that differentiates itself through the entire experience and reflects the true essence of the brand'. The former creative director for Calvin Klein describes the brand as: 'A new way to think about water. Beyond refreshing... to beautiful.' It took over a year to have the exceptional bottle successfully manufactured. The result is a piece of design that stands out from all competitors in all high-end environments: top hotel bars, fancy restaurants or exclusive clubs. The bottle's unique and beautiful design went a long way to recommending it to the tables of the rich and famous. It helped open doors to the celebrity world which would later carry the message of Voss water into New York City and the rest of A-list U.S. society. Nowadays, Voss water enjoys star-packed success. You won't be surprised to learn that, in blind taste-testing, people can't tell the difference between Voss and Evian. Yet, minus the

limited marketing skills. Yet one idea turned everything around. It decided to concoct ice cream flavour sensations: ever tried bacon and egg flavoured ice cream, toasted coconut, lime and mascarpone ice cream, Manuka honey gelato or vanilla bean, poached pear and blue cheese? Then there's pumpkin and caramelised pecan. In June this year, founder James Oliver (no relation to that Naked Chef mentioned above) won medals for all seven of his whacky flavours at the New Zealand ice cream awards, a hotly contested honour. Word of mouth is now spreading news of this low-volume, high-quality brand and building cult status for the 22-year-old entrepreneur behind it. James simply went against the norm in the ice cream industry, and people loved it. The brand managed to make the public talk, with just one crazy idea!

The biggest challenge for almost all brand owners is distribution. That was the hurdle Ben & Jerry's ice cream faced against Unilever and Nestlé, finally succumbing to the challenge when the company was acquired by Unilever in 2000. The Anglo-Dutch conglomerate and Switzerland's Nestlé now command more than a third of the world ice cream market. Distribution was also the challenge Mars had against Hershey's, and which Mars won with aggressive sales representatives literally fighting in stores to secure shelf space. So, let's say you've invented the brand name everyone talks about, your product design is outstanding in a range of persuasive ways, the product and its attributes are unique, and your campaign makes people desperate to buy your product. None of this is to any effect if consumers can't find it anywhere. What would you do?

Finding Your Wings

Red Bull offers a few lessons. Did you know that the secret of the brand's success was its distribution strategy? By analysing the retail market, the Red Bull marketers realised that they'd never win the conventional retail channels over. The Coca-Colas of the world had well and truly colonised them. Instead, Red Bull, in a piece of lateral-thinking genius, targeted stores which, at that time, had nothing to do with soft drinks: surf-wear stores, clothing stores and petrol stations (remember, this was 15 years ago, when petrol stations actually concentrated on selling petrol). By installing the now famous Red Bull fridges, filled with the round-form containers, Red Bull secured immediate exposure among probably the most lucrative consumer group of all: trendy, sporty, energy-filled people - as well as party-goers who need a kick start between engagements. To this very day, Red Bull has maintained this alternative distribution strategy. And the beverage giants quickly realised they'd left this channel open by mistake. Yet that oversight is the reason why we know Red Bull today.

If you're a start-up branding entrepreneur, the trick is simple: be different, across every touchpoint. The brand name, packaging design, ingredients, communication and distribution channels. Following conventional marketing paths will doom your start-up to failure. If you've discovered you've become a corporate rather than a creative brand entrepreneur, shake up your approach. And, if you don't know where to start, give this article to your boss and ask that your marketing budget be cut in half. That'll give you a kick along.

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