

DISPATCHES™

Insights On Brand Development From The Marketing Front

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AN IDEA THAT RINGS TRUE

Here's a question for you: What do the Duracell, MasterCard and Dove brands share in common? You might be thinking, top-of-mind, not much—after all, the brands compete in different categories and they are not all even fast-moving consumer goods. But they **do** share at least three significant things in common: (1) each brand comprises a line of products that are, for the most part, at parity-performance with their competitors; (2) each has been running advertising for some time now that contains a true campaign *idea*, and (3) each has experienced sustainable share growth while the advertising has been running. So, let's get this straight, three brands whose products function roughly the same as their equally large (and big-spending) competitors, experience sustainable growth...all because of an idea?

Well, maybe not exactly. We can assume that these brands are not relying solely on advertising to achieve their growth. But neither are they relying on phony or pedestrian ideas to drive their advertising messages. Actually, thinking about the ideas in the current Duracell, MasterCard, and Dove campaigns there is one **more** thing that each has in common: a campaign idea that rings true.

An idea that rings true is potentially so powerful because it connects with the brand's target automatically, intuitively, effortlessly. It enables people to *involve themselves* with the brand and its story, rather than making them feel like the brand is brow-beating them into listening, forcing them to get involved. In short, we might say there are two overarching hallmarks of an idea that truly rings true with the target:

- It naturally strikes a chord in the mind or heart...in a way that has the target subconsciously saying, "Yes, that's just how I feel; it's about time someone finally had the guts to say it too."
- It makes the brand come across as being realistic and even self-deprecating if need be. It shows that the brand knows its rightful place in the target's eyes—that no brand, however important it may be to the manufacturer or marketer, is that important to real, everyday people.

Given these hallmarks, is it any wonder, really, that so many people have become involved with and enjoyed the Duracell, MasterCard, and Dove advertising campaigns? In all of these the target customer can find herself or himself appreciating the "normalcy" in the brand's story; in none of these does the target find herself or himself hearing a brand that speaks unrealistically:

- **Duracell**—The idea is a simple (but unusual) comparison-endorsement. In each TV or radio spot we find that a significant but "customer-touchable" party, like heart hospitals

specializing in open-heart surgery or the Rocky Mountain Rescue Squad, trusts Duracell over other brands. And in each spot we can hear and see that, “while choosing a battery may not be the biggest decision of your day,” ordinary folks can likewise trust only Duracell to work—when it **has** to work (for family event photos, for your daughter’s microphone at her first singing recital, for finishing a record-scoring hand-video game).

- **MasterCard**—As nearly everyone knows after over ten years in the global market now, the idea underneath MasterCard’s “Priceless” campaign is also, fundamentally, a comparison. It might be more accurate, though, to label it an “unexpected juxtaposition”—of numerous, everyday items and services (of amounts large and small) one can easily purchase with MasterCard against that one, precious, life-moment that cannot be purchased at any price...or with any credit card, for that matter. What makes this campaign idea ring so true is surely that so many of the life-moments the brand has featured are exactly the ones that humans of all ages and cultures know only too well. And, of course, there is that wonderful, self-deprecating acknowledgment by the brand that there actually **are** some things that their brand cannot help a person acquire.
- **Dove**—Ok, we agree that this brand’s campaign idea has been talked about and buzzed about plenty. There are some—and not just those marketers working on competitive skincare brands—who would say, “Please, this idea has been beaten to death; if anything, it has been given way too much credit.” And, looking at marketing journal articles of late, it appears that the Dove brand’s rocket-like growth has fallen back to earth. Still, though, you have ask yourself, “How **did** Dove earn such amazing buzz, PR, accolades, and (at least for 2-3 years) such impressive growth?” We think the answer is pretty clear: it was the *idea*, stupid. Again, like both the Duracell and MasterCard campaign ideas, this one is beautifully simple—featuring real women and their real beauty rather than featuring models or celebrities (with their “is it really real?” beauty). Then, too, there is the boldness of the brand’s approach...being the first among so many skincare brands to break a longstanding taboo. And you know, it’s hard to find women just about anywhere in the world who don’t instantly admire a brand that “finally had the guts to say what everyone has been thinking.” When you can connect with a target in this kind of way, who needs better than a parity-performing product?

Are there other brands out there with strong ideas that ring true? One we have seen recently is for the new KY *Yours + Mine* Brand. This is a sub-brand of KY which has been recently introduced, using a couples-testimonial kind of campaign idea. We will explore this idea further in an upcoming *Dispatches*; should you see it in the meantime, check for yourself how well the idea meets the two hallmarks of an idea that rings true.

BOATS & HELICOPTERS:

1. Marketing people are idea people. Companies hire us to create ideas that are better than those of our competitors – especially when they know that their products are not

2. demonstrably better. Do a “hallmark” check on you current advertising campaign idea: does it (honestly now) ring true?
3. While you’re at it, ask your ad agency to do a survey of the market. Identify brands with campaign ideas that ring true and have a dialogue with them about these...noting what principles each seems to be following, hypothesizing about how they landed on such an idea, inferring the *insight* that supports the “ringing-trueness.”
4. Once you actually have an idea that rings true, develop it further with additional marketing efforts—along the lines of what Dove so brilliantly did to bolster the “real beauty” idea with its Teen Self-Esteem effort.

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