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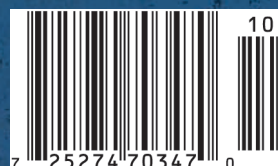
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**Brands  
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**+**  
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Brand of the Year Tim Hortons enlists some uber-Canadian contest judges: Jason Priestley, Jann Arden, Ben Mulroney and Anna Olson.

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### Brands of the Year

They're as Canadian as maple syrup, and this year's picks have experienced very sweet success

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**ON THE COVER:** There's nothing quite as Canadian as Tim Hortons, this year's overall Brand of the Year winner. Talk to someone beyond our borders – when you say "Tim Hortons" they immediately equate it with Canada, and when listing characteristics of Canadians, "they all love Tim Hortons" is often uttered. Just ask U.K.-based illustrator Gary Neill, who created this month's cover, and we're sure he'd agree. As it turns out, all of this year's BOY winners were born right here in the Great White North, and we couldn't be prouder of the whole bunch. How's that for patriotism?

# The viral icing on the cake

**W**hen the \$12.5 billion merger between Tim Hortons and Burger King was announced in August, many consumers were up in arms. It wasn't because Tim Hortons would change the look of its restaurants to resemble BKs, or that it would start eliminating menu items, or selling Whoppers with Double-Doubles. It wasn't because prices would go up or they'd shut down Tims locations. It wasn't any of those things because nothing had actually happened yet – it was the mere *possibility* of those things.

Imagine your brand is so ingrained in a country's culture that the possibility of it changing has people protesting on Facebook and calling for boycotts. Now that's a powerful brand.

When we chose Tim Hortons as our overall Brand of the Year winner, the BK merger hadn't happened yet. It wasn't until our associate editor Megan Haynes had started writing the story that the news hit. But the coverage and reaction to the merger reinforced why it was chosen.

This was an interesting year for Tims – it got a little riskier. It played with innovative concepts like serving beer. It created buzz-worthy activations that went viral. And is there anything riskier than a massive merger? Time will tell if the risks pay off.

It could be argued that all of our Brand of the Year winners went viral this year, one way or another.

By now most people know about WestJet's success with its "Christmas Miracle" video, in which it gave out gifts to unsuspecting passengers. A similar stunt by a different brand might have felt forced, but WestJet spent years building its reputation as caring for its customers.

TD went viral with its "Automated Thanking Machine" that also handed out gifts, again tying into its

reputation for being good to those who bank with it.

You could argue that Herschel is a brand whose products themselves have gone viral – from zero to "everyone on the sidewalk has one" in five short years.

And Beyond the Rack, which lives online, has amassed a 13.5 million member base and gotten the attention of big brands like Shoppers Drug Mart.

For this year's BOYS, going viral was the icing on a cake they had been carefully baking for years. Read about their journeys starting on p. 17.

The other big story that came and went as we were working on this issue was the Ice Bucket Challenge. While by now it's safe to say we're all a little iced-out, it serves as a fascinating case study of a brand going viral unintentionally (the brand being the actual ALS societies). What do you do when you're suddenly the most popular thing on the internet and you had little or nothing to do with it? The ALS Society of Canada handled the whole thing like pros, and big brands could learn from this non-profit (see p. 12).

And in case you're wondering, no, I didn't dump a bucket of ice water on my head, but while many questioned the intentions and efficacy of the whole thing, any initiative that brings millions of dollars and attention to a deserving cause is okay with me.

So which brands will go viral in 2015? It's anyone's game, really. Just remember that it's the icing. You need to bake the cake first.

Emily Wexler, editor

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**Trevor Rempel,**  
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# What's behind the Canadian sweep?

**W**e didn't set out to pick Canadian-born Brands of the Year, it just happened. And Canadian ideas are getting more podium time, such as at the PROMO! Awards. National brands – or global ones with made-in-Canada programs – made a strong showing. One of the Best of Show nods went to Canadian Tire's "Ice Truck" by Taxi, and what could be more authentic?

I asked for thoughts as to why the Brands of the Year all waved the Canadian flag, and the ongoing push to use global creative was flagged.

Tony Chapman said an all-Canada roster could be the wake-up call brands need. "Many global brands are standing on a one-size-fits-the-world marketing platform. Its very design is to drive efficiency and consistency, which powers

pricing and preserves profit, but not necessarily speed or local market relevance."

He says this gives made-in-Canada brands an unprecedented advantage. "They can't match the scale of the big boys but they can certainly be faster at identifying consumer insights and media opportunities that matter to Canadians, better at developing relevant products and content and more efficient at deploying tactics."

That applies to a lot of the work we've seen win.

Taxi chairman Paul Lavoie – who originally opened a New York office to make sure the agency didn't lose accounts to the global alignment trend – is now spending more time in Canada with CEO

Rob Guenette, focusing the agency on relevant, fresh work that gets results. He cites the agency's PROMO! Awards showing for clients from Boston Pizza to Kraft and Canadian Tire as an example. Beyond positioning an agency as effective, he pegs the value of awards as recruitment and morale. So on that front as well, the brands that have Canadian creative leadership trigger the most passion and ROI.

In the landscape of brands, where some global brand managers function as international campaign stewards, Lavoie says the focus on getting the work with the most scope for Canadian-unique creative has intensified.

"Made in Canada" also drives AORs to pursue more activation work, which Lavoie says has a ton of creativity and has gone from contests to ideas – like "Ice Trucks" – which are more in the Titanium realm: "Below the line, topline, consumers don't see that. We make up these distinctions."

Bottom line, global creative recycling seems to be giving the brands whose decision-making lives here a home court advantage, with agency partners vying to work on business where they can affect tangible results.

If you missed PROMO! check online to see the results that locally-baked programs generated, and if you've done work of that calibre, check out the Shopper Innovation Awards and enter your cases. And come celebrate the Brands and Agencies of the Year at AOY. Be inspired by all the made-in-Canada programs, so you can make a case for investing in more of them.

Cheers, mm

**Mary Maddever, publisher, *strategy*, Media in Canada and stimulant**

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## PROMO! AWARDS CROWN A DUO

By Jennifer Horn

**T**he creative crème de la crème of Canadian brand activations was recognized at the PROMO! Awards last month. And although, in most cases, there can only be one big winner, this year two campaigns (commercial and cause-related) won Best of Show titles. The first was given to Canadian Tire and Taxi for the “Ice Truck,” while the second went to World Vision and agencies Real Interactive and KBS for “No Child for Sale.”

Not only did World Vision and its agencies receive the coveted award, they also won two Golds and one Silver for the campaign that juxtaposed scenes of North American consumerism with that of children sold into slavery in developing countries.

Canadian Tire and Taxi also walked away with a Gold for their campaign, which showcased a car made almost wholly of ice, save for the engine, tires and battery. And the agency also won three Golds, four Silvers and a Bronze for work for Louisville

Slugger, Boston Pizza, Mio and Kraft Dinner.

WestJet, Studio M and Mosaic’s “Christmas Miracle: Real-Time Giving” video that made global waves around the holiday period last year, picked up three Golds at the show, while Unilever won two for the “Magnum Pleasure Store” (led by Mosaic).

Leo Burnett also took home a stockpile of PROMO! Awards, picking up a Gold and Bronze for Raising the Roof’s “Repackaging Help,” a Silver and Bronze for AMC’s “*The Walking Dead* Rotting Finger Countdown,” a Silver and Bronze for Yellow Pages and Bronze for work with Earls Kitchen + Bar and TD.

As for another big winner, Cossette won Gold and Silver prizes for its “Minute of Silence, Minute of Hope” campaign for Amnesty International Canada, as well as a Gold for its work on Chevrolet Spark’s sponsorship of Osheaga 2013.

To read how all these winners did it, visit [Promoawards.strategyonline.ca](http://Promoawards.strategyonline.ca).

## AGENCIES DOWN FOR THE CAUSE

By Matthew Chung

With brands shifting their thinking about CSR – from risk-mitigating technique to business catalyst – it’s only natural that agencies follow.

KBS Canada, which already works with the likes of World Vision Canada and The Keg Spirit Foundation, last month launched a CSR division, Cause Company, to brand that work and attract new clients from the non-profit sector, along with government and profit-driven businesses that do charitable work. The branding move comes about a year after Toronto’s Smith Roberts rebranded as Corktown Seed Co., an agency that focuses on cause marketing.

While not a new concept (Toronto agency Stephen Thomas has worked exclusively with non-profits for more than 30 years and JWT launched what’s now known as JWT Ethos in 2002), the cause marketing space has been heating up. It’s a trend driven in part by consumers – 91% of them are likely to switch brands to one associated with a good cause, according to a 2013 Cone Communications study.



Cause Company leader Marie Magnin and Tony Chapman at a Global Citizen Festival event at KBS.

Corporations are also giving more, with donations increasing 581% between 1990 and 2009, according to Imagine Canada, and spend on sponsorship has also been climbing. In 2013, corporate cause sponsorship in North America was up 4.8% (\$1.78 billion) from 2012. But it seems brands are coming up short in ensuring consumers are aware of this investment, with around 70% of consumers in the global Cone study saying they are confused by the messages brands use to talk about their CSR efforts.

That adds up to opportunities for agencies like KBS, which has set a goal for Cause Company to bring in upwards of 15% of its total revenue.

“There are a lot of charitable organizations, and a lot of competition for share of heart and wallet and I think that is going to continue to intensify,” says Marie Magnin, who leads Cause Company.





OP-ED

## GET SUPERWOMAN A DRINK

By Jessie Sternthal

"Stop the glorification of busy" said a quote that zipped around the social feeds recently, with hundreds of likes and dozens of shares.

It's a wonder any women had the time to like or share it. Because from where I'm sitting, we've been *frighteningly* busy. Ever since Melanie Griffith and her shoulder pads snagged that corner office in *Working Girl* circa '88 to a Carly Simon score, we've leeeeeetttttt the river runnnnn...us all over.

We strived for and became superwomen. And, not surprisingly, advertisers have certainly dialed into and leveraged that.

A few years ago I wrote some spots for a national coffee brand that mainly targeted the modern, super-busy woman. The spots won over client and agency, but they didn't win over focus groups. Turns out, Canadian women in both Quebec and Ontario pretty much hated being represented as the superwoman – even though the women in the spots were heroes and conquerors of their busy-ness! Not victims of it. Some members of the groups found the work "stressful" to watch. Others didn't appreciate how "imperfect" the women's lives seemed, while others still were down right "offended."

Even though almost 100% of the women exposed to the concepts found them comical and true, they rejected them. Why? Calling out how busy their lives were was simply un-aspirational. Glorifying busy, as it turns out, wasn't a glorious idea.

But that doesn't mean avoid busy all together. Amex's Tina Fey campaign is awesome, musing about her own busy life and how Amex helps. It alludes to our busy lives but doesn't crush us with it.

If done well, busy can be good business. But maybe we should take a cue from all those likes and shares, and "STOP THE GLORIFICATION OF BUSY." Because if busy-ness continues to be a stand-in word for "successful" or "fulfilled" or "happy," then we might all be on our way to becoming a little nutso.

*Jessie Sternthal is a senior writer at Marketel's Marketelle.*

## BOO-WORTHY BRAND OPPS

By Tanya Kostiw

Just because your brand doesn't make its way into the pillow sacks of trick-or-treaters on Halloween night doesn't mean you can't get in on the fun. Here are a few sweet suggestions for breaking through during the spookiest time of the year.



### TRACK THAT TWEEN

A rite of passage for tweens has always been to go out trick or treating without pesky parents to cramp their style. But sending your kid out without adult supervision can be worrisome.

Enter the Track My Tween Trick-or-Treater, an app brought to you by a mom-friendly retailer like Walmart or Target, with some help from Google and its maps. Parents and kids

could input a pre-determined trick-or-treating route, with the tween checking in via their smartphone at established locales to receive points, which can be redeemed for swag or discounts in-store. If they forget, they get a reminder to their phone.

Mom then receives a notification to her smartphone to let her know her little Katniss Everdeen or Spiderman has checked in safely, which is brought to her by a CPG brand the retailer carries, like Tide or Kraft, looking to associate itself with mom and the well-being of her kids. The notification would offer her coupons and push to the retailer's website.



### RED BULL GETS SWEETER

Silly marketers, trick or treat isn't just for kids. Red Bull has shown us no space is untouchable by literally going to space (well, technically the stratosphere), so why shouldn't it make a Halloween play? Of course we wouldn't advocate giving Red Bull to the trick-or-treating crowd, but a space-esque partnership for co-branding opps with candy

like Mars or Rockets (such as a treat for kids and a mini can for the tired parent chasing after them sold together), could take the brand to new heights.



### COUNTING CANDY (AND CALORIES)

Ever heard of Valentine's Walk off Your Poutine, an app that tracks when you've walked off enough calories to indulge in the dish? A brand like Lay's or Cadbury could develop a similar Halloween-themed tracker, inviting consumers to kick off the calorie-burning on Halloween night, counting their steps and letting them know when they've

walked off the equivalent of a treat. Milestones could be rewarded along the way with coupons and special offers. We just wonder how many steps it takes to burn off an entire box of those fun-sized chocolate bars...

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HALLOWEEN PHOTOS FROM TOP: FLOKKER CREATIVE COMMONS JIM, THE PHOTOGRAPHER; REMERMEDIA; BETH COLL ANDERSON



# EMBRACING THE CHEERIOS EFFECT

It's all about coming together in this new masterbrand campaign for the cereal

By Megan Haynes



A spot in the new campaign tells the story of two dads adopting their daughter.

**F**or the first time in its long history, General Mills is giving Cheerios a single voice.

The CPG company has unveiled a new masterbrand campaign that spans all seven lines of the cereal brand, which together represent a 14% share of the market.

The branding is built around the concept of connection, says Jason Doolan, director of marketing, cereal, General Mills, and is inspired by the “Cheerios effect.”

An actual scientific term named after the cereal, the Cheerios effect occurs when small objects floating in liquid are drawn together.

“The Cheerios effect is a perfect metaphor for what people do in life as well,” says Glen Hunt, chief transformational officer and CCO at Cossette, which created the campaign. “[There is] this idea that at our very core, we are these simple little Os.”

The campaign soft-launched in September with a 15-second teaser commercial that features Cheerios coming together in a bowl, explaining the effect.

In October, the brand will ramp up its efforts, with new longer-form spots rolling out on TV and online. The floating Cheerios continue, but are overlaid with voiceovers of people telling stories of connection with

loved ones. For example “Lisa and Annie” tells the story of cousins who struggled to connect growing up, but found a way in adulthood. The camera pans out to show that Annie is deaf, and the pair communicates via sign language.

The campaign will drive people online where they will be encouraged to share their own tales of connection. It will roll out across all the brand’s touchpoints, from in-store to digital. Updated packaging (featuring explanations of the new masterbrand positioning layered on top of the existing package) will also roll out in the fall, helping explain the new positioning. The campaign will be in market until spring 2015.

“In the world of features and benefits, the yellow box of Cheerios was very simple and pure. Honey Nut Cheerios provided more flavour and indulgence and attracted a different consumer,” Doolan says. “So we built a 14% share in the category by respecting what’s unique about each business. But at the same time, you can’t deny the fact that they’re all a simple, floaty little O.”

Each individual line will maintain its own brand identity, Doolan says, and individual brand communication (such as Honey Nut Cheerios’ Bee mascot) will still be used occasionally to help drive specific brand targets. But he says they are still very early in the planning process, and the new masterbrand push will take up the majority of the media spend in the coming months. This new positioning will become the brand’s core messaging, designed to lift the entire line.

The cereal category has been stagnant to declining, Doolan adds. On-the-go meals and QSRs have been taking away share from the cereal space, prompting the brand’s deep dive.

The decision was made back in the winter to build the masterbrand campaign around shared values with Canadians. “Before the Cheerios effect [inspiration], we were spending some time on the issue of connection,” he says. “We live in an increasingly disconnected society. But when we looked at the heritage of the brand, we’ve always had a theme [of connection] behind the subset of Cheerios, whether it’s a toddler and her mother, two children playing or a young couple.”

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# Branded Content & Integration

**Branded content is not a new phenomenon.** However, armed with new tech, formats and research the industry's desire to utilize it is at an all-time high. So, the **December/January issue** of *strategy* dives deep into all things branded content.

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BY MATTHEW CHUNG

# So you went viral, now what?



Brands and agencies got in on the Ice Bucket Challenge, with execs like Aldo Cundari getting doused.

Brands have been busy of late creating experiences for consumers and sharing them in online videos – from an ATM that delivered prizes to a fridge that dispensed beer for singing the national anthem. And for a few weeks this summer you couldn't scroll through a Facebook News Feed without seeing someone dump ice water on their head. These viral videos garnered millions of views, and in the case of ALS societies across the globe, millions in donor dollars.

But how can marketers guarantee these campaigns add up to long-term growth – and not get them pilloried by the public? And how does a brand leverage a viral effort started outside of its boardroom? Industry pundits weigh in on how to navigate the fortune and fallout of going viral.

## RIDE THE WAVE



**Tammy Moore**  
is interim CEO,  
ALS Society of  
Canada

The Ice Bucket Challenge was started by a young man living with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), who personally challenged his friends and family. In that initial video, he directed the momentum of an existing activity to a charitable area to which he was deeply connected.

The challenge solidifies that people want to be a part of something that has meaning – they appreciated it was not contrived by an organization. It was never our campaign, so our role as brand managers was to ensure we aligned to meet public demand and expectations. Still, we learned some lessons from which other brands can benefit.

### BECOME A PART OF THE STORY

As the leading non-profit ALS organization in Canada, our success was dependent on respecting and understanding that this challenge's power came from being unbranded. We approached it not as a marketer, but rather as an equal participant, integrating ourselves into the story by making sure we were seen within social realms answering questions, commenting on posts, re-tweeting videos and acknowledging and validating the public's efforts to support the community.

When we heard rumblings of the challenge, we

could never have predicted its mass popularity. But we started setting up infrastructure to meet demand and ensure we were “first in market,” setting up an Ice Bucket Challenge website and ensuring the public knew we were available to answer questions.

### LEVERAGE SUPPORT NETWORKS

We harnessed the support of the media, conducting close to 100 interviews. We brought together our provincial societies for regular update meetings to help us adjust and evolve our key messages. With things moving quickly, it was critical for everyone to be aligned.

In some ways, it worked in our favour to not be too corporate and polished in our response, as it showed our grassroots connection. But as the challenge's popularity grew, it became hard as expectations to respond increased, so we had to add more resources.

### STAY FOCUSED

There was a lot of noise and clutter surrounding our organization and the challenge itself. Staying focused on what truly matters – fulfilling the public's need to contribute and be validated in a transparent way – helped to disempower attempts to shed a negative light on both public efforts and our organization.

---

## HEED THE HAZARDS



**Alison King**  
is president of  
independent PR  
agency Media  
Profile

Every marketer dreams their idea will go viral. But, like Frankenstein's monster, creating something with a life of its own has potential pitfalls. Here are a few, and how to handle them.

### LOSS OF CONTROL

Your campaign is now pop culture and no longer strictly your own. Your video might appear on websites that you'd prefer not to be associated with. Your beloved mascot might become a meme.

You need to decide if your organization will be comfortable letting go. You don't need to jump in with both feet on the first try, but ensure being risk-averse won't hinder your ability to be competitive.

### THINGS GO BAD

Social media allows you to speak directly to your fans, but it also allows your critics to join the

conversation. This has been said before, but worth repeating: prepare in advance responses to topics of frequent criticism and install a rapid response team. Journalists in particular are going to look for dissent and opposition to tell a balanced story.

### YOU JUMP THE SHARK

Oh my God! We love it! We love it...we're over it. Things move fast and you're going to be old news in a heartbeat. So, don't give it all away the first time you find yourself with an audience. Consider the overarching narrative arc for your campaign and how different tactics will allow you to evolve the story over time. There are some fairly predictable phases – discovery, speculation/editorializing and then the story of the campaign's origin. Be ready to participate but also be ready to exit stage left when your arc is done. Always leave them wanting more.

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## MAKE IT MEANINGFUL



**Geoff Craig** has  
a history with  
viral videos for  
brands like Dove,  
and most recently  
"The Undeading,"  
using zombies  
to promote CPR,  
as CMO of the  
Heart and Stroke  
Foundation

As large Canadian brands continue to humanize themselves through social media, we're seeing a glut of content being manufactured and packaged for the sole purpose of building stronger consumer-centric relationships. Branded "viral" videos, delivered through the lens of uplifting gestures of social goodwill, tug at heartstrings, exercise tear ducts and feast on our natural human inclination to share emotionally-driven, uplifting stories with our social graphs.

This movement to personify brands and showcase their sensitivity shows no sign of slowing down. However, it must be asked whether this technique is effective in building authentic, long-term relationships with fans and followers, or if it alienates and appears self-serving.

I believe as more brands jump on this method of corporate social responsibility, consumers will grow increasingly skeptical and desensitized to this "feel-good" content. A by-product of the Photoshop and internet age has been an augmented wariness regarding what's real and fake, and as brands continue to blur the line between being corporate conglomerates and community-oriented organizations, so too will our cynicism and suspicion of their motives and actions grow.

If brands are to form authentic, lasting and

effective relationships with their consumers/fans today, they must fully embrace the same dynamics that help marriages and friendships persevere – mutual respect and admiration, transparency and empathy. The real reward is the transition from short-term brand affinity to long-term brand loyalty, and this can't be achieved through viral videos alone. It has to be an organization-wide commitment to be authentic, transparent and community-focused.

No matter what the viral execution is, it still has to live up to and meet the fundamental beliefs, culture and strategy of the brand. Any manufactured viral attempt by a brand should be viewed as a single execution that supports a larger overall strategy.

Flash mobs (one of the earlier forms of social viral marketing) are a perfect example of one-off thinking: the vast majority were stand-alone pieces that would occasionally go viral because of their uniqueness, but typically never ladder up to a strategic insight or supported strategic initiatives. This ultimately made them utterly forgettable and ineffective.

Long-term loyalty is driven by a more complex cocktail of bringing value and utility to people's lives (often beyond the product or service itself), and no entertaining cat video or a one-off, feel-good, tear-jerking stunt will achieve that loyalty Holy Grail.



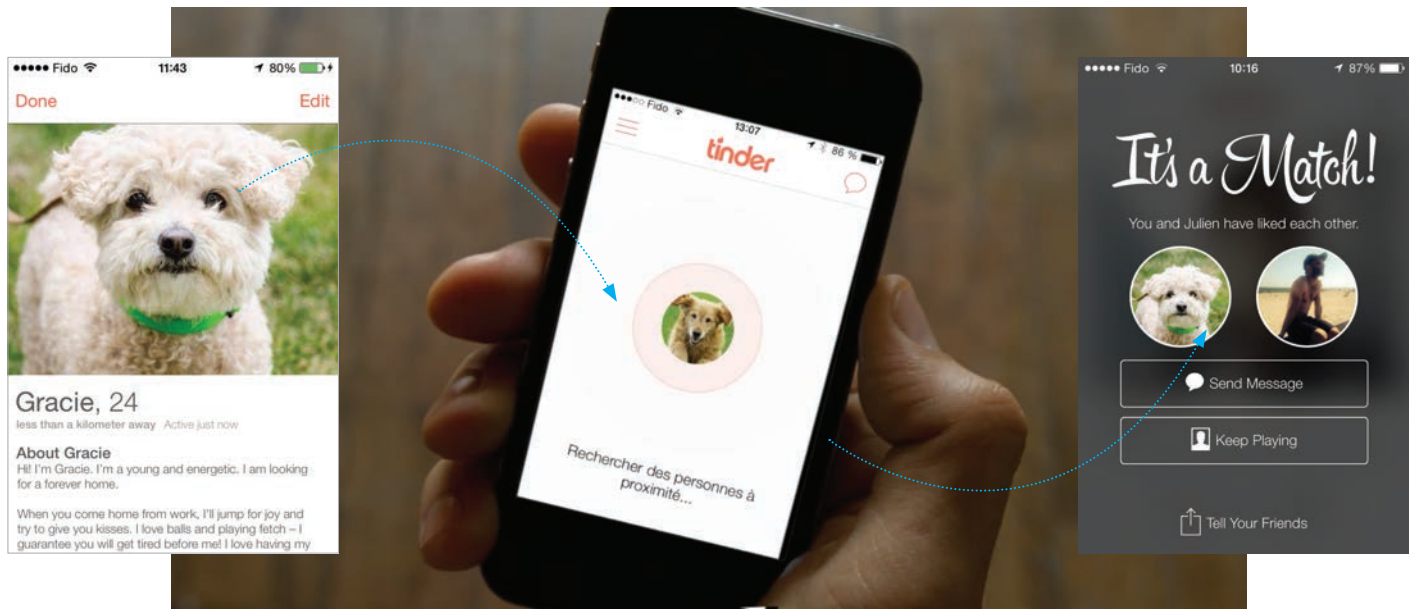
## BRANDS SWIPE RIGHT

BY MATTHEW CHUNG

Tinder, the location-based app that lets users make new connections (or turn them down) with the swipe of a thumb, is proving a hot property. You'd understand if it has the hearts of some brand managers palpitating, since the majority of its users are millennials.

But it's still a tricky space for brands to flirt with, and not just because of the risk of rejection. Earlier this year, U.S. broadcast co Fox and Tinder formed a partnership for *The Mindy Project*, creating profiles for show characters, and Tinder is on record saying it wants to monetize the app. But currently, its official terms of use forbid using it for commercial purposes. Tinder didn't respond to requests for comment, but it's obvious that a few brands, including some bold Canadian ones, are getting in the game with guerrilla campaigns. Since the platform is free to join, it's a potential hotbed for testing programs like these.

Do these executions disrupt the experience or help ingrain a brand with the hip kids? You be the judge.



## ROSIE ANIMAL ADOPTION'S CUTE PROFILE PICS

**D**rawing on the insight that people are looking for companionship on Tinder, Quebec-based Rosie Animal Adoption and Montreal agency DentsuBos sought matches for “man’s best friend” on the app.

Their campaign included putting profiles of pooches on the platform with bio info that listed interests such as “enjoys long walks in the park” and “good food with good friends,” says Xavier Blais, copywriter at DentsuBos.

Blais says the agency had some concerns about how consumers would react to the ads but most people responded playfully. For instance, one person wrote, “Let’s get married. You’re my type, white and fluffy.”

“We thought since we are doing it just one dog at a time, we are disrupting the process but not flooding it only with dogs,” Blais says. “We told [the adoption service], you probably won’t get a lot of dogs adopted through this process

at first, but it will get you one-on-one conversations with potential guardians,” he adds.

Results have been encouraging. The first two dogs to go on Tinder – Sookie and Gracie – found homes shortly after the app launched in the spring and the agency continues to load new profiles of adoptees.

More recently, New York shelter Social Tees Animal Rescue and the intern program at agency BBH launched a similar initiative called “Puppy Love.”

## NESCAFÉ GETS HOT AND STEAMY

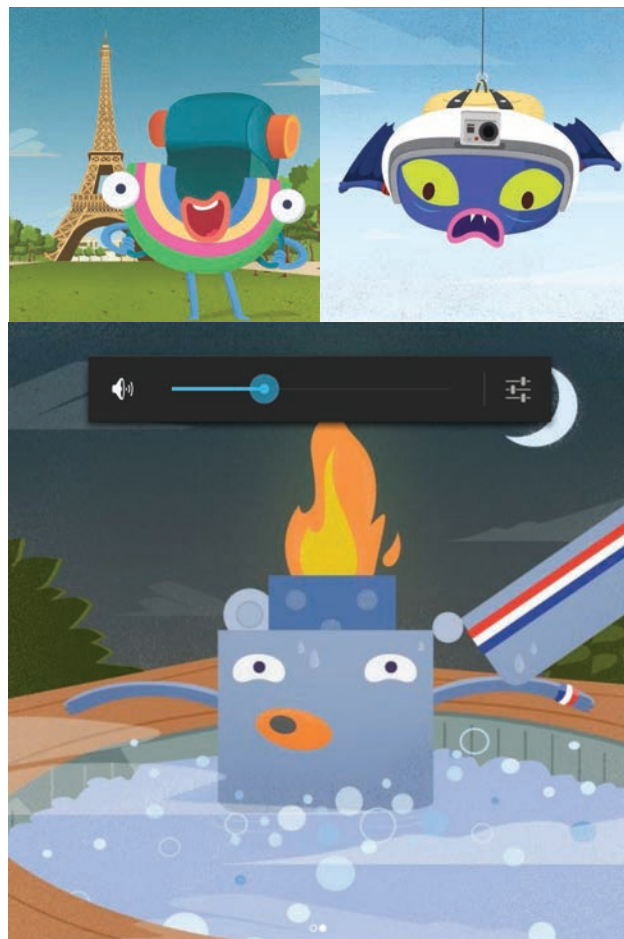
**N**estlé Canada wanted to arouse millennials' interest in its Nescafé 3 in 1 coffee (packets containing a mix of instant coffee, whitener and sugar). So, working with agency OneMethod Digital + Design, it created three online vids for its "Threelly Awesome" campaign, with each clip featuring three animated characters that morph to become one (three in one, get it?).

Rather than promote the vids through the usual digital channels, the brand launched a campaign on Tinder in September during post-secondary school orientation week, at more than 40 Greater Toronto Area campuses (the app has a 160 km radius for finding matches). They created animated profiles for the characters – including a horse, a lighter and a mermaid – and wrote witty bios, such as this line from the profile for Flint, the lighter: "I'm tough like steel but I can melt your heart in a second... Think we can ignite something?"

When someone swiped right on the profile, likely hoping to connect with a potential date, they found out the person on the other end was in fact a brand. Social media managers at OneMethod sent a suggestive message that included a link to the YouTube videos. For instance, the horse character wrote to one suitor: "Before you decide to go for a ride with me, why not get to know me a bit better by watching my recent debut on YouTube." The community managers would also engage in a response when someone left a message.

Ryan Saunders, marketing leader, coffee, at Nestlé, acknowledges there was risk involved venturing onto a new platform, but says the goal of the campaign was to have some fun and surprise consumers.

"To get noticed you have to get creative, take chances, be different and be brave," he says.



Steve Miller, VP and CD at OneMethod, says Tinder had not pulled the profiles or contacted them since the campaign launched, and the response from what is usually a cynical demo has been largely positive.

"For the most part people have had a lot of fun with it. They have even taken on personalities as they talk back with us, almost like they are also a character," he says.

"The profile pics are fun and the write-ups are funny, so there is a story there. I think it's a rewarding experience as opposed to a brand going onto Tinder and putting [up] their product."

Since the videos were only promoted via Tinder, Miller attributes the views (almost 500 as of press time) to people clicking links in the app.

## AGENCIES GET IN ON THE ACTION

**A** few enterprising creatives have been taking a swipe out of Tinder's playbook. Vancouver's Pound & Grain unveiled an app last month at TIFF to help users with similar movie tastes hook up for a viewing. Called Film Hearts, moviegoers selected a flick they wanted to see and discovered others looking for a watching buddy (it sounds a bit like a first date to us). About 600 people interacted with the app.

Meanwhile in Europe, there's no love lost at Dutch agency Woedend! It's seen the way the industry is going and decided it wants to help grease the revolving door for brands and agencies. It launched Pitcher, a mobile app that marketers can use to swipe through more than 60 Amsterdam-based creative shops. Users can swipe right to put an agency on their shortlist, then send out an invite for pitches with the touch of a button.





# THE INDUSTRY'S BEST ALL IN ONE PLACE.

(We're not lion.)



strategy  
**agency**<sup>TM</sup>  
OF THE YEAR  
+ MEDIA, DIGITAL & PR

October 30, 2014

# BRANDS *of* THE YEAR

**Viral content has become the Holy Grail** – forever sought-after, yet highly elusive. And when a brand attempts to go viral with a campaign, it's even harder to break through. You need to combat consumer skepticism, while executing a brilliantly clever idea. So how do you do it? Simple: be a Brand of the Year. ➡ In other words, build a brand that consumers love and reflect your brand values in your marketing. Make it convincing by making it true. ➡ All of this year's winners – Tim Hortons, Herschel, WestJet, TD and Beyond the Rack – experienced viral success in some form. ➡ The Brands of the Year were chosen, not just for their viral abilities, but for a buildup of brilliant branding. They were narrowed down from an extensive list thanks to industry feedback and much deliberation. Simply put, these brands were impossible to ignore this year.

By  
EMILY WEXLER





# Crowning Tim Hortons

This year's overall winner celebrates its 50th anniversary with big birthday pushes, new products and innovative tech, and there's no stopping this beloved Canadian icon

BY MEGAN HAYNES

Above from left: The '95 "Lillian" commercial defined Tim's marketing for decades; the store of the future with lager and touch-screens could be in the works.

**C**an you imagine grabbing your next pint of beer at Tim Hortons? How about watching the next hockey game on a TimsTV?

One day it could be a distinct possibility.

This year, for its 50th anniversary, at a franchisee trade show in Toronto, the Canadian brand unveiled a store of the future, complete with a strawberry lager and coffee porter, not to mention touch-screens at the tables and an app that lets you place your order and pay, effectively jumping the queue. There were plenty of decadent food options and even a light coffee roast, complementing the existing medium and dark roasts. The futuristic Tims, a temporary

pop-up, is the result of various departments – from marketing to product innovation to store design – blue-sky thinking about what could potentially exist, says Peter Nowlan, chief brand and marketing officer, Tim Hortons. Though he remained mum on which of those innovations would likely see the light of day, he promises that some are “in the works” right now. (The TV network already exists.) The entire thing generated lots of media attention, he says, as folks eagerly weighed in on what they liked and didn't like.

As the brand celebrates its birthday, it's riding a wave of love. Tims came in at number six on Ipsos Reid's Canadian Most Influential Brands study (it was the top Canadian brand, beat

out only by Google, Facebook, Microsoft, Apple and Visa). And a study of 1,000 Canadian female consumers by Marketel's women's division Marketelle named Tims the most beloved brand by women, claiming top spot ahead of Walmart, Apple and Starbucks (women from Quebec named it second-most-loved brand, preferring local pharmacy Jean Coutu).

“Nearly 40% of Canadian women [cited] Tim Hortons as one of their most adored brands,” the report said. “Asked why they liked Tims so much, women's answers went way beyond the cup of joe. No other brand in Canada enjoys the emotional connection that Tims does.”

This was echoed in an Interbrand study of Canadian companies, which named the

QSR as the number five brand in Canada. “Regardless of age, gender, social status or heritage, there is probably not a single brand more universally loved by all Canadians than Tim Hortons,” it wrote.

The coffee chain also ranked number 61 on global research consultancy APCO's loved companies list (which measures brands' emotional connection), ahead of McDonald's (69), the Yum! chains (78) and Starbucks (96) – and was the only Canadian company on the list. Only Subway beat the brand globally, coming at 32, in the quick service space.

And people aren't just declaring their love – they let their wallets do the talking. The chain has 27% of all market share for QSRs in Canada

and 42% of traffic – which is more than the next 15 QSRs combined (including main competitors McDonald's, Starbucks and Subway).

Its strong branding and results was a primary driver for Burger King to pursue a merger with it (see sidebar on p. 20).

Tims' own research finds it currently serves 75% of coffee in Canada, said Marc Caira, president and CEO, on an investor call, and is winning in the breakfast daypart "by a long shot" (where it competes largely against McDonald's). Finally, it is gaining ground in the lunch market, neck and neck with McDonald's, says Nowlan.

With all this adoration (not to mention the flurry of activity surrounding its anniversary, new product innovation and regular marcom), is it any wonder it was named our overall Brand of the Year?

The path to this love was an incredibly slow one, of course, simmering over the past half a century. In the early years, loyalty was largely driven by under-the-radar advertising and expansion. In fact, most of its early successes were really from its roots in the community, says Alan Middleton, professor of marketing at the Schulich School of Business.

The brand's biggest advocates were its franchise owners, and its biggest growth mechanism was its quickly expanding footprint.

It was an "of the community" brand, with a small-town feel that was incredibly popular through to the '90s. When it brought on board its AOR JWT (then Enterprise, prior to a merger), the company was really propelled forward as an iconic Canadian brand,

rolling out its well-known "True Stories" campaign in 1995, featuring iconic tales of Canadians and their love for a Double-Double, such as "Lillian," which featured a little old lady who trekked across the city each day simply to get a cup of coffee. (Want to hear more about the brand's 50-year evolution? Head to [Strategyonline.ca/timhortons](http://Strategyonline.ca/timhortons)).

Politicians courted the "Tim Hortons vote," with Prime Minister Stephen Harper going so far as to throw a celebration for the brand when it repatriated its headquarters to Canada after the dissolution of its 1995 merger with Wendy's.

But in 2009, competition started heating up as brands like McDonald's and Subway upped their game, competing with Tims on lunch and breakfast.

The company's U.S. expansion stalled, the brand unable to catch on, competing directly with Dunkin' Donuts, which has similar offerings and a much more entrenched history. The brand was forced to close underperforming locations. It made a failed bid into the ice cream space, pulling out of a partnership with Cold Stone Creamery this year, falling victim to Canada's long winters.

What's more, same-store sales slowed, and much of the success and steady profit growth was attributed to its continuous expansion across the country. But now, it's blanketed the nation and there's little room left to grow.

Yet despite this slowdown, 2014 was the brand's most exciting year to date.

Kicking off the year, the brand returned to portraying hockey in ads. Despite being

incredibly tied to the sport (having been started by a Toronto Maple Leaf), for decades hockey was only ever associated with the brand in a CSR capacity through Timbits Hockey.

But this year, working with Sidney Crosby, JWT and media AOR Mindshare, the brand rolled out a spot ahead of the Olympics, featuring a crowd of people jumping the boards to help play the sport (appropriately named "Jump the Boards"), declaring hockey to be "our game." According to Toronto research firm Solutions Research Group, despite not having run during the Games, it is one of the top 10 most memorable ads from the Olympics – the only non-sponsor on the list.

From there, the brand moved straight into its 50th anniversary campaign. And while it had a traditional TV spot, featuring

consumer photos from across the country, aired to a modified "I've Been Everywhere" by Geoff Mack, it was the brand's experiential promotions that garnered the most attention.

Working with digital AOR OgilvyOne, the brand rolled out a replica of the original Tims location in Hamilton, bringing back original patrons (some former Maple Leafs) and employees, decking out Toronto's Yonge-Dundas Square in '60s garb, and inviting consumers to have a cup of coffee or an original donut.

The footage from the campaign went viral, says Nowlan, garnering nearly 1.3 million hits, the brand's most successful digital video to date.

That is, the most successful campaign until the brand rolled out its latest push online for its new Dark Roast coffee (its first new blend since 1964). It



Clockwise from top:  
Former power duo,  
Tims' co-founder  
Ron Joyce and Dave  
Thomas from Wendy's;  
Sid the Kid rallies the  
troops in a recent  
campaign; Tims  
gets nostalgic for its  
birthday.





**Right:** Tims turned off all the lights for its Dark Roast launch; It also tapped actor Jason Priestley to judge a consumer-created donut contest.

featured a completely blacked-out Tim Hortons in Quebec, inviting consumer to come try a cup of joe in the dark, based on the insight that without sight, your other senses are heightened. The video garnered almost 2.6 million hits online, before it ever made it to broadcast.

"I think this is the natural evolution of the 'True Stories' campaign, as we tell true stories that consumers can actually experience [by taking part in the activation]," says Nowlan, who joined the company in June after five years at Molson Coors. He says the

traditional heart-warming "True Stories" spots will continue to roll out every 18 months or so, but experiential activations will become a bigger part of the brand's marcom repertoire. More recently, the brand turned a regular suburban house in Calgary into a pop-up

restaurant, garnering buzz on social media. (The video Tims made of the experience had not yet gone live at press time.)

Of course, consumer-facing marketing is only half the brand's battle plan. At an investor conference earlier this year, the QSR rolled out a five-year plan, and a big factor was product and tech innovation (indeed, Middleton cites product innovation as a key reason Tims thrived the way it has, saying it encourages excitement and repeat visits, allowing the brand to avoid consumer boredom).

For example, its Dark Roast allows it to more directly compete with Starbucks, which has darker coffee offerings. (In 2013, Starbucks rolled out a blonde roast in Canada to compete against Tim Hortons). Tims also unveiled warm kettle chips in a bid to increase basket size, says Nowlan. Since most people only order one or two items (coffee and a donut, coffee and a sandwich), kettle chips were a new product consumers could conceivably have on the side – something different than fries or salad.

The brand also benefits from the donut trend currently sweeping the nation, allowing it to unveil more decadent offerings, such as a birthday cake donut or an Oreo donut.

And its "Duelling Donuts" program has soared. The crowd-



sourcing competition, inspired by actor Jason Priestley's reference to a fictional Tims donut concoction on an episode of *How I Met Your Mother*, saw a spike in entries this year from 63,000 in 2013 to more than 76,000, Nowlan says. Consumers enter the campaign online, creating concoctions from a list of flavours and bases. The donuts are sampled by a panel of celeb judges and then put to Canadian consumers to vote on. The winner takes home \$10,000.

And in stores, the brand is rolling out a revamped look, with some locations getting more modernized furniture, fireplaces and even a network of TVs.

This may just be the start for the brand as it eyes the next 50 years.

It's won breakfast, has its sights on lunch. Is dinner next? Perhaps one day soon you'll pop into your local Tims for a bite and a pint to watch the next big hockey game. It's already one of Canada's most popular hangout spots, so it's not a far-fetched idea.

## A WHOPPER OF A DEAL

This piece was being penned as news broke that a merger between Burger King and Tim Hortons was in the works, worth \$12.5 billion, pending shareholder approval. BK was attracted to Tims' strong profits and brand: despite having fewer than a third of the locations Burger King had, Tims outperformed the fast-food joint on same-store sales. In 2013, Tim Hortons pulled in US\$3.2 billion, to Burger King's US\$1.1 billion.

As news rolled out, reaction from Canadians was swift, as Canucks decried the risk to the beloved brand – what would Burger King do to Tims? Could we expect to see fries and Whoppers instead of Timbits and crullers? Media worried about what it could mean for the profitable company and established brand.

On an investor call, Tims president and CEO Marc Caira and BK CEO Daniel Schwartz tried to assure everyone the merger would not change anything at the branding level – the two companies would operate independently of each other and everything would be business as usual. The merger, Caira explained, would allow Tim Hortons to tap BK's extensive global network and knowledge to help it with the "must-win" battle of its U.S. expansion, something it has struggled with.

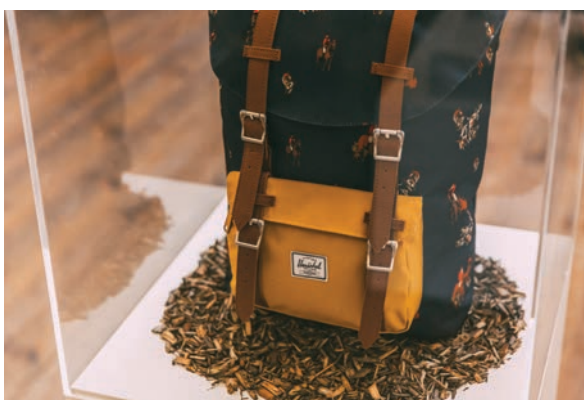
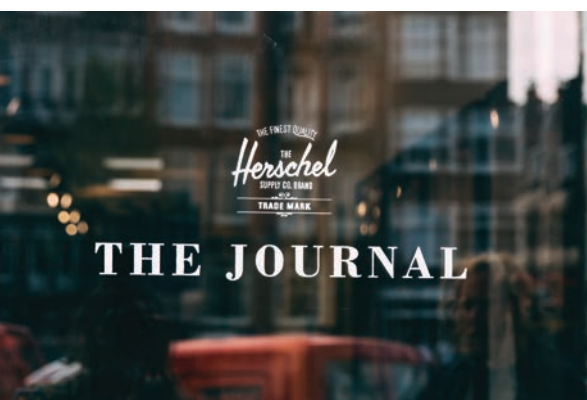
But backlash and worry continued. A crop of stories rolled out explaining to Americans why Canadians were up in arms. "To Canadians, Tim Hortons – or Timmy's, or even just Tim's[sic] – isn't just a coffee and doughnut shop," wrote Colin Schultz for magazine the *Smithsonian*. "It's a core component of the Canadian cultural identity – a part of Canadian identity that just got bought by a burger joint...For comparison, this is like a British company coming over to America and buying Smith & Wesson or Jack Daniel's or Ford – if those companies didn't just sell iconic American products but also happened to be the all-around top hangout spot in the country."



# Herschel's cool factor takes it global

The Vancouver-based brand has the backpack and accessories market in the bag, with its nostalgia-dripping products touching nearly every corner of the world

BY JENNIFER HORN



As it has done for previous launches of its magazine, *The Journal*, Herschel (along with partner Clarks Originals) held an event at an Amsterdam gallery for its third issue.

**T**here's a tiny town in Saskatchewan, home to only 30 people. You've probably never heard of it before, but you probably know its name. Herschel is where two brothers, Jamie and Lyndon Cormack, began their journey toward creating a global, multi-million dollar bag brand, Herschel Supply Co.

From humble beginnings, their company has established itself with the hip kids thanks to cool

collaborations, a smart retail strategy and clever placement among influencers (like a gifting suite in the Instagram lounge at the Cannes Festival of Creativity).

Based in Vancouver, the Cormack brothers decided to leave their careers in sales in 2009 to begin designing and selling bags. In just five short years, the company has grown to employ more than double its namesake town's current population, in places from Hollywood to Hong Kong, and

brings in tens of millions of dollars in sales (as a private company, the brothers don't disclose specific numbers).

"We didn't think the market had what we wanted to create," says Lyndon, who heads up sales, operations, finance and marketing for the brand, while Jamie leads product design and production. The brand does all of its marketing in-house. "It's not like we were trying to ride on anyone's coattails or come up with a 'me-too' brand, we really

thought that there was a need for a classic brand that's a bit nostalgic, but also modern."

"Our growth has been so staggering, it's hard for anyone to relate to the number," adds Lyndon. "In the last four years, it's been something like 22,000%."

Herschel backpacks, bags, travel goods and accessories, with their signature canvas body and leather straps, sit in 6,000 retailers across 60 different countries. But that's not to say the brand stops at the territories in which its bags are sold. Herschel has been visiting new places through consumers for about a year-and-a-half now, ever since it unfurled the "Well Travelled" positioning, which began with the brand asking anyone with the travel bug to submit stories and images from their voyages around the world to its blog.

"We were late to the game for a reason. We didn't just want to jump on the social bandwagon because it was the cool thing to do," says Mikey Scott, Herschel's global marketing director. The brand registered an Instagram handle and slowly began gaining followers – reaching 2,000 before it posted any images – at least not until it had a social strategy that felt authentic enough to compete with more established brands



on the platform. "In a digital age, we can go head-to-head with any brand and we'll succeed by doing it in a personal, organic way, as opposed to brands that have a million followers, but no curated stream."

So the team decided to officially launch its Instagram account with #WellTravelled, inviting users to post images of places they visit using the hashtag. Herschel shares those images on its page and gives credit to photographers (both amateur and professional) in the caption. The brand speaks to more than 370,000 Instagram fans on a daily basis, with many of the shared photos (which usually involve someone wearing a Herschel backpack amidst a majestic backdrop) generating 10,000 to 16,000 likes.

What began as a social strategy soon led Herschel to pursue other endeavours, such as launching a magazine, called *The Journal*, which is now in its third installment, as well as local and global photo gallery events. Available only in retail all over the world, the 150,000-copy publication (which includes a digital version, with one article from the mag posted on the Herschel website each week) curates a collection of images that revolve around the notion of the brand being "Well Travelled." It's also seasonal and sets the stage for new products, says Lyndon, with lookbook-style images of the different lines worn by models in various parts of the world. To promote the launch of each issue, Herschel prints and displays photographs from the magazine in galleries in cities across the world, from Los Angeles to Amsterdam.

"We're inherently a social



and digital brand, but we also put a lot of time into creating great images and stories, so we use print as a way to not only inadvertently help push retail sales, but also help launch a season and to give consumers more than a single [online] post each week," adds Scott. "Let's give [consumers] everything on the season, and they can flip through pages and learn about the brand."

Herschel products are marketed as a companion for anyone, of any age, to travel with anywhere and everywhere — whether that's subway-hopping in the city or jumping on a plane to an exotic location, says Lyndon, adding he's not aware of any direct competitors that play in the same category as his brand. It doesn't go after the same audience as many of

the fashion, action sports or outdoor bag brands. Its customer ranges from the pre-schooler to the college sophomore to the working professional.

And when you walk into retailers that stock its products, such as Toronto's Te Koop, it's typically the first bag label you see, with prominent window displays bringing attention to its bags. Herschel is even in Apple stores as one of the tech company's laptop bags of choice. The brand invests in face time with retailers, heavily attending various trade shows, as well as creating innovative retail fixtures to hold its products. For instance, Herschel recently partnered with Paris-based architecture firm Ciguë to create contemporary, yet utilitarian-style racks to hold its bags in stores.

Herschel doesn't sell inside

outdoor-focused stores such as MEC, nor does it stock its products in action sports-dedicated stores like Sport Chek. Instead, says Scott, the brand prefers to have its products carried in fashion and lifestyle-branded stores, both globally and locally, such as Urban Outfitters and Zumiez.

Lyndon says his team is also looking into doing more collaborations with other brands, just as it has done in the past with New Balance (creating 12 shoe designs for the company), as well as Clarks Originals, Stussy and many others, which have been featured in *The Journal* and Herschel's blog.

As for new markets, he says the company is being cautious not to get in over its head and enter new territories without proper planning. "We've said no to [some Asian] markets, we don't sell in Pakistan, Mexico or parts of Latin America or Eastern Europe," adds Lyndon. "We want to make sure we have all our ducks in a row and enter in a really impactful way. We want to look at what will work tomorrow, and what will be scalable for years to come."

For now, Herschel is keeping busy with new designs for headwear, launching ball caps and beanies in time for the holidays. "We feel that we [need to] bring a compelling story to the market, and figure out how our DNA fits into many different categories [like hats and shoes]...If we treat the [product category] with respect and have the same attitude that we have with bags and wallets and computer sleeves, then I think we will do a great job."



**CHARLIE. OSCAR. NOVEMBER. GOLF. ROMEO. ALPHA. TANGO. SIERRA.**

**Bravo, WestJet.**

Congrats on being a Brand of the Year.



**PUBLICIS**

# WestJet reaches new heights

Please fasten your seat belts, make sure your seatbacks and tray tables are in the full upright position and prepare to read how years of building brand equity has landed the airline a spot among the country's top brands

BY MATTHEW CHUNG

**F**ew brands can boast that their arrival in a community was celebrated by a crowd of 1,000 people.

Yet when WestJet's debut flight between Calgary and Brandon, MB, touched down last fall, it was greeted by a group of residents excited at the prospect of faster travel between the cities.

The rollout of WestJet Encore – a regional service to communities including Grande Prairie, AB, Thunder Bay, ON, and Penticton, B.C. – was one part of the airline's major expansion this year. It also made its first foray into Europe this June, flying 737s from St. John's, NFLD to Dublin, and the service was so popular WestJet decided to extend the seasonal route by three weeks.

But beyond the successful service expansion, the Calgary-based company's entry into new communities is significant because it harkens back to WestJet's beginnings in 1996 as a western Canadian airline with a fleet of three Boeing 737s.

The Encore service completes the return journey, if you will, for a company that has since expanded to 120 planes

and 90 destinations.

As it sets its sights on taking its brand promise – people-driven customer service and value for money – to more international destinations, and flies toward its goal of being one of the five most successful international airlines in the world by 2016, WestJet can reflect on a banner year of achievements, when nearly two decades of building brand equity yielded big-time recognition.

The company claimed a spot on Interbrand's biennial Best Canadian Brands study in 2014 – at number 20 it was the only airline in the top 25 and one spot ahead of railway Canadian Pacific, the only other transportation sector entry. It was also named Value Airline of the Year by industry mag *Air Transport World*.

On the financial front, it reported a record second quarter with net earnings of \$51.8 million, marking the 37th consecutive quarter it reported a profit. More people are choosing to fly with the airline as well – in August it transported 1.9 million passengers (another record for the brand), which was a year-over-year increase of

about 126,000 passengers, and registered a record load factor (ratio of passengers to available seats) of 89.3%.

When it comes to marketing, the airline's viral video, "WestJet Christmas Miracle: Real Time Giving," executed with agencies Studio M and Mosaic, has already reached legendary status. Released in December 2013, the video documents passengers at airport lounges in Toronto and Hamilton being surprised by a virtual Santa Claus booth asking them what they'd like for Christmas, then shows WestJet staff hustling to get the "wish-list" presents onto a luggage carousel before those customers arrived in Calgary. It has been viewed more than 36 million times and took home Bronze hardware at the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity.

But its viral success can be viewed as the culmination of years of work, says the airline's director of marketing David Soyka. The video would not have resonated with both consumers and the creative judges if it wasn't grounded in a deeper brand story of providing great service to customers, he says.

The brand's culture became truly well-established in 2005, when WestJet and then-AOR Taxi introduced an "Owners" campaign, which portrayed the airline's staff as a caring bunch and leveraged the fact that, due to the company's employee share plan, which the majority of staff are part of, they are all also owners.

Indeed, examples of WestJet staff members trying to brighten up passengers' days are not hard to find. Search for WestJet on YouTube, for instance, and alongside its branded videos you'll find passenger-filmed clips of the airline's staff making customers chuckle.

"Half of what made the success [of "Christmas Miracle"], if not more, was the fact it was a believable and realistic story [based on] people's experiences with us and our brand," says Soyka.

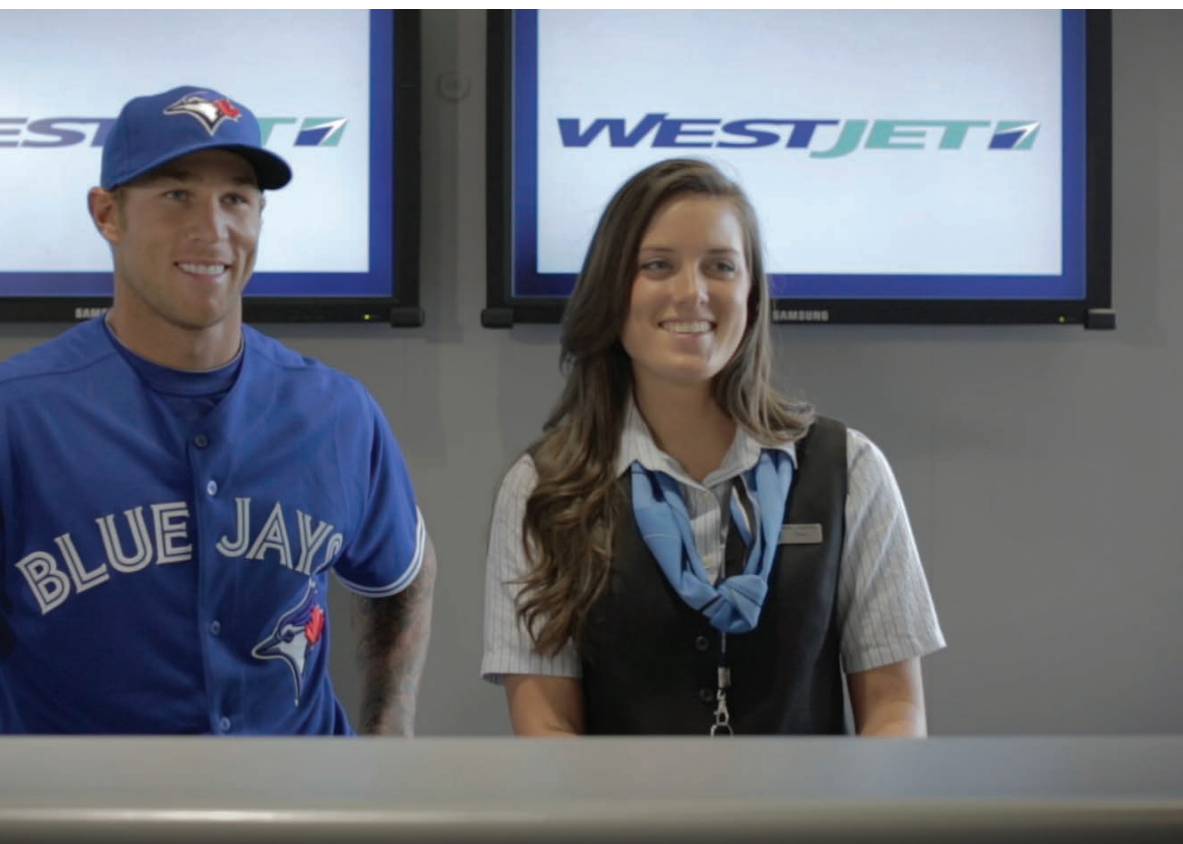
Building on the vibrant attitude of its front-line staff, Soyka says WestJet's marketing



Above: WestJetters celebrate the announcement of daily service between Penticton, B.C., known for its peaches, and Calgary.







**Top:** Toronto Blue Jays' Brett Lawrie stars in a TV spot. **Above:** The "Christmas Miracle" video has amassed more than 36 million views. **Right:** The brand partnered with Walt Disney Parks and Resorts to launch a custom-painted Boeing.

puts a "human aspect" at the heart of its communications. That can include a viral hit like "Christmas Miracle," or the follow-up Father's Day video that also lives on the brand's YouTube page and has received more than 900,000 views. Done with Ronald McDonald House Charities, "Father's Day Surprise" tugs on heartstrings and demonstrates the WestJet commitment to customers, as it shows how a WestJet employee trained for one man's job to free him up to go visit his ill son.

"At the end of the day [airlines] are all flying similar equipment, doing a similar mission of hurtling people

through space in silver tubes," Soyka says. "But what makes the WestJet experience and brand different is the WestJetters themselves – they're driven to care, they have passion for a job well done and an entrepreneurial spirit."

That personality can also be found in simpler brand messages, whether it's ads with the Toronto Blue Jays (WestJet is the team's official airline sponsor) or a seat sale campaign, developed by the marketing team of about 20 people along with AORs Publicis and Media Experts.

Soyka points to a recent Mother's Day contest where people entered for a chance to win two round-trip flights for their mother-in-law or mom to anywhere the company flew. The ad for the "Send your Mother-in-Law Packing" contest included the smile-inducing copy: "If you like, we'll even bring her back."

With some wit and care,

WestJet has navigated the turbulent airline space, eating into larger rival Air Canada's domestic market share while competing against newer entrant Porter Airlines.

Now new challengers could further darken the skyline, such as two proposed so-called



"ultra-low cost" carriers – Jet Naked and Jetlines. The two no-frills airlines, which are currently courting investors to get them off the ground, would target people who fly infrequently by charging low prices and including additional fees on everything beyond the fare. Meanwhile, U.S. low-cost carrier Southwest Airlines is also eyeing the Canadian market.

WestJet may well face other pressures created by its

growth, airline analyst David Tyerman says, noting that as the company continues to grow, it will grapple with how to maintain the service current customers have come to expect.

"They are very conscious that they do have this reputation of being egalitarian and of being the people's airline," he says.

A big issue it likely grappled with was whether to charge a fee for the first checked bag on domestic flights, a step it took last month for most flights within Canada and to the U.S., as its competitors do.

"These are the kinds of things the company is wrestling with as their business model has changed over time," Tyerman says.

However, Bryan Kane, president of Publicis Toronto, says after various visits to the brand's Calgary campus, he sees a company deeply committed to its culture and hiring people who fit in with the brand.

"When you talk about Brand of the Year, a lot of times it's a

campaign or a key initiative that people go back to," he says.

"I think the core of what sets WestJet apart is the culture and the understanding of the brand.

"It's not something that has been architected by a bunch of senior level consultants...it is who they are," he adds. "We won't see WestJet waiver or go in a different direction because it is a part of who they are and their communications are a reflection of that."



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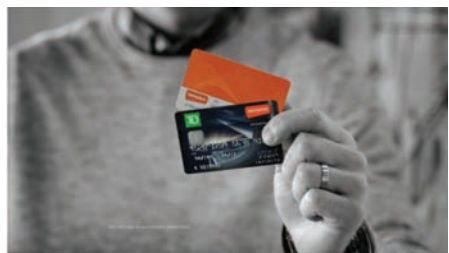
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# TD gets close for comfort

The bank has added a personal touch to an impersonal category, thanking its customers and touting convenience to be seen as a challenger brand

BY JENNIFER HORN



TD's latest spot for its new Aeroplan Visa.

It was a scorcher of a day when Calgary sisters Tegan and Sara stood on stage and belted out songs to a crowd in Toronto. The audience of more than 1,000 people, protected under pockets of shade and keeping hydrated with free sodas, didn't wait months after purchasing tickets to see the act. In fact, they didn't purchase tickets at all, many of them just happened to be walking by. The concert was a surprise treat from TD Bank, created in the name of comfort.

Though aligning itself with

music and events is not a new strategy for the bank, having sponsored more than 60 music festivals over the past 11 years, the pop-up concert series, called TD Music Café and developed by Diamond Integrated Marketing and NKPR, was run by and for TD to support its positioning of being the bank that brings comfort to a sometimes stale and somewhat impersonal category.

Dom Mercuri, TD's EVP and CMO, says the brand finds success in being able to make life comfortable for customers.

That's why it began opening its banks on Sundays in 2011, and extending its weekday hours to challenge competitors and make banking more convenient. And in late 2012, TD improved its cross-border banking services to allow seamless money transfers between accounts for shoppers, business travellers and Canadians studying, vacationing or living in the U.S.

Admittedly, the past couple of years have been tough for TD. Its insurance division was hit hard in 2013, after extreme weather

and flash flooding in Alberta and Ontario saw a rise in insurance claims, however, the bank managed to bounce back.

In August, it reported record-high earnings of \$2.1 billion for the third quarter of 2014, putting TD just behind RBC, which posted a net profit of \$2.38 billion for the same period. TD saw a 37% increase in earnings the year prior due to a rebound in insurance earnings, healthy loan and deposit growth, as well as developments in its retail division, such as the major

deal it struck last September with Aimia-owned Aeroplan to become the loyalty company's primary card issuer. As a result, the partnership helped



**Above:** It launched free Coin Counters in early 2013. **Right:** The bank celebrates one of its many accolades.

shift some 540,000 Aeroplan customers from competitor CIBC over to TD.

It was only natural for the bank to launch its Aeroplan card with the same thinking used in previous marketing, putting a spotlight on convenience and comfort. It introduced the TD Aeroplan Visa Infinite credit card with a campaign and dedicated website that explained the changes made, how the program worked and what customers could expect during the transition, says Mercuri. "It worked well, and it stayed true to the brand of trying to make things as comfortable as possible, as well as our vision to have personal connections with consumers," he adds.

"Digital connections are increasing, so we decided to invest in the people, time and money to grow that," he says. "[But] one of the key things that we see is that having a human connection is [also] important, as consumers have fewer direct face-to-face interactions."

In response to this insight, the company has been beefing up its marketing department to better handle more experiential and social. It also brought on Leo Burnett

COO at Leo Burnett.

He adds that his agency has so far dedicated most of its time creating consistent design elements across the company's various touchpoints, with Judy John, Leo's CCO and CEO, adding that they're taking the idea of comfort and delivering communication to consumers that's "easy to digest and simple to understand."

As a result of having a finer focus on experiential and social, the bank launched a campaign,

Hill+Knowlton Strategies, was uploaded to YouTube and, at press time, has raked in more than 11.8 million views.

"[TD] fundamentally believes that the most important part of its brand is the people and what happens when customers interact with it," adds Caruso, noting that going forward, his agency is working to help define, in modern terms, what comfort really means at TD.

And if profits and online fame aren't enough of a measure of success, the bank also has accolades to back it up. This year, TD was ranked first in customer satisfaction by marketing firm J.D. Power in its annual study. It's a title that TD has no problem holding onto — this is its ninth year winning. Also, during this year's Ipsos Best Banking Awards, held in August, TD took home top honours for the 10th consecutive year for the best customer service among Canada's five major banks. And finally there was the Best Canadian Brand title, which it claimed (yet again) in this year's biennial study from Interbrand.

"We've had a busy year in terms of the range of activities we've done," says Mercuri. "We don't build on the brand purpose of comfort in just one particular campaign, and it's not just done in the marketing function. It's really how we deliver it through all the different touchpoints that we have with our customers. [And] it's not just about what we put out there, but how we engage with customers and find new ways to deliver on that human connection."



as its agency of record in late 2012 to evolve the TD brand that its former creative agency partner FCB helped build over the years, specifically moving away from the iconic grumpy old men characters. It now focuses more on TD being seen as a challenger brand by marketing its convenient products and services that challenge category norms, such as extended business hours and TD Coin Counters, which launched in early 2013, says

Dom Caruso, president and called "#TDThanksYou," which went viral in July when it set up and filmed four "Automated Thanking Machines" at branches in Toronto, Montreal, Calgary and Vancouver.

The brand hid people inside, so when customers used the ATMs, they were able to interact with them and receive gifts, from flowers to the chance to throw the first pitch at a Blue Jays game. The video of the stunt, a collaboration between Leo Burnett, Diamond Integrated Marketing and





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# Beyond the Rack gets into Canadians' closets

How the e-tailer found rapid growth and secured itself a key place in the e-comm landscape in just five short years

BY TANYA KOSTIW



**Above:** BTR partners with lifestyle figures such as Chef Chuck Hughes. **Top centre:** brand name products such as Just Cavalli are among its offerings. **Opposite page:** Marie-Laurence Blais won a contest to become a BTR model.

Once upon a time, if you wanted to buy a hot new outfit, you had to actually get out of your pyjamas and leave your home. But in the last few years, the world of e-comm has exploded, with bricks-and-mortar stores offering up their own online platforms to compete with the multitude of buying sites. With so many sites out there promising steep markdowns and the best brands, how does a Canadian startup with zero brand recognition get off the ground and gain a loyal customer base?

Despite getting its start in early 2009 right after the recession, Canadian e-tailer Beyond the Rack (BTR) has managed to find a winning formula in a short period of time. With all its marketing done in-house and eschewing traditional advertising campaigns, it has firmly embedded itself in the country's e-tail scene by focusing on partnerships, the customer's experience and the value of data and measurement.

BTR has experienced steady intense growth over the years, with sales now into the hundreds of millions. Its market penetration in Canada is 30%, while its overall membership is

13.5 million (split fairly evenly between U.S. and Canadian consumers), with about 5,000 brand partnerships. Because it straddles many categories (fashion, home and even tech) the e-tailer says it's hard to peg its top competitors. Although flash sale sites like Gilt and Nordstrom-owned HauteLook are hot south of the border, and platforms like eLuxe and Peacock Parade (the latter adhering to a rapid-sale concept) are playing in the e-comm space north of the 49th parallel, BTR is Canada's largest flash sale site.

The membership-based site offers short-term, "flash" events, in which it sells items from its various brand partners at a price that is 30 to 80% cheaper than retail.

With various products at ranging prices, like designer bags in the thousands or a \$7 spatula, Richard Cohene, director, marketing and business development, says the e-tailer has something for all.

"We do have a very wide breadth of merchandise – a lot wider than most retailers – and I think that's one of our biggest strengths, we're not a destination for the millionaires... [and] we don't just sell low-

priced merchandise."

"What we are trying to do is just be that destination for brands you know and love, at a discount," he says.

But as a startup, a loyal following doesn't appear overnight, particularly when the marketing funds aren't there to make that happen.

"If you can't buy brand equity, we decided we would steal it, borrow it," Yona Shtern, CEO, Beyond the Rack, told a crowd at an HEC Montréal alumni event in Toronto in February. "It's kind of like if you want to look better, stand next to good-looking people. So that's basically what we decided to do as a company."

Beyond the Rack associated itself with events like the Golden Globe Awards and the Academy Awards, taking photos with "fun celebrities," while also positioning itself around certain brands. Initially, it even sold some brands at a loss. The idea was that if the retailer sold luxury brands such as Gucci and Hugo Boss, shoppers would believe a dress it sold for \$17.99 was also worth buying.

But the e-tailer would move on to find success beyond its initial "fashionista" segment, (although not abandoning

this focus), extending into the home, kids and baby categories, opening its outlet section of the site and focusing on men.

Although its core demo is women ages 28 to 60 ("we actually skew [older] than we all thought," notes Cohene), the brand personalizes its communication on an individual basis.

"We literally send out about a million variations a day of the actual content of the email [to members] to really optimize that click-through and engagement rate to make sure that we can open the funnel up as much as possible to get users back to the site," he says. "The last thing we want is to be sending a generic message to absolutely everyone all the time. You're leaving a lot of fruit on the tree if you're doing it that way."

The e-tailer also forged ahead with new partnerships, both in the fashion space and beyond. It has worked with celebrities and lifestyle figures like the Kardashians, Rachael Ray and Chef Chuck Hughes, while partnering with credit card cos such as Visa (with which it recently offered members free shipping if they pay with Visa Debit) and unique programs with Air Miles and



Shoppers Drug Mart.

The partnership with the latter, launched earlier this year, allows consumers to access a curated collection of items on a separate site and earn Optimum points on their purchases. The program is supported with its own email message system with promotions such as double or 10 times the points offered. The two retailers had been in discussions for about a year and a half, Cohene estimates, and he expects more to emerge from the duo's relationship.

Similarly, consumers can earn Air Miles on their purchases when they visit Beyond the Rack via the Air Miles e-store, although it differs from the Shoppers platform in that it is not a separate site.

The brand's main above-the-line advertising has been in the digital space with traditional

online ads, while in the social space it has garnered 20,500 Twitter followers, nearly 12,000 on Pinterest and more than 600,000 Facebook likes. Meanwhile it also engages with consumers through its blog and initiatives like modelling contests. Last month it kicked off a plus-size model search for a year-long contract with the brand. Would-be models can submit photos to a microsite, and people can like them. The two contestants with the most votes win a place among the top 25. (A judging panel picked the other 23 and narrowed them down.)

BTR also recently launched its mobile app for its on-the-move consumers. (More than half of its weekend sales are made on mobile devices, and just less than half on weekdays).

But it's really its relationships with suppliers that are seminal.

Beyond the Rack both pursues and is sought out by suppliers, while its team of buyers travels to places like L.A., New York and Italy to secure merchandise. The e-tailer sells pre-owned luxury goods from brands such as Louis Vuitton and Chanel, which it obtains from certified resellers who can guarantee its authenticity. Buyers will regularly travel to Milan in order to acquire the kinds of discounts it can offer on its high-end, pre-owned merch.

"You can't work through multiple tiers of resellers and be as competitive as we are in terms of pricing," says Cohene. "We have to go as direct as we possibly can."

After all, keeping the customer happy is a basic rule for any business, but in the case of Beyond the Rack, it's built into its brand identity.

Earlier this year, Shtern attributed 80% of the e-tailer's revenue to repeat customers, while noting a shift in its approach to customer service, from one where reps are extensively trained to protect the company from those trying to take advantage of it, to one in which they "over-service" patrons, and the main goal is customer satisfaction. Customer service reps are given an "apology" budget of sorts to distribute to dissatisfied customers, and are questioned if they don't use it.

"We know that a customer who interacts with us who had a bad experience with the brand for whom we created resolution immediately, we see an eight-fold increase in customer lifecycle, in lifetime value," he said. "It's the best money we can spend."

Maintaining good customer relationships could mean sending flowers on her birthday or offering someone a credit to come back and shop, but it's also simply about gaining trust.

BTR also practices a philosophy to measure everything, test small, fail fast and learn from it. For instance, to make its Home vertical successful, it experimented with variables such as vendors, brand assortment, price and margins for two years. Earlier this year, Shtern pegged the category at one-third of the e-tailer's business.

Similarly, Cohene says this measuring and testing approach helped BTR address the low conversion rate of its former registration page, which didn't let users see the site prior to registering. Tests, which enabled non-members to see the site, pointed to higher conversion and



lower bounce rates.

The e-tailer has also learned to look closely at data, Cohene says. And the larger the marketing team (currently at about 10 people, with future plans to expand), the more you can focus on granular cases, drawing strong conclusions – which has helped BTR come to revelations, such as with the registration page, he explains.

"The devil is in the details, and if you don't spend enough time looking at them, then you'll probably miss the point because the smallest percent shifts here and there are really the things that are the most telling."

As for the brand's future, sticking to what has worked plus new iterative elements is where it wants to head, he says. In the coming months, Cohene says BTR is planning something that could be a retail game-changer, and although he couldn't share further details, he says it will be the only one doing it.

"We have to be that company at this point. We have to reinvent ourselves and we have to be the ones where people say, 'Well, they're doing it.' And I think we're going to start to set the bar."







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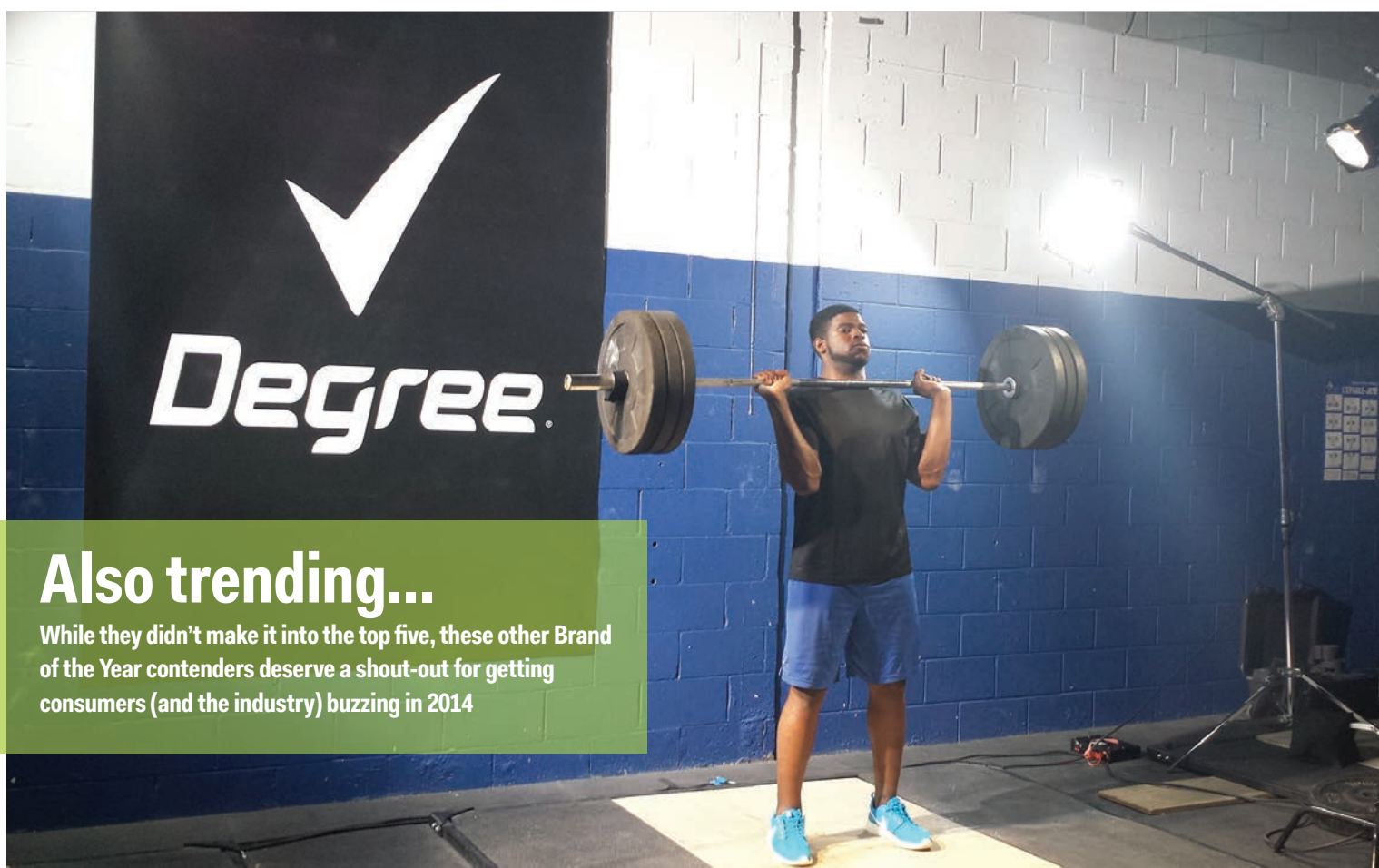
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## Also trending...

While they didn't make it into the top five, these other Brand of the Year contenders deserve a shout-out for getting consumers (and the industry) buzzing in 2014

## ATHLETE OF THE YEAR P.K. SUBBAN'S WINNING PLAYS

By Matthew Chung

**P.K. Subban had a career year in a Montreal Canadiens jersey**, helping lead the NHL franchise to within two wins of playing in the Stanley Cup finals.

Yes, there was plenty for hockey fans to cheer for on the ice, but it may have been possible to hear the cheering of a few brands, too, with each of his goals and assists.

Because this was also the year Subban skated into the spotlight as a brand unto himself: the charismatic 25-year-old was featured in *Maclean's* Canada Day issue and has more than 450,000 Twitter followers. And brands like Degree and Boston Pizza are happy to have him on their team.

This spring, Unilever's Degree put the defenceman on its roster as its spokesperson, featuring him in a TV and online series on Rogers Sportsnet, called *The Next Level, presented by Degree*. Subban hosted the show, which featured elite Canadian athletes, from Milos Raonic to Andrew Wiggins. In addition, he engaged with the brand's Twitter and Facebook audiences and conducted local media interviews. While Unilever did not disclose results from the campaign, the CPG co says Subban's involvement helped convey its

message of inspiring people to push their limits, because the athlete reinforces "the importance of embarking on a continuous journey of improvement."

Subban, along with his dad and two hockey-playing brothers, is also a key partner in the Hyundai Hockey Helpers program, which works with non-profit KidSport to provide grants for league registration and equipment to around 1,000 kids each year. Last season, the company ran "Hyundai's P.K. Challenge" – companies that signed up to be "team players" pledged to provide a grant for a child to play each time Subban scored.

Subban was also featured in an OOH campaign for Boston Pizza. During the playoff series against the Boston Bruins, the company put giant billboards up in Montreal that declared his love for Boston – "P.K. (heart) Boston." A few days later, the word "Pizza" was added after Boston.

After going to arbitration with the Canadiens this summer (a story that dominated sports reports), Subban signed an eight-year contract with the club, surely a happy outcome for his current and future brand partners north of the border.



## LUXURY CONTENDER OF THE YEAR HOLT RENFREW'S HIGH-FASHION BATTLE PLAN

By Megan Haynes

**With Nordstrom's arrival** and Hudson's Bay's purchase of U.S. retailer Saks, the Canadian luxury retail market is heating up. But Holt Renfrew isn't just kicking up its Prada heels and calling it a night.

The company recently announced it was expanding its footprint by 40% to more than 1.2 million square feet, focusing on four key markets (Toronto, Calgary, Vancouver and Montreal – resulting in the shutdown of low-traffic stores in Ottawa and Quebec City).

This includes new stores, such as its Men's shops in Toronto dedicated to suiting

fashionable guys, as well as revamping flagship stores in Montreal and Toronto, and launching “luxury apartments” for private shopping. These apartments will offer bespoke shopping experiences, with everything from drinks to floral arrangements tailored to the high-rollers. The first of these apartments opened in Toronto's Yorkdale Shopping Centre in January, following the grand opening of HR2, the brand's discount designer chain in Vaughan, ON and Montreal.

The brand also dipped its feet into the

art space, partnering with the French Embassy to bring an exhibit by photographer Laurence Picot directly to its Yorkdale location. “LuxInside, Traces of Man” features X-rays of luxury goods, such as a Leica camera and an Hermès saddle.

It followed the brand's first forays into art, working with the AGO for a David Bowie experience and the Design Exchange museum for a retrospective of iconic shoe designer Christian Louboutin. “Our business is art – [these exhibits] are a direct extension of what we do in fashion,” said Kimberly Grabel, SVP marketing and customer experience at Holt Renfrew at the time of the launch (Grabel has since left the brand).

The brand also launched a teched-out Christmas campaign last year, partnering with Samsung for a retro holiday in-store display. A staple of the retailer's holiday promotion, it featured '50s and '60s scenes complete with vintage finds from thrift shops. A Samsung screen was placed in the middle of the display, and passersby could pop into the retailer to get their photo taken to become part of the scenery.

The holiday push generated “record sales,” says Moira Wright, divisional VP of PR, Holt Renfrew. It also picked up a Retail Council of Canada award for the push, which recognized the campaign for its “excellence in in-store marketing.”

## BEST TECH-TAPPING BRAND ABSOLUT MAKES IT WITH MAKERS

By Jennifer Horn

**Today's makers and hackers are like the dot-comers** of the mid '90s. They're the first to jump on new technologies predicted to transform industries, and Absolut showed this year that it's not about to stand on the sidelines and watch these creators make their mark.

The alcohol brand spent the past year picking the brains of some of the country's smartest tech tinkerers, hosting a series of maker events, and in turn, saw 6.1% growth in a relatively flat category in Canada (vodka growth for the same period, July 2014, was only 0.6%).

“Technology gives [makers] the power to create, customize and consume products the way they want,” says Chris Bhowmik, senior brand manager, vodka, at Absolut distributor Corby Spirit and Wine Limited. “Brands will need to adjust in the future by giving up control of [their] products to consumers.”

At the brand's 11 MakerFest events in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver, Absolut gave craftspeople, robot builders and solderers a

space to exhibit interactive installations in front of more than 5,000 people.

The catch was that they had to use Absolut glass bottles and hack them to hold, display or add to the design in a compelling way. Think robots being told to pour drinks with the power of the mind (for example, using EEG headsets, attendees had to simply think hard about the drink being served).

MakerFest, which is part of the brand's global campaign “Transform Today,” helped Absolut achieve trending status on Twitter in Canada, and moved the brand beyond the traditional use of UGC in marketing, giving consumers a say in how its products can give back to the world. *With files from Matthew Chung*





## THREAT OF THE YEAR NETFLIX TURNS UP THE DIAL IN CANADA

By Tanya Kostiw

**For many Canadians (including this writer),** a world without Netflix seems unfathomable. The OTT provider has rocked the nature of content consumption for many, to the point where it's hard to believe we lived in a pre-Netflix world only four short years ago.

Today, the U.S.-based service, which offers unlimited access to TV shows and movies for a monthly fee, has become a staple in many Canadian homes, since launching a Canadian version in 2010. Netflix famously doesn't divulge numbers, but Toronto-based Solutions Research Group data suggests three million Canadian households had the service in January, while Canada.com reported its subscriber base to be more than 4.6 million the same month.

The OTT provider's popularity has turned up the heat on traditional broadcasters, which have been releasing "TV everywhere" content offerings to keep up with today's consumer. The most direct challenger



of late is Rogers' and Shaw's recently-unveiled Shomi SVOD platform, which will be offered in a beta version to its internet and TV customers in November.

Netflix has also made waves recently for its creative. Along with DDB Vancouver, it picked up a Bronze Film Craft Lion in Cannes this year for the "Pep Talk" spot, which plays on the idea of being part of the Netflix bandwagon, touting the tag line, "You Gotta Get It To Get It." It features a hockey coach riling up his team by referring to the idea of inspiring movie clips on Netflix – without ever mentioning any at all. The spot made news during the NHL Stanley Cup playoffs, when New York Rangers coach Alain Vigneault joked about "Pep Talk." This tagline and positioning carried forward in the second leg of the campaign, currently in market, with "Airport," "Test Results" and "Proposal," which similarly play on ambiguous cinematic drama.

Netflix's foray into the original content space has also made noise – and it's not all from our southern neighbour. In March, Netflix announced its partnership with the Canadian hit *Trailer Park Boys* and franchise distributor Entertainment One to release an exclusive eighth and ninth season, with the former kicking off in September.

Meanwhile, Canadian regulation of the OTT provider continues to be a hot topic, such as at the recent CRTC Let's Talk TV hearing.



## PIONEER OF THE YEAR FRANK & OAK SPIES INTERNATIONAL EXPANSION

**Montreal-based Frank & Oak has had a banner year.** The online retailer creates and curates men's fashion, making clothing in-house to keep costs low. Beyond the e-commerce site, Frank & Oak offers a robust blog and offline magazine, allowing its content to drive a lot of the branding. Guys are invited to browse everything they need to know about dressing themselves from style Q&As with musicians to learning about which fabrics work best for which occasions. "We realized the millennial guy likes to know the 'why' behind a product," says Ethan Song, CEO and CD, Frank & Oak.

The digital clothier is also moving deeper into the analogue space, with a round of pop-up shops and soon a flagship bricks-and-mortar location in Toronto. The store, the second for the company (the first opened in Montreal in 2013), will include a barber and coffee shop to create a different retail experience.

Last year it also partnered with Aldo-owned Little Burgundy to distribute its travel wares in stores (backpacks, shoes and other travel-related clothing) – a first for the brand. Though the line sold "very well," the bigger opportunity was to introduce the brand to new audiences and build up more content around the theme of travel, Song says. It also partnered with Ubisoft this year to release a line of menswear based on the videogame *Watch Dogs*, allowing it to tap into the "huge" market of gamers. Both partnerships were promoted largely through PR and social channels, as well as through the clothier's content online.

And it seems to be working. In the past year, the brand has grown its shopper base by almost 400,000 across North America. It now reaches nearly 1.6 million consumers. Its mobile apps (iPhone, Android and iPad), launched in spring of 2013, have been downloaded more than 250,000 times. And this summer, the brand expanded into the U.S. (where roughly 70% of its sales occur), opening an office in New York. **MH**



# AEROPLAN GROWS UP

BY MEGAN HAYNES

AEROPLAN'S BRANDING HISTORY IS NOT TYPICAL – IN FACT FOR MANY YEARS ITS BRAND WAS BUILT BY OTHER COMPANIES, TRAVELLING COMFORTABLY THROUGH LOYALTY LAND. NOW, AS IT CELEBRATES ITS 30TH BIRTHDAY, IT HAS FINALLY COME INTO ITS OWN

**A**eroplan could make a great coming of age flick...assuming people wanted to see a movie about a frequent flyer program growing up, of course.

The points program started as a small element of Air Canada's overall marketing mix – a way of enticing flyers to remain loyal. It didn't have much of its own brand identity, being heavily tied to the airline. As it navigated the '80s and '90s, it explored new partners, and even had a fling with the Diners Club card. But still, its identity was limited and undefined.

It wasn't until the brand cut official ties with its parent company in 2002 and struck out independently that it started coming into its own. And now, at 30, Aimia-owned Aeroplan is all grown up with a distinct personality. And as the industry salivates at the potential of big data, and customers demand personalization, the frequent flyer-turned-travel-rewards-turned-coalition program wants to

be the company that makes everyone, from consumers to brands, happy.

**IN THE '80S, THE LOYALTY SPACE WAS NOWHERE** near as saturated as it is today.

It wasn't until 1981 when American Airlines introduced AAdvantage, which rewarded frequent flyers with special airfare rates, that the modern frequent flyer program was born. After that, airlines started introducing their own programs rapidly, says Kevin O'Brien, SVP and chief business development officer, Aeroplan.

Aeroplan's 1984 launch marked the first time an airline in Canada offered such a program. "Airline margins have always been extremely difficult," O'Brien says. "[Frequent flyer programs] were based on the idea that you could be much more effective in how you deployed your money if you knew more about

your customers.” The program amassed very basic personal information, allowing Air Canada to create more personalized marketing and giving it a way and reason to talk directly to consumers, he says, something that wasn’t very prevalent in the early ’80s.

Aeroplan launched as a department of five. In the early days, it was a very manual process to receive points, says Christa Poole, manager, external communications. Members were sent stickers, which they placed on their paper tickets after the flight. They would then have to send the ticket to a fulfillment house, which would enter the flight data into a system for crediting. If a member wanted to redeem points, they would have to call and request a certificate by mail.

The Air Canada subsidiary really didn’t have much of a brand identity of its own, relying on the parent company for all marcom. No distinct advertising existed, says David Klein, former VP marketing and innovation, who has worked on the brand since the ’90s while he was at FCB, one of its agencies during that time. Member acquisition was handled almost exclusively at the boarding gates, where Air Canada employees asked if people were already part of the program. If not, he says travellers were signed up on the spot.

But despite this, Aeroplan quickly took flight, growing to include new travel partners, such as car rental cos and hotels. Other companies were enticed by the concept of rewarding loyalty, O’Brien says, so evolving into spaces related to travel simply made sense. By 1985, more than 100,000 people had enrolled in the program.

**THE FIRST TIME AEROPLAN REALLY STARTED** exploring outside the Air Canada “nest” was its partnerships with CIBC in 1991 and Diners Club in 1993.

It marked the brand’s first shift from a frequent flyer program (earning points while travelling – and for distance) to travel rewards program (earning points while spending money to help pay for travel).

O’Brien says bringing credit cards on board was, again, a natural evolution for the brand into the travel ecosystem.

“People were starting to catch on that airlines had unique relationships with people that maybe they could hitch their wagon to,” O’Brien says.

Indeed, when CIBC first allowed people to sign up, he says there were lines around the block. In fact, he says anecdotally some branches had to extend their hours, with early adopters being those who were already travelling for work and earning points. A credit card simply allowed them to do it on everyday purchases. After bringing CIBC on board, membership in the program doubled, and it gained roughly 200,000 new members each year.

Yet the brand still didn’t have much of its own ID, says Poole. Though it was active in print (the *Globe and Mail*

being a preferred vehicle to reach the business audience), it shied away from masterbrand campaigns on TV. In fact, Aeroplan’s first foray into television in ’91 was led by CIBC and designed to inform people about the new card – rather than Aeroplan’s benefits.

Much of the brand’s activity throughout the ’90s and early 2000s was led by CIBC, with Aeroplan enjoying the fruits of the bank’s labour. For example, in 2001, the bank partnered with Advantex to create an online portal that allowed people to earn Aeroplan points on their CIBC Visa when they shopped online. The portal included a widget that tracked people’s points accumulation. However, this was more of a play to encourage online shopping in the early days of digital retailers, rather than to build up the Aeroplan brand.

Aeroplan faced some competition in the ’90s: Air Miles, its biggest adversary, opened its Canadian operations in ’92, while other banks caught wind of the popularity of travel rewards program, each launching their own travel reward cards in turn. By 2000, Canadians were well familiar with the concept of “earning points,” meaning Aeroplan had difficulty differentiating itself from the competitors.

**IN FACT, IT WASN’T UNTIL AEROPLAN SPLIT OFF** from Air Canada in 2002 that it started exploring its own identity.

The split from the parent company was difficult for the brand and came on the heels of Air Canada’s merger with Canadian Airlines.

“It was an absolutely crazy time, to put it mildly,” says Rupert Duchesne, who was president and CEO at Aeroplan at the time of the split, and now group chief executive at Aimia. Just prior to Air Canada’s acquisition of the competition, there had been a strategy meeting looking at what parts of the business could be expanded, he says. “The one that made most sense was Aeroplan [because] it had the most revenue from outside sources.”

Aeroplan was spun out from AC to extract the value from the program and monetize the asset, says Poole. The logic was that loyalty programs are more stable than airline profits, so splitting it off created a cash-producing business. (Even today, Aeroplan continues to be a source of revenue for the airline through Air Canada’s tiered reward program and seat purchases.)

It required completely splitting off the company, which at the time was made up of eight employees, to create and fill rolls in all departments from finance to the call centre.

Beyond losing the comfy perks of working at Air Canada (such as a generous pension plan and free flights), there was also the risk that Aeroplan wouldn’t survive on its own. (Ironically, in 2003, Air Canada went through bankruptcy protection, says Duchesne, and as a separate entity, Aeroplan wasn’t adversely affected.)

And while the rewards program was well on its way to





**From top:**  
Early marcom efforts relied on direct; 2013 ads introduced its latest platform, Distinction; In 2009, exclusivity was emphasized in a mass campaign welcoming consumers to the "club."



its independence, the events of Sept. 11, 2001, threw the entire travel industry "off kilter," Duchesne says, forcing the brand to delay until mid-2002.

But the transition allowed the company to brand itself – the first time it had its own identity since its creation. Early positioning focused on the tagline "Have a dream," while marketing efforts were geared at growing the appeal of the brand to reach a broader group of "better off" Canadians, says Duchesne. That meant bringing in new partners to broaden the appeal even further (beyond the business traveller), including Esso and Amex.

Klein says the job for the marketing team wasn't to distance the Aeroplan brand from Air Canada (though he says they consciously stopped using AC's famous roundel mark). Rather, he says focus was on communicating that AP was no longer just for travel to a customer base that only knew it as such, while also bringing in new general consumers. Messaging shifted towards "this notion of integrating Aeroplan into your everyday life, your everyday spend," Klein says.

Branding efforts touted a "joie-de-vivre positioning," introducing the tagline "Rewarding life" in 2007. By 2008, it had launched a program that allowed people to "shop" with their points online.

However, despite its foray into its own identity space, Aeroplan faced a number of obstacles: with banks now in the loyalty game, one 2010 study by Maritz Canada found loyalty programs run by financial institutions had higher member satisfaction rates than coalition programs, and Air Miles enjoyed an 81% awareness rate, compared to 60% for Aeroplan. One survey by *Frequent Business Traveler*, a trade publication in the travel rewards space, found Aeroplan was the least-liked program in Canada, with less than 30% of survey respondents saying they were satisfied or very satisfied – 43% said they were unsatisfied or very dissatisfied, largely due to the point redemption process.

**"WE [STARTED] LOOKING FOR A WAY TO DRIVE** more emotional engagement of what the member experience was meant to be," says O'Brien. In 2009, the points program brought in Toronto-based consultancy Hazelton Group to do a deep-dive into the brand's positioning and place within the industry. It also brought in Cossette as its AOR (after working on a project basis with Diesel – later Sid Lee, FCB and Rapp over the years) to handle both creative and media.

By this time the program had nearly 4.5 million members and a marketing team of 75. It had also gone through myriad owners, transitioning from a subsidiary company to a privately-owned one to publicly-traded (in 2004) and finally a privately-owned company in 2008 when Air Canada divested its final shares. (In 2011, the company renamed its parent group Aimia to distance the Aeroplan brand from the global expansion into other loyalty networks.)

In 2009, the company identified the need for a more comprehensive blueprint for its growth over the next five years, examining its relevance to both members and partner companies. As a result of this deep-dive, O'Brien says they identified an opportunity to become a more elite program.

The emphasis was on the idea that being an Aeroplan member should grant people privileges you can't get elsewhere.

"As we looked at it 'joie de vivre' wasn't broad enough," he says. "It didn't fit with this spirit we were trying to create, that Aeroplan is something members aspire to get more out of."

O'Brien says they identified an opportunity to play in the exclusivity space, resulting in the brand's 2010 identity iteration, "Welcome to the club."

It wasn't about acquiring new cardholders, he adds, but rather engendering more loyalty among shoppers to the coalition partners.

"We had members who were flying with Air Canada, but not necessarily holding an Aerogold Visa," he says. "We had members who had the Visa, but they were spreading their flights around. We had people who were being promiscuous with where they got their gas. But if they were really buying into the club, they would have consolidated their behaviour."

As a result, a mass campaign was created pointing back to the fact that as an Aeroplan member, consumers were part of a unique group of people with access to unique things. When Aeroplan started embarking on this rebranding journey, Klein says they came to the realization that the journey (physically going from point A to point B), while important, wasn't a key factor for consumers. It was the experience people had when they reached their destination that mattered most.

The brand started introducing exclusive experiences – such as getting one-of-a-kind guitars or trips to world sporting matches – to complement the existing reward structure. “[We] dialed up the communication of rewards based on experiences,” he says. “So it wasn’t just about flying from Toronto to Vegas on your points. It was about the helicopter ride you booked when you got to Vegas.”

The brand also benefited from even more partners. It was no longer just CIBC spreading the word about Aeroplan, O’Brien says. “Try to watch a baseball game and not see Home Hardware ads with the Aeroplan logo on them. It’s impossible,” he says. “Shop.ca is all over TV right now talking about Aeroplan offers.”

The brand’s net promoter score – its main form of customer satisfaction measurement – has done well, he says. The system, which measures whether someone would recommend a product or service to a friend and averages it out to a score, tends to reward the most favoured companies in the world in the 60% range. Prior to the changes, Aeroplan would typically run in the positives (meaning more people were saying positive things than negative) but would receive less than 20%. Now, the brand is consistently running 15 to 20% higher.

**SO WHAT DOES THE FUTURE** hold for Aeroplan? In a word, data.

The company renegotiated its two-decades-long partnership with CIBC to bring in TD as another credit card partner, and a big factor in renegotiating the deal was to build in agreements around things like the banks identifying places members were spending money where Aeroplan didn’t already have a retail partnership.

“As you can imagine, a contract put together in 1991 didn’t really conceive of data as a primary reason for having a relationship,” O’Brien says. “It was all about the currency exchange.”

But having something of value for consumers is simply no longer enough for Aeroplan – or its business partners.

More and more brands – especially retailers – are launching their own loyalty programs, enticed by the possibilities of data. As a result, Aeroplan has to create more value for its partners or risk losing them.

For example, it could help manage things like partner inventory – such as tailoring product selection based on member preferences in an individual store – something Aeroplan is working towards for its partners.

The brand has also expanded its data-crunching capabilities internally, adding employees to its predictive analytics teams, not to mention adding entire departments dedicated to handling clients’ marketing, and it launched a digi-specific team handling social and digital marketing.

From a consumer-facing perspective, the brand continued to evolve its exclusivity messaging by launching its latest platform called Distinction – a tiered service that rewards people with certain point levels (the basic being 25,000 points), with even more exclusive rewards. Until recently, only frequent flyers received any preferential treatment for mass reward collection.

“The bulk [of members] aren’t frequent flyers anymore,” O’Brien says. “There’s one guy who earns 20 million [points] a year because he runs his business through his Amex card – what do you do for that guy? You have to recognize him in some way, and we weren’t.”

The Distinction program is designed to address this issue, such as rewarding members with bonus miles or chartered flights. The program is also designed to encourage people to level up, with three distinct tiers in the program (Bronze, Silver and Gold) with different types of rewards in each.

The ultimate goal, O’Brien says, comes down to a *ménage à trois* of loyalty. “We want our members to be loyal to us, our partners to be loyal to us, and our members loyal to our partners.”

## NOTICE OF APPOINTMENT

### Aimia Inc.



**John Boynton,**  
Chief Marketing  
Officer, Canada

Vince Timpano, President and CEO, Canada, Aimia Inc., is pleased to announce the appointment of John Boynton to the newly created role of Chief Marketing Officer for Canada. Boynton’s mandate is to ensure Aimia is recognized as the leader in loyalty marketing and for its full suite of loyalty programs, products and services.

Boynton will shape the future of the Aeroplan program by accelerating the development of innovative products and marketing by leveraging valuable member insights to ensure a rich and relevant member experience. He will also lead the proprietary loyalty business, with a focus on high-value loyalty products and services.

With more than 25 years of broad marketing experience, Boynton most recently served as Executive Vice President and CMO for Rogers Communications Inc. Prior to his 12 years at Rogers, he gained experience across a number of sectors across North America with brands such as Pepsi Co, Sprint Canada, and AT&T.

#### About Aimia

Aimia, a global leader in loyalty management, has proven expertise in launching and managing coalition loyalty programs, like Aeroplan, delivering proprietary loyalty services, creating value through loyalty analytics and driving innovation in the emerging digital, mobile and social communications spaces. For more information, please visit [aimia.com](http://aimia.com).





## PROMO! AWARDS 2014

On Sept. 18 at Toronto's Arcadian Court, the PROMO! Awards, hosted by *strategy* and CAPMA, celebrated the best in brand activations across the country. For more on the winners, visit [Promoawards.strategyonline.ca](http://Promoawards.strategyonline.ca).

1. CAPMA president Chad Grenier takes to the podium | 2. Dominic Prigent from Bob picks up a trophy for work with Dove in Quebec | 3. The TrojanOne team gets silly | 4. Funnyman and PROMO! host James Cunningham brings comedy gold to the show | 5. *Strategy* publisher Mary Maddever applauds the Best of Show winners | 6. Meghan Edwards, Lianne Pitts and Jennifer Britton from North Strategic, which won for Sport Chek | 7. Eve-Marie Boutet and Thomas Nelligan from Cossette take a moment of silence after winning Gold for Amnesty International Canada | 8. The Real Interactive team takes a selfie after their big wins (including Best of Show) for World Vision | 9. Taxi's Darren Clarke took home multiple awards, including Best of Show for Canadian Tire's "Ice Truck" campaign | 10. Folks from Taxi and Kraft strike a pose | 11. Leo Burnett's Anthony Chelvanathan accepts one of the agency's trophies | 12. Whitney Gibson from Mosaic and Michael Mills from Studio M celebrate their WestJet wins.



# EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING

FUELING THE CONTENT PIPELINE AND  
BUILDING DEEP CONSUMER CONNECTIONS

SPONSORED SUPPLEMENT

**Experiential marketing is no longer simply a campaign add-on.**

The rise and evolution of what used to be called event marketing is the industry's instinctive response to tremendous upheaval in a business disrupted by new technologies and changing consumer behaviour.

While the usual rhetoric around experiential marketing is about building deeper connections between brands and their consumers, that's only part of it. Marketers are getting a lot more than they expected out of experiential programs, such as real consumer insights and compelling media content. They've found that the best content comes from their consumers.

From pop-up shops and installations to in-store experiences and participation in events, recording consumer interaction with brands and providing photo ops for social sharing are ways that marketers are developing content.

David Diamond, president of Diamond Integrated Marketing, says, "Experiential marketing makes for great content. It's what people are craving and consuming through social media channels and it only works when it is delivered in a way that is sincere and genuine. The best way is to interact with consumers in ways that evoke natural emotion."

The "TD Thanks You" video is an example of the new approach to experiential marketing. The nearly four-minute video led by Diamond Integrated and available through YouTube is a compilation of cross-Canada branch visits and 150 customer interactions with a talking ATM replica that dispensed thank-you gifts and some big surprises. Twenty of the TD customers received personalized gifts such as tickets to visit an ill family member, a trip to Disney World and one lucky Blue Jays' fan who met his favourite player and had the chance to throw out the first pitch at a game. The video has had about 12 million views to date.

Diamond says, "This video has really hit a mark with a lot of people and is shared extensively on social media. Ultimately, it reflects a fresh

The 'TD Thanks You' video captured the genuine surprises and heartfelt moments of customers when confronted by a talking, gift-dispensing replica of a Green Machine.

# Globally Inspired Talent Obsessed Client Centric



**DIAMOND INTEGRATED MARKETING**

A new approach needs new friends

[ExperienceDiamond.com](http://ExperienceDiamond.com)

Pride programs offer brands such as Trojan unique opportunities to build authentic connections and tell a bigger brand story.



## Diamond Integrated Marketing: Making strong connections through authentic experiences

For the past eight years, Diamond Integrated Marketing has been developing unique ways to connect consumers with brands. Experiential programs have been a big part of that, including another successful season of Pride initiatives across Canada for TD Bank, Trojan and for the first year, Lucky Charms Cereal.

According to Diamond, the LGBT market is one that brands should be paying special attention to. It is currently bigger than any ethnic market in Canada with an unofficial estimate pegged at 10% of Canadian consumers. In addition, 76% of LGBT households report income above the national average.

Pride celebrations are seeing an increase in attendance and the attendee characteristics are evolving. More families and allies are joining the celebration and there is widespread support beyond the LGBT community.

Opportunities go beyond consumer engagement and can transition into the heart of organizational culture. Consumers are also employees and they look deeper than a commercial message of support; they also look for action. From health benefits to internal initiatives that drive awareness and support, LGBT targeted programs can help tell the larger brand story inside and outside of the organization.

Programs that invite the LGBT community to be a part of the brand and celebrate together, create a loyal following. Finding unique ways to engage and relate LGBT consumers to the brand is key, but don't forget about the allies, friends and family throughout the process. For TD Bank, Trojan and Lucky Charms, they welcomed consumers to celebrate with them in the streets and enhanced their experience and enjoyment while attending the festivals. Above all, they created memorable and unique moments of pride worth sharing with friends and family.

TD, a long time Pride supporter, continued its "forever proud" theme to garner excitement about its newly launched travel rewards credit card product. Consumers were invited to take a seat in Rainbow Class for a keepsake photo and a chance to win the experience of a lifetime, a trip to World Pride in Madrid in 2015, as part of their participation.

Trojan used its 12th year of participation in Pride celebrations to bring awareness to its Lubricant and Vibrations product lines and to also throw a dance party under the creative umbrella of "Rock Hard. Rock Safe. Rock Pride."

For its first foray into the Canadian LGBT market, Lucky Charms leveraged the success of the umbrella theme launched in the US last year. It had one simple message – "tell us why you are #LuckyToBeyou". Consumers chose the charm that best represented them and took photos in front of a colourful backdrop. Social media quickly took over with over 70% of content originating in Canada and 30% originating in the US.

Across all programs, there was one consistent theme: authenticity.

David Diamond, agency president, says, "It was all about how to be as authentic as possible with the people we're trying to reach. For a brand to advertise and say 'we support Pride', that's great. But to actually be in the heart of Pride and for attendees to celebrate with the brand makes it more special. That's ultimately worth more to the demographic than any ad."

approach to brand storytelling. Rather than hiring actors as would have been done in traditional advertising, we enabled special experiences for real customers and this was the story. In that way, rather than looking at experiential marketing and its roots as event marketing, we're looking at the new era of communication, the rise of experiential."

Involving consumers in the message or experience to make the brand more memorable translates across demographics. Unlike the early days of event marketing where the prime target groups were younger demographics, everyone from kids to seniors respond to brand experiences.

"The truth is, media consumption patterns have changed across every demographic," says Diamond. "A lot of the success we've had with experiential, while it is successful with youth, is also successful amongst retirees and young professionals."

Measurement is always a big issue for marketers but although it's more of a challenge with experiential marketing than other media, agencies can take a shallow dive and monitor press impressions and social media activity to gauge the success of an event. In the end, if the experiential program was a good fit for the brand, the results will show in year-over-year returns and new customers.

Diamond says, "The best campaigns are the ones that drive business. Did it get the desired behavior – did I get you to purchase my product, did I get you to consider my product, and did it change your attitude around the product?"

Another benefit of experiential marketing is the opportunity for live research. In addition to sitting in a boardroom looking at numbers, marketers can – and should – watch and listen to how consumers really interact with their brands, according to Diamond.

"That's experiential research. If you build an airport installation, do you sit at the gate and watch the behaviour of people or do you just look at a bunch of numbers? It's a mistake if a brand uses experiential marketing to collect data that sits and is analyzed and six months later there's a conclusion. The consumer moves too fast today. It's the responsiveness and adaptability that the medium allows for that I think is ultimately driving a lot of success."

Diamond adds, "Sometimes it is the simplest insight that produces the most brilliant work. Experiential research will often lead to that simple insight."



# Tangible lessons from startups

BY DAVID GRISIM

**A**fter 17 years at a global CPG behemoth, I made the leap to a startup that is a supplier to the big guys. And I'll be damned if I didn't quickly learn important lessons I wish I knew before. Sure, there's being agile and flexible and the other stuff we've all heard a million times, but I'm thinking about the tangible actions I could have taken with a bit of startup enlightenment.

So, here are my practical tips to help you act a bit more like a scrappy startup:

## Be willing to call "bullshit" on bullshit measures

We hire really smart people. Then we ask them to turn a blind eye to stupid measures and processes that exist only because of inertia. A brand manager recently told me she measures sampling success purely on CPMs and how quickly samples can be distributed. That explains why so often outside my office at Yonge and Bloor in Toronto someone shoves an unqualified, unmeasurable sample into my hand. Now, this brand manager is a smart marketer, and she knows how ridiculous her approach is, but she explained to me that management endorsed it. At our startup we can't afford to waste time, money or other resources on bullshit processes and measures. And neither can you.

## Never let data silence that beautiful voice in your gut

Much like removing your sense of sight enhances your hearing or taste, removing (or reducing) the reams of data at your fingertips can enhance your gut instincts. A case in point: When Portland-based Wieden+Kennedy took on the challenge to reinvent the Old Spice brand, it did



Not getting bogged down in data gave Wieden+Kennedy the freedom to forge a great reinvention journey for Old Spice.

so with the condition that its advertising would not be measured. This freed it up to take all of us on one of the great reinvention journeys in modern brand history. At a startup you are (likely) unencumbered by excess data (at least at the beginning), freeing you up to listen to your gut ever more intently. And if you do things right, you'll look at data after the fact to validate your amazing gut instincts.

## Create "tours of duty" instead of "career paths"

In *The Alliance: Managing Talent in the Networked Age*, author Reid Hoffman talks about breaking the cycle of mistrust between employee and employer by communicating like adults. Let's stop pretending employees don't roll their eyes when we talk about "the employee/employer deal" (a.k.a. "Do great work and we'll look after you"). Why not instead focus on keeping top talent by helping them build their personal brand through an assignment that best utilizes their skills and passions? And, as a "tour" nears the end, structure their next project to best use their talents and interests. Or part on great terms if you can't make it work.

I've lost outstanding people who loved their non-traditional job and produced great results. But I pushed them back into the mainstream to a role they didn't want

that I thought could be good for them a couple of assignments down the road. Then, I'd find myself stuck with a job no one else wanted, and I lost the one person who was hitting it out of the park. At Exact Media I hope to keep my great people for the long haul, but I hire them for a tour of duty. I think this transparency leads to greater loyalty than making promises I might not be able to keep.

## Be careful how you reward suppliers

As a startup, you're always thinking about joint value with your partners. If you're with a large organization that outsources project management and sourcing decisions, it's as important to reward them for growing the top line as it is for protecting the bottom line. If the sole measure of marketing success by your sourcing vendor is cost savings, there's a risk of also driving out a lot of value, ultimately delivering commoditized services with low costs and even lower ROI. Instead, reward sourcing vendors for improving ROI, and they'll be just as motivated by delivering great marketing as they are by cutting costs.

Is this the entire list of what I wish I knew while in the corporate world? Not even close. Talk to me in three months.



**DAVID GRISIM** is CMO and Canadian managing director of Exact Media, and a former marketing director at P&G.

# The real science of advertising

BY EMMA HANCOCK

**H**ave you ever had this happen? You're on a plane when suddenly the flight attendant makes that announcement we all dread, "Is there an advertising professional on board? We have a medical emergency and we can't find any doctors." No? Me neither. I'm not a doctor, so I can't do what doctors do. And presumably, doctors can't do what I do.

Or can they? I decided to ask my doctor for a second opinion.

During my yearly physical, I asked her whether she believed she could do my job. "Well, I find advertising intriguing. But I don't think I could do it because I am used to doing things I know, have been trained for and done research in. I believe someone in your field needs to be an expert the same way they do in mine. To suppose there isn't a science behind it is preposterous." And just like that, from the top of the professional food chain, total affirmation.

Today, the popular opinion is that data and measurement is the science in advertising. I beg to differ. The real science isn't an elaborate targeting scheme with its gang of accomplices: Optimization, Deployment and Metrics. "Advertising is communication, and communication theory is a social science," explains Charles Leech, partner at ABM Research. "It's systematic in analysis and is based on knowledge of how people encode, transmit and decode visual, aural, kinesthetic, olfactory and other

phenomenological input." Sounds intense, because it is, and it may be the only advantage left in a world of product parity repressed by disposable content.

Some brands, even great brands without parity, I might add, bank on the science.

"Advertising is about competitive advantage, and the science of business and communications make advertising kind of like a guided missile of ideas – weapons of mass attraction," as David Brimson, director-Europe, marketing and sales, at McLaren Automotive, describes. "It's the processes behind the agencies' internal brief that must have the most discipline and process. It's this bridging role, the transition from client internal thinking to the shaping of the external consumer expression where the real agency value is – harnessing and directing creative horsepower makes that missile of ideas a smart missile."

## ADVERTISING IS ABOUT COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE, AND THE SCIENCE OF BUSINESS AND COMMUNICATIONS MAKE ADVERTISING KIND OF LIKE A GUIDED MISSILE OF IDEAS – WEAPONS OF MASS ATTRACTION

I'd hate to see where that missile would go without a plan.

So where do you learn the science of advertising (surely there's a course for all this)? Well, sort of.

"In many ways, the discipline of advertising is learned on the job. This can be a great thing. Or not. It depends, obviously, on where you work," says Stuart Macmillan, CD at Lg2 in Montreal.

Like that great doctor, we glean so much of the critical knowledge, experience and skill from living it, in practice, with real consequences. And unlike media metrics that churn out stats at the touch of a button, the ability to not only create but also predict what your audience will like and respond to takes

nothing short of brilliance.

Because it's not an exact science – humans are hard to predict. "Without emotion, consumers are trapped in rational decision paralysis," says Leech. "Science has shown that only emotional responses as registered by the central nervous system are capable of physically galvanizing a consumer to reach out and click or pick something off the rack or shelf." Therefore, everything we put out, even short-lived daily content, must have strategic depth and make an emotional connection.

So you'd think that all agencies would be focused on the true science, right? Michael Farmer, chairman and CEO of Farmer & Company in New York, a leading agency compensation consultancy, shared his point of view: "The simple answer is 'no.' Agencies are being relegated to executional roles at commodity-level fees...disinvesting from account management and strategic planning head counts. They're hanging on to their creative resources, but these other departments are being downsized and juniorized in an effort to generate holding company profit margins."

He goes on to say, "At a time when the marketplace and media possibilities have never been more complex, agencies are simplifying in an effort to make profits in the face of declining fees."

So there it is. Maybe we're not doctors, but we better start paying more attention to the discipline of advertising and brand building. Clients are looking for strategies that drive brand growth, profitability and share gains. They're also looking for a defensible position in just about every decision they make. They crave science, they need science...Let's just make sure we guide them with the real science.

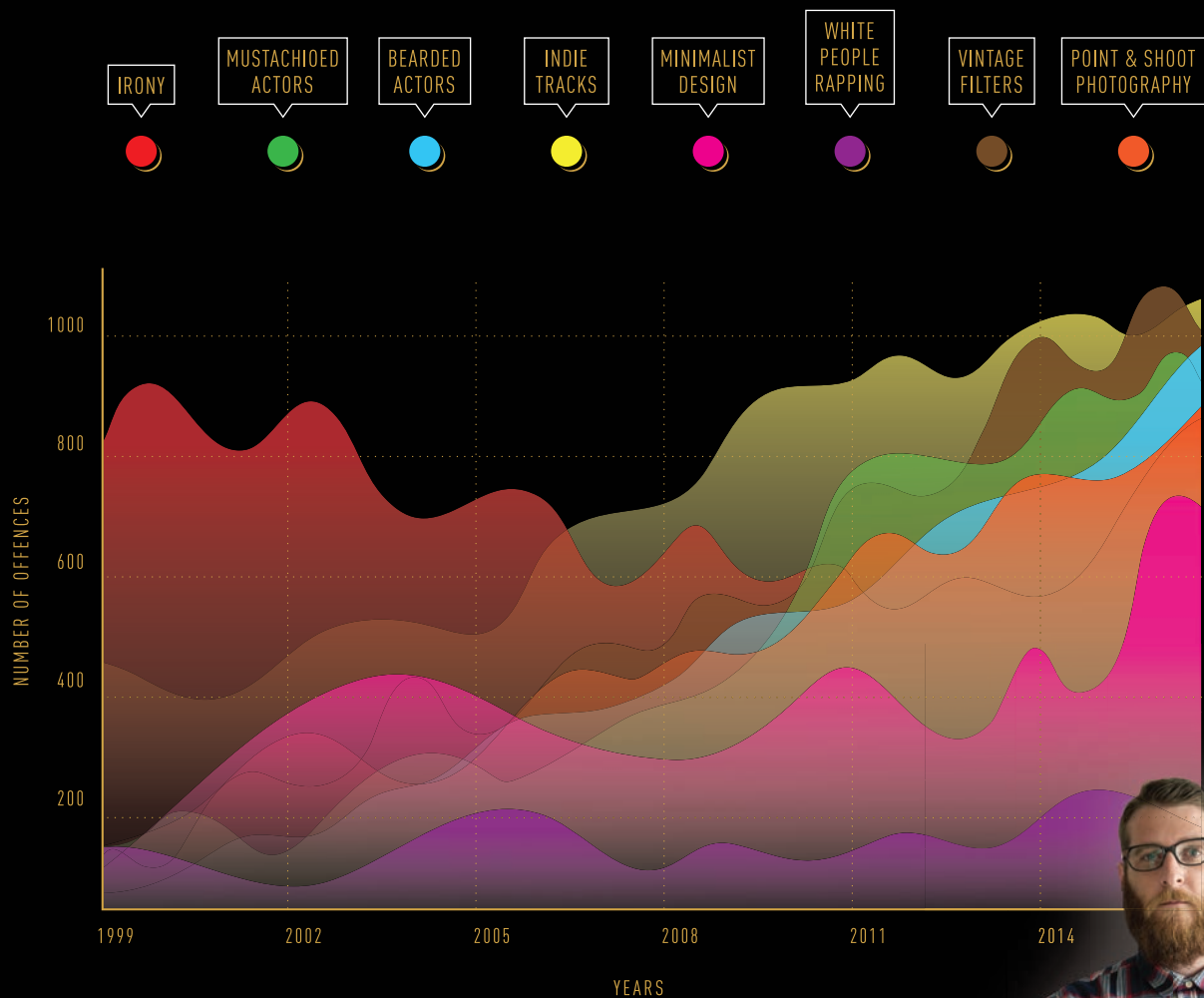


**EMMA HANCOCK** is a founding partner of Heroes & Villains Advertising.

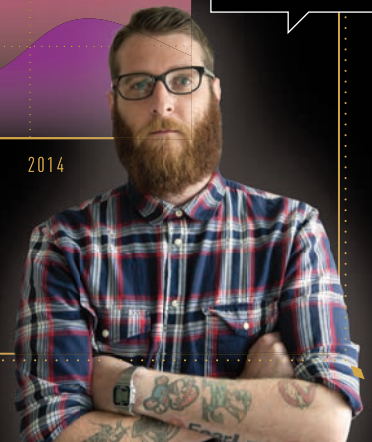


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