

## CHALLENGER BRANDS



*“The truth isn’t the truth until people believe you, and they can’t believe you if they don’t know what you’re saying, and they can’t know what you’re saying if they don’t listen to you, and they won’t listen to you if you’re not interesting, **and you won’t be interesting until you say and do things imaginatively, originally, freshly.**” Bernbach.*

There has been much written about “Challenger Brands” over the years. Just Google it. Everyone has an opinion on how to drive a Challenger Brand, its awareness, positioning and market share. Most of it is about the big, obvious campaigns - Pepsi, Avis and VW for example - but the world is full of day to day smaller players trying to shake-out some market share from the market leaders. There is also a lot written about brand loyalty, and about the dangers of vanilla creative. The blogosphere is full of it. I’ve also recently read a lot about the waste of high frequency advertising using poor creative. Try Googling all of the above.

So what is my point?

It strikes me that what the blogosphere spends much time opining about with these different advertising topics is really one and the same. It’s about differentiation. It’s about clarity. It’s about finding clean space on the page.

A Challenger can’t challenge without having a point of difference. “The Pepsi Challenge.” “We Try Harder.” “Think Small.” Someone seeking brand loyalty can’t achieve that if what you are seeking loyalty for isn’t clearly defined. Think of the great sports brands that inspire manic loyalty. In Australian terms think Collingwood or South Sydney. People love them. Or hate them. Because they really *stand* for something.

Similarly, those bloggers out there pointing out the pointlessness of high frequency dross are actually talking about the same point (as are those critiquing low risk, low impact, say nothing vanilla creative). If you aren’t actually *saying something* clear, compelling, bold, and above all different you can run it as often as you like, but it’s just wasting column inches and money.

Taking this point further, the internet is full of experts proclaiming how different the world of social media is to traditional advertising. PR people of course often wax lyrical about the credibility and cut-through that earned media generates ahead of advertising.

But they are all missing the point. What makes something go viral on social? *Something fresh, creative, bold and different.* What makes a commercial story attract the attention of a journalist? Do I need to answer that?

Riley Mathewson channelled DDB in recent times with our “[No Fuss...Just Cremations](#)” [campaign](#) that attracted so much global attention. And we can testify that being bold, creative and different works. It works with advertising, it works with traditional PR, and it works with social. It *really* works when it’s *all put together*. It works whether you are a Challenger trying to build market share like Just Cremations, it works if you are trying to inspire brand loyalty, and it works if you just want to strip all of the hyperbole and marketing rhetoric away and just sell more stuff.

Clint Ford  
**Senior Consultant**

+61 8 9381 2144

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