

Dick Maggiore: Great slogans are difficult to create, but worth extra effort

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Other than creating the brand's name, the development of tagline might be marketer's most important task.

By Dick MaggioreSpecial to The Canton Repository

They roll off our tongues like sweet candy, and many are so popular that people use them in their everyday conversations.

Great slogans, though, are much more than clever words.

Slogans, or taglines, are the backbones that support brands and make their differentiation memorable. They can be a very effective and efficient means to communicate a brand's differentiating idea, its position.

"Finger-lickin' good." I get it immediately. My only question is, original or extra crispy? "Betcha can't eat just one." No, Lay's, we can't. Unless you're referring to one bag!

The U.S. Department of Agriculture categorizes pork as red meat, just like beef. The National Pork Board preferred to promote pork as less fatty and, therefore, more nutritious with the tagline, "Pork. The Other White Meat." Sales rose 20 percent.

Other than the brand's name, the development of the tagline might be the marketer's most important task.

In addition to communicating the brand's position, the line must be succinct and memorable. It is ridiculously hard. But, done properly, your prospects and customers will be more likely to engage with your brand.

While Coke has had many slogans over the years, it seems every time they hire a new chief executive or marketing director, they feel the need to come up with a new slogan. Coke's strategic position is the "original." Therefore, we strongly believe that their best slogan was "The Real Thing."

Coke is the market leader. Pepsi is No. 2. So, what does Pepsi do in the ongoing Cola War? Only what Coke will let them. So Pepsi fires back at Coke with the tagline, "Pepsi, The Choice of a New Generation." Excellent move!

A good strategy for the No. 2 brand in a category is to go against No. 1. In the car rental category, the Avis "We try harder" slogan went against No. 1 Hertz. "We try harder" played on the promise it would work harder to get and keep its customers' business.

Interestingly, Avis had its first profitable year when it began using the "We try harder" slogan. Then, after more than a half-century of "We try harder," Avis car rental changed its slogan to, "It's your space." What the heck does that mean? The new top brass threw away 50 years of brand equity. They also slipped from second to sixth in the car-rental category. What a crime!

Two more very successful brands that turned a negative into a positive: "With a name like Smuckers, it has to be good." And Listerine, "The taste you hate, twice a day."

The FedEx story is quite telling. Fred Smith, the founder, wrote his college paper introducing the hub-and-spoke model of connections arranged like a wheel in which all goods move along spokes connected to the hub at the center, allowing for greater efficiency. His professor didn't get it and gave him a C-.

Upon graduation, poor Fred Smith put his new concept into practice. The headline on his first ad read, "We have planes, trains and automobiles." Like so many CEOs, we want to be all things to all people. The ad touted how they can ship anything you'd like; big or small, heavy or light, fast or slow, you name it. Hey, the more people we can appeal to, the more successful we'll be. Right?

He lost millions of dollars during those first two years.

Then in 1982, after a strategy session, he decided to focus on one idea: overnight delivery. The next slogan read, "When it absolutely, positively has to be there overnight." Wasn't long before Fred Smith's company was the world's largest overnight shipper.

What just might be the all-time best and longest-running slogan, about 40 years, "The Ultimate Driving Machine," began as a way to overtake Mercedes. BMW said "The Ultimate Driving Machine vs. The Ultimate Sitting Machine." BMW surpassed Mercedes in sales and became the largest-selling luxury brand in the United States.

Here are more great slogans:

â€¢ Papa John's, Better ingredients. Better Pizza.

â€¢ DeBeers, Diamonds are forever.

â€¢ Visa, Everywhere you want to be.

â€¢ Subway, Eat Fresh.

â€¢ Walmart, Save Money. Live Better.

â€¢ Nike, Just do it.

â€¢ Burger King, Have it your way.

â€¢ M&M, Melts in your mouth, not in your hands.

â€¢ Apple, Think Different.

â€¢ Bounty, The Quicker Picker Upper.

â€¢ 7UP, The Uncola.

â€¢ Charmin, Please don't squeeze the Charmin.

â€¢ John Deere, Nothing runs like a Deere.

â€¢ Perdue, It takes a tough man to make a tender chicken.

â€¢ United Airlines, Fly the friendly skies.

â€¢ Wendy's, Where's the beef?

â€¢ Wheaties, Breakfast of champions.

â€¢ Folgers, The best part of waking up is Folgers in your cup!

â€¢ The Home Depot, You can do it. We can help.

This column isn't long enough to list the not-so-good slogans; there are too many. Here are a few multimillion dollar-slogans. Let me know if you can guess what the brand is. No Googling:

â€¢ Your future made easier.

â€¢ Your world delivered.

â€¢ Yes you can.

â€¢ Way of light.

â€¢ Uncommon wisdom.

â€¢ Always worth it.

â€¢ Shift.

â€¢ Today's the day.

â€¢ Live richly.

â€¢ Know how.

â€¢ A business of caring.

â€¢ Enjoy the ride.

â€¢ We get you there.

â€¢ We make it better.

â€¢ Inspire the next.

â€¢ Such a waste. (This one isn't a tagline. It's my commentary.)

Successful marketing strategy is about focus. The slogan, therefore, must be aligned with that focus.

Good slogans follow good strategy.

*Dick Maggiore is president and CEO of **Innis Maggiore**, founded in Canton in 1974 and today the nation's leading positioning agency, building strong brands for companies in competitive markets here and across the country.*