



Bobblehead Marketing:

WHERE'S THE SWEET SPOT OF LONG-TERM RELEVANCE?

In the beer business many brewers agree that one of the best-positioned brands in the business is Corona.

This may help explain the meteoric rise to category share leadership for this clear glass packaged leviathan in the US import market. Corona's \$3.00 vacation-in-a-bottle lifestyle positioning has earned a revered place inside the minds of many male and female drinkers – it is a drink-able, sought-after respite and sense of laid back relaxation associated with beach, sand and palm trees. Nice mental picture and good for business, too. Here's the thing, Corona has religiously remained devoted to this idea for 20 years. No mid-course side trips or fundamental reinventions that have taken them very far a field of the unique DNA strains in their brand.

Sure it's freshened up from year to year and presentation of the theme has gone through changes but the basic concept remains the same. All too often brands lurch from idea to idea to secure some deeper meaning but end up

skimming the surface with less rich positioning platforms that last about as long as the current communications budget. The Bobblehead approach to marketing – a sort of multiple personality disorder common in the branding world – in our opinion trumpets the absence of a deep brand behavior driving platform that transcends pop culture norms and acts as an anchor for all forms of brand outreach and communication.

At one point in time Cadillac was the preeminent arbiter of luxury and status among auto brands. The Chevrolet-ifying of Cadillac brought low its iconic status while in pursuit of a broader market. Off shore luxe badges like Mercedes, Lexus and BMW corralled the air of sophistication and reward and took on the mantle of relevant meaning to upscale buyers. BMW's ultimate driving machine theme carries those transcendent qualities that



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impact brand behavior and product development strategies over time. A sense of self that rivets marketing plans to an inner steeliness that won't falter no matter what competitors in the same space may do.

Interestingly a Wall Street Journal review reports that Cadillac's sales rose 37% between 2001 and 2005 as the brand focused on its historical engine prowess, attaching the brand to notions of rocket-like performance as told through an ad campaign featuring the wiry vocal stylings of Led Zeppelin's Robert Plant. Meanwhile their Escalade line was anointed with the hip-ness factor, appearing in rap star music videos that helped catapult sales forward among the chrome spinner set. So far so good.

Well never mind all that as Cadillac peels off Plant and turns attention away from the Shaq attack in search of greener grass yet again over the marketing hill. Now, evidently, it is time to pursue a softer lifestyle theme aimed at a younger demographic. Sales slides of 9% for the first half of 2006 would certainly warrant another new take wouldn't it?

Bobblehead possibly...?

Point is this: in the absence of a platform level concept that becomes a litmus test for brand behavior (and a guide for cross-channel communications), campaigns in and of themselves won't define the brand beyond a "three miles wide and a half inch deep" notion of the popular culture cue du jour.

Mining rich and lasting positioning ideas begins with the core essence of what the brand, the product is about – as seen from the consumer's point of view. Their feelings, their take and sense of what the brand is about. This kind of deep study comes first, before investing in outreach elements intended to build a bridge to relevance for the intended consumer. Doing anything less may place the franchise and future into the wavering, nodding whiplash of Bobblehead behavior that dances this way and then that.