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campaign
effectiveness

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are
ignored

11%
are
negative

14%
are
effective

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Economics OF *Imagery*

*What is the impact
of brand image
on marketing R.O.I.?*

Is it possible to quantify the value of a brand's image, and if so, how?

Jeff Glueck: Yes, absolutely. At Travelocity, we track for brand metrics through monthly surveys. We then take those brand metrics and feed them into our econometric models and we can determine the value of our improving perception among consumers in terms of sales impact. That impact has been significant.

In the first quarter of 2004—when we introduced a new site design, logo, mascot and brand language—we saw an immediate improvement. Some metrics jumped 20 percent in short order. We went on to record eight consecutive quarters of more than 25 percent revenue growth. The new brand language wasn't the only thing we did differently, but it was a key part of the solution.

Allen Olivo: You can, but it depends on creating a set of what I

like to call “converging validities” that start to tease out the value of that imagery relative to other competitors, as well as to other ways of portraying the brand. One way to do that is to compare photography versus illustration.

At Yahoo, from a strategic standpoint, we're making a decision that “reality” is very important to our overall brand positioning. My philosophy on building a brand is that you build it from the outside in; you come from the consumer point-of-view, and at Yahoo it's about what people can do with Yahoo. Therefore, we choose photography versus illustrations.

Being able to get at the results of that, through data, is very possible from a quantitative standpoint. We know that when we use very powerful images of real people, we move the needle. When we shift marketing strategies and move away from that kind of brand imagery, we know that the brand can suffer.

Ed Faruolo: It can be done—but I don't think anybody has really done it yet. You would need to

start by looking at the core message you're trying to achieve and then testing the various types of images that might be able to get that message across. Then you would look at a) whether those images are communicating more of what you want to communicate and b) whether they are getting higher intrusiveness scores. Those two measures, taken together, could determine the economic value of the images that you're testing.

David Norris: The measure that's most important is consistency. Part of the expense of building a brand is trying to create an association for a consumer with a brand. That consistency can be measured in a number of ways—based on the lighting, the cropping, the focus, and so on.

Quantifying that visual impact generally is done by lining up all the images that are used over a period of time and evaluating the consistency of those images. Awareness studies can be another good way to quantify an image's effectiveness.

A ROUNDTABLE FEATURING

Jeff Glueck
Travelocity

Ed Faruolo
CIGNA

Allen Olivo
Yahoo!

David Norris
OnRequest
Images

What are the keys to ensuring that a brand's image helps deliver a positive R.O.I.?

Glueck: First, we brought in a new director of design at Travelocity who elevated our design language across the board. We also brought in a consultant, Desgrippes Gobé and Associates, that helped design our new logo and our overall look-and-feel.

Second, we did lots of user testing. Our theory was that our old homepage looked like a Turkish Bazaar; it made people feel like they were being screamed at from every corner. So, in the new homepage design, we eliminated two-thirds of the links and created calming, organized color blocks. We knew we succeeded when we got consumer feedback that said—*as soon as I get to your homepage I already feel like I'm on vacation.*

We also did some quantitative testing; not only did our new homepage test 60 percent better in preferences than our old homepage, it beat competitors by a similar percentage. Third, we simply kept watching our business results and our brand metrics to see whether it was getting better.

Olivo: Be true to your brand product, understand your customer, and make it authentic and real. Those are the three pieces that I would say Yahoo looks at. Do I believe the person? Do I believe this portrayal? Is it true to the brand product? If you can say “yes” to those things, then you should have a positive R.O.I.

Faruolo: Your internal discipline is most important. At CIGNA, I'd create an oral report card on how our spending generated impact not only in terms of awareness, but

also the desire among consumers to do business with us. I had research that compared consumers who were familiar with how CIGNA was communicating its brand and those who were not. The differences were startling, absolutely startling; it underscored that we had to entice people more visually than with words, and make more of an emotional connection.

When I was able to show some numbers that really proved my point, I won the management support I needed. So, it's a matter of understanding your company's culture, and then figuring out which metrics are going to impress your business leaders.

Norris: The R.O.I. is all about looking at the cost that you put forth for a set of imagery and how that then contributes to a positive increase in

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JEFF GLUECK, TRAVELOCITY

your brand equity. In our experience, this has to be done over a period of time—12-18 months is probably the right minimum time frame. Obviously, measuring over a longer period of time has more value because you can average the results.

So, the keys to ensuring that your brand imagery does deliver a positive R.O.I. are identifying the things that you want to measure, and then making sure to track those factors over that period of time. The biggest problem sometimes is when marketers start measuring something and then they change what they're measuring. As a result, they really don't have any benchmark to compare against.

What is the role of technology in ensuring that a brand's image builds its equity?

Glueck: At Travelocity, we have set up a centralized content management system that our far-flung offices can use. It's a very inexpensive, open-source system that we've implemented. We route all multimedia and imagery requests through one team that adheres very strictly to the brand's guidelines.

Ultimately, it's about educating people about what the brand stands for and having better processes, and not just better technology. When we first set the visual multimedia guidelines, I was worried they were so high that we would not be able to sustain them, but our team has risen to the occasion. Every

day I see new imagery and I just get goosebumps because they've stuck to the brand manifesto.

Olivo: We start with a set of brand guidelines—all of the rules and regulations for the brand. We also have a full library that's shared worldwide that includes best practices both from the past as well as currently. That way, anybody from Yahoo can look at our campaigns, find practices that were successful, and that could be localized to their own markets.

Because we are global, we rely heavily on central sites to let everyone participate in the strategic briefing, the creative process, and so forth. So, when we have a weekly

conference call with Europe and Asia—all the marketing managers around the world and their ad agencies—everyone is accessing the same data. Technology is critical to how we build our campaigns.

Faruolo: The role of technology is to keep people from doing stupid things! And I mean that seriously. Before CIGNA had a digital asset management tool, you basically had to go around knocking on doors and try to explain what was going on to people. You need to have imagery that's online so that it's easier to access, so that the rules are easier to access, and so that people just have to fill in the blanks and follow along.

If you have a great program and great imagery technology, it will spread throughout your organization. Before you know it, you will find that there's cooperation

across the company. So each division does its own thing, and the result is brand dilution. In addition, often there's no financial plan that allows for a centralized purchase of a solution to solve the enterprise-level problem.

Is it possible to use stock imagery to fully express a brand image?

Glueck: Yes. Travelocity primarily uses stock photography, which has gotten much better in recent years—the libraries are much more extensive, and there's much more ethnic diversity, which is another goal of ours. We re-touch them, we re-crop them, and we look for very high resolution and bright colors. Your photo-editing team has to be top-notch.

All of those things are best found—and truest to your brand—when you can control the situation and you can create the image. So, my preference has always been to use original photography, but stock photography, used appropriately in the mix, can be part of the overall effectiveness of what you're trying to accomplish.

Faruolo: It's doable, but it's very tough. It's a similar question to your technology one, in a way, because if you know, up front, the type of imagery you're looking for, and have standards related to the power of that image, you certainly can get it from stock.

However, that's more the exception than the rule. Typically, stock is used just to fill in the blanks. You also have bigger challenges in making sure that if you're going to utilize stock, that you have a certain, consistent style. That could be as simple as the way you tint your images. As long as it's truly supporting what your brand is all about and it's establishing a communication that people want to look at it and remember it, then it's doing its job.

Norris: There are two sides to this question and I will use the term “used imagery,” because stock is really just that. Your decision about “used imagery” has two sides. First, do you want to use an image that other people have used? How does that affect your brand?

Secondly, how likely is it that an image that was created in a generic way and not for a specific brand will have the look and feel that is perfect for your brand? Is it possible? Yes. But it's very difficult to find a set of stock imagery that fits your brand and is not so “used” that you don't mind using it. Those are the two things that marketers have to consider.

Apple works very, very hard to get at the most essential thing to communicate and then gets rid of everything else.

ALLEN OLIVO, YAHOO!

in areas where you never had it before. By the same token, if your imagery is trite and doesn't stand out, the technology can make you look not-so-good too.

Norris: Digital asset management is very important. Many marketers want to have tight brand control. But in a large corporation, if you don't have a way to centralize and manage and share the images that you want the people throughout your company to use, it's extraordinarily difficult to improve your brand equity.

The challenge is, some companies don't have a centralized organizational structure that is conducive to managing imagery

Sometimes we'll obtain images from our partners and apply photo-editing to adapt them so that they fit our brand standards. I wouldn't use a stock photo if you have a single image that's going to be your brand signature. But if you need a constantly changing set of images that fits your brand language, it's entirely possible.

Olivo: I believe stock photography can be effectively used, but my preference is always to use original photography, because that's really what helps define and style the brand in ways that no one else can. Yahoo always wants to be coming from a point-of-view that's real, authentic, original, unique and human.

Which brands do the best job of building their equity through imagery and why?

Glueck: I'm a big fan of Tiffany's in the way they have used Truman Capote-era, classic images — black-and-white photography mixed with their Robin's-egg blue color, which has to be (other than Coca-Cola red) the most recognizable brand color in the world. It's testimony to them that you can give someone almost anything from Tiffany's in that blue box, and they'll just love opening it.

I'm a big fan, in the same vein, of RedEnvelope, because people love opening that waxy, red box with the big ribbons. I'm also a fan of *The New Yorker* magazine. What a unique typeface they run — and their cartoon format, which is virtually unchanged for 40 years. It's just instantaneously recognizable; you know it's a *New Yorker* cartoon when you see it.

Olivo: IBM comes to mind. They've created a very unique look-and-feel over the last ten years. They've got those blue bars. They've created a unique "letter-box" format. The style in which they shoot, the sense of humor with which they portray things, are unique to them. You can look at an IBM ad and know right away that it's an IBM ad.

Having run marketing communications at Apple, I can tell you that it's a matter of learning what to take away versus learning what to add. Apple works very, very hard to get at the most essential thing to communicate and then gets rid of everything else.

That's also very much the strategy that we're trying to convey at Yahoo. It's not what the internet can do; it's not what Yahoo

can do. It's what *you* can do with Yahoo. So, we have to be coming at it from a customer point-of-view because that's what is creating the Yahoo experience.

Faruolo: In the financial services category, Fidelity has stood up pretty well over the past year or two. They've effectively used a combination of a "slice of life," which is pretty strong. When we did a study at CIGNA a number of years ago, the strongest imagery was the Prudential rock, the Allstate hands and the Travelers' umbrella.

I worked on the Travelers for about five years, and at the time, the Travelers' umbrella was just about as powerful as the Allstate hands. The thing was, in those days, Allstate was spending somewhere between \$100 million and \$150 million a year on their program, while Travelers, in a good year, was spending only \$20 million. So, Travelers was being outspent at least five-to-one, and yet they were getting the same kind of brand recognition.

Norris: One of my favorites is the "Got Milk" campaign. They have done an incredible job of being very consistent in the imagery that they use across all media. They do TV, they do print, and they do direct — but they do it all in a very consistent way and they've won tons of awards for it. It's one of the most successful brand-building campaigns ever.

American Express has done a phenomenal job of building their brand. They have defined a unique and identifiable look and feel and they've stuck with it very consistently. On the flipside, I think Hewlett Packard has done an incredibly bad job of managing the look and feel of their brand. There's so little consistency across



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the imagery that if you line up all of their marketing materials in a room and you ask people which company it is, they think that they are all different companies.

We actually came up with a methodology called "image score," where we can perform an assessment of a brand's existing imagery in three main areas. We evaluate image quality; how "on brand" the imagery is; and corporate compliance. It's a very powerful diagnostic for companies that are trying to get a handle on how they're doing and how their imagery is affecting their brand. ■