

Balls

I have not, and will not, allow the term cojones into my lexicon. The English language is already rich enough to adequately cover the topic of bravery: bollocks (copyright Gordon Ramsay); balls; spunk; and my all-time favourite from Down Under, cocks on the block. But it manifests itself so infrequently in marketing these days that we are in danger of having more descriptors than examples to apply them to.

You will have read earlier about two contenders for the accolade: Shoppers Drug Mart and Kraft. But I think only one earns it.

I am a huge fan of the new look Shoppers stores, the Optimum programme and the adroit use of the Life brand. However, I see little that is “would never have thought of that / done that”, but plenty that is well executed common sense. All three elements are tried and tested; it is the bringing together of them with single-minded focus that is driving the business. Cojones should not be about taking mindless risk (something agencies might bear in mind when pitching their latest ludicrous ads) but about thoughtful determination. To my mind, the only risk Shoppers ran was in maybe succumbing to siren-song of their agency and persisting with television.

A temptation that sadly has blunted the potential effectiveness of the Kraft CRM initiative, What’s Cooking. I subscribed to this for quite a while; got my weekly e-mail with recipes allegedly targeted at the Bradley family’s

preferences; and made about 5 of them. But I had two problems with the programme: firstly, the recipes weren't actually that good; and secondly, I suspected that the programme was badly under-funded, as most marketing money was still going into product ads for things like Kraft Zesty Italian Dressing.

And these two problems are not unrelated. With more investment, there would have been the resource and technology to learn from my feedback. I was never asked which of last week's recipes I had used and what did I think of them. Thus there was no opportunity for Kraft to learn and send me recipes more personalised to the Bradley's esoteric tastes. And no-one seemed to care very much when I unsubscribed, despite me having bought more Kraft products in that time than during the last ten years. But then of course, they wouldn't have known that, because they never asked.

So why were Shoppers able to be single-minded and Kraft not? Like most retailers, they never got into the habit of having a range of brands, which they would then advertise and build brand management structures around. They would then not have had the arguments about budgets, who's paying for this, what does my brand get out of it etc, that bedevil all brand organisations whenever a new idea turns up.

In my experience, probably the biggest impediment to radical change in a business is the brand management structure. No surprise really. After all, it

was invented for the express purpose of generating a Darwinian battle for resources; not for realigning organisations. And once a brand management structure is in place, the danger is that the rest of the organisation thinks that marketing is something the Marketing Department does rather than something the business does, which makes single-mindedness even harder to achieve.

The bottom line is that marketing-driven companies have the ability to push through and implement radical change; Marketing Department-driven companies don't. The clock is ticking as much on the traditional brand management model as it is on the big ad agency model.