

So Who's Doing Hot Marketing These Days?

See if you can guess who answered in the following ways....

“My company”	(Established CMO)
“Not my company”	(New CMO)
“My last company”	(Very new CMO)
“The question is an oxymoron”	(CFO)
“No-one; because they don't employ me”	(Marketing Consultant)
“Eh?”	(Consumer)

When I was asked the question; I had to scratch my head for quite a while, and eventually came up with the usual suspects: Tim Hortons (always been top of my list, but now at risk unless the Boston Cremes get more consistent); the new Shoppers stores; Swiffer; and that new disposable toilet brush thingy.

But hang on; am I answering the spirit of the question here? Aren't I supposed to be coming up with amazingly effective promotions, ad campaigns and the like? Well, I can't think of any. Not because I think they are all crap – I can't recall any crap ones either.

A couple of weeks ago, I was laid low by a “gastric episode” and consequently spent all day in bed; during which I watched TV for 12 hours straight. Kicking off with the Coronation Street omnibus (“ave you put t' cat out?”), followed by Antiques Roadshow (“Well of course, if you had the other one of the pair...”), straight into Sunset Boulevard (“Why do I need to speak? I can say anything I want with my eyes!”), segueing into the Italian Job (“Cor! Bloody ‘ell!”) – original version, obviously - and on through the day.

While I can remember quite a lot about the programmes I watched, I can't recall ANY of the ads. 12 hours TV viewing would be, what, 2 hours of ads?

And it's the same with on-pack promotions. I quite enjoy getting the groceries in, but I can't recall ANY of the promos, let alone respond to them.

Now, I'm not saying that there is a correlation between me noticing something and its success in the marketplace; but given that I earn my living in the Advertising and Marketing community, I ought to be noticing something.

Was it always thus? I don't think so. I think too many marketers are having their drive, initiative and creativity beaten out of them by the absolute focus on shareholder value as the only metric of success.

Risk taking just isn't in people's interests these days. When I first started in marketing, I was told that it was all about making decisions; and that if I got 7

out of 10 right, then I would end up as a VP. And he was accurate on both counts.

However, my 7 out of 10 didn't come in a regular pattern. I had spells in my career where everything seemed to come off, and other spells when the 3 wrong decisions came like buses – all at once.

So who gets permission to fail three times in a row these days? Since everyone has ridiculous goals and is given inadequate resources; even one in a row isn't well tolerated. Businesses are obsessed with de-risking decisions, which of course weeds out the very initiatives that could deliver the shareholder value.

Much easier to close a factory or two; or reduce the agency fee by 30%.

I despair.