

rA*m*

d*o*m

C O N S I S T E N C Y

Living dead. Shabby chic.
Burning cold. Fine mess.

The power of the oxymoron.
When opposites attract
through verbal intercourse.
Two incongruous words
coming together to paint
a more vivid, nuanced and
rather interesting picture.

We'd like to add our own
oxymoron to the lexicon:

random consistency.

It's a term we use to describe a brand or campaign that expresses its personality in many different ways, without ever losing its real identity. We believe that as long as the core purpose of a company is clearly defined and always within sight, then a marketing campaign can be allowed a certain degree of freedom. The result is often unexpected, involving and fresh.

In some ways it's about the fundamentals. Delivering the right content, to the right people, in the right way, in the right place. Just good, sound marketing. But, as the pendulum has swung from the old days of "The Big Brand Holding Forth From The Mountain" to today's "Wild West" mentality, some of those basic principles have been forgotten. The result, for too many companies, has been an either/or scenario. They either try to keep control of their brand through extremely tight guidelines or they allow their brand to follow every whim of the market. Neither is workable in the long run.

The balance of being open to change (random) while staying true to who you are (consistency) can be an extremely effective strategy to get to the right place.

"Random" suggests things happening by chance. Unplanned. Unpredictable. Its polar opposite, "consistency" is about undeviating, true-to-type steadiness. Each word, by itself, doesn't sound entirely appealing when applied to a marketing strategy. Is there a company today that can afford to take a haphazard approach to their marketing? And conversely, with consumers' ever diminishing attention spans, can we really stick with the same-old, same-old and stay competitive?

Let's parse it a little further. Randomness is chaotic. And people, by nature, prefer consistency. It's a form of human gravity. Consistency holds everything down. It helps us understand the world and our place in it. When there are inconsistencies in our world, dissonance is created—the emotional, psychological and behavioral state that arises when things don't go the way we thought they would, or should.

By breaking familiar patterns, we have to stop and think a little differently about something.

Dissonance is distressing to us. Yet, while it clearly isn't comfortable, dissonance gets our attention and holds our interest. In many ways, it's how we learn. By breaking familiar patterns, we have to stop and think a little differently about something.

With today's high metabolic rate of change, it's absolutely critical for a brand to recognize the need to think differently. To morph, evolve, respond and move fast when necessary. (Which is pretty much all of the time.) It's a little tricky to be nimble if your brand is in a psychological straitjacket.

Add to this the fact that the consumer is leading the way and demanding a participatory place at your table. You run the risk of being left by the side of the road if you keep to a one-way conversation. You can't afford to talk *at* your audience—you have to talk *with* your audience. Better yet, get them to talk about you.

A brand that embraces random consistency in its marketing is a brand open to a conversation. Why? Because it's a brand that's actually listening. It's taking what it hears in the market and applying it strategically, in real time, to fuel a better experience and conversation with its customers.

Random consistency also makes the development of a truly integrated, multi-media campaign more possible.

It recognizes that while your customer has probably tracked you by following a breadcrumb trail from one medium to another, you still have to consider each marketing tool as a unique experience in itself. Content created has to be spot-on within the context of the venue. A too-tightly constrained campaign doesn't allow for that kind of active experimentation or pushing of the boundaries.

Random consistency helps you celebrate the new forms of engagement your customers are seeking. Today, it's all about how to make people's lives better. The fastest growing, most valuable brands do just that.

By encouraging a new level of interaction, brands can explore how to service, care, develop, sell, compete and ultimately succeed. But the thing is, you can't interact if you can't react—quickly, smartly, relevantly. Random consistency gives you a platform from which to be agile, current and connected.

So why is it hard to allow random consistency into our marketing?

There's a natural instinct to circle the wagons in times of danger. A tightly controlled brand can give the illusion of, well, control. And these days, with markets imploding, disruptive competitors on all sides and the customer's refusal to play by the old rules, the idea of having a more open, more constantly evolving brand can feel like a free-fall over the edge of a cliff without a parachute.

But as Chip Heath and Dan Heath, the best-selling authors of *Made to Stick* say, "It's the edge that sparks conversation. No one remembers something that's 5% better than something else."

Through a curious alchemy something special emerges when these two contrasting ideas of random consistency come together. Somehow a brand becomes more alive. Energized. Harmonious. True to itself.

And, in these days of constant change and certain uncertainty, a friendly argument can surely be made for the power of a really good oxymoron. ■

Ride it. Feel it. Judge for yourself.

We experienced the transformative reaction of random consistency last year while working with our client, Cannondale, one of the world's leading bicycle manufacturers. Cannondale is an idiosyncratic, passionate company of cycling addicts. They live for riding. But as our client admitted, they had lost their cadence when it came to their marketing. It was time to get the Cannondale brand out of a straitjacket created by guidelines that had become way too corporate for this renegade company.

We focused all our efforts—across all channels and tools—on a single strategic idea: Get more “butts on bikes” with a test ride. Once people get on a Cannondale, the conversion to a sale is pretty high. One unifying line summed it up: “Ride it. Feel it. Judge for yourself.” The line wasn't slick or corporate. It was an invitation to experience it your way.

With everything coming from this one core idea, we explored the edges. In print, online, POS, collateral and video. This wasn't about a total deconstruction of the brand. Far from it. In a sense, it was more of an excavation of the real Cannondale.

The response from independent bike dealers around the world has been great. The hard core riders of Cannondale feel like they've got their brand back.

1

CANNONDALE
TEST RIDE REASON #1:
MARKETING IS BULLSH*T.



Ride it. Feel it. Judge for yourself. Find a dealer at Cannondale.com.

2



DIRT RAG
THE MOUNTAIN BIKE FORUM

Blog Print Rag Web Rag Me

Fresh Dirt
2008 Trek MTR Media Camp - 6.25.2007
reporting on the unveiling of the Trek and
mountain bikes.

DIRT RAG #129 Stuff Preview - 6.22.2007
Mojo, Specialized Epic Marathon Carbon
Comp and Van Dessel's Gin and Tonic

Author: [Wesley](#) | [Read More About Wesley](#)
Suspect - 6.21.2007 - Contact your
representative in support of the National
Area Conservations Act of 2007.

DIRT RAG

3



LEAD-FREE
ADJUSTABLE
HANDLE-FREE OPERATION
NO TOOLS REQUIRED!

GIM JOHNSON'S SIGNATURE
PIMP KIT

19

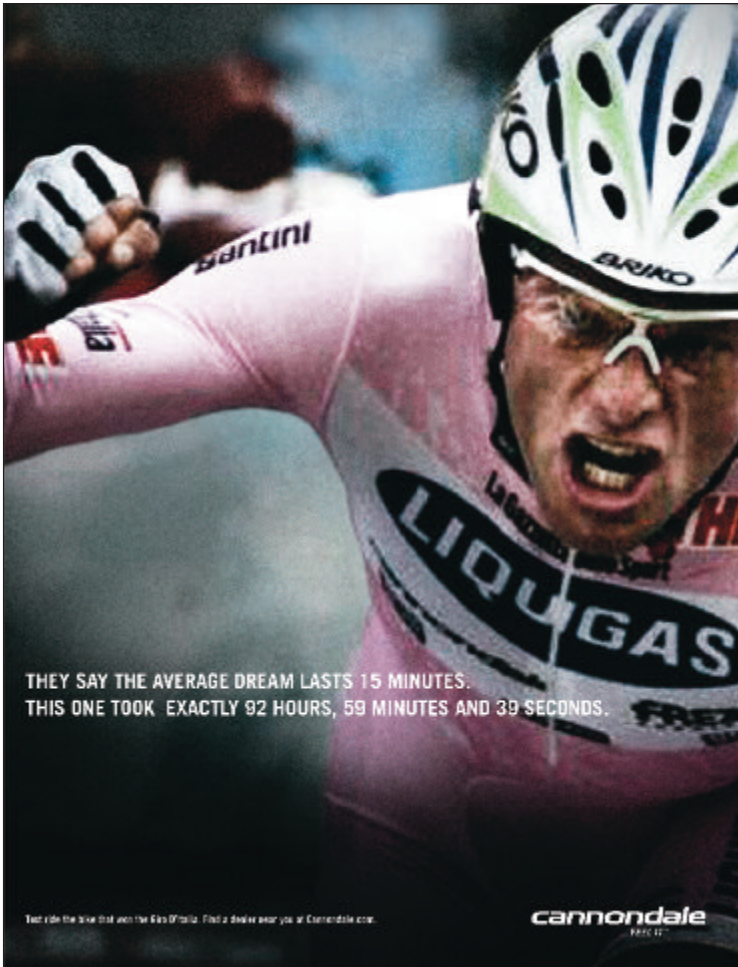
9 9

WESLEY
JOHNSON

CANNONDALE CANNONDALE CANNONDALE CANNONDALE CANNONDALE CANNONDALE



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1 Cannondale takes its bikes seriously. Not itself. Which is why this anti-marketing marketing approach seemed to fit. Irreverent. Pragmatic. Not your typical print ad. Point was to drive to the web and to the dealer for a test ride.

2 This viral effort invited readers to meet for an afternoon of "heavy breathing, sweat and crazed passion." The ultimate test ride.

3 Marketing from the outside in, Cannondale sends its top dealers fun stuff every quarter, like the signature pimp kit with 9 Ball reflector and valve stem caps celebrating Tim Johnson's cyclocross championship.

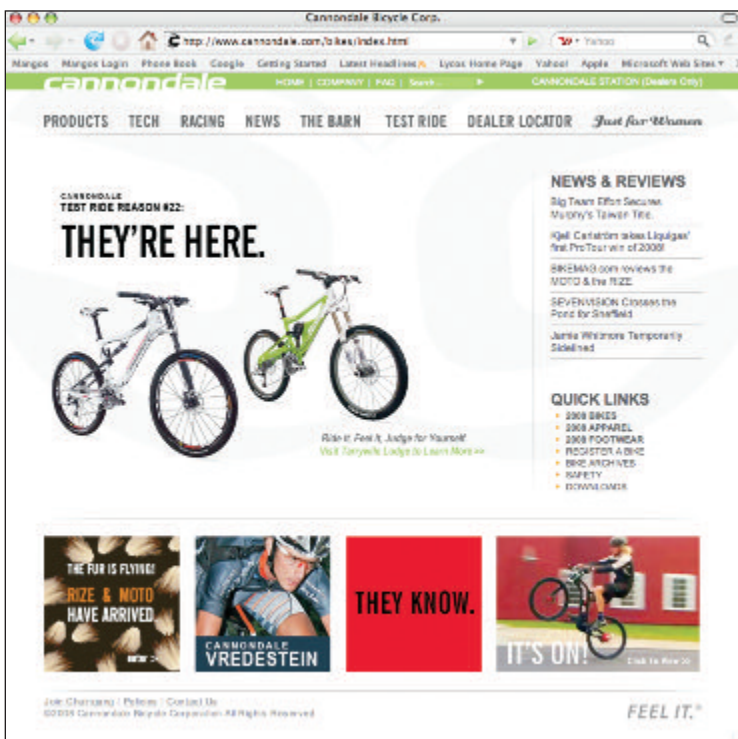
4 A limited edition belt buckle with the Cannondale logo. More swag for the top dealers.

5 The ability to leverage real-time victories is crucial to Cannondale, a company deeply committed to racing. This ad invited readers to test ride the bike that won the Giro d'Italia.

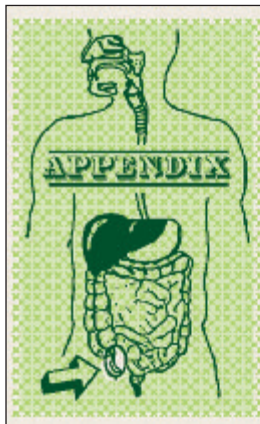
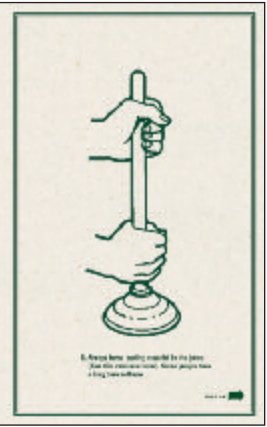
6 A screen grab from the Cannondale home page. Navigation includes a Test Ride button that links consumers to the nearest Cannondale Test Ride Center.

7 Screen grabs from the "Tarrywile Lodge" web experience where we launched the Moto and Rize—Cannondale's two new mountain bikes. Everything in the room is interactive and highlights the bikes' new technology. The Lodge website had over 500,000 visitors in the first six weeks. Online and print teaser ads helped drive the traffic.

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- 8 A 24-page, tongue-in-cheek guide to selling a Cannondale. “Bathroom reading” for the 20-something shop guy. Full of tips, technical information and slightly subversive anecdotes, it was included in one of the quarterly mailings.
- 9 A point-of-sale banner used to help new bike models stand out in the incredibly crowded showroom floor of the independent bike dealer. Simple. Lightweight. The Cannondale mantra in three sentences.
- 10 Another point of view at point of sale. Hang tags attached to bikes at dealers picked up the Test Ride format and demanded interaction.
- 11 Walk into any bike store and you’ll find brown shipping boxes all over the place. We thought there was a lot of empty landscape on those boxes. So we started our own Collector’s Edition. Random box designs all tied back to Cannondale’s culture and personality. Now, boxes that used to be just a logo are point of sale, too.

rAnDOm

CONSISTENCY

How to make it work for you.

Create a little dissonance.

Dissonance startles us out of our comfort zone. It makes us pay attention. It says this is not business as usual. This is a good thing today.

Be clear about what shouldn’t change.

Mathematicians know that every equation needs stability—a constant to count on. So does every brand. What are the constants, the sacred cows, of your brand? Identify them. Hold them close. (But don’t be afraid to let them go if they’re no longer relevant.)

Marketer, know thyself.

Random consistency isn’t about creative types running amok, changing campaigns as the mood strikes. The best marketing still comes from a clear understanding of what a company stands for. Think Southwest™ Airlines and their unswerving focus on being the low cost airline. Think GEICO. Insurance with their promise of “15 minutes will save you 15% on car insurance.” While each of these highly successful brands has a fluid approach to its marketing campaign, they never lose sight of their core purpose. They know who they are.

Think real time, versus on-the-fly.

“Real time” means reacting immediately to opportunities, but always from a strategically grounded place. “On-the-fly” is its ugly step-sister. If you’re marketing too much by the seat of your pants, then chances are it shows in initiatives that are unclear and unfocused. Random consistency can’t be an excuse for anything goes.

Open your doors wider.

As John Grant, author of *The New Marketing Manifesto* says “It’s not what you do, it’s what they do with what you do.” He advises all brand owners to invite the market into their world. Use subcultures as “Creative Directors.” The result will be a market that is engaged with your brand. Random consistency offers a broader palette for more people to paint on.

Trust your customer.

At the end of the day, you have to have faith in a consumer’s ability to accept a more robust brand. They’ll thank you for it.

WE'VE BEEN THINKING S E R I E S

The We've Been Thinking Series offers Mangos' insight into the world of communications. Our goal is to stimulate thinking and spark ideas. Independently owned since 1977, Mangos is a full-service advertising agency. Clients around the world turn to us to make complex business issues simple, human and relevant. It's an approach that has earned Mangos a reputation for creating award-winning work that delivers proven results.

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