

The Most Memorable Ad Campaigns Share These 3 Elements

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It takes more than a simple creative burst to cut through the clutter of meme contests and personality quizzes percolating their way through Twitter, Facebook and the rest of the social media networks.

In this 24/7, plugged-in universe, marketers must create “light bulb” campaigns that stand out against the din of the news feed. Sometimes this is achieved through complex, multi-faceted campaigns. Other times, a simple but persuasive concept, visual or narrative will hit a home run.

The Clinton Foundation recently took the former approach, pulling off a major coup with its [NOT-THERE.ORG](#) campaign designed to call attention to the release of a report on the status of women and girls across the globe.

On International Women’s Day, the campaign co-opted 40 existing advertisements, removing images of high-profile women like Scarlett Johansson and Serena Williams from magazines, billboards and bus shelters and replacing them with NOT-THERE.org. The multi-faceted campaign touched on all media sectors, with iHeartMedia removing women’s voices from songs, and a social media component that included online videos and the call for women to change their profile pictures to a blank silhouette.

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With the support of celebrities like Amy Poehler, Cameron Diaz and Sienna Miller, and media outlets trumpeting their own participation, the campaign achieved a slew of media attention from outlets as varied as [The New York Times](#), [US Magazine](#), [People](#), [Vogue](#) and [Advertising Age](#), to name just a few. Beyond just media hits, the scope of the stunt seemed to resonate across the broader marketing world, proving that big, bold thinking and flawless execution are still achievable in today’s highly segmented and micro-targeted landscape.

Of course, it’s not just the grandiose ideas that pack a punch. We all remember those [Got Milk](#) ads featuring well-known actors, musicians, athletes and even cartoon super heroes sporting the famous milk mustache. This simple visual, initially created for the California Milk Processor Board and licensed by the National Milk Processor Education Program, conjured a sense of

nostalgia, making wildly successful people seem extremely relatable.

Whether highly complex or simple and straightforward, successful marketing campaigns bear the same hallmarks:

1. Anticipatory thinking.

Before jumping in, think through all the potential positives and especially the negatives of your idea. Bud Light's two-year old "Up for Whatever" campaign has steadily helped build the company's social engagement. But a newly released tag on their bottles encouraging drinkers to "remove no from your vocabulary" caused a social media firestorm. The brand shut down production of that particular bottle label just days later.

2. Goal oriented.

You may have what seems like a genius idea, but will it actually achieve the desired result, i.e. grow a business, attract customers or bring attention to a cause? The Taco Bell Chihuahua became a highly recognized mascot in the 1990s, but the dog didn't help the fast-food chain sell tacos. In fact, the marketing campaign produced a [6 percent drop](#) in sales. Why? Because touting the fact that a real dog likes Taco Bell didn't make human beings want to run to the restaurant to eat the food.

3. Engage and connect.

The best ads and marketing campaigns tap into a growing trend, feeling or shift in the public's perception. In 1988, Nike sensed a growing fitness craze and coined the iconic phrase "Just Do It." The athletic company, once second place to Reebok, quickly dominated the athletic footwear market, [increasing sales from \\$877 million to \\$9.2 billion in just 10 years.](#)

There is no one right formula for executing a winning "big idea." The key is to be open to inspiration from all fronts. Whether it's perfecting a concept, like Thomas Edison did with the light bulb, or coming up with a whole new approach ala Benjamin Franklin's electricity experiment, big ideas come in all shapes and sizes.