



## 'Bonding' Slogan to Brand

By Max Sutherland

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***For a slogan to work, it has to be bonded to the brand. No superglue exists. If you must change slogans, here's how wording can help.***

A [survey](#) of top USA companies reveals that for the majority of slogans, less than 10% of people can identify which brand goes with which slogan.<sup>1</sup> It is a timely warning - globally as well as for the USA.

Does your slogan remind people of your brand? Does your brand remind people of your slogan? For a slogan to work, it has to be bonded to the brand. Outside of the words themselves, repetition and consistency are the only bonding mechanisms.

**HAVE A BREAK.  
HAVE A KITKAT.**



"Have a break" was just a common saying before Kit Kat bonded to it. Consistent repetition transformed it into Kit Kat's well-known slogan so that today it reminds people of the brand - and when people see the brand, it has strong potential to remind them to "Have a break. Have a Kit Kat".

These bi-directional, associative links build 'slogan equity'. "Have a break. Have a Kit Kat", "The ultimate driving machine" and "Just do it", have built up enormous equity for Nestle, BMW and Nike. It takes deep pockets and lots of patience to build slogan equity. So, nurture it.

Currently, we seem to be caught up in an orgy of slogan switching. When brands are flagging, and even when they are not, it seems advertisers are increasingly tempted to break with last year's slogan. Each new brand manager seems to want to put a personal stamp on his/her brand so the attachment is often no more enduring than the length of that brand manager's tenure.



Even long running slogans that have been around for decades are endangered. In 1998, Nike played with changing (to the slogan "I can") then quickly reverted. Burger King switched repeatedly before eventually coming back to "Have it your way". Now we have Nestle in the U.K. toying with replacing the 47 year old "Have a break. Have a Kit Kat".

Go figure!

### A Fresh Approach

Incoming brand managers should ask themselves, is the brand really saddled with a slogan that is tired or difficult to work with creatively? Even then, it can often be invigorated by a fresh approach. As I discussed in my last column "[How to supercharge your slogans](#)", one way is by employing topical ads that splice your existing slogan (and brand) into top news stories to powerfully increase attention and involvement with the slogan.

Consider BMW's 40 year old slogan "*The ultimate driving machine*". It might target top news stories such as British golfer Karl Woodward hitting a 408 yard drive to break the 400 yard barrier and celebrate with a headline like "*Congratulations on **the ultimate drive!**.... From BMW - **the ultimate driving machine***". And BMW might further link to Arnold Schwarzenegger's victory as the new, hard driving governor of California (see illustration). There are many opportunities.

Slogan change is a last resort as it involves writing-off the accumulated equity and then investing in a new 'bonding' exercise. If you really must change, then remember that bonding of the new slogan to your brand will be crucial to its performance.

Here are some ways to help a new slogan hit the ground running by infusing it with an inherent bonding advantage. The objective is to mitigate the amount of paid-for repetition it will need.

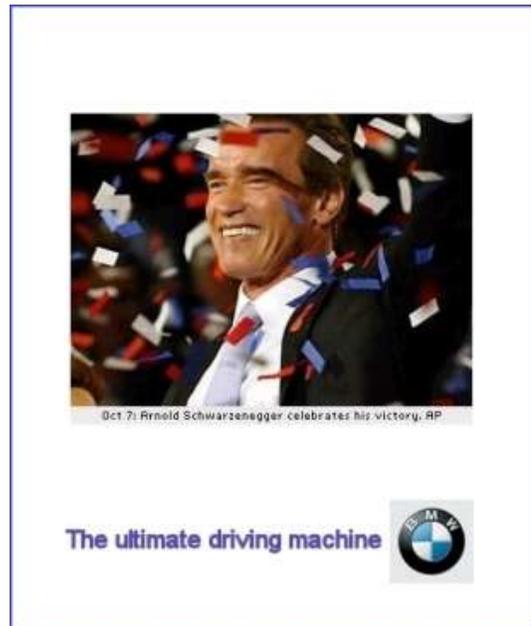


Illustration only

**Embed the Brand**

For easier and more immediate bonding, embed your brand in the slogan (perhaps as a double meaning). For example what brand goes with these slogans?:

- "*Nothing runs like a Deere*" (John Deere tractors 1972)
- "*You just can't help acting on Impulse*" (Impulse body spray)
- "*I can't get by without my Mum*". (Mum deodorant).

The brand that is bonded to each of these is unmistakable. Contrast that with "*Everything you hear is true*" - where the brand is adjacent (not embedded). This could be a slogan for 'True Writer' pens or 'True' cigarettes but it is for Pioneer electronics. To bond a slogan like this costs more because it takes more repetition over longer time periods.

But remember that bi-directional association is the objective. When you embed the brand, half the bonding process is taken care of (i.e. the slogan--> brand linkage). Repetition is still necessary to achieve the other half (the brand-->slogan association).

**'Free' Advertising**



When you bond to something that recurs frequently, it has the potential to remind people of the brand so it acts like free advertising. The expression "*I can't get by without my mum*" is a common saying that when we hear it, can trigger us to think of "Mum" the brand. So it produces easier bonding and a degree of free repetition to help consolidate that bonding.

"*Mum's the word*" gets free advertising for Mumm champagne, and Australian paint manufacturer, Wattyl, once bonded to the saying "*Wattyl they think of next?*" When an Australian of that era, hears someone say "*What will they think of next?*" even many years later, it still has the potential



to bring to mind the Wattyl brand.

## Sonic Slogans



Another way to minimize the amount of paid-for repetition is by using sonic slogans. That is, by bonding your brand to a particular sound that has the potential to mnemonically remind people of your brand each time they hear that sound. For example in Australia “Don’t say a *tissue*, say a *Scotties*” used ‘a..tishoo’ to bring the Scotties brand top of mind to the sound of each sneeze. Similarly in the U.K., the slogans “Schhhh. *You-know-who*” (Schweppes) and “Schhhhhhwepervescence” enable Schweppes to ‘own’ the ‘Schhh’ sound.



Slogans that mnemonically exploit sounds and sayings like this, can more effortlessly achieve brand reminding without quite as much need for the huge investment in paid advertising. They are intrinsically very effective at reminding people of the brand and bringing it top of mind. This can be very strategic - particularly in categories where top of mind awareness is an important determinant of what people buy.

## Conclusion

The way to make a slogan work is to craft it strategically so it will bond with maximum cost efficiency to your brand name. Then lock it in with the matching keys of corporate commitment, consistent repetition and fidelity. Be prepared to stick with it and build slogan equity. “*It won’t happen overnight...but it will happen*”.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> See “Emergence Slogan Survey” [www.slogansurvey.com](http://www.slogansurvey.com)