PANTENE

A one-billion dollar brand became a three-billion dollar world-class category leader.

CHALLENGE

Mathilde Delhoume: Hi, I am Mathilde Delhoume, I’m the Global Advertising Development Manager for Pantene at P & G.

Debby Reiner: I’m Debby Reiner, I’m the Global Account Director on Pantene.

Thomas Puckett: I’m Thomas Puckett, and I’m the Global Creative Director on Pantene.

MD: Pantene and Grey has been a long story, so as in any long relationship there has been different phases.

DR: The challenge, when we were assigned the Pantene business, was to take this small niche, department store and apothecary brand and really make it a global mega-brand. P & G is not in the business of teeny-tiny, niche businesses. They’re really about creating big, global scale noise and really broadly appealing propositions.

TP: How do you not lose what Pantene stands for by going bigger and broader? The more you appeal to everyone, and the more you say you have something for everyone, what do you ultimately end up standing for? That’s also, I find, a big challenge.

“The challenge was to make Pantene a global mega-brand.”

IDEA

DR: The magic really happened because we had an incredible, strategic nugget. Pantene had this history. It was born of Panthenol, was the active ingredient. It was all about healing. It was originally created to cure burn victims in World War Two.

TP: Skin, not even hair-related.

DR: So it had all of this mythology around healing and therapy and the magic really happened when that collided with some executional—

TP: Magic.

DR: —magic. But the collision of that strategic insight around health improvement and the incredible execution of shine that people had never seen before, when those two things collided that’s when it all sort of took off.

TP: From an insight point of view, delving more into the emotional territory that the woman lives in. She wants beauty, but she doesn’t want to just stop at beauty. Beauty is the part that empowers her to glide through the day and to bring more magic and love and warmth and power in her experience of the day. And hair plays a key role in that.

SOLUTION

TP: We’ve had a lot of evolution over time. In the beginning it was lasering in on the simple proposition of beauty through health, and then bringing that to life executionally with this phenomenal lighting technique that no one had ever seen. Then it grew and became a lot about how we can make the hair explode and twist and dance and move and fall back into place, and then start all over again. And we created these “wow” hair visuals, that we call them. And then the next evolution was caused by the competition copying whatever we’re doing. What we’ve done in the last two or so years has been to reconnect the hair to the woman, because a woman wants beautiful hair as an expression of her own beauty, she doesn’t want it to have a life of it’s own that exists separate from her. She wants it to express who she is. So we’ve done a lot of work trying to capture the emotional performance.

MD: The challenge was to go beyond the left brain—the product attributes—to really create an emotional connection with our consumers. What Grey did beautifully was to create an idea: when Pantene transforms your hair, you feel inspired to turn an everyday moment into a shining moment. The emotional contribution that the brand brings is completely anchored into what the product does. So it is not fluffy emotion, it’s emotion directly related to the hair attributes. This is an idea that had lots of potential holistically, coming to life through all our communication touch points.

TP: We did an amazing program, Pro-Voice. The angle we took was music, because music is such a powerful force that young women are interested in. It was a program designed to speak to women 18-24, where unsigned singer-songwriters would submit songs, and they would be judged by their peers as well as by a celebrity judge panel, and that created a community for young women to really say, hey, Pantene is in my world, Pantene understands what I’m about, they’re not just trying to sell me some product. And it worked great, we had a one hour special on MTV.
RESULTS

DR: You know, when P & G bought it, there was no brand in haircare that was bigger than a five share, and the category leader basically changed every three years. The strategy rang so true for women that it exceeded everybody’s expectations. It blew past the five share point, in many markets, around a 20 share and it’s been the category leader for—since 1992, fifteen years?

TP: In the beauty category, that’s pretty amazing, to remain in the lead.

DR: The proudest thing for me is the size of the business, three billion dollars is just—the scale is incredible. How truly global it is. Again, 137 different countries, only 30% of the business now is in North America. We have come a long way in terms of just really distributing the business around the world, tapping into developing markets, seeing the growth really accelerate there and being representative where the women are, and not just necessarily where P & G has relationships and traction.

MD: Pantene is the number one brand of hair care in the world, where we can really step back and look at the results. The first one is the Central Eastern Europe, Middle East and Africa region. All our brand equity scores are up, both on the emotional point of view and judgment point of view. So it means that we increase the emotional connection while keeping our strengths on the functional attributes of the brand. All our equity data results confirm that we have been able to achieve that. You know, when I stated working on this brand, I could see the transformational power that a hair care brand could bring to women. And the level of confidence you can bring to a woman because she has a good hair day is worth thousands of millions of makeovers. This is what I liked and what I was really personally seduced with working on Pantene and working with the Grey team.

“The strategy rang so true for women that it exceeded everybody’s expectations.”

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