



How to Supercharge Your Slogans: 'Slogan Slipstreaming'

By Max Sutherland

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Is your slogan muffled by the competitive din? The solution is not to ditch it but to 'pitch it'! Here's a way to supercharge your slogan - to transform the voiceless into the vociferous.

The purpose of a brand slogan is to mnemonically remind people of the brand and its positioning. A descriptive brand name is a 1 or 2 word advertisement, but to communicate a brand's essence in just 1 or 2 words, often borders on impossible. So we deputize a slogan to act as a précis.

The best slogans remind people not only of the brand but also the brand positioning – the brand promise. Switching slogans is like switching promises. Politicians do it, but brands do it at their peril.

If your slogan is muffled by the competitive din, here's how to raise its decibel level. By slipstreaming.

The analogy is borrowed from motor racing. A fast moving vehicle creates a vacuum of air behind it. As it goes by you feel a powerful wall of air following that can almost blow you over. Motor racers and competition cyclists know that if you get close in behind this force, there is little wind resistance so you get 'sucked' along by the slipstream.

How can you apply this to making your slogan cut through?

Look for opportunities to slipstream top news stories. A top news story, by definition, is one that compels a lot of attention. By getting in behind it and linking your slogan to it, you slipstream the huge attention it is commanding.

Let me illustrate. As I am writing this, the world's news media are focused on Tony Blair, the British Prime Minister, who has announced he will undergo an operation for a heart problem but will be back at his desk on Monday. If you are Timex, what a wonderful opportunity for the Timex slogan '*Life is ticking*'.

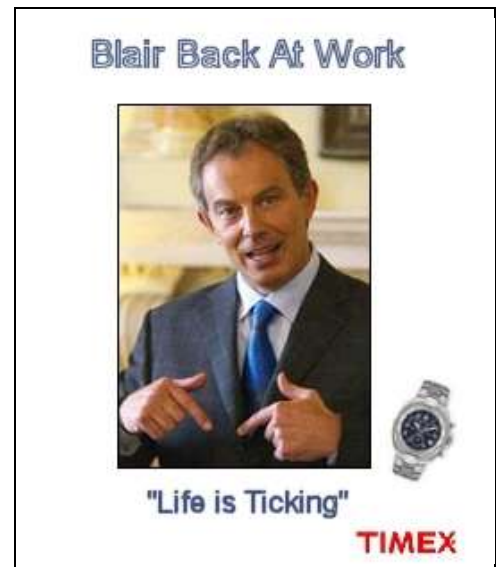


Illustration only

By splicing the slogan (and your brand) into a story like this (see illustration), each single ad exposure will do more to get attention to the brand and consolidate the slogan in memory than probably 10 or 20 standard repetitions.

What's the difference between this and 'topical advertising'? With topical advertising ([also a form of slipstreaming](#)), the brand is a point of focus but not the slogan. Consider a classic example. When the world's attention was riveted on the first moon landing, Volkswagen ran a photo of the moon lander over the headline "*It's ugly. But it gets you there.... VW*".

That is great advertising and focuses attention on the brand but the slogan makes no appearance. The words bridging brand to story are a temporary construction. Slogan slipstreaming looks for opportunities to insert a pre-constructed, permanent bridge a.k.a. your brand slogan, as well as the brand.

Timex's old 1950's slogan *'It takes a licking but it keeps on ticking'* would have worked even better to slipstream the Tony Blair story! Because Blair has been taking something of a licking lately ...and indeed he does keep on ticking.

So what other slogans could slipstream the Tony Blair event? Energizer batteries (U.S.A) could easily slipstream it with: *"It keeps going and going and going"*.

And so could insurance company Met Life with its theme *"Have you met life today?"*

Could your slogan slipstream it? If not, look for some other high profile event because not every news story that comes along is an opportunity for every brand slogan. However, once sensitized to slipstreaming, you realize there are lots of opportunities out there that you might not otherwise think of.

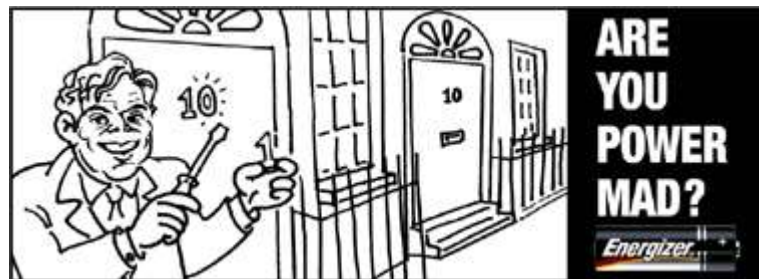


Topical ad for VW

Serial Slipstreamer

Energizer batteries in the UK is an example of a 'serial slipstreamer'. With its slogan *"Are you power mad?"*, it lies wait for opportunities. Here are two examples:

Gordon Brown is 'Prime Minister in waiting' in the UK for when Tony Blair retires or stumbles. Leadership tensions are never far below the surface and at the (Labour) party annual conference in 2003, this power struggle made constant headlines. Energizer saw the opportunity and ran an ad highlighting this fight for No 10 Downing Street by using its slogan *"Are you power mad?"* (See illustration).



Energizer slipstreams the power struggle for No 10 Downing St

And then in July 2003 when the Chelsea Football Club in the UK made constant headlines by going on a shopping spree to buy a list of the top soccer players, [Energizer seized the opportunity and linked to it, again with "Are you power mad?"](#).

More often brands make a foray into topical advertising where the slogan happens, in a one-off manner, to be used as the link. Burger King for example, used its U.K. slogan *'Got the urge?'* when stuntman David Blaine finally exited his glass box after being suspended for 44 days over Tower Bridge in London.

As yet, few companies have cottoned on to serial slipstreaming as a strategy.

Yet you can apply it to help a fledgling theme to take off - or to revitalize a well established slogan.

Revitalization

Will BMW ever feel a need to reinvigorate their 40 year old slogan "*The ultimate driving machine*"? Consider what sorts of opportunities BMW might lay wait on.

How about Arnold Schwarzenegger being elected governor of California? This high profile victory for the hard driving Arnie continues to make headlines around the world. BMW's slogan could bridge to this. (See illustration.) (Incidentally so could Chrysler with its new slogan "*Inspiration Comes Standard*").

And how about when British golfer Karl Woodward hit a 408 yard drive breaking the 400 yard barrier? That story could be slipstreamed by a headline "*Congratulations on the ultimate drive!.... From BMW - the ultimate driving machine*".

Lost Opportunities

A lot of money is invested by brands in sponsorship opportunities yet many 'free' opportunities like this are ignored.

Consider what could be done with Apple's "*Think different*" slogan. For one thing, Apple could slipstream every announcement of every Nobel prize award.

Or consider the Volvo slogan "*For life.*" It could slipstream high profile births, the first new year baby born each year, wedding anniversaries, people turning 100 - anything that gets a lot of publicity with the potential to be linked to the expression "*For life.*"

Another example.... soccer star David Beckham is now the paid face of Gillette because "David Beckham is seen by millions as the best a man can be." O.K. but how about the many free opportunities to leverage '*The best a man can get*' slogan? Every headline of every world record in every male sport is a potential opportunity for Gillette to add interest and build further equity into this long running slogan. Every newspaper report of every heroic deed is further opportunity to link to the expression "*The best a man can get*".

Conclusion

Slogan slipstreaming can leverage the media spend by a factor of many, many multiples to generate maximal impact for no extra cost. In an era when we are losing our ability to cut through and reach the consumer mind, a slipstreaming strategy can supercharge new slogans and revitalize established ones by powerfully increasing attention and involvement.

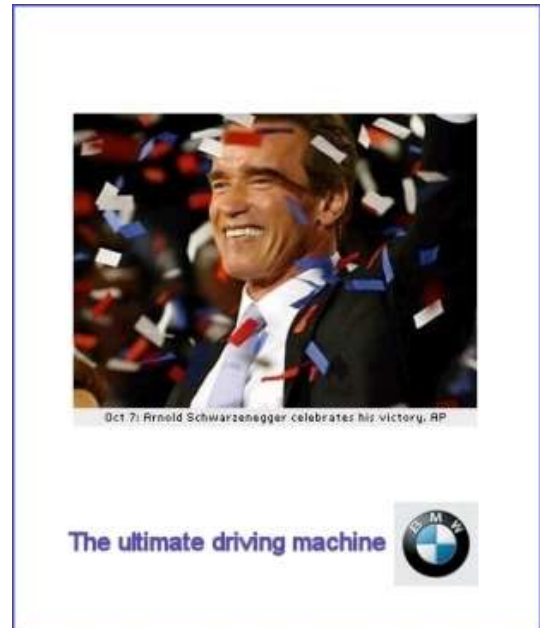


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