



TIPS FOR WINNING PAY-OFF LINES

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There is a great deal of money spent on brand pay-off lines, and a huge amount of mystique surrounding the topic. The fact is that some (very few) payoff- lines are great, and most are not. So what makes some great and others less than great?

We recently embarked on a very large consumer research project to get the facts about what makes some pay-off lines work better than others. With 2500 interviews under the belt, and almost 200 pay-off lines evaluated, and by looking at the characteristics of the ones that scored well versus those that scored poorly, we are seeing a clear picture of what makes pay-off lines successful.

SOME GROUND RULES

- 1) The test of a good pay-off line is the proportion of the target market that recognises it, and is able to link it to the correct brand.
- 2) Pay-off lines that have been around for years that are not recognised by many people in the target market are failures.
- 3) Pay-off lines that are recognised by many, and mostly linked to the correct brands, are successful provided they are reinforcing the desired perceptions about the brands they herald.

We found that most pay-off lines fall short on both recognition and brand linkage. Some do extremely well on both measures.

Here is a set of 10 rules we have derived based on the findings of the research. Not even the best pay-off lines obey all of the rules. In fact on average the best obey only 4 or 5 of them.

RULE 1: GOOD PAY-OFF LINES TELL YOU WHAT THE BRAND DOES

Payoff lines which explain a brand's purpose or function work better than those which give no clue to the market category. Good pay-off lines define the brand's playing field.

Illustrative examples

*"You've got an uncle in the furniture
business ..."*

"Nobody makes better tea than you and ..."

"South Africa's leading cellular network"

"The world's favourite cookie"

"The world's favourite airline"

"Slow brewed, extra matured"

"Fresh percolated taste"

"Biggest, meatiest, best tasting pie in town"

Compare to these

"Just what you need"

"Reaching new frontiers"

"Way of life!"

RULE 2: GOOD PAY-OFF LINES EVOKE POSITIVE FEELINGS

Pay-off lines which impart "positive waves" and "good vibrations" work better than ones which are impassive or empty.

Illustrative examples

"Life's great"

"Finger licking good"

"Sheer driving pleasure"

"Soft as a mother's love"

"With us you're number one"

Compare to these

"Moving forward"

"It's the best you can do"

"Lighten up"

RULE 3: GOOD PAY-OFF LINES DELIVER ONE CLEAR PROMISE.

Pay-off lines which are clear and specific do better than those which are vague and ambiguous.

Illustrative examples

"Roars with flavour"
"Your two year guarantee store"
"Cooks perfectly, every time"
"Too fresh to flop"
"Pharmacists who care"

Compare to these

"The difference"
"The way you want to live"
"Do more, feel better, live longer"

RULE 4: GOOD PAY-OFF LINES MAKE A UNIQUE PROMISE

Pay-off lines which link to a unique brand feature or benefit do better than those which make generic promises which could be applied to any brand in the category.

Illustrative examples

"A glass and a half in every slab"
"For a 25 hour day"
"Engineered like no other car in the world"
"Recommended by dentists"
"You always get something out"
"Feel the bubbles melt"

Compare to these

"Great taste. Great value."
"Building material supplies"
"What men want"

RULE 5: GOOD PAY-OFF LINES CONTAIN, SUGGEST OR RHYME WITH THE BRAND NAME

Embedding your brand name in the pay-off line goes a long way to ensuring correct linkage.

Illustrative examples

"You always win at ..."
"Mom remembered ..."
"Have a break, have a ..."
"Its dry but you can drink it"
"You pay less at ..."

"Beyond Petroleum"

"Keep walking"

RULE 6: GOOD PAY-OFF LINES ARE CONSTRUCTED AROUND POPULAR FIGURES OF SPEECH

Using current idioms, slang expressions, metaphors, sayings, platitudes or figures of speech in your pay-off line tends to improve its success.

Illustrative examples

"It's Ayoba time"

"I'm Lovin' it"

"How can we help you?"

"Forget-me-not ..."

"Better and Better"

RULE 7: GOOD PAY-OFF LINES USE REPETITION, ALLITERATION, RHYME OR SONIC DEVICE

Song writers and poets know that rhyme, meter and other verse "gimmicks" help their fans remember the words. The same applies to pay-off lines.

Illustrative examples

"Today, Tomorrow, Together"

"Zoom Zoom"

"Schhhhh ... you know who"

"Much more munch"

"Snap, crackle and pop"

Don't compromise, serve ..."

"It goes crrrr in your mouth"

"Have a ding-dong day, ..."

"Packed with peanut power"

"Wotalotigot"

RULE 8: GOOD PAY-OFF LINES ARE THE ONES THAT HAVE BEEN AROUND FOR AGES

Good Pay-off lines become better with age. Resist the temptation to keep changing your brand's pay-off line without sound reason.

Illustrative examples

"First with the goodies"

"Finger licking good"

"Have a break, have a ..."

"Things go better with ... "

RULE 9: GOOD PAY-OFF LINES ARE EMBEDDED IN OR ASSOCIATED WITH A JINGLE

Melodies are better remembered than words. This is evident in the fact that most people can recognise hundreds or thousands of songs, but remember their lyrics. This is why pay-off lines which are set to music often work better than those that are flat.

Illustrative examples

"You've got an uncle in the furniture business"

"Everything keeps going right..."

"People with a taste for life"

"Let your fingers do the walking ..."

RULE 10: GOOD PAY-OFF LINES ARE UNUSUAL

People notice, interrogate and remember that which is unusual or abnormal. We tend to pass by that which is familiar.

Illustrative examples

"It's Ayoba time"

"Zoom Zoom"

"Vorsprung durch technik"

"Soul food"

Compare to these

"You're the difference"

"Moving forward"

By looking carefully at the pay-off line failures, we were able to identify the two pitfalls that most of the failures fall into:

PITFALL 1: BAD PAY-OFF LINES DON'T MAKE SENSE

Consumers tend to screen out pay-off lines which call on them to be irrational or which don't make sense in terms of grammar or possibility.

Illustrative examples

"Be stupid"

"The touch of tomorrow"

"Own your life"

"Drive the change"

"Road ahead"

"Own your look"

PITFALL 2: BAD PAY-OFF LINES DON'T RING TRUE

Pay-off lines are in essence promises made to consumers. If the promise is incredible then the pay-line will be dismissed.

Illustrative examples

"Do great things"

"It all comes together with a ..."

"The power of dreams"

"Fashion to celebrate your curves"

More car, more life"

How well does your brand pay-off line stack up against these rules?

**For a copy of the survey results, email a request to
gordon@bkrs.co.za**