

EPISODE 37 — REFERENCE LOG

Campaigns vs. Cute & Clever

<https://advertisinginamerica.buzzsprout.com>

 The Campaign Debate: Cute and Clever is a Costume

FREE 45-MINUTE STRATEGY SESSION

Wizard of Ads for Essential Services — Free 45-Minute Strategy Session

 [Free 45-Min Marketing Session for HVAC, Plumbing & Electrical](#)

PEOPLE & THOUGHT LEADERS

Roy H. Williams

Context: Referenced by Ryan Chute as a foundational influence on the Wizard of Ads philosophy. Described as a renaissance man who studies fine art, classic literature, and poetry to develop unique angles of entry for advertising. Ryan references his encouragement of writers to find a North Star idea that doesn't run out of metaphor.

Relevance: Foundational thinking behind why Wizard of Ads pursues campaigns over one-off ads.

 <https://www.wizardofads.com>

Orlando Wood

Context: Described as a 'very famous market researcher' from System1 Ad Testing. Ryan references Wood's 2019 research paper 'The Advertiser's Brain Has Turned Sour,' which argues that modern advertising has lost characters, sense of place, and storytelling—replaced by disconnected, vacuous creative that doesn't match brand identity.

Relevance: Provides research-backed support for the episode's argument that campaigns with characters and story outperform one-off executions.

 <https://www.system1group.com>

Martin Lindstrom

Context: Ryan references Lindstrom's 2011 book Brandwashing to support the argument that brands plant subconscious cues—jingles, sound signatures, and what Wizard of Ads calls 'brandable chunks'—that create automatic brand recall at the moment of need.

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Book: Brandwashing: Tricks Companies Use to Manipulate Our Minds and Persuade Us to Buy (2011)

 <https://www.martinlindstrom.com>

Robert Cialdini

Context: Ryan references Cialdini's work on influence and persuasion to describe the mechanism of brand triggers—how repeated cues create conditioned responses that fire automatically at the moment of need.

Book referenced: Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion (original 1984, updated editions ongoing)

 <https://www.influenceatwork.com>

Jenny Romanek

Context: Referenced by Ryan Chute in connection with Ehrenberg-Bass Institute research on Category Entry Points. The discussion covers how brand growth is driven by linking brand cues to the situational triggers (what Wizard of Ads calls 'anchor points') that buyers experience at the moment of need.

Relevance: Provides the academic framework behind why long-running campaigns outperform one-off attention grabs for grudge-purchase categories like home services.

ORGANIZATIONS & RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS

Ehrenberg-Bass Institute for Marketing Science

Context: Referenced in connection with Category Entry Points research. The Ehrenberg-Bass Institute is the leading academic research body on how brands grow, based at the University of South Australia. Their findings on mental availability and category entry points underpin Ryan's argument that campaigns create durable brand recall at the moment of need.

 <https://www.marketingscience.info>

System1 Group

Context: Home of Orlando Wood's ad testing research, including 'The Advertiser's Brain Has Turned Sour.' System1 specializes in predicting market impact of advertising through emotional response measurement.

 <https://www.system1group.com>

Wizard of Ads for Essential Services

Context: The host organization. Referenced throughout as the source of the 'brandable chunks' framework, the campaign philosophy, and the free 45-minute strategy session offer.

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Strategy Session URL: [Free 45-Min Marketing Session for HVAC, Plumbing & Electrical](#)

BRANDS & ADVERTISING CASE STUDIES

GEICO Gecko

Context: Used by Chris Torbay as the primary example of cute and clever executed as a campaign. The gecko is a recurring character whose personality shows up consistently across every spot, making viewers internalize an insurance ad without feeling sold to. Represents the ideal of campaignable cute and clever.

Lesson: Cute and clever works when the character can be replicated and developed over time within a consistent brand identity.

H.L. Bowman (Bowman)

Context: A Wizard of Ads client used by Chris and Ryan as a live example of campaignable cute and clever. The 'Bowman Bow Man' is a campy 1950s superhero character who is overly proud and over-the-top in everything he does—designed to be both funny and consistently replicable. The character shoots arrows at things that aren't quite the right targets, creating recurring comedic situations anchored to the brand identity.

Lesson: When cute and clever is built around a character that matches the brand's logo and identity, it becomes a campaign. The character can be developed like a sitcom figure across multiple executions.

Call Dad (Plumbing/Home Services)

Context: Referenced by Ryan as an example of a brand where culture and brand identity are fully aligned—where the decision-making framework ('What would Dad do?') is the brand itself. Contrasted with manufactured cute and clever that doesn't have this depth of identity.

Lesson: When a brand's culture is its brand, the campaign writes itself.

 <https://www.wizardofads.contractors/works/call-dad>

Budweiser — Clydesdales Campaign

Context: Referenced by Chris Torbay as an example of a Super Bowl brand that has succeeded by building a recurring campaign within the Super Bowl context rather than chasing one-off stunts. The Clydesdales are a consistent character the brand returns to, creating compound equity over time.

Lesson: Even in a format that incentivizes one-offs, the brands with the strongest equity are the ones that show up with the same face year after year.

Budweiser — 'What's Up?' Spot

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Context: Referenced by Chris Torbay and Mick Torbay as an example of a highly successful cute and clever execution that could not be extended into a campaign. The spot got a sequel but couldn't be sustained as a multi-year strategy—'You can't stand for What's Up.'

Lesson: High-performing one-off ads and campaignable ideas are two different things. Viral success is not campaign equity.

Taco Bell / KFC / Wendy's — Social Media Voice

Context: Used by Chris Torbay to illustrate the trend-chasing danger of cute and clever. Taco Bell pioneered the snarky, real-time social media voice. Then KFC did it. Then Wendy's. Now every fast food brand sounds the same because they all hired young Gen Z writers and chased the same trend—destroying the differentiation that made the original approach work.

Lesson: When a tone becomes a trend, it stops being a differentiator. The second everyone is doing it, it's noise.

Guinness

Context: Used by Chris Torbay as the counterexample to cute and clever—a brand whose identity demands gravity, patience, and pride. Chris argues that a young copywriter who just had success on Kit Kat cannot walk into a Guinness brief and apply the same tone. The 'watching the bubbles rise' emotional territory is as disruptive in its direction as quirky is in the other direction.

Lesson: Brand tonality is non-negotiable. The most powerful brands are the ones that go deepest in their own direction, not the ones that chase the current trend.

The 'Seal' Ad

Context: Referenced by Mick Torbay as a memorable but unidentifiable Super Bowl spot in which the singer Seal transformed into an actual seal. Still discussed as a creative achievement, but Mick cannot recall the brand—which is precisely his point about the difference between memorability and brand attribution.

Lesson: Memorable creative that doesn't stick to a brand is expensive entertainment, not advertising.

BOOKS REFERENCED

Brandwashing: Tricks Companies Use to Manipulate Our Minds and Persuade Us to Buy

Author: Martin Lindstrom

Published: 2011

Referenced for: Subconscious cue planting — how brands embed jingles, signatures, and brandable chunks that trigger automatic recall at the moment of purchase.

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Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion

Author: Robert Cialdini

Published: Original 1984, updated editions

Referenced for: The conditioned response mechanism — the 'I see this, I hear this, and I immediately trigger that response' principle that underpins the category entry point strategy.

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