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Hyping the Hippo

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This is the ultimate comeback story. A relic from our past returned to tug at our heartstrings and remind us of how magical our childhoods were. With a smile and a chuckle, we were transported back to the best of 80s Ireland. It made us want to share that magic with our own children, teach them the value of money and get them into the habit of saving young. This is a case about an unlikely teacher – a hippo called Henri.

This story, about a youth savings product captured the imagination of a generation of parents and became one of the most talked about and effective integrated campaigns in financial services this year. It resulted in a whopping 200% increase in the number of Ulster Bank youth savings accounts opened.

The Ulster Bank brief to Ogilvy was straightforward - to drive up-take of the URfirst savings product aimed at children between 0 -11 years. The objective was to increase account openings by 50% during the campaign period.

Competition is rife in youth savings both among leading competitors and smaller, challenger offerings. Compared to the rest of the market, the interest rate was not very competitive. Ogilvy needed to find a distinctive 'hook' to reel customers in. We needed to tap into a broader cultural tension.

We recognised that parents are under enormous pressure to live up to the new middle class norms. A worrying consequence of this endless juggling of work/life commitments is that parents are losing control of their family's experience of childhood. Ogilvy discovered that most parents have fond memories of their own youth. We tapped into this and re-launched Henri Hippo in a way that struck a chord with both parents and young children in a very different century.

The result was a campaign that delivered 200% on the target number of acquisitions set and a four share point lift in the brand consideration scores.

MARKETING OBJECTIVES

Why are youth savings so critically important to banks? Banks are mindful of the potential lifetime value of youth customers. Children's savings accounts are a milestone in developing a relationship between children and the bank. In light of this, Ulster Bank decided to refresh their youth strategy.

Ulster Bank's business objective was to acquire new youth customers across the island of Ireland with their URfirst children's savings account and retain their business from their first childhood savings account right up to their first current account and ultimately their first mortgage.

The URfirst account is aimed at 0 -11 year olds. It's an instant access savings account and can be opened with a minimum balance of £5. The interest rate was 2.3% in ROI and 5% in NI.

The business target for the campaign was to achieve an uplift of 50% in account openings. The communication goals were to attract children to the account while encouraging and rewarding a savings habit and to generate awareness among parents. The campaign was designed to run for a six week period in outdoor, in-branch and online.

Recent Ulster Bank qualitative research had revealed that Ulster Bank was losing emotional resonance with its younger audience. It was found to have a relatively low key presence in the consumer's mind, especially for non-customers. Ulster Bank were in a 'holding position' in terms of brand communications, as the new positioning of 'Get the right people behind you' had not yet launched. We needed to find an emotional way to bring to life the URfirst savings proposition and build brand awareness.

No bank is strongly associated with children's savings these days. We set an objective for Ulster Bank to win the hearts and minds of parents and to 'own' this market. The affluence of Celtic Tiger Ireland had made us increasingly complacent about money. The 'maxed-out parents' we were speaking to had taken their eye off the ball. The piggybank had become an ornament in a child's bedroom rather than a tool to help them save. We were in danger of raising a generation of mini Paris Hiltons and Callum Bests who have no sense of the responsibility of money. We'd forgotten that it's our job to teach our children how to save.

THE TASK

The interest rate on the URfirst account was not competitive in the market. In order to transform it into an aspirational account for children and adults, the ultimate decision makers, we would need an evocative and emotional hook to overcome this.

Our second task was that we needed to overcome the prevailing apathy towards saving. Money has been plentiful in recent times and any discussion of savings is labelled as 'kill-joy'. Parents want to get their children into the habit of saving and help them develop better financial planning skills for their future. Deep down, they want them to understand the value of money but they're so caught up in the hamster wheel of day to day life that this concern is put on the long finger. Also, they're not quite sure how best to teach these basic saving skills. They're looking for tools to facilitate this process.

We would also have to get the kids on board. Children, especially older ones, are very brand and communication savvy. They can be a tough crowd. Sophisticated graphics and animation are second nature to them. Our task was to bring to life a Henri Hippo that would appeal to the Shrek and Playstation generation and get them excited. Research showed that from age four to eight, children begin to acquire money on a regular basis. This was to be the target sweetspot for our campaign.

Children's experience nowadays is diametrically opposed to that of their parents. It is a far cry from the rice krispie bun and pass the parcel parties of our childhoods. The homespun Holy Communion celebrations of our youth have been upgraded to the expense and glamour of a wedding reception. It is not uncommon for a child to wear a designer dress to the church with a spray tan to match. The average communion windfall is €463 with one in

four getting between €500-1000. 56% of children are more likely to spend this money than to save it. One in five children have no savings account at all. Christmas is another cash bonanza and 22% of children spend all of their Christmas money.

Today's children are experiencing affluence without innocence instead of the innocence without affluence that we grew up with.

In addition to these consumer challenges, a set of brand guidelines had to be adhered to.

THE STRATEGY

The Ogilvy crucible team interrogated the URfirst account and we looked back at our own childhoods and how we had saved as kids. Together with Ulster Bank we recognised the potential to reinvigorate Ulster Bank's youth offering through the resurrection of the 80s savings icon, Henri Hippo. The time had come to dust off the Henri Hippo moneybox.

Qualitative research revealed that children don't believe that they should have to save to get what they want. Instant gratification has become the norm. With the best will in the world, parents are finding it hard to replicate their innocent childhoods for their own kids. Most parents feel nostalgic about their experience of growing up and want to share some of the traditions and rituals with their kids. This emerged as a key insight.

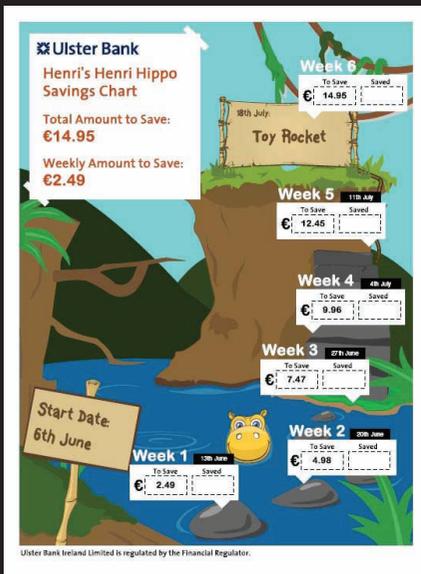
The Ogilvy team decided to capitalise on this insight and use Henri as the hero for parents and children to bring back the habit of saving. Our strategy would focus on giving these 'maxed-out parents' a platform to encourage their children to save. Children needed to know that savings could be fun and are a vital part of their future.

The role of Ulster Bank was therefore to help facilitate parents in their role as teachers. Parents would need a tool kit that encouraged savings. Channels used would need to engage both parents and children by making savings fun, easy and motivating. Parents could pass on some of the fun they experienced growing up.

One of the potential barriers identified was that some parents may not have been exposed to Henri Hippo. After developing an email survey of 200 parents, the planning team discovered that over 80% of parents remembered

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Remember when
 all you wanted was
 a SodaStream.



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Remember when
 social networking was
 done in person.

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him and that despite the hard times of the 80s, our audience still had very funny memories. Social currency gadgets such as Rubik's cubes and rollerskates and classic TV shows such as *Fame*, *Dallas* and *The A Team* were also recalled. Just reading some of the responses brought us back to our own days of airborne Flashdance moves in the living room. We needed to transport people back to these times, when Leroy from *Fame* was hot and and you asked for leg-warmers for Christmas.

Henri Hippo would be the hero of children's savings. He could help parents to share the innocence of their childhoods with their kids while encouraging a savings habit.

THE IDEA AND COMMUNICATION ACTIVITY

It was agreed that our creative platform would centre around the days when our target audience were children. The creative idea was to bring people on a trip down memory lane. Each execution would spark a different and universal memory from the 80s, even among the 20% of our audience who had no awareness of Ulster Bank's Henri Hippo.

There were eight different executions developed. Each was designed to work on a number of levels:

1. Transport people back to the happiness of their childhoods.
2. Announce the return of Henri Hippo.
3. Remind parents that they used to save with Henri and now their children can.
4. Call to action to drive traffic to Henri Hippo's web page.

A fresher, hipper Henri was developed by our creative team to compete in the sophisticated visual world of children's television characters. He retained his distinctive characteristics and remained recognisable but he appealed to the new generation of children in our target audience.

Our new Henri Hippo was well received in pre-testing. He reminded parents that saving was fun and that this was missing for their children. When parents saw Henri in focus groups they said he was exactly what they needed to teach their kids the value of money.

In-branch material and posters, 48 and six sheets and T-sides were developed. Outdoor was chosen as the lead medium for the nationwide campaign. It was

up-weighted around prime locations to optimise awareness of Henri Hippo. Urban commuter media such as commutercards, bus shelters, Smart cars in Cork and branded Mini's in Northern Ireland were used to speak to our 'maxed-out parents' when they were stuck in traffic.

The headlines reminded parents of the innocence of their childhoods and evoked nostalgic and entertaining memories of the 80s.

- 'Remember when social networking was done in person'
- 'Remember when a mobile was something that hung from your bedroom ceiling'
- 'Remember when all you wanted was a soda stream'
- 'Remember when happiness was staying up late to watch Dallas'

Media specific executions were developed for different types of transport:

- 'Remember when a train journey felt like an adventure'
- 'Remember when the only place to sit was down the back'

The idea was so rich that it enabled our campaign partners to develop other elements of the campaign that were integrated with ours. An online campaign was designed by Cybercom to reach parents when they were online. This aimed to drive the appeal of Henri and link to the product website where parents could access information on the account easily. They could download colouring images and cut-out Henri's to engage their kids. Online savings calculators helped children to see what they would get if they saved a certain amount every week.

When children opened an account they received a Henri kit that included the legendary money box. Local branches ran Henri Hippo days and children received pencils, pencil cases, rulers and a rucksack to take home. These elements spurred them on in their savings efforts.

A targeted PR campaign was planned by Gibneys that included radio competitions and visits from Henri to schools and branches to run dedicated savings days for children. On the 2fm Colm and Jim-Jim breakfast show people were asked to text in their first childhood memories. The people with the most entertaining memories won Henri accounts for their children. Producers of the show said their Henri Hippo competition was their most successful promotion and they received a record number of entrants.

Henri was everywhere. He received coverage at the GAA roadshows and had custom made O'Neills jerseys and he also entered the Belfast City marathon and even did some fundraising at the finish line.

RESULTS

The campaign not only over-achieved its business goals (see return on investment section below) but Henri Hippo brought back some much needed emotional resonance with Ulster Bank.

The campaign improved overall brand consideration scores for Ulster Bank. For the statement 'A bank I would choose to open a bank account with', Ulster Bank gained four share points over the period April to June 2008, from 7% to 11%. This represents a significant improvement of 57% of a key brand performance measure. Not only did this put Ulster Bank ahead of Halifax during this period but it was also an unprecedented shift on Ulster Bank scores, proof that the campaign had struck a credible chord with the target audience.

Overall brand communication cut-through also increased from 43% to 47% and Ulster Bank was the only bank to increase its overall brand communication awareness scores between April 2008 – June 2008. This was directly related to the Henri Hippo campaign as no other Ulster Bank communication had been running during this period.

The level of conversation around Henri reached iconic levels. The campaign had clearly created a very strong connection with its audience.

During the six week online campaign Henri had more than 50,000 visitors to his home page with the online banner ads driving nearly one quarter of visitors to the site. He had 54 friends on facebook, was a hot topic on radio chat programmes and discussed across blogs:

'Henri Hippo is a localised phenomenon, it really focused on people my age who grew up in Ireland during the 80s... I really want to get my own kids thinking about saving now that I have seen it'

'Henri Hippo has made a glorious come back, I love it, I want to relive my own childhood again, I want to share it with my own children'
The reaction in Ulster Bank was equally positive. Staff engagement reached an all time high:

“Across the island of Ireland staff reaction to the introduction of Henri Hippo was overwhelmingly positive. Branch staff were inundated with requests for the moneybox modelled on vintage Henri and the demand was so high that we had to order additional supplies”. Vincent Keogh, Senior Product Manager, Savings and Investments, Ulster Bank.

Henri Hippo had re-established Ulster Bank as the market leader in youth savings:

“Critically, the real value of the Henri Hippo campaign was in re-establishing Ulster Bank’s previously held position in the marketplace as the leader in youth savings”. Patrick Farrell, Head of Retail Strategy and Marketing, Ulster Bank.

Return on investment

The campaign significantly over-achieved the target of 50% increase in account opening.

This does not include the accounts which were subsequently opened for Holy Communion funds. At the time of writing, Ulster Bank did not yet have access to data on subsequent account openings.

During the campaign, account openings increased by 250% in ROI and 156% in NI.

For Ulster Bank, the investment was very worthwhile

They have asked that the base investment figure remains confidential but the media spend for ROI was €359,341 and for NI was £50,849 (€63,561) which amounts to a total media spend of €422,902. The value created therefore was 1.7 times the total amount invested.

However, if we take into account the most critical objective of ‘Lifetime Value’ of a customer, this is significantly higher. According to our client, it stands at 19 times the amount invested. For every Euro invested by Ulster Bank, the campaign generated €19 net value:

“Based on the total invested in the campaign and the average lifetime value of a customer, we will make back over 19 times the level invested”, Kirsten Lyons, Head of Communications, Ulster Bank Retail and First Active. Further evidence of the return on investment is illustrated by the huge amount media coverage received on the Henri Hippo campaign. In press alone, the

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coverage of the campaign amounted to a PR value of €271,795. This figure does not include the extensive radio and blog coverage the campaign also received and is illustrative of just how much the return of Henri Hippo captured the hearts and imaginations of Irish parents and children.

