

50 Years of Louie the Fly



Mortein was originally manufactured in Australia as an insecticidal powder in the late 19th century. It went through several phases of evolution before the company introduced aerosol to Australia in the early 50s; just in time for the start of television. The then Managing Director, Bill Graham, believed in aggressive marketing and advertising and immediately saw the enormous potential of the television medium.

Background

Mortein has a long association with Free TV. In 1956 when television first arrived in Australia, Mortein was one of the first TV ads on air with a lengthy infomercial. In 1957, Louie the Fly was born, when author Bryce Courtney famously scrawled out the concept and jingle in a taxi on a way to a meeting with Graham.

Challenges

Mortein's business is highly seasonal with 75 per cent of annual sales generated between October and March each year. Keeping the brand relevant from year to year therefore is a key challenge.

The other challenge for Mortein was to ensure their message and brand remained contemporary and relevant. This needed to be considered within the framework of, "if it ain't broke..."

The Solution

The beauty of a long-lived and much-loved character such as Louie the Fly is the continuity of association that means as each season rolls around, the Mortein brand doesn't have to start from scratch in building awareness.

One of the key strengths of the original idea was that Louie was animated, which directly addressed the issue of how to depict the effectiveness of insecticide without using potentially off-putting vision such as real flies crawling over food or the like. Yet the original Louie was a line-drawing for black and white television.

To keep Louie fresh, he has had several makeovers: from line drawing to cartoon animation; from black and white to colour; and from cartoon to 3-D. In celebration of his 50th anniversary, Louie has this year been given an image overhaul and appears in dazzling computer-generated form.

CASE STUDY: Mortein

The Role of TV

There are few better illustrations of television's ability to build brand fame as with Mortein. TV has played an integral role in the establishment of Louie the Fly as one of the nation's most enduring brand icons. To cap it all off, last year, the Advertising Federation of Australia, named Louie the Fly as one of the top 50 television ads of all time.

Results

After 50 years, Mortein continues to be one of Australia's favourite brands. "Thanks to Louie, when asked to name a product 'that kills insects', over 90 per cent of respondents answered 'Mortein,'" says Frederique Hull, Marketing Director of Reckitt Benckiser. "More importantly, they strongly associate both the character and the jingle with the Mortein brand."

Who

Client: Euro RSCG Worldwide
Agency: Reckitt Benckiser