

Old favourites that never die

Why there's no shame, and a lot of sense, in updating successful promotion ideas. By Brian Oliver



Cook... 'if one particular scheme provides the right creative solution, why not make full use of it?'

A few years ago, the gloom of harrassed motorists was lifted by a spate of car stickers which featured copywriters' gems such as: "Old golfers never die, they only lose their balls". If such a sticker had been produced for sales promotion executives, it would probably have read: "Old sales promotions never die, they are simply dusted down and used again... and again... and again".

Not quite as funny, admittedly. But, as most sales promotion experts seem to agree, it is true.

Over the past 12 months in particular, there has been a noticeable turning back of the clock as far as the sales promotion activities of a number of major brands are concerned. For example, McVities has launched a modern version of the "Tide man" promotion first seen in the 1960s; Shell has relaunched its "Make money" scheme; and Esso has responded by bringing back its famous free glasses promotion.

Meanwhile, the latest printing technology has enabled spot-the-ball competitions to make a significant comeback in the form of sophisticated scratch-card promotions. Even trading stamps — which fell out of favour in the

inflation-ridden late 1970s — are back. And old-style collection promotion techniques — such as PG Tips's picture cards and Kensitas cigarette coupons — are still going strong.

As if to prove that "old is beautiful", Kellogg's has even started putting free novelties inside its cereal packs again, for the first time in ten years.

"Old sales promotion ideas never really die because there are no new promotional techniques — just variations on old themes," says Kellogg's sales promotion manager, Jeremy Sandys-Wynch. He believes there are only a few basic techniques — such as coupons, free offers, competitions and collections.

"Just as people associate Procter and Gamble and Daz with plastic daffodils, Kellogg's Cornflakes is probably best remembered for in-pack giveaways," says Sandys-Wynch. "We decided to use this technique again because we haven't used it for so long."

He points out that lenticulars (3D-printed images that appear to move) are currently being given away free inside packets of Cornflakes; Letraset transfers are being inserted in Rice Krispies packs;

free badges were offered with packs of Ricles last spring; and BMX stickers are being included with Frosties.

But instead of simply putting novel giveaways inside each pack, as in the past, Kellogg's is now linking the free inserts more closely with the creative themes of its various TV commercials. For example, the Rice Krispies transfers feature cartoon characters from the brand's TV advertising, and the badges offered with Ricles featured Henry's Cat — the BBC TV cartoon character which is used on Ricles packaging and in its merchandising. Similarly, Frosties BMX stickers (which feature the brand's long-serving Tony Tiger character) also tie in with Kellogg's sponsorship of televised BMX races.

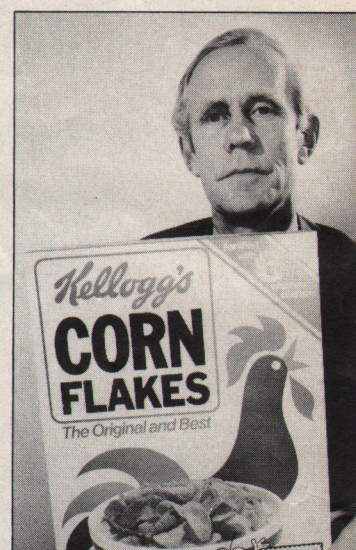
"There is a sort of cyclical pattern to sales promotion anyway," says Sandys-Wynch. "But we have found it more cost effective to get back into inserts now because we have installed mechanical droppers which reduce the high labour cost of manual insertion."

Similarly, Shell's "Make Money" scheme — which was originally launched in 1966 — was

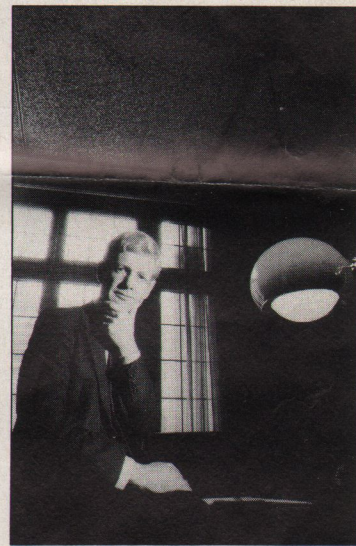
updated last year by promotional games specialist Don Marketing. Through the use of the latest printing technology, the 1984 version was produced for one-third of the cost of the original promotion. "We redesigned the game piece so that it formed part of the envelope itself and then used a special camouflage design and security inks on the reverse side to prevent people from seeing through the envelope," explains John Donovan, chairman of Don Marketing.

"We normally pride ourselves on developing new ideas and concepts — but the 'Make Money' scheme had been so successful that we felt it could be used again," adds Donovan. "It took us four years to persuade Shell to run it again."

Ironically, Shell's relaunch of the "Make Money" scheme forced its arch-rival, Esso, to respond by resurrecting another old-style promotion — a free glasses offer which had been enormously successful in the early 1970s. This type of promotion — first launched in 1971 — offers free glasses to motorists who spend a certain amount on petrol in Esso filling stations. The only change from the old scheme was a reduction in the amount of petrol which had to be



Sandys-Wynch... 'cyclical'



Thursfield... 'flowers are alive' bought to qualify for a free glass.

"It was the first time we had used the promotion on any scale since 1973," explains Esso's sales promotion manager, Tony Wingrave. "We started again because Shell fired the first broadside with the relaunch of the 'Make Money' promotion and we felt we had to respond with appropriate strength. We decided to launch a free glasses offer again because we know it works for us."

Meanwhile, Steve Cook, a director of sales promotion consultancy Francis Killingbeck Bain, observes: "If a promotion has been enormously successful, and has shown that it works, there is no shame in repeating it. If one particular scheme provides the right creative solution, why not make full use of it?"

Cook cites the example of McVities, which launched a free music cassette offer two years ago. The promotion proved to be so successful, he says, that the company decided to repeat the music offer the following year. "Obviously the time scale for repeating an old promotion will vary according to the product concerned," adds Cook. "For example, a petrol company may feel a change of ►

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'People have been making older ideas work much harder'



"Make Money" . . . so successful that Shell was persuaded to use it again

pace is necessary at certain times of the year. Looking at the situation laterally, it could decide to offer free tankards as a different type of collectable, instead of free glasses."

According to David Thursfield, managing director of Wimbledon-based sales promotion consultancy Below The Line Projects (BLP): "The vast majority of promotions involve dressing up an old technique." He points to the McVities "Money maids" promotion 18 months ago which, he says, was simply a modern version of the "Tide man" scheme that had not been seen for 20 years. Under the old promotion, a white-coated man from Tide would call at random on houses in a particular area. If the housewife could show a packet of Tide and answer a simple question, she received a reward. A similar mechanic was used in the McVities promotion, says Thursfield.

"This technique has probably not been resurrected as much because of the high costs involved," says Thursfield. "To do it properly, you need to have people on the road and you also have to advertise the promotion to let people know that it will be happening in their area."

Thursfield also believes that old promotions never die: "They can simply become too commonplace and consequently go out of fashion. In such a situation, they either need a well-earned rest or they have to be dressed up in some way to make them look new and fresh again."

He firmly believes that promotions which have shown they can be effective should always be "taken out of the cupboard again" if they are likely to be appropriate to a particular client's brief. "There is no reason to ignore a particular mechanic just because it has been tried and tested by a lot of people. A way has to be found of bringing it up to date and making it relevant to the brand concerned."

Stephen Callender, associate director of sales promotion consultancy Kingsland Lloyd Petersen, admits that the discovery of new ideas is very difficult. There are only a handful of basic techniques, he says, and most sales promotion companies are simply developing these ideas and making them tie in with a client's marketing needs much more closely.

"There have been tremendous leaps forward in the way these basic techniques are being used," says Callender. "In the past few years, people have been making older ideas work much harder. They are showing that sales promotion is another medium which can talk about the client's product at the point of purchase."

As an example of this approach, Callender points to the "Clapperboard" promotion which his agency recently ran for Truman's Holsten Export brand. The promotion was basically an old-style competition — although it was closely linked to the "X-Certificate" lager theme used by Holsten in its cinema advertising. All elements of the promotion carried a movie theme.

For example, Holsten drinkers in pubs received a free "Clapperboard" containing several simple questions about films and participants who got the answers right won free drinks. But the promotion also involved a competition for cinemagoers, which ran in cinemas in which the Holsten Export commercial was being screened. Point-of-sale displays were set up in cinema foyers, and cinemagoers could either use the competition entry to claim a free drink at the nearest Holsten stockist or enter a competition to win a trip to Hollywood.

Meanwhile, BLP's Thursfield points to the "Free trip home" promotion which his company launched on New Year's Eve on behalf of Hofmeister and London Transport. "It may have seemed highly novel and original because it

was in an area of the market which is not known for running sales promotion activities," he says. "But it was effectively a free trial sample for London Transport."

While sales promotion specialists are now developing new versions of old techniques, Thursfield notes that this is often because consumers' needs and requirements are also changing. He points out that the offer of free plastic daffodils is, on the face of it, one of the few old promotional ideas that has not been resurrected so far. However, Thursfield says the free flowers technique is still very much alive.

"Plastic flowers have been replaced by fresh flowers or plants because that's what consumers want," says Thursfield. "Free house plants, tie-ups with Interflora and 'uni-rose' promotions have all evolved from the plastic daffodil."

One old-style technique which has not survived is the "divi" — the dividend payments that had been part and parcel of the Co-op movement for years. Like the Robertsons goliwog, the *Be-Ro Recipe Book* and the Miss Pears competition, the Co-op "divi" had become part of the image of the brand being promoted. In the Co-op's case, however, it was hampering efforts to update its old-fashioned image. So it had to go. In early 1984, several societies began to phase out the scheme and, last September, the Co-operative Wholesale Society introduced a string of more modern promotions and incentives — such as money-off vouchers, discount cards and even a special offer funeral scheme.

Some long-running promotions, such as the picture cards offered in Brooke Bond tea packets, are changed on a regular basis and therefore manage to retain consumer interest. The first free picture card was inserted in quarter pound packets of Brooke Bond tea in 1952 — shortly after the war —

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campaign

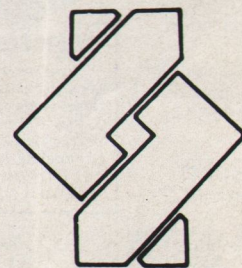
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Experts believe new technology will have a major impact on the way promotions are revamped

time rationing of tea was ended — and picture cards are still being offered with Brooke Bond's PG Tips brand. A new series is launched every nine months.

As in the past, collectors can request a copy of a free album in which to keep their cards. Although albums are now mostly mailed direct from Brooke Bond, they were originally sold for a few pence each through traditional grocers. But since the distribution of tea products began to spread to more sophisticated retail outlets (which were not interested in stocking the albums), the number issued each year fell from a peak of nearly 2.4 million copies in 1968 (for the History of the Motor Car series) to 750,000 in the mid-1970s. About 300,000 albums are expected to be mailed out this year.

But Brooke Bond's marketing manager, John Nicolson, says the company has continued to use picture cards because research has shown that they still work for the brand: "It is very expensive to print hundreds of millions of picture cards each year and we wouldn't do it if it wasn't worthwhile. Each series of 40 cards has some educational value and this has become part of the brand. PG Tips is seen as a safe, reliable brand for the home.

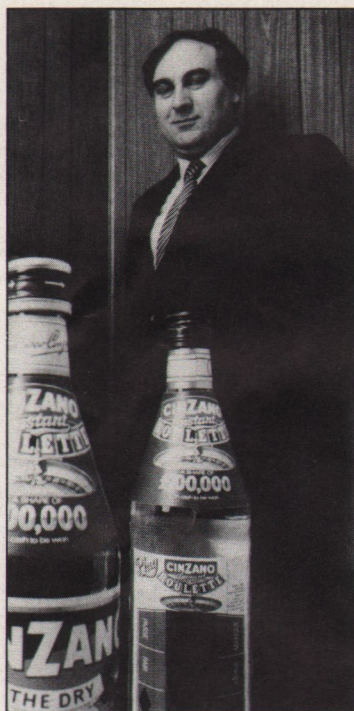
That wouldn't be the case if we offered bubblegum-type picture cards.

"The theme of each series often enables us to run other promotions which can be related to the picture cards."

Cigarette coupons are another example of the collection promotion technique. They were highly successful in the 1960s, when most cigarette brands were running coupon schemes. This tactic was abandoned by many tobacco companies in the early 1970s, when the advent of added-value kingsize brands prompted a major review of promotional strategies.

However, Gallaher's Kensitas brand has never stopped offering coupons. A new Kensitas gift catalogue is produced every two years and, while most coupons are redeemed by mail order, Kensitas even has its own gift showroom in Glasgow (Scotland is the brand's strongest market). "Kensitas has such a strong following—especially in Scotland—that we decided some time ago to retain the coupon scheme," explains Gallaher's Mike Jenkins.

The trading stamp—which still accounts for eight per cent of all promotional activity in the US—was another collection promotion



Donovan... stamp comeback?

technique which flourished in the early 1970s but was later badly hit by cut-price wars and inflation. It also looks like making a comeback in the UK.

In August 1983, the Association of British Travel Agents put its backing behind the launch of a new

company, Holiday Stamps, which offered consumers stamps with goods bought through selected outlets, including grocers, CTNs, off-licences and filling stations. These coupons could be redeemed against holidays booked through ABTA travel agents.

Last November, Don Marketing launched what it hopes will be the first national trading stamps operation since the demise of Green Shield.

According to chairman Donovan, the company has already signed up several hundred garages and grocery outlets and is talking to a major chain of butchers and "a large retail organisation". To avoid the heavy financial burden of setting up Green Shield-style national redemption centres, Don Marketing has tied in its trading stamps with Bonusplan's Bonusbond scheme.

"This gives us maximum flexibility at the redemption stage," he says.

"Consumers can save up the stamps by visiting a particular retailer, then, when their saver book is full, they can exchange it for Bonusbonds which can be redeemed at any Bonusbond outlet."

Donovan says the scheme is

being promoted through TV advertising in the South West. "We will extend the TV advertising as we build up outlets in other parts of the country. We aim to have a network of 1,000 sites by the summer and our long-term objective is to establish a new national operation for trading stamps."

He adds: "Inflation was one of the biggest problems facing trading stamps companies, but that now appears to be under control. We feel the climate is right again for trading stamps."

Sales promotion specialists believe that the rapid development of new technology—such as videotex and Viewdata—is likely to have a significant impact on the way in which "old" promotions are revamped and re-used.

For example, BLP director Roy Clouter points to a recent retail promotion in which a treasure hunt was organised to promote Prestel TV sets: "Customers were invited to use a Prestel terminal inside the store to pick out the 'square' in which the treasure was buried," he says.

"It was an electronic version of a hole-punch card competition, which in turn was an updated version of the old spot-the-ball technique." ■

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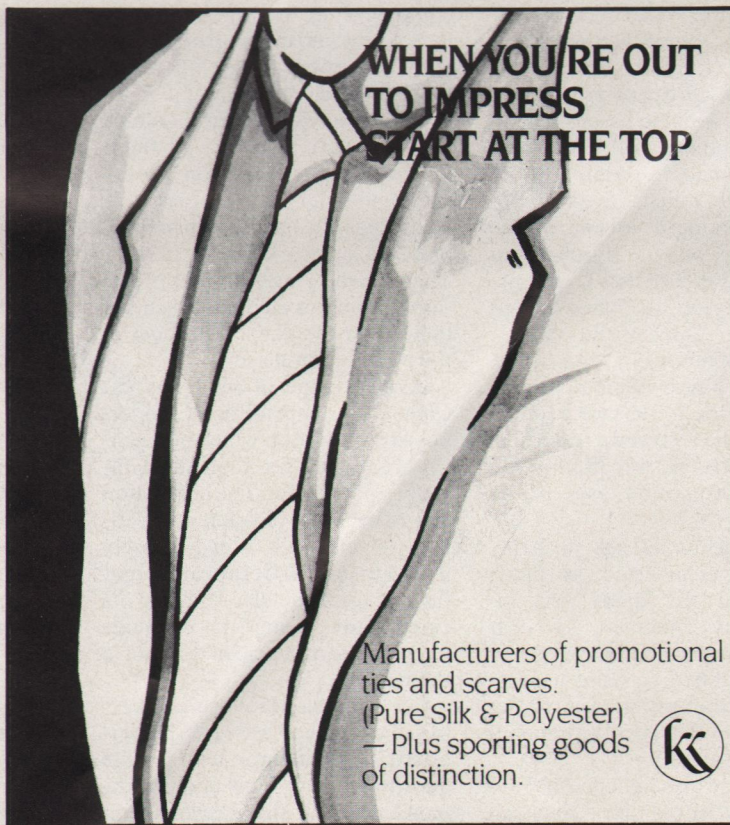
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