
Body Language

09

This chapter features case stories for Visa and Nike. The common ground for these stories is their ability to understand that brands do not always need to explain things specifically, but can communicate by having the right body language. Both brands avoid the hard sell and instead “walk the talk” in a way that is authentic, differentiating, and clearly communicates the brands’ benefits.



Visa Goes with the Flow

By 2008, Saatchi & Saatchi and Visa had been working together in Europe for more than a decade, but the client-agency relationship was at a crossroads.

That was because Visa's business was changing fundamentally. Advances in digital information technology meant that Visa Europe—a joint venture of 3,400 banks across 32 European countries—was evolving from a straightforward credit-based payment platform into a technology and innovation company. Advances like tapping or waving your card over a reader, or just using your mobile phone to make payments, which are almost second nature to many consumers now, were just starting to be rolled out in the late 2000s.

As technology and customer behaviors changed simultaneously, growth for Visa became focused on making everyday purchases easier and more seamless, with a new emphasis on debit cards and smaller Euro amounts. Therefore, a key communications goal was to convince people that Visa was the best way to pay for little things too. The marketing team would be judged not just on the total number of cards issued, but on the total number of transactions and the average amount spent on each card.

Visa's competitors were starting to change too. Digital players like PayPal and Google were now becoming just as important as old nemeses like Mastercard and American Express. Visa needed to find new solutions to this evolving scenario. They needed more marketing consistency and increased levels of customer engagement. Their messages had been fragmented. Visa was looking for a single, powerful idea that would lead to a consistent campaign for years to come (as their competitor Mastercard had with their "Priceless" campaign). It was so important to Visa that they had already decided to achieve it, with or without Saatchi & Saatchi.

Visa Europe's chief marketing officer, Mariano Dima, and Saatchi & Saatchi Europe's CEO, Robert Senior, took the opportunity to forge a partnership that would both solve the business problem and rekindle the client-agency relationship. They began by co-chairing meetings with the key players from both the client and the agency. Their first job was to define the unique benefit that Visa's superior technology brought to consumers in this new age.

That idea became the campaign theme,

“Life flows better with Visa.”

“Flow”

Like most great ideas, the solution for Visa was a series of iterations. It started with a positioning statement: “Visa is better money for a better way of life.” According to Dima, “We interviewed consumers, retailers, and members. They had a clear and simple focus: our money was quicker and more secure, making their lives better. This was our brand’s essence.” The positioning was then linked to a clear benefit statement: “Visa helps simplify your life.”

Defining the benefit was only half the battle. Great advertising finds a way to articulate the benefit and execute it in a way that is truly unforgettable.

In one of the client-agency team meetings, the group kept trying to find a more compelling way to define the benefit, when the creative director said, “Isn’t it all about flow?” Dima and Senior said in unison, “That’s it!” They knew instinctively it was a great organizing idea: an idea that works as a linchpin for a variety of integrated marketing communications.

“Flow” really captured what Visa was trying to say. It also helped avoid the common marketing tendency (some would say disease) of becoming overly self-important and self-indulgent. The people working on any product think about it 24 hours a day. They sometimes lose perspective, and become unable to see clearly how the product fits into people’s day-to-day lives. Consumers don’t think a lot about their credit or debit cards. It is not a pillar of their life. In fact, people usually think about them only when something goes wrong with a transaction. They are, however, enablers. “Life Flows Better with Visa” made it clear that Visa knew it was not the most important thing in people’s lives, but did its bit to make every day a little smoother. Visa made your life flow better because it was faster, accepted in more places, and highly secure.

Flow was potentially a big idea, yet it needed to be executed with simplicity, so people would get what it was about without too much explanation. It also needed to be executed with wit and charm, so the advertising, like the line, would avoid self-indulgence. The campaign’s first execution appeared in 2008 on television. It would run in 30 languages across Europe. Oh, and it featured a naked man!



“Running Man”
turns a few heads

The naked man ad was a provocative idea. When it was presented internally at Saatchi & Saatchi, along with a number of other ideas, Senior remembered, “We almost started talking ourselves out of it.” When he asked Saatchi London’s executive creative director, Kate Stanners, which ad she wanted to recommend, she showed no hesitation. She felt the executional idea hit the “spiritual brief.” Unlike a strategic brief or creative strategy, which represent flows of logic, she felt this idea captured the gestalt of the brand and what it was trying to say about Visa and its products.

“Running (Naked) Man”

The spot began with a man—naked save for a pair of socks on his feet and holding a Visa debit card in his hand—running in the desert. As he runs out of the desert into rural towns, he passes shops where he is able to get, in succession, some fast food, a pair of overalls to cover himself, and a map. As he gets nearer the city, he is able to get a scooter. Once in the city, he gets a shave, a new suit, and a ring in a jewelry shop. All the while, he never stops running.

He then runs up the steps of a beautiful church and down the aisle, where his bride is waiting. As he goes down the aisle, he shoots a look at his friends, who are smirking. It is now obvious that they left him in the desert naked as part of a bachelor party prank. In the end, the newlyweds are together in an idyllic shot and all is well with the world thanks to Visa’s debit card.

The product was at the center of the story, enabling the hero to achieve everything he wanted to do. Stanners noted that the naked man idea was “the best possible demonstration of not needing anything but your Visa card to get your life going.”

“Running Man” was an instant hit. The research results for the ad were outstanding. It was a terrific kick-off to a series of memorable ads that are still running to this day, which all share a common executional platform. They are all lighthearted, purposeful journeys that help explain how Visa improves the flow of your daily life.



Bill Shannon shows off his unique moves on crutches

The next journey happened in 2009. The idea had its roots in the Saatchi & Saatchi New Directors' Showcase, which is a yearly staple at the Cannes Lions Festival. The Directors' Showcase is a popular attraction that is very useful to agency creatives and producers looking for new talent. It is the second-most attended event at Cannes each year, next to the festival itself. One of the most interesting films in the showcase that year was a music video for hip-hop producer and musician RJD2 featuring interpretive dance artist Bill Shannon. Shannon, known affectionately as "CrutchMaster" in dance circles, was born with a degenerative hip condition yet he performs highly choreographed dance maneuvers on his specially made crutches. The result is mesmerizing. His movements glide effortlessly and are a joy to watch. There is not a hint of disability, but rather a feeling that his crutches enable him to do amazing things others cannot do.

It did not take long for Saatchi to connect these smooth-flowing movements and Visa's next journey. In the commercial that resulted, viewers saw Shannon's incredible dexterity as he glided down steps and a bannister, into shops and through crowded city streets with his feet never seeming to touch the ground. To the newly initiated, watching the commercial was akin to seeing Michael Jackson's first "moonwalk." As in the "Running Man" ad, Shannon's trip was purposeful. Along his way, he bought a hat, a jacket, and finally a skateboard. Watching him coast through the crowd at the end of the commercial with skateboard and crutches in balletic synchronization provided the commercial's climax, and a perfect canvas for the "Life Flows Better with Visa" tag line. This ad, perhaps more than any other, made clear that Visa "removes obstacles" along the way, every day.

From couch potato to road runner; and
from road runner to World Cup champion



The job for 2010 was a little different. The team needed to develop a new journey consistent with the campaign, but also needed to announce Visa's sponsorship of the 2010 World Cup. In doing so, the 2010 commercial would communicate not only that your life flowed better, but that your life could also get better.

The commercial started with an overweight couch potato watching a football match. He gets so excited when his team scores that he jumps up, grabs his Visa card and starts running. He runs through England, through Europe, through Sub-Saharan Africa and all the way down to South Africa, where the 2010 World Cup is taking place. As in other commercials, he is buying what he needs along the way without breaking stride. In a twist, as he keeps running, he gets thinner and fitter. He gets so fit in fact, that he runs into the World Cup stadium, on to the field and scores a winning goal. He assumes the same celebration dance he did in the beginning, but this time as a champion. The commercial ends with the now familiar "Life Flows Better with Visa" line.

On a humorous inside note, although there was more than one actor used to differentiate the beginning (couch potato) from the end (soccer star), the first actor did so much running during production and rehearsals that he was actually losing weight too fast for some of his scenes.

The TV commercial was part of a fully integrated campaign including cinema, television, online consumer promotions (where, among other things, people could win actual tickets to the World Cup), and other online engagement initiatives.

2012 London Olympics

The World Cup campaign would be a warm-up for Visa's biggest promotional campaign opportunity: the 2012 Summer Olympics in London. As a major Olympic sponsor, and with the Olympics being hosted in Europe, Visa was expected to do something special.

By 2012, consumers' acceptance of both contact-less and mobile payments was gaining traction, and Visa's delivery of both products was excellent. This meant that the speed of transactions had never been faster. In fact, many transactions could be done in as little as half of a second. The strategic goal for Visa and Saatchi for 2012 was to use the Olympics to underscore both "flow" and "speed."

**Flow
better
= flow
faster**

Speed and the Summer Olympics were a natural fit. So, Visa thought,

“What better way to extend the running man idea than by associating the brand with the fastest man in the world: Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt?”

The commercial for the Olympics featured Bolt arriving at the airport. His luggage is lost. He eyes another man at the airport, whose luggage is also lost, and the two inexplicably race from the airport all the way through London.

The two use their Visa cards to get around and to get things they need. (Here we see the first overt use of the Visa cellphone application to make a payment.) In Bolt's case, he buys a running outfit. In the other man's case, he buys a green jacket. Bolt runs into the stadium; the other man gets there by boat. Then we realize why they are racing each other. As Bolt sets up in the starting blocks for his race, we see that the other man is the starter, who holds up his pistol to start the race.

The story behind the commercial is as entertaining as the commercial itself. The agency team had a total of 16 hours with Usain Bolt. In that time—which is the typical duration of one commercial shooting day—they needed to get all of their film footage and interviews for TV, print, point-of-sale, PR, digital applications, and even messages to bank CEOs. The team planned their time with Bolt down to 30-second increments.

Bolt insisted on doing his own stunts, like jumping over a luggage cart. Every time he did, the production team's collective hearts were in their mouths. At one point, he began to run on a treadmill in front of a green screen, so the background could be superimposed later. After a few seconds of running, he stopped and started to grab his leg, seemingly in pain. Everybody froze. Had they just hurt the world's fastest man? Had their big idea turned into a disaster? Had they just ruined the Olympics for the whole world? After a few more seconds, they realized he had just tripped. He smiled and said he was fine. The shooting commenced. Whew!



The campaign was a huge success. Usain Bolt became one of the greatest performers and personalities at the Summer Games. Among his other achievements, he set a new Olympic record for the 100 meter run to go with his existing world record, reinforcing his claim as "World's Fastest Man." He was also by far the most flamboyant athlete at the games. He was never too shy to mug in front of the camera, do a little dance, or praise his own performance.

The association with Bolt made a lot of sense, but there was risk involved. He was not British or even European. Before the Olympics, only true athletics fans knew who he was. The average person on the street might not know him at all, and would only get the full impact of the campaign if he did something spectacular at the Games. He did, and the rest is history.

Mariano Dima summarized the campaign as,

“A fun and impactful way to drive customer engagement with the brand.”

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He believes it “showed how Visa can help people overcome barriers and get one step closer to making their dreams a reality, whatever they may be.” He also noted that even calling it a “campaign” is probably a mistake: “It is not a campaign, it is the brand itself. ‘Life Flows Better’ is not just about communications, it informs our product development. It focuses us on doing things to simplify our consumers’ lives, not just develop something for technology’s sake.” Like the Ritz-Carlton case we saw earlier in the book, the advertising idea has become an operational strategy. “It is the cornerstone of our business,” according to Dima.

Business Flows Better for Visa

The results of the “Flow” campaign have been long-term and sustained. In almost five years since the campaign began, the amount of money spent on Visa across Europe has grown from €1 in every €10 to €1 in every €8. In the UK, a staggering €1 in every €3 is now enabled by Visa.

The brand’s level of engagement with consumers is at an all-time high. After the Usain Bolt Olympics campaign, Visa’s measure of engagement was above the norm in all measured countries, ranging from +29% in Germany to +52% in Italy to +66% in the UK.

Visa measures its ad impact and cut-through by regularly comparing their ads to 1,500 other ads in consumer testing. The campaign has consistently scored in the top 25%, and its most recent ads have scored in the top 5%. The brand has grown its measured equity every year for the last five years, consistently increasing its gap with competitors. In fact, on all soft and hard measures of brand health, Visa has increased its strength steadily since “Life Flows Better” began in 2008.

In terms of hard business results, Visa Europe’s annual report shows that since 2008 the point of sale expenditure on Visa cards has increased by 27%, and in the same time period, total number of cards has increased 21%. The total number of transactions using Visa cards has increased a whopping 35%. That’s the exact sort of card growth and increase in small transactions Visa was hoping for way back in 2008.

A Final Thought

Kate Stanners’ reflections on the campaign’s development are instructional for anyone trying to create a Lovemark. She said, “You can put words on a page or in a strategy, but a creative leap needs to happen for something to become great. Our creative leap for Visa was when we defined ‘flow’ not as a word, but as a visual idea with its own body language.”



***Emotions speak louder than words.
Many Lovemarks create that emotional
connection by having a clear and confident
body language. It is not always what they
say, but how they say it.***

NIKE CASE STORY

Nike Launches a Shirt and Relaunches a Team Love Affair

What is more patriotic and evocative than a country's flag? In the case of Brazil, the answer is easy, the country's national football (soccer) shirt. It is not an exaggeration to say that Brazilians spend much of their childhood in it.

As America focuses on the Super Bowl as the apex of American sporting culture, the rest of the world focuses on the World Cup. Nowhere is that focus more pronounced than in Brazil, a perennial tournament favorite, the only country to win five World Cups, and the host of the next World Cup in 2014. And for no brand is it more important than for Nike, the worldwide leader in football apparel and the brand entrusted to design and produce the Brazilian team jersey for the World Cup.

Nike introduced the new team jersey in 2012. It was a marvel of clothing engineering, featuring the best textile technology available in sports, such as recycled polyester and laser-cut fabric for better ventilation. Yet this was more than a jersey launch: it was the official kick-off for building a road to World Cup 2014.

There was a big problem, however. Fans' relationship with the team was in crisis. The team had made some debatable player selections, and it was holding its worst world ranking in 18 years. This is almost a sin in a country used to being consistently ranked in the top three globally, and which was for many years the undisputed number one. Criticism had gone beyond the field and was pointed at the team's coach, its directors, and even its uniform. The biggest issue, however, was not criticism, but apathy. Young fans were starting to become distant and showed a certain disregard towards their country's team. It was no longer a case of what the team could do for Nike, but what Nike could do for the team.

Nike and their agency, F/Nazca Saatchi & Saatchi, were very clear on their target audience: 16–19 year-olds who are completely football obsessed. They are attending school, and they play football practically every day, be it on the field, on the street, or in the hallways. Their love of football is not a passing craze: it is a way of life.



Brazilian teenagers are obsessed with playing football

Nike and Saatchi dove into Xploring with a passion. In a country with continental dimensions, they set out on a nine-month journey talking in depth to hundreds of teenagers in order to analyze different regional perceptions. The goal was to find out what they had in common.

They found that football-obsessed teens considered themselves natural-born players; they just have not been discovered yet. They would put themselves in the starting line-up of any team. They also had a common dream: to play a World Cup wearing a Brazilian jersey. Using exploratory research tools to extract information that the teens had a hard time verbalizing, it became clear that the current Brazilian team was not a hot topic. But there was a big insight: while older Brazilians were filled with frustration and openly critical, these younger Brazilians, despite feeling distant from the team, still kept the dream alive. It was their dream. Their unspoken dream.

The planning group identified three major broken links in the national team's relationship with teens. First, there was a physical break. Over the past three years, the team played 47 games, only seven of which were in Brazil. Many of the matches in Europe took place at times during the day when the teens were at school or work. Second, there was a lack of recognizable faces.

Many of the players on the current team left the country at young ages to join teams abroad. They had not established a connection with young fans. Third was the victory break. It had been 10 years since Brazil had won a World Cup. Many of the teens did not have any first-hand memory of Brazil as champions of the world.

The players had their own issues. There was a tremendous weight on them to reverse recent fortunes and to reestablish Brazil's rightful place. This led to a lot of unexpressed apprehension.

Nike's goal was to use their unparalleled understanding of both the young fans and the players to bring the sides together. No company in the world has had a more intimate relationship with both world-class athletes and young sporting consumers. The symbol of that togetherness would be Nike's new national team shirt. In effect, Nike would create a friendship process where the target buyer could meet, connect with, and be captivated by a new friend, the Brazilian national team.

Three Steps to Success

Step one was the introduction. To make sure that football-obsessed teens would get to know the team and its players more intimately, Nike stores reproduced the team's changing rooms inside the stores. People could rummage through each player's personal locker, getting to know more about their history and the great opponents they had faced in order to get called up to the national team.

Step two was the interaction. On February 23, 2012, the day the Brazilian team set out for its first game of the season in Bosnia, the team's hottest star, Neymar, seemed to have inadvertently put his phone number on one of his tweets to another team player, Ganzo. The message was re-tweeted by other famous Brazilians, including mixed-martial-arts fighter Anderson Silva, and samba singer Thiaguinho. It did not take long for the number to be picked up and leaked all across Twitter, Facebook, and blogs. It was even picked up by newspapers and online news sites. As expected, curiosity got the best of teens and Neymar's phone starting ringing off the hook.



Nike set up player lockers in their stores so fans could get to know the team better

When people called the line, they got a personal message from Neymar laughing about his phone number slip up, and asking them to leave a message of support for the team. A day later, the cover was lifted on the campaign on Nike's digital channels and on Neymar's Twitter page, where further messages of support could be recorded. The Brazilian national team was now a hot topic in the press, online, and on football pitches throughout Brazil.

Step three was captivation. On the day of the Brazil-Bosnia match, every person who had left a message of support received a surprise call a few hours before the game with a recorded thank you message from Neymar, talking as if from the locker room right before the game. Immediately after the call they were sent an SMS text message with a link to the site featuring a new Nike commercial introducing the new national team shirt. The commercial showed a match between Brazil and Brazil, where the players played against themselves with one team wearing the new home uniform, and one wearing the new away uniform.

The commercial began with the match announcer saying that, "Brazil has a lot to prove," and ended with the line, "Defeat your own shadow." This worked on many levels. Unlike other countries, which would have to play their way into the World Cup, Brazil, as host country, would qualify automatically. Combined with Brazil's unparalleled heritage, this had people saying that the players on this team "had not won anything yet." As the Saatchi-Nike team found out from talking to everyday Brazilians, the country's biggest hurdle to World Cup success in 2014 would be Brazil itself. It would need to overcome the shadow of its past, undermine the creeping apathy, and re-engage young football-obsessed Brazilians, with the new jersey as the symbol of the future.

A shot from the television commercial featuring Brazil vs. Brazil



Fans Re-engaged

Re-engage them it did. In just five days, Nike had over 47,000 mobile interactions with football-obsessed teens. Within 15 days, Nike increased its Facebook fan base by 15% with the Brazilian team as the key topic. The jersey launch commercial, after only a week, became the most watched video in the history of Nike Football Brazil's channel, and took Nike's Brand Channel to first place among brands in Brazil. After just two weeks, it had 4.6 million views and was among the most watched videos in Nike's global history.

The cherry on top was that Brazilian fans and Brazilian players had rediscovered their love for each other. They were connected on the road to 2014 and working together to get Brazil's sixth World Cup title.

Let's not forget that the business goal of the campaign was to launch and sell a new shirt. Shirt sales jumped significantly versus the previous year. Guilherme Glezer, head of brand connections at Nike, attributed success to "total consumer engagement on digital platforms, an epic video, and an intelligent media buy," which delivered "one of the greatest experiences in Brazilian advertising in the last few years."



At its best, Lovemarks thinking helps companies sell products, while touching the hearts of the people it sells them to. Nike's new shirt campaign is a perfect example. Brazil's national shirt now has a chance to be a Lovemark for a whole new generation.
