

How Avis's "We Try Harder" Campaign Almost Got Killed by the CEO's Wife!



Proof that your biggest weakness can become your greatest advantage.

"In my opinion, 'We Try Harder' is the greatest positioning line ever written because it transformed a weakness into a competitive advantage."

It doubled market share within four years and became one of the most successful repositioning campaigns in US advertising history.

Most brands spend fortunes trying to hide their weakness. Avis built a billion-dollar advantage by admitting their Emotional Truth™: People Admire Extra Effort from an Underdog.”

Avis's new CEO challenged the agency to develop a powerful positioning line. **We presented the “We Try Harder” campaign and CEO Townsend loved it.**



Bernbach fought to save the campaign

Then we got the call. **Avis's CEO called and told Bill we had to kill the campaign...** and show him our "second best" idea.

Townsend's wife hated the campaign. She insisted that he kill the campaign because, **"Avis can never admit it's No. 2."**

Bill's response was, **"That's unfortunate. We're going to be forced to resign the account before we even launch the first campaign.**

This is one of the best campaigns we've ever created."

**Bill convinced Townsend to "at least test it in a small market."
The rest is history.**

Years later, Avis became the world's largest rental car company.

When it finally reached No. 1, it celebrated with a billboard that read,

"We're No. 1 Because We Try Harder."

The Lessons Learned

**If there's a "pink elephant" in the room...
don't ignore it.**

Own it. Reframe it. Turn it into an advantage.

Advertising's highest purpose isn't writing clever copy.

**It's discovering the brand's Emotional Truth which
others have missed.**

**That's always been the part of marketing I love
most.**

**Contact me to learn more about the first step
behind your next great campaign.**

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