

# TM

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## **Product branding goes back in time As life gets more complex, advertisers are targeting your fond memories from simpler times**

By Susan Heinrich

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Henry Evans, vice-president of marketing with PanGeo Health Brands of Mississauga, On. "Any Baby Boomer [or older generation] has a distant recollection of what Wampole was.

Consumers are bombarded with products pitched as the latest and greatest thing, but brands from days gone by, even in cases where they were long dead and buried, are often even more appealing, say the companies choosing to resurrect them.

For PanGeo Health Brands, the opportunity to mine the equity that remained in the line of products from a Canadian pharmaceutical company called Wampole -- including a Cod Liver Oil that dated back to 1893 -- was viewed as a valuable business opportunity. In 2000, PanGeo Pharma purchased Wampole and with it a long history of products for 'what ails you.'

"For us it made a lot more sense to revive a brand with a name and feeling than to start from zero and concoct something," said Henry Evans, vice-president of marketing with PanGeo Health Brands of Mississauga, On. "Any Baby Boomer [or older generation] has a distant recollection of what Wampole was. And it was always a positive recollection. The only negative was that Wampole allowed itself to disintegrate over the last few years."

Despite its slow demise, consumer research showed a recognition of the Wampole name among older consumers and a belief it manufactured quality tonics and liquids, Mr. Evans said. That brand equity formed the basis for the launch last month of 65 new products under the Wampole brand.



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Ted Matthews, founder of Brand Coach, a Toronto marketing consultant firm said relaunching a brand gives you a head start against a new competitor because even if no one remembers it, an old brand comes with a history you can use in your marketing.

"In this day and age, it's hard to come up with a new product. If you mine the equity of an old one, the product is already created, the packaging is already done, and the messaging is already done ... [and often] you have mind-share with a certain part of the population," he said.

Plymouth Gin, which has a 200-year history in Britain, was recently relaunched under new owners in Canada. The brand had enjoyed the position of the most popular brand of premium gin in Britain for 150 years. But after being hit by a tough period during the Second World War, it was left to languish. Previous owner Allied Distilleries, which also owned Beefeater Gin, chose to focus on promoting the latter rather than Plymouth.

"By the mid-'90s it was virtually dead as a brand," said Nick Blacknell, managing director of Plymouth Gin in London, England.

A small group of investors purchased Plymouth from Allied in 1996, and relaunched it in 1998.

"They could see beyond the balance sheet and saw a fantastic old brand with a great history that was also great quality," Mr. Blacknell said.

That story has taken it a long way. Four years later it has grown from virtually nothing to No. 1 in sales among premium gin brands in the U.K.

"The interesting thing is we never advertised, it was all word of mouth," said Mr. Blacknell.



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That success inspired Plymouth to relaunch in such other markets as Canada and New Zealand, where it was a favourite among past generations.

Mr. Blacknell attributes its success in part to a growing appeal that products with a long history hold for a younger generation: witness the recent success of such brands as Burberry among the young and fashionable.

"I definitely get the sense, certainly in the U.K., there is more of a respect for history. At the moment, people worldwide are buying into classic brands. Truthfully, we've been lucky."

Church & Dwight Canada faced a slightly different challenge with its Gravol brand. While the nausea medication had a very long history in Canada, the company wanted to grow sales.

The question for Tim Herbert, director of client service with Allard-Johnson, a Toronto advertising agency that managed the project, was how to reinvigorate an old brand that was already a household name without taking away from the existing perception of what Gravol was.

The answer was an advertising campaign which suggested using Gravol for children who were not just nauseous, but vomiting.

"As with a lot of established brands, people get into usage patterns," said Mr. Herbert. "People were using it to treat nausea but not vomiting."

Market share for Gravol jumped by about 20% in Manitoba and Saskatchewan and preliminary figures for other markets are very positive as well.

The success of Sleeman Breweries of Guelph-On. is testament to the idea that a long history holds a unique appeal. The company, which launched its premium beer in 1988, is now the No. 1 selling craft beer in Canada.

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Sleeman, which ceased operations for some 50 years before being reborn, has been a success because it has a great story to tell, said Mr. Matthews, who has worked as a consultant to the company. "Sleeman has built a brand with two wonderful multi-layered brand stories. And to do it, with a relatively small amount of funds is amazing. They are just doing it with tremendous authenticity."

The company has built its marketing around the brand's long history. The Sleeman family began brewing beer in Guelph, On., in the mid-1800s but the original Sleeman Brewing & Malting Company ceased operations in 1933. John W. Sleeman, great-great-grandson of the original brewmaster resumed operations in 1988, using the original recipes that date back more than 100 years.

Paul Brennan, director of marketing with Sleeman Breweries, believes brands with a history are becoming increasingly appealing.

"My theory is as life continues to get more complex -- and life is more complex today than 10 years ago -- one of the things that appeals is something about the values of 1934. There's a really strong emotive response about the idea of making beer in copper kettles ... People connected to it: It's a simpler product from a simpler time."

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