

# Ep108 - Awarded Campaigns: How Procell reframed the true cost of cheap batteries to win B2B buyers

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** [00:00:00] Welcome back to Behavioral Science for Brands, a podcast where we bridge the gap between academics and practical marketing. Every week we sit down and go deep behind the science that powers great marketing today. I'm MichaelAaron Flicker.

**Richard Shotton:** And I'm Richard Shotton.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** And today we're continuing our mini series where we explore effective campaigns.

Today we wear your battery charger by Procell. Let's get into it. So Richard, for anyone who doesn't know the brand Pro Sell, it's Duracell's brand for trade buyers, and today we've selected a B2B campaign that you and I learned about and fell in love with because of how creative it is and how smart they take an insight and really look to turn it on its end.

So in this B2B campaign, the goal was to drive [00:01:00] sales and share of its US market for supplying batteries to companies that have more than a thousand employees. So if Duracell is the consumer brand. Pro sell is the corporate enterprise brand, and the problem that they were trying to solve was a tricky one.

Procurement departments often default to buying the cheapest batteries of all of their things they need to choose from, and they're focusing on purchase price rather than what Procel wanted to highlight, which was the hidden expense of Repla repeatedly replacing. Batteries. And so the insight was that the real cost isn't the price of the battery alone, but rather the price of the battery, plus the cost of the interruptions and labor when a device stops working.

And so to bring this to life, the UK arm of VML and [00:02:00] Duracell created. A humorous character. They call him the full-time battery changer to personify wasted labor. And Richard, not all of the effective campaigns and work that we're featuring in this miniseries have such an easy to reference commercial. So we thought, let's play the 32nd spot.

If you're watching this. Podcast over video. You'll get to see in here if you're just listening at home, the audio does more than enough of the work for you to get a flavor for the campaign. Then let's come back and talk a little bit about what they were doing here and what else they did in the campaign.

**Procell Ad:** Great news boss.

We could save money. If we switch to long lasting pro cell batteries, then we won't have to pay for a full-time battery changer.

**Procell Ad Manager:** Back up. We pay for a full-time battery changer.  
[00:03:00]

**Procell Ad:** We do ma'am and his assistant

**Procell Battery changer:** double A,

**Procell Ad:** I believe we have for 25 years.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** The spot ends with the lined pro cell. Replace less, save more. Richard, just a funny spot in and of itself, right?

**Richard Shotton:** Yeah, absolutely. There's a big difference between having a great idea, identifying a brilliant psychological PR principle and then executing on it. And I think this is both a brilliant insight, but also a brilliant piece of craft.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** And you know what, to me, one of the things that gets so great in the creative exchange of the back and forth of the executive and the manager that the executive's talking to is, you know that there's wasted costs within the system. You know that like [00:04:00] when you hear these ideas for how you're gonna beat out.

Expense without losing anything of value. And then you get to these moments where you're like, how did we be how could we have done this for 25 years? Of course there's a battery changer and an assistant to the battery changer, and you cut to that. That those two guys one on the ladder, it's just a ma.

It's just got a lot of humor because I think it strikes a lot of chords of human truth there's, that happens in companies.

**Richard Shotton:** A a. Absolutely. And it's an extreme of a, it's ex an extreme version of the fact that there are no boring categories. There are just boring ads. This is a brilliant example of someone taking what a first glance would look like.

Very dry brief and showing even in the world of batteries that you can make this humorous. So I think they're well done to the agency.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** And a plus one to that because even in the world of B2B where the argument is how rational the decision [00:05:00] making ought to be we shave a quarter of a cent off each bulk purchase and it saves millions of dollars.

Actually there's something very humorous in emotional that can cut through and we're gonna talk more about that later. But that makes a big difference.

**Richard Shotton:** Ab, absolutely. It can sometimes feel like. Humor is just a nice to have, and it's there for awards and things, but actually it is a very powerful way of communicating.

It gets attention and crucially, it changes people's impression of the brand across a whole variety of metrics.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** So they lead with this spot as the distillation of the message, but beyond the spot, they used a number of different tactics to reach their target audience. Procurement. Departments one, they sent this playful battery changer figurine.

These the, these little mo [00:06:00] models of the gentleman in the spot. And they sent those and fake cheap battery packs to procurement teams to illustrate how silly it is to employ someone who spends all day swapping dead batteries. So they made a joke out of it. They had a. Physical touchpoint. They also ran paid search ads so that anyone Googling the term false economy saw a pro sales message above the dictionary definition, reinforcing the idea that buying cheap data batteries is a false savings.

And to me, they tie it all together. With this replace less, save more, they're reframing a purchase decision around the hidden cost rather than just a unit price.

**Richard Shotton:** Yeah. Yeah, it, I think that is the big psychological insight, the power of reframing, because there is a tendency amongst decision makers,

whether it's a consumer or a professional, to focus solely on the information in front of them. [00:07:00]

Actually what people should do is draw on all the information that is relevant to a decision, but that's not what happens. People are steered by what is easy to think about and unfortunately it's the cost of something. The pounds or the dollars you have to pay that most people gravitate towards do because it's easy to quantify.

What they forget about is all those other metrics. So there's some amazing studies here. Like one of the real classics of the area is from Irvin Levin. So it's a 1988 study done when he was at the University of Iowa. And he cooks up a batch of what in Britain we would call MIT beef, but you would call ground beef.

I think he cooks up a batch of this food and then he. Shows it to people and just before they're gonna we it. Some people, he says it's 25% fat. Other [00:08:00] people, he says it's 75% lean. Now those statistics, those numbers are essentially the same thing. Now, a mathematician would say it's exactly the same thing. A psychologist would say you're emphasizing different bits of the product.

If you talk about 25% fat, you're emphasizing that it's high fats can be maybe greasy. If you talk about it being 75% lean by emphasizing the leanness, you are drawing attention away from that. Now the interesting bit of the study is after Levin has given people this preamble, he asks them to say, what kind of quality do you think this beef is?

How lean do you think it'll be? How greasy do you think it'll be? And he sees this very clear pattern. If people have been told it's 75% lean, they expect it to be less greasy to the order of 17%. They expect it to be leaner. They rate it 31% leaner and [00:09:00] they rate the quality at 19% higher. Now remember, this is exactly the same beef.

It looks exactly the same. The statistic to all logical purposes is giving you the same number. But when it's talked about 75% lean, when it's the leanness that, that he emphasizes. Rather than 25% fat, you get these very different results. That's the power of reframing. What you as a communicator draw attention to will affect people's interpretation of the events.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** It to me, it's such an empowering concept because so often we talk about how advertising is a weak force. You put something into market, people are distracted, they're not very receptive, they're suspicious of

your message. There's a lot of reasons to believe that what you say is only gonna have a light effect on the buyer.

But we own the frame. We own how we get compared to, because it's our communication. [00:10:00] And I think that's easy to allow other influences to narrow that too much. We get to present any argument we want in our marketing message. We get to set up any frame that we believe will be compelling, and this study really shows that just choosing.

Is it what percent lean it is or what percent fat it is can dramatically change the experience of what you taste.

**Richard Shotton:** There's this amazing phrase from Daniel Carne wti. So it was written as W-Y-S-I-A-T-I, and it stands for what is all there is, and it does what it says on the tin, essentially if you are given.

A certain frame if you are posed some data in a particular way, what most people do is just follow that path. They don't recut the numbers or the argument all the different ways they could. So [00:11:00] absolutely, how you present something is very important.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** Not only is this our analysis, we have a quote from Steve Pilsner, global brand director at Duracell, the parent company of Procell, who says, this new campaign aims to cut through a cluttered media landscape with an idea that is different, unexpected and will get people talking. He has the strategy of the campaign is to.

Do something unexpected. And I love that he says with an idea, this is a bigger than any one ad execution. I love that he naturally goes to, this is a big idea for pro sell it. It's such a lovely way to think about how you can communicate a big idea this way.

**Richard Shotton:** Yes. 'cause he begins by saying it's unexpected and that's definitely true.

Most. B2B advertising, it's very dry, very rational, very [00:12:00] logical. So first of all, by being unexpected, by taking this humorous approach it's far more likely to be noticed. We've talked about it often. There's an idea called the von Rests off effect, a very old idea in psychology. Essentially humans are hardwired to notice what's different.

So by breaking those category conventions, by behaving unexpectedly, he gets. For his brand, this notability. But of course, that's just the first task of a bit of communication. It's no good. It's very important to be noticed, but it's no good if you send off the wrong message. But the great thing is everything is of value.

This big idea that you need to switch from cost to buy. Which will benefit the cheap and cheerful players in the market to cost a replace, which shifts the understanding or the thinking to matters of quality and will benefit a premium player like pro sale. So it's unexpectedness with a purpose, with an idea.[00:13:00]

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** Richard, when we said we wanted to make this mini series about effectiveness and effective work, we set a pretty high standard for ourselves. We didn't want to just look at work we saw in market and thought was using a behavioral science insight. We said, where can we go to find the. Work and the effect it had on the business.

So this Battery Changer campaign from Procell, we sourced from the IPA, which is the Institute of Practitioners in advertising, a UK based group that really is in our minds, one of the global leaders in evaluating if the advertising itself drove the. Result in market. So they have econometricians on the judging board.

They require not just the creative but the sales data to be submitted. They require a lot of rigor in order to [00:14:00] claim whether or not it was the advertising that drove the results. And in this case, pro sales revenues were increased by 12% and their market share went up 10% because of this campaign. So we.

We not only want to bring you the behavioral science behind it, but we're, we want to teach everyone. There are global bodies, there are institutes that look at the effectiveness of advertising. This one, in this case, it's the IPA, and really great to see the business results that Duracell and Procel got because of this campaign.

**Richard Shotton:** Yeah I'd argue that the IP effectiveness awards that this did so well in got it. Silver, it is one of the real gold standards of effectiveness measurement that they really do probe and tease the data. You can't, as an c just cherry pick a few statistics, chuck them in and hope people are seduced by your glossy case study video.

They really do interrogate the [00:15:00] data. Yeah and a brilliant behavioral science insight. Creatively executed and then there's the results to, to support it. Success.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** So let's discuss other ways of practically applying this principle. And one of them is this idea of reframing a loss rather than a gain.

And this signpost to something we've spoken about in an earlier episode 22. Scot milk, and this is a classic idea that we that we wanted to bring up here. Classic example of loss aversion is this idea in Got milk that rather than promoting the benefits of milk, the campaign focused on the negative experience of running out what it was like to have dry cereal without milk, or a great plate of cookies, but then no [00:16:00] milk.

And that absence was so tragic in that moment. And so by reframing milk as something you'd regret. Not having the brand made its inaction feel you could feel if you didn't have the product at that moment.

**Richard Shotton:** Yeah, and I know most people listening do not work for milk processing boards.

And it's, in some respects it feels like a very different category, but the insight from Got milk can definitely be applied by listeners, whatever business area they're working in. So this idea of loss aversion, one of my favorite study supporting it. It's another coincidentally 1988 study.

It comes from Elliot Aronson, so brilliant psychologist at Harvard, and he goes around a neighborhood knocks on the door of these houses. There's 404 houses. This is a nice big sample, and he tries to sell people locked insulation. Now the twist in the experiment is sometimes he says to people that take out the loft [00:17:00] insulation and you'll save 75 cents a day.

So he's emphasizing what people will benefit what the gain will be if they take out the product. But other households, he has a slightly different story. He says, take out the loft insulation or you'll be wasting 75 cents a day. So same mathematical sum, 75 cents in both scenarios, but sometimes he emphasizes what you'll gain.

Other times what you'll lose if you don't take out the product. And what he finds is that roughly. People are 50% more likely to take out the loft insulation if he emphasizes what they could be missing out on, what they could be losing out

on. So he calls this idea loss aversion, and it's something that has been experimented on more broadly, but it's essentially the idea that.

The mathematically equivalent loss influences more than the flip side gain. And that's something I think yes, got milk does [00:18:00] it amazingly, but on really mundane levels you could apply it. Most brands when they are trying to do a discount or approach, they'll talk about come to us and you could save \$50 versus a competitor.

What Aaron would say, what the got milk example would say is reframe it. Don't talk about what you'll gain. Talk about if you don't switch to us, you will be losing \$50 by staying with the competitor that takes the same mathematical sum, puts a different frame on it and makes it more effective.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** You and I have talked about on the show in the past a study about how much money. Would you have to win to to give that to, to offset an equivalent loss? And tell me if I've got this right. If you get, if you're willing to give someone \$10, [00:19:00] they would have to have the equivalent of \$20 of loss help, help remind us of this

**Richard Shotton:** disconnect

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** it.

**Richard Shotton:** Yeah, ab, absolutely. So I always like talking about the Aaronson study 'cause it's in a very realistic setting. I think it's very simple. The study you are talking about, I think is the original 1973 study by Daniel Kahneman and Amos Ky, and it was essentially giving people bets on the flick of a coin.

So it's a 50 50 chance heads I win, tails I lose. And the economist tried to work out well. What would I need to be rewarded if I would lose \$5 on a tail coming up with a coin. And what roughly happens for the average person is the gain needs to be about twice the loss for them to once take part.

So

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** I have to be willing to get a \$10 in a win in order to be willing to pay \$5 as a loss.

**Richard Shotton:** [00:20:00] Yeah. Whereas mathematically. You should be, if it's \$5 in the cent, that is the upside versus \$5 on the downside, you should be

fighting my arm off to, to take that bet. 'cause you'll, you do it enough times and you'll win.

But that's not how people behave. Yeah, Kahneman Anderski did it in this slightly abstract setting of asking people about gambles. But it's exactly the same principle as Aaronson does it in the with the homeowners.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** And we brought this all up because Procell is trying to focus on the loss of replace less, save more.

We're bringing this up because it connects to this concept that they're bringing.

**Richard Shotton:** Yeah. And I think on a, on another level. What the Aronson Anderski experiments are showing are you will get different impacts from a situation depending on whether you emphasize. [00:21:00] The frame of gain or the frame of loss.

So I think it is another way of showing that people do not behave desiccated, calculating machines who draw in all the information that they should. They are very responsive to what you put in front of them. And if you put in front of them the losses from not adopting a behavior, they will behave differently.

And if you talk about the gains that they could achieve by adopting a behavior, so I think it's a another version of reframing, and it's a specific one. The probably most listeners could go through their communications and find an instance where they could switch the, gain, the savings that they're offering into losses if people don't switch.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** I love that idea. And we brought another study today that talks about the power of reframing [00:22:00] specifically around product outages, but this again talks about this power of language and changing the frame. Is that right?

**Richard Shotton:** That, that's actually right. It's again. People respond to the same situation very differently depending on the language that you use.

So we've talked about the leaven study, changing the labels of the ground beef. We've talked about the Aronson study, changing the gain or loss frame. The final study that that, that might be useful in this area is one boy Robert Peterson. So it's a bit more up to date than the others.

It's a 2019 study. It's by Robert Peterson at UT Austin, and for his study he gets 1,117 people and he gets them to go through a product journey. So they're on a e-commerce website and they are trying to buy an item and. Unfortunately, it's just not there. It's unable to be [00:23:00] purchased on, on, on this occasion.

And I'm picking my words carefully for a good reason. Yeah. And after people have finished their e-commerce journey, he asked them how irritated they are with the website. The twist in the experiment is some of the participants saw that item labeled, app stock. Some saw it labeled, unavailable, some saw it labeled, sold out.

Difference in irritation is very apparent. When you cut the data by the label, people saw, people are least annoyed if they see it as sold out. They're most annoyed if they see it as unavailable or outta stock. And we're talking about a kind of 11 to 15% variation in, in, in irritation levels. Now, the reason this happens according to Peterson is if you label a product sold out.

You are [00:24:00] drawing attention to the fact that it was very popular. Lots of people wanted it. You are harnessing social proof. To the benefit of your product. If you labeled a product though as out of stock or unavailable, what you are drawing attention to is the mistakes that you as a business have made.

You haven't got your logistics right, you haven't managed to get enough product into stock. You're drawing attention to your ineptitude. So Peterson says exactly the same situation will be interpreted very differently dependent on the language that people use. And again, I love this study 'cause it's such a simple thing.

Every business pretty much every business is gonna have an occasion where they just can't fulfill an order, doesn't cost you anything. You've got to label it a certain way. Why not label it in the way that works with human nature rather than against it?

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** And what I love about adding this to today's discussion is of course understanding that the power that you choose of the words can affect people's [00:25:00] reaction.

Something we talk about a lot and it's a great example, but we talked before about how do you signal a loss instead of a gain. How to hear, do you signal certain words versus other words. It creates more creative marketers. In my mind. When we're really nitpicking at all of the touch points, we are not satisfied by just saying out of stock.

We're saying, what else could we say? Or in? In this case, we're not satisfied with just saying Unavailable outta stock might give us a little bit of a boost, but I think it creates this. Twofold benefit. One, we feel empowered as marketers to continue to test and put new things in market to see how they perform.

And two, it shows that slight changes, inexpensive, maybe costless changes can drive performance for our for our campaigns.

**Richard Shotton:** Yeah, absolutely. And at the very heart of it. [00:26:00] Is people have to have, also, the marketers have to have the right model of human behavior in their mind to take advantage of some of these experiments we're talking about.

Because if as a marketer you believe that humans just neutrally interpret the event in front of them. What's the point of muck around with the language it doesn't matter that people are gonna judge your product based on its inherent qualities. So you'd ignore all these opportunities.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** Yeah.

**Richard Shotton:** But if you follow the behavioral science evidence, if you follow this principle of what is all there is and framing and that changing people's attention from one aspect of the product to another can radically change their interpretation of that product. If you bind into that mental model of how people behave, suddenly everything's up for play.

Tweaking the wording, thinking about what frame benefits your product, suddenly these are massive opportunities. I think it all comes back to having the right mental [00:27:00] model of human behavior to start with.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** So I love this point. I think we've double underscored it. It's really an empowerment message for everyone listening.

I. Something that we started the podcast with kind of comes to mind to me here, which is we watched the commercial and we laughed. We enjoyed the spot that VML put together that Duracell and VML put together, and there's something about humor. That really can break through. And we've touched on this from time to time, but in this whole empowerment message and thinking about how folks receive messages, maybe we should talk a little bit more about humor and maybe the power it has to signal a strong quality.

**Richard Shotton:** Yeah, absolutely. I think when we were talking with Mark Ritson, he mentioned. John [00:28:00] DOS has talks about this 95 5 rule that applies to both business, to business and consumer marketing. Most of the time, people are not in market for your product. Now,

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** that would be the 95% in his example.

**Richard Shotton:** Yeah. 95% are not in market for your product, if you just advertise in a straight manner with logic about why your product is amazing, most people, you are giving them information that will be useful in the future. Now, that sounds as if it's a great thing to do, but there is a fundamental principle of behavioral science called present bias, which is.

We are very interested about what is happening to us now. We give that great weight and importance. What is gonna happen to us in the future we don't really care about. It's too far away. It's any benefit in the future, we will discount very steeply. So if you do a dry message with all this useful information about the something that's gonna happen in a month or a year's time, people don't really care.

What they care [00:29:00] about is how they feel at the moment, and that's why humor is so powerful, because it makes us laugh. It's enjoyable in the here and now, and the present bias suggests that's what. People are influenced by, we turn towards things that give us pleasure in the moment we turn away from things that bore us or don't give us pleasure in the moment, even if they have great benefits in the future, and humor is about giving that immediate benefit.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** It gives us something to really think about how we add that to the toolbox. I think there's sometimes a big fear amongst marketers that humor specifically am I gonna be off color? Is there is there reasons why my humor may make us look childish? Or is there getting humor right? Is I think on the list of marketers worries?

Is it fair to say I,

**Richard Shotton:** I think that's [00:30:00] absolutely fair to say. But it's worth working at it. It's worth giving your creative agency lots of time to get it right not maybe accepting the first version of the ad. But just because something is hard doesn't mean that we shouldn't try and deliver on it.

Doesn't mean we shouldn't try and use that tactic.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** Good life advice, good market advice.

**Richard Shotton:** Yes.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** So we've talked about a number of topics today. Richard, would you mind to go through and just bring back the biggest points from today's conversation?

**Richard Shotton:** So we've covered, I think, three big areas. We've talked about the power of framing that Daniel Kahneman has this idea of what is all there is.

So the how you frame the information. Is super important because people, [00:31:00] although they probably should from a logical perspective, people won't go out and get all the information that's relevant to making a decision. They will give disproportionate emphasis in their deliberations to the information that is easiest to access.

So changing this frame of reference can have a big effect. We then talked about. All sorts of ways of doing that. So more kind of tactical approaches. And one of the examples we talked about was Elliot Aronson, that he talks about this idea in 1988 of loss aversion, the argument that losses influences us more than the equivalent gains.

So the simple example is don't tell people what they would gain by taking out your product. Tell them what they are missing out on if they don't take out your products. And then the final part we talked about. Was present bias. So this idea that humans are very driven [00:32:00] by what is happening to them in the immediate moment or the near future.

Don't ignore that in your communications. Work with that bias by sugaring. The pill of your communications make them enjoyable to engage with and people will lean in and listen. Whereas if you just tell people about future benefits, and remember, most people are not in market any one time, so most of the genuine reasons to buy their future benefits, they will be discounted.

Very heavily in people's minds. So three big things, w loss aversion and present bias we've discussed today.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** And with that, we brought you to the end of our analysis on Procell, replace Less, save More. If you found this episode enjoyable, please share it with those that have passion for great marketing and if

you would like, [00:33:00] comment or share. Try it one more time. I'll start at the beginning. And that brings us to the end of our episode today on Pro Sell.

Replace Less, save More. If you enjoyed today's episode, please share it with another marketer that you think would find it interesting and if you would like, comment or follow our pages, it helps us find more. Listeners just like you so that we can reach them and share this thought leadership with them.

Until next time, I'm MichaelAaron Flicker.

**Richard Shotton:** And I'm Richard Shotton.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** Thanks so much for listening.

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