



**2009 Gold Effie Winner**

## **“Whopper® Freakout”**

Category: **Restaurants**  
Brand/Client: **Burger King**  
Primary Agency: **Crispin Porter + Bogusky**

### **Strategic Challenge**

How do you make a product that has been around for 50 years and already sells over a billion units annually interesting enough that you increase sales during a highly competitive period, *using absolutely no marketing tools other than advertising?*

That was our challenge in Whopper's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year. With no special product builds, pricing changes, couponing, giveaways, special offers or distribution changes, we had to make promiscuous fast food consumers fall in love with Whopper again and eat it more often than they already did.

We had to do it going head to head with McDonald's and Wendy's promotions of McSkillet and Baconator.

And we had to do it with no new information or changes to the environment around Whopper. All we had to go on was that Americans loved Whopper better than any other burger around.

### **Objectives**

Reaffirm Whopper's iconic status as 'America's favorite burger.'

Increase Whopper sales and total store comparative sales vs. a year ago for the same

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December/January promotional period.

## The Big Idea

### Demonstrate America's love of Whopper by taking it away.

All we had to go on was a simple fact: that the Whopper was America's #1 preferred burger. On the surface, a differentiated enough statement, but one hard to bring to life compellingly. Our thinking was that stating claims in advertising of people's preferences is like going up to someone and telling them, "you're funny". The only way to prove people loved the Whopper was to *demonstrate* it.

But even demonstrations can be rife with clichés the public tired of long ago. Taste tests, man on the street interviews, bite and smiles. We needed to do something no one had ever done before.

So we devised a little experiment. Rather than give people a Whopper in order to get their response, we decided to take the Whopper away to see what would happen.

Specifically, we took over a Burger King restaurant in Las Vegas for a single day and:

- 1) told people that the Whopper had been permanently removed from the menu
- 2) or swapped people's Whopper orders with competitive burgers like the Big Mac

This experiment was totally for real and did not feature actors in the roles of customers. The experiment was with ordinary people who showed up as part of their regular day. We took a reality TV concept and applied it to advertising.

What happened exceeded our expectations. People *freaked out*. And we captured their reactions on film.

## Bringing the Idea to Life

Our approach to media was to encourage people to **SPREAD THE FREAKOUT**.

We used a series of TV spots to drive traffic to 'Whopperfreakout.com' where people could view a full-length 8-minute documentary on the experiment. This film was linkable and uploadable to blogs and social networking sites, serving as a catalyst for interaction.

Our intent was to instigate a process that would be picked up and carried by consumers. Burger King is consistently outspent 3 to 1 by McDonald's. Our paid media needed to generate free frequency through site traffic, video sharing, user generated content, blog chatter and PR.

Over 5 million consumers watched the 8-minute long streaming video while another 14 million watched it and the TV spots on youtube.com. This exposure generated over 100 parodies and re-enactments that also ran on youtube.com and garnered an additional 5 million views. All this led to a 300%+ increase in web chatter about Burger King during the campaign. The equivalent value of this free media was roughly 20% of the paid media.

With great content, the simplest media strategies can work gangbusters, and with weak content, the cleverest media strategies can have little effect at all. Our media strategy of using TV to kick off a web storm worked because we had sticky content that people wanted to play with and riff off

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of.

### Communications Touch Points

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>TV</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Spots <input type="checkbox"/> Branded Content <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsorship <input type="checkbox"/> Product placement <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Radio</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Spots <input type="checkbox"/> Merchandising <input type="checkbox"/> Program/content <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Print</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Trade/Professional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Consumer Magazine <input type="checkbox"/> Print partnership <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Direct</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Mail <input type="checkbox"/> Email <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>PR</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Events</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Packaging</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Product Design</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Cinema</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Interactive</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Online Ads <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Web site <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Viral video <input type="checkbox"/> Video skins/bugs <input type="checkbox"/> Social Networking sites <input type="checkbox"/> Podcasts <input type="checkbox"/> Gaming <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Phone <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>OOH</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Airport <input type="checkbox"/> Transit <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Billboard <input type="checkbox"/> Place Based <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Trade Shows</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Sponsorship</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Retail Experience</b> <input type="checkbox"/> POP <input type="checkbox"/> Video <input type="checkbox"/> In-Store Merchandizing <input type="checkbox"/> Sales Promotion <input type="checkbox"/> Retailtainment <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Guerrilla</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Street Teams <input type="checkbox"/> Tagging <input type="checkbox"/> Wraps <input type="checkbox"/> Buzz Marketing <input type="checkbox"/> Ambient Media <input type="checkbox"/> Sampling/Trial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Consumer Involvement</b> <input type="checkbox"/> WOM <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consumer Generated <input type="checkbox"/> Viral <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Other</b> _____
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### Additional Marketing Components:

None

### Reach:

National

### Total Media Expenditure:

\$10 - 20 million

## Results

### Whopper quarterly sales increased by double-digits\*

\* Source: NPD Group/Crest Data

"In December, we kicked off the Whopper's 50th anniversary celebration with our innovative Whopper freak-out media campaign, driving significant brand relevance and incremental sales. In fact, the Whopper line posted double-digit sale increases over the prior year period in the U.S. Comps were strong throughout the quarter and remained strong, even accelerating into January".  
– *Burger King F2Q08 Earnings Call, 1/31/08*

These increases were on top of an especially strong 2006, when Burger King released the King X-BOX Games sold with value meals.

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### **Whopper sales contributed to a 29% increase in Q2 Profit**

Whopper was more profitable than special promotions that required significant operational expenditures.

### **“Whopper boosts Burger King's profits”**

Hold the pickles, spend the dollars: Burger King turned in strong profits Thursday, even as other chains like McDonald's and Starbucks struggle. An advertising campaign depicting customers reacting angrily to the discontinuation of the chain's signature hamburger helped spur a 5.4% increase in U.S. and Canadian sales. – *Bloomberg News, 5/2/08*

### **“Burger King Q2 Profit is a Whopper, up 29%”**

Burger King Holdings (BKC) said Thursday that its second-quarter profit jumped 29% as the stalwart Whopper, the new Homestyle Melt and promotions with TV tie-ins gave a boost to worldwide sales at stores open at least a year. – *Associated Press, 1/31/08*

### **The campaign was IAG's best-recalled restaurant ad of 2007**

In fact, 6 of the Top 10 best recalled restaurant ads in 2007 were from the Whopper Freakout campaign.

Top 10 New National TV Ads Among Restaurant Sector Launched January 1, 2007 - December 31, 2008				
Rank	Ad Caption	Brand	Brand Recall Index	Likeability Linkage Index
1	Whopper Hidden Camera: You Cannot be Serious :15	Burger King	231	114
2	Whopper Hidden Camera: Just Got Fried :15	Burger King	231	107
3	Sweet Onion Chicken Teriyaki :15 Jared and Tony Stewart	Subway	231	96
4	Sweet Onion Chicken Teriyaki :30 Jared and Tony Stewart	Subway	224	96
5	Combo Choices :30 DEBATE 2007	Wendy's	224	89
6	Whopper Hidden Camera: Discontinued Whopper :15	Burger King	221	114
7	Whopper Hidden Camera: Whopper Montage :30	Burger King	221	112
8	Whopper Hidden Camera: Whopper Whopper :15	Burger King	221	105
9	Whopper Hidden Camera: I Could Cry :15	Burger King	221	102
10	Subway Club :30 Jared and Ryan Howard	Subway	217	102

Source: Nielsen IAG Research, January 1, 2007 – January 31, 2008. People Age 13+. Includes only new national TV ads first airing January 1 - December 31, 2007. Ad Performance based on the first 50 IRPs (Nielsen IAG estimated Rating Points on monitored networks/dayparts).

### **Over 5 million people watched the full-length 8-minute film on Whopperfreakout.com**

“Whopper Freakout campaign became its own pop culture content, with the most popular YouTube user-generated parody attracting over 1.2 million views, together with over 120 other videos emulating *Burger King* commercial content”. – *Excerpt from BKC 2008 Annual Report, Burger King Corporation, May 2008*

### **14 million people watched Freakout on You Tube**

And over 100 created their own parodies and riffs and posted them on You Tube. Even the riffs like ‘Ghetto Freakout’ were hits.

### **Anything else going on that might have helped drive results?**

Literally the only activity in play during this time period was advertising (TV, radio, digital). There was no coupon promotion, price changes, special builds or special offers.

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We did run a double cheeseburger ad called 'Tiny Hands' in a regional test where it drove greater sales of double cheeseburger, but largely by cannibalizing Whopper Jr. We therefore don't believe that it contributed significantly to the increased national sales of the period, and certainly not to Whopper sales.

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