

Marketing communications aflac duck campaign

[Business](#), [Marketing](#)



State of the Industry Paper Aflac Duck Campaign Introduction One company which has had success over the last decade is AmericanFamilyLife Assurance Company or more commonly known as Aflac (duck voice). Historically, Aflac was a pretty successful company but they were still missing that one piece to make them recognizable. That one thing the company needed was a face and they found it when they launched their Aflac Duck Campaign. In this paper, the Duck campaign strategy will be discussed along with the history of Aflac, target audience and competition of Aflac, and the successful outcome of the campaign.

History The American Family Life Assurance Company was founded in Columbus, Georgia by three brothers, John, Paul, and Bill Amos in 1955. Three years later, the company had their first big plan which was developing a cancer expense policy. Several years afterward, Aflac expanded by adding numerous diverse policies to cover accidents, dental, disability, hospital care, and other health events. In the 1960s, Aflac thrived on making presentations to companies with large groups of employees. Today, the overwhelming majority (96%) of Aflac's policies are bought at work through a payroll-deduction basis.

Later in the 1970s, Aflac continued its success by expanding into the Japan market. Aflac was only the third American company to sell insurance in Japan. This has proved to very successful since today, Japan is about three-quarters (75%) of the company's revenue. Aflac continued to do well through the 1980s and into the 1990s and named a new CEO, Daniel Amos, in 1990. Under the newly appointed CEO, Aflac become a Fortune 100 best company

to work in the United States in 2000. Overall the company had taken shape beautifully in its history.

It was the largest provider of renewable insurance in the US and it was also the largest provider in Japan (History 2012). So what is the problem? Daniel Amos wanted to change one thing about his company and that was brand awareness. Despite the success, after initiating name awareness ad campaign in the United States Aflac the name recognition for Aflac came back at 2%. After various attempts to get the company recognized “ The Duck” debuted on New Year’s Day in 2000 (Amos 2010). “ The Duck” “ We had to do something dramatic,” stated Aflac CEO Daniel Amos in aHarvardBusiness Review (Amos 2010).

In the late 1990s, Aflac began listening to agencies pitch ideas for new television advertisements. One agency, Kaplan Thaler Group, was in a meeting tossing around ideas and they themselves were having a tough time remembering the name of the company. Amos explains, “ One day, one of them asked, ‘ What’s the name of the account we’re pitching? ’ A colleague replied, ‘ It’s Aflac-Aflac-Aflac---Aflac. ’ Someone said that he sounded like a duck, and the idea was born” (Amos 2010). During testing of the different advertisements, Kaplan Thaler ad scored 50% than what Aflac was previously doing.

Amos liked that the commercial pointed fun at the company’s name (Amos 2010). When Daniel Amos tried explaining the ad to others they simply did not understand the reasoning behind it. The first Aflac Duck debuted on CNN on New Year’s Day in 2000 (Amos 2010). The bit ran four times an hour. From this point on the rest was history. The first day the commercial aired, <https://assignbuster.com/marketingcommunications-aflac-duck-campaign/>

Aflac had more visits to their website than the entire year before. Weeks later, the company was getting requests for stuffed animal versions of the duck (Amos 2010).

Months later, Amos describes an event at Disney Studios that Aflac was sponsoring. “ We didn’t know whether it would be a good idea to put ducks on all the tables..... I was just watching to see if ducks were left on the tables,” said Amos. This next encounter confirmed Amos had found what he had been looking for. “ I spotted the head of Disney Studios with a bulge under his jacket. When I jokingly asked him what was going on, he said, ‘ I want you to understand that Donald is always king around here. But I want to take one home to my kids” (Amos 2010).

Daniel Amos had found a dark horse. A duck quacking out the name of his company with various celebrities repeatedly asking for the company name was his winner. “ The Duck” had been born. Target Audience Aflac believed it needed the duck to attract more of their target audience. With the company’s cancer expense services there was not much more room for growth from that audience. That audience is the 35 to 54 year old age group because most of the company’s policies came from business groups. Since Aflac was trying to make a push in selling more policies regarding accident and liability insurances, they wanted to reach out more to families and attract new customers. Since many other insurance companies offer pretty much the same insurance policies Aflac needed a way to stick out (Sunset 2008). This is where the duck comes in. Competition Insurance is always a buyer’s market because everybody wants to have coverage and be protected from accidents, liabilities, health, and other events. Aflac offered similar services

to its competing insurance companies such as Citizens Financial Corporation, Conseco Incorporated, and Amerisafe Incorporated.

In a tough industry, Aflac had a hard time selling policies outside of their corporate base that they had already built years prior (Sunset 2008). They needed a way to leapfrog the competition. This where the duck comes in. Marketing Strategy behind " The Duck" As mentioned previously, the Kaplan Thaler Group (KTG) was responsible for creating the pitch idea for " The Duck. " KTG had developed their own advertising model called " Big Bang. " KTG's website describes a " Bang" as, "...creates brand experiences and connections resulting in deep relationships" (Thaler).

Aflac was looking for that deep relationship with consumers so they could be recognized. All the initial spots for Aflac comprised of one central theme. It turned the company's weakness, a difficult name, into its strength by making that most of the campaign's humor (Sunset 2008). In all the early advertisements, it started with a small group of discussing a recent accident or trying to decide what insurance company they should buy policies from. In both spots, the people cannot recall the name of an insurance company, the duck pops up and quacks, " Aflac! This happens continuously throughout the commercial typically with the duck doing something humorous in the background. When people watched more and more of these commercials they already knew what they were getting and that was Aflac. The name became instantly memorized because of the repetition the commercial provided. Looking at the ads, there are several examples of tactics discussed from class. As discussed in Day 12 of lecture, just the foundation of distraction played a role in the commercials. Using the humor of the duck

repeating the company name distracted you from what the company's trying to sell but you remembered the name and it made you interested in what the company was. Also from Day 12, the commercial displays the elaboration likelihood model. The level of elaboration is low thus leads the viewers to view the message peripherally. Now since the viewers understand this peripherally they are not taking logic, information, or rational thinking into account. They are viewing it as humorous, which in the Aflac advertisements sparked a change in attitude because immediately the company was more recognized.

People accepted the position of the message, the name recognition, probably due to how it was spoken to them and who was saying it. A duck quacking the company name to you repeatedly is easy to remember. Also, people had the ability to process the message of name recognition because now that it had a symbol/face it was so easy to remember. Now that the marketing strategies behind "The Duck" have been revealed, it is easy to understand why there were immediate results. Outcomes/Results As previously mentioned, the day Aflac aired their first "Duck" commercial; they had more visits to their website that day than the previous year.

In the first two weeks of the first year (2000), the company had more sales leads than in 1998 and 1999 combined. In the second quarter of the first year, the company had a record quarter of \$168 million in sales (Sunset 2008). In the first year of "The Duck" in the United States, sales went up 29%. In three years, sales were doubled (Amos 2010). For the first time ever accident/disability insurance swapped with cancer-expense insurance for the

company's number one product (Sunset 2008). Also in the third year, Daniel Amos's goal was met. Aflac achieved 94% brand awareness.

The new account growth increased 10% and the mid-sized business accounts increased 20% (KaplanCase Study). In 2008, Aflac's two main markets, USA and Japan, had combined revenue of \$16.6 billion, which is almost double the revenue from the last year (1999) without "The Duck" (Amos 2010). Aflac has also been named a Fortune 100 Best Company to Work For over the last fourteen years. Aflac was also named on Fortune 500's list for Best Company overall (Corporate Report 2012). In 2010, Aflac was the number one preferred voluntary insurance carrier (Kaplan Case Study).

These results speak for themselves and Aflac is not slowing down. "The Duck" is everywhere. Looking at Aflac's website, there are numerous ducks on each page. Aflac is one of the main sponsor's for NASCAR driver Carl Edwards, who has a giant ducks all around his car. "The Duck" makes an appearance yearly in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. Aflac has become a mainstay in the world of college football by sponsoring The Heisman Trophy and "The Duck" often makes appearances with "The Aflac Trivia Question." Aflac also makes appearances with the National Football League and Major League Baseball (Aflac Homepage). The Duck" has met some stars over the years as well such as Chevy Chase, Yogi Berra, Yao Ming, the 2004 United States Olympic Swim Team, and even cartoon characters Bugs Bunny and fellow duck, Daffy. Over time, "The Duck" has also appeared on "The Tonight Show" and "Saturday Night Live" (Sunset 2008). "The Duck" has garnered several awards itself. In 2004, "The Duck" was named one of the country's favorite advertising figures (Press Release 2004) and was an

original member of the Advertising Walk of Fame (Sunset 2008). Also, a two time Gold Effe Winner (2002 & 2004), Webby Award for Best Web. Com (2010), and People's Voice Award Winner. The Duck" also had a higher Q Score, which measures familiarity, than Ronald McDonald and the Energizer Bunny (Kaplan Case Study). Aflac does not plan on slowing down this phenomenon either with their newest Duck campaign, " Get the Alfacts. "

Conclusion In conclusion, it should be obvious that the Aflac Duck was one of the most successful campaigns in the past few decades. The company had a great start with their good long history but it just needed that final push. The marketing strategy put in place by Kaplan Thaler Group and Aflac was well put together and they created the company symbol they wanted. The Duck" was able to target the audience, beat out the competition, and get the results Aflac was looking for. When Ms. Kaplan Thaler was asked if the duck will begin saying more than " Aflac," she replied, " That's going to be up to him. Right now, the Aflacts speak for themselves" (Elliott 2009). References

Sunset, B. (2008, January 28). The Aflac Duck Campaign. Retrieved from <http://marketing-case-studies.blogspot.com/2008/01/aflac-duck-2000-campaign.html>

Amos, D. (2010). How I Did It: Aflac's CEO Explains How He Fell For The Duck. Retrieved from <http://www.internationalistmagazine.com/AflacsCEO.pdf>

Case Studies Kaplan Thaler. Retrieved from http://kaplanthaler.com/clients/case_studies

Thaler, L. , Thaler, R. BANG! Getting Your Message Heard in a Noisy World. Retrieved from <http://www.thepowerofsmallbook.com/index.php/other>

Abbey, R. (2010). Encouraging Animal Advertisers to Pay for the Use of Animal Images: A Voluntary Certification Approach. Retrieved from <http://sjalp.stanford.edu/pdfs/Abbey>.

<https://assignbuster.com/marketingcommunications-aflac-duck-campaign/>

pdf Elliott, S. (2009, April 21). Not Daffy or Donald, but Still Aflac's Rising Star. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/22/business/media/22adco.html?_r=1;scp=2;sq=Aflac;st=cse (2012). Aflac 2012 Corporate Citizenship Report. Retrieved from <http://www.aflac.com/us/en/docs/investors/CSRReport.pdf> (2012). Aflac History. Retrieved from <http://www.aflac.com/aboutaflac/corporateoverview/history.aspx> (2004, September 20). Aflac Press Release. Retrieved from <http://www.aflac.com/aboutaflac/pressroom/pressreleasestory.aspx?rid=616598> (2012). Aflac Homepage. Retrieved from <http://www.aflac.com/aboutaflac/corporateoverview/missionandvalues.aspx>