

The 2007 ARF David Ogilvy Awards Case Study  
Brawny Academy: Where Women Send Their Husbands To Clean Up Their Acts

Agency: Fallon; Client: Georgia-Pacific  
Brand: Brawny Paper Towels; Campaign: Brawny Academy  
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**Belonging to a commoditized, uninvolved category.**

***"There are all of the warning signs that the paper towel category is on the verge of becoming undifferentiated and commoditized by premium products."***

IPSOS-ASI, March 2004

A familiar household brand since the 1970s, Brawny paper towels has enjoyed awareness levels in excess of 90%. However, in more recent years, the brand has struggled to gain relevance and differentiation due to the reality of competing in a low-interest, commoditized category (Source: Ipsos-ASI).

Making matters worse, Brawny has had no clear product attribute with which to challenge its biggest competitor, Bounty. It lags not only on specific attributes (i.e., absorption, durability, and softness), but also in perceived versatility of product. Even if Brawny went head-to-head with Bounty, the message would likely be drowned out by Bounty's immense media pressure, outspending Brawny six to one (Source: TNS Media Intelligence 2006).

The one clear asset that is central to brand awareness is its icon, the Brawny Man. We had learned from previous research that he was a mixed blessing: He clearly denoted attributes of strength, yet was one-dimensional and somewhat out of touch with women today. What, if anything, could we do to improve the brand attributes or move Brawny out of commodity status?

Success and growth for Brawny paper towels depended on shifting perceptions of the brand, its icon, and the versatility of the product. Therefore, our marketing objectives were:

1. Increase relevancy of the Brawny brand.
2. Increase the perception of product versatility.
3. Increase brand engagement and purchase consideration for Brawny.
4. Increase Brawny paper towels' dollar volume.

**Reconnecting with a target misrepresented by the category.**

Before addressing the Brawny Man and his role, we wanted to understand the basics of the Brawny target. Using Simmons, we found that Brawny's core target, Female Premium Towel Buyers, led busy, multifaceted, fairly upscale lives—and were very demanding. This contrasted sharply with a creative review of category advertising that showed average American women obsessed with cleaning, and worse, *enjoying* cleaning because of one particular product or another.

Initial focus groups with Brawny's target confirmed that their feelings ranged from disappointment to exasperation to outright resentment at the way consumer product brands chose to portray them.

This clearly defined a need for further research. If women were telling us the category had it all wrong, we needed to pinpoint the disconnections.

Disrupting the category alone wouldn't be enough; we had to connect with them in a truthful, real way. We believed the kind of true-life, in-depth insights we were looking for were never going to come out by listening in on focus groups. So, we decided to go and see for ourselves.

We designed and executed a set of ethnographies to tap further into the psyche of the target: going into their homes, and spending quality time listening and observing them.

We aimed to study, and then probe, three key areas:

- Household chores/cleaning dynamics (the hows, whos, whys...and how they felt about it)
- Paper towel usage specifically, and perceptions of the category
- Current perceptions of the Brawny Man

Prior to the ethnography interview stage, diaries were mailed to respondents so they could start recording details of their routines and articulating their experiences and feelings about household chores—capturing everything for later reflection, not just the things recalled during the interviews.

In total, 17 two-hour in-home interviews were conducted in Des Moines and Charlotte—both strongly representative markets. More than half the interviews were friendship interviews. Incorporating friendship pairs into the research allowed the women to discuss, debate, and even moan about housework issues with good friends, not just with the research team. During these interviews, women compared and contrasted their habits and feelings, often calling each other out on true feelings and behavior—providing very rich feedback.

Among the wealth of information, two towering observations stood out like giant sore thumbs:

***FINDING 1: Brawny Man = A Product Only for Brawny Jobs***

It was evident that, while Brawny's icon had many desirable attributes—being strong, handsome, and tough—he was seen as one-dimensional by our target.

It was also evident that Brawny, as a towel brand, was relegated to only the "big messes" around the house. In fact, research showed Brawny paper towels were more often stored in the garage than inside the home like other brands. Brawny was seen as the serviceman you'd call on in a time of need, but not the brand you'd invite into your home for your everyday needs.

In comparison, Bounty towels led in a versatile range of product attributes (perceived as being softer, more absorbent, and stronger), mirrored by a wider range of places it was kept (close at hand in the house), as well as the wider range of its uses (Source: Ipsos-ASI).

The Brawny Man's single dimension was keeping brand usage to a single dimension.

***FINDING 2: One-Dimensional Help from Husbands, Too***

The transformative insights in our thinking came not from the category observations, but from how women talked about their men.

As one-dimensional as Brawny's uses seemed, there was a common observation (or more accurately, we should say "obsession") that husbands were *useless*.

The husband/wife housework dynamic was a deeply emotive area of enormous frustration, yet also full of great humor. Men, it turned out, were also stuck in the same place where the Brawny Man was—useful for the big jobs (mostly outdoors), but totally ineffective at the huge range of jobs that needed to be done around the rest of the home.

This was where the friendship groups really paid dividends. Two women comparing *husband efficacy* around the house is hilarious to watch, and a subject they will talk about for hours! How very different from trying to get them talking, let alone excited, about *paper towel efficacy*!

## **Disrupting the category—Brawny becomes an advocate for women.**

In summary, from researching category advertising and women's lives around cleaning and housework, we found two repeat offenders guilty of crimes against women:

1. **The Category:** Guilty of relying too heavily on excessive side-by-side product demos and advertising featuring stereotypical portrayals of women blissfully cleaning.
2. **Their Men:** Guilty of not pulling their weight around the home and sharing in household duties.

With the category clearly out of step with our target's reality, and her husband clueless about the depth of her frustrations at home, we had tapped into an area that could allow us to disrupt category conventions and create a meaningful connection with our audience.

Our big idea was simply to forget about being a paper towel company insistent on touting marginal functional improvements to our products. Instead, we would become *an advocate for women*, focused on making their lives at home more enjoyable by providing tools to help their husbands become better, more proactive, and more compassionate men.

## **Bringing "Brawny Academy" to life.**

Ironically, a husband-and-wife creative team developed the platform for this campaign. And while they'd only been married for a few years, they couldn't help but be struck by the *realness* of the issues uncovered in the research.

Their own dialogue regarding the household dynamics of husbands and wives led to the realization that our solution could not be contrived. It could not be *advertising per se*. It had to be real—real people facing real problems and getting real help from real experts.

Therefore, we created **Brawny Academy™: Where women send their men to clean up their acts**. Under the watchful eye of the Brawny Man, eight real men from across the country were sent to a week-long camp and put through an intense training regimen that included everything from household cleaning scenarios to handyman activities to improving their communication and personal skills so they could show their wives they cared in a manly way.

The men's travails and triumphs were captured on film and turned into a reality series that was promoted like a traditional reality TV series through an expansive, coordinated effort, including:

- **Television:** The platform was launched with a :60 anthem spot that featured the Brawny Man setting up camp and introducing the central idea of supporting women through helping their husbands become better men. A :30 trailer provided a comprehensive look at the series and helped establish the brand platform. Viewers were updated on the campers' progress through weekly promo spots.
- **BrawnyAcademy.com:** The Brawny Academy Web site was developed to provide engaging content and useful tools that our target could access on demand and even share with husbands and friends. In addition to viewing the reality series, visitors could check out highlights, outtakes, video diaries, casting videos, and contestant

bios. They could also download the *Brawny Academy Field Guide*, which was filled with helpful lessons.

- **Brawny Man:** To reinforce the *realness* of the idea, we allowed our icon to step off the package and enter a real-world environment—interacting with real people—for the first time in his 30-year history. Unlike other traditional packaged-goods icons, who are typically rigid and highly protected, a live Brawny Man allowed us to show consumers that he was not only fun-loving, strong, and skillful (and could hang with the guys), but was also warm, compassionate, and tremendously human (and could empathize with women). Brawny served not only as the guide at Brawny Academy; he also became an ambassador for the brand through a variety of events coinciding with the campaign. After the series wrapped, he even made follow-up visits with the campers and their wives to check on their progress.
- **Print:** We produced instructional print ads that served as a “guide for husbands.” The ads were placed in women’s service magazines and were meant to be pulled out and shared with husbands. Each ad included instructional step-by-step guidance around household cleaning tasks such as scouring the toilet or removing a red wine stain, and was complemented with a bonus lesson about being a more compassionate man (such as the considerate way to remove a spider from the house).
- **Online:** An extensive online effort included a viral “Academy Entrance Exam” in which women answered questions to determine if their husbands were in need of a visit to Brawny Academy. Excerpts from the Brawny Academy experience were posted in online environments, and media banners helped direct online traffic to [BrawnyAcademy.com](http://BrawnyAcademy.com).
- **Promotion:** Viewers watching the online episodes could participate in several weekly online trivia contests, answering questions related to activities in the Webisodes. Those who answered correctly were eligible for prizes, including a grand prize trip to Disney World’s Fort Wilderness Resort for their very own Brawny Academy experience. Consumers participating in the online vote were also encouraged to select the “Most Improved Man,” the contestant they felt had grown the most from the Brawny Academy experience.
- **Endorsement Radio:** In key markets, especially the hometowns of our contestants, radio DJs were engaged in on-air dialogue about the weekly happenings at Brawny Academy.
- **PR:** The Brawny Man became a media personality, evangelizing the Brawny Academy mission and his role as an advocate for women and a coach for men. He made appearances on CBS’s *Early Show*, and *Good Day Atlanta*, and TBS’s *Dinner and a Movie*. A charitable online auction was also conducted on eBay in which women could bid on an in-home visit from the Brawny Man to give a household-cleaning tutorial for their husbands. The eight camper contestants themselves attracted a strong “Web-lebrity” following in their home markets—appearing on TV, in newspapers, and on the radio in Boston, Dallas, Chicago, and L.A. In all, PR garnered an estimated additional 100 million impressions for Brawny Academy.
- **In-Store Packaging:** We leveraged the strategy at retail by integrating Brawny Academy into the package design and including the

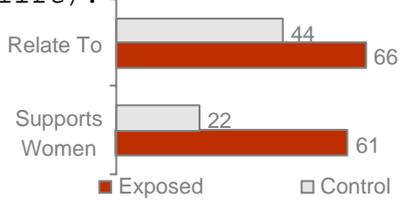
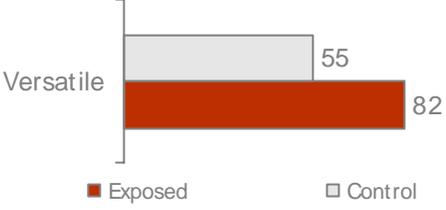
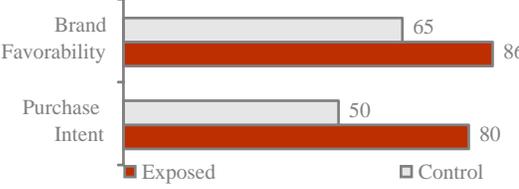
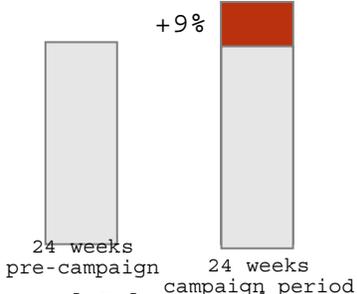
instructional lessons from the print on the back panel. Packaging also directed consumers to [BrawnyAcademy.com](http://BrawnyAcademy.com).

**Monitoring the success of Brawny Academy.**

Success for Brawny paper towels depended on shifting perceptions of the brand, its icon, and the versatility of its product. Within one month of the launch, consumers who were exposed to the content (versus a control group not exposed) reported significant shifts in relevance, product versatility, brand engagement, and purchase consideration.

The launch of Brawny Academy also resulted in a record number of calls to Georgia-Pacific headquarters (even though we never published a phone number), with hundreds of women pleading for information on how their men could attend the camp!

**Results.**

<p><b>Objective 1: Increase relevancy of the Brawny Brand.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Brand that I relate to" grew 22 points (a 50% lift).</li> <li>▪ "A brand that supports women" increased by 39 points (a 171% lift).</li> </ul>  <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Metric</th> <th>Exposed</th> <th>Control</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Relate To</td> <td>66</td> <td>44</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Supports Women</td> <td>61</td> <td>22</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>[Source: Dynamic Logic tracking study]</p>	Metric	Exposed	Control	Relate To	66	44	Supports Women	61	22	<p><b>Objective 2: Increase the perception of product versatility.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Versatile" increased 27 points (a 50% increase).</li> </ul>  <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Metric</th> <th>Exposed</th> <th>Control</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Versatile</td> <td>82</td> <td>55</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>[Source: Dynamic Logic tracking study]</p>	Metric	Exposed	Control	Versatile	82	55
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<p><b>Objective 3: Increase brand engagement and purchase consideration for Brawny.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Brand favorability" increased 21 points (a 31% increase).</li> <li>▪ "Purchase intent" increased 30 points (a 58% increase).</li> </ul>  <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Metric</th> <th>Exposed</th> <th>Control</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Brand Favorability</td> <td>86</td> <td>65</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Purchase Intent</td> <td>80</td> <td>50</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>[Source: Dynamic Logic tracking study]</p>	Metric	Exposed	Control	Brand Favorability	86	65	Purchase Intent	80	50	<p><b>Objective 4: Increase Brawny paper towels' dollar volume.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Brawny paper towels overall dollar volume grew 9% versus the previous unsupported 24-week period.</li> </ul>  <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Period</th> <th>Dollar Volume</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>24 weeks pre-campaign</td> <td>Base</td> </tr> <tr> <td>24 weeks campaign period</td> <td>Base + 9%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>[Source: Internal Volume Data]</p>	Period	Dollar Volume	24 weeks pre-campaign	Base	24 weeks campaign period	Base + 9%
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