

GRID

BRANDS GROUP

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METHODOLOGY — PUBLISHED IN FULL

# The Crave System.

How we build brands people crave — the strategy, the marketing science, and the five-stage process. If you never hire us, use it anyway. If you do, you'll know exactly what you're buying.

GRID BRANDS GROUP — THE CREATIVE & COMMERCIAL AGENCY FOR CONSUMER BRANDS —  
TORONTO · MIAMI

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## WHY WE PUBLISH THIS

# The playbook isn't the advantage. The reps are.

Great kitchens publish their cookbooks. The recipe was never the moat — the moat is a team that has cooked it a thousand times under pressure, knows what to do when the category shifts mid-quarter, and has the studio, the retail relationships, and the reps to execute it this month instead of next.

Publishing the method earns something more valuable than mystique: trust. You can read exactly how we think, check it against the best evidence the industry has produced, and hold us to it in every meeting. That's the deal.

One more reason. Most of what's in here isn't ours — it belongs to the whole industry. P&G's strategy discipline, the IPA's effectiveness databank, two decades of buyer-behaviour research from the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute. That work deserves to be used, not locked in conference keynotes. Consider this our small repayment.

# What works.

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| 01 | <b>Balance brand and activation – roughly 60/40.</b><br><small>BINET &amp; FIELD, "THE LONG AND THE SHORT OF IT" (IPA)</small> | Long-term brand building creates the demand that short-term activation harvests. Brands that cut brand spend look efficient for two quarters, then stall – the pipeline of future buyers quietly empties. |
| 02 | <b>Reach beats precision.</b><br><small>BYRON SHARP, "HOW BRANDS GROW" (EHRENBERG-BASS)</small>                                | Growth comes overwhelmingly from light buyers and non-buyers, not from squeezing loyalists harder. Hyper-targeting feels efficient and starves the top of the funnel.                                     |
| 03 | <b>Be easy to mind and easy to find.</b><br><small>MENTAL &amp; PHYSICAL AVAILABILITY (EHRENBERG-BASS)</small>                 | The brand that comes to mind first in a buying moment – and is actually within reach when it does – wins. Most marketing problems are one of these two, misdiagnosed as the other.                        |
| 04 | <b>Distinctive beats different.</b><br><small>JENNI ROMANIUK, "BUILDING DISTINCTIVE BRAND ASSETS"</small>                      | Consumers don't memorize your positioning statement; they recognize your codes – colour, character, pack, sound, tone. Codes deployed consistently outwork differentiation claims deployed cleverly.      |
| 05 | <b>Emotion outsells information.</b><br><small>IPA EFFECTIVENESS DATABANK</small>  | Campaigns that make people feel something outperform rational, message-led work on every long-term business measure. People decide with the gut and justify with the spec sheet.                          |
| 06 | <b>Consistency compounds.</b><br><small>ESOV (FIELD/IPA) &amp; CREATIVE-CONSISTENCY RESEARCH (SYSTEM1)</small>                 | Great platforms wear in, not out – and share of voice above your share of market reliably precedes growth. The brands that hold their nerve on a campaign outperform the ones that redesign annually.     |
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# What doesn't.

- **Performance-only spend.** It harvests demand it never creates – the numbers plateau the moment the market's existing intent is spent.
- **Rebranding as strategy.** A new logo doesn't fix a weak offer, a price problem, or missing distribution. Diagnose first.
- **Trend-chasing without codes.** Content that could be anyone's gets remembered as no one's.
- **Targeting so narrow it's efficient and invisible.** You can't grow on an audience the size of a dinner party.
- **Changing campaigns every year.** Your team is bored of the work years before the audience has even fully noticed it.

## THE HONEST SUMMARY

Most marketing failure isn't a lack of creativity. It's strategy that was never connected to the P&L, brand assets abandoned before they could compound, and media plans optimized for the metric instead of the money. Every stage of the system on the next pages exists to prevent one of those failures.

# Five stages. One team. Accountable from positioning to purchase.

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## 01 Commercial truth

*"Where does the money actually come from?"*

Before any creative is briefed: unit economics, margin structure, velocity, channel mix, and the category entry points that actually trigger purchase. The Playing-to-Win questions — where to play, how to win — answered with the discipline P&G made famous, against your real P&L.

**YOU WALK AWAY WITH** — a one-page strategy your CFO would sign: the choices, the target, and what we're deliberately not doing.

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## 02 Memory design

*"What should people remember?"*

Positioning, narrative, and distinctive codes designed as one memory structure — the colour, voice, characters, and pack behaviour that make the brand recognizable in a quarter-second scroll, linked to the moments when your category gets bought.

**YOU WALK AWAY WITH** — identity and asset codes built to survive every channel, plus a messaging architecture the whole company can actually use.

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## 03 Craft that behaves like culture

*"Why would anyone watch this?"*

Entertainment over interruption. Work built to be watched, shared, and felt — shot in-house at Grid Studio, platform-native, emotion first. Not one hero film: a repeatable format the brand can own for years.

**YOU WALK AWAY WITH** — a campaign and content system with formats designed to wear in, plus the production engine to keep it fed.

04

## Everywhere you can be bought

*"How easy is it to buy?"*

Physical availability, treated as marketing — because it is. Retail programs, shelf and POS, e-commerce that converts, licensing and distribution partnerships. The half of brand growth most agencies can't touch because they've never operated it.

**YOU WALK AWAY WITH** — a channel and retail plan wired to the creative: one system from the ad someone saw to the shelf where they act on it.

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05

## The loop

*"What actually moved product?"*

Always-on operation with a weekly cadence. We measure what moves product — sell-through, revenue, repeat — not vanity impressions. Creative iterates; codes hold. Wear-in is monitored so good platforms are scaled, not abandoned.

**YOU WALK AWAY WITH** — live reporting against commercial metrics, and the next round of work already in motion.

### WHY "CRAVE"

Awareness is remembering a brand exists. Craving is wanting it — the physical pull toward the thing itself. Every stage aims at that: a brand easy to mind, impossible to mistake, genuinely entertaining, and one arm's reach away when the urge hits.

# Branding, advertising, marketing — one loop, not three departments.

## Branding is the memory.

Who you are, what you stand for, and the codes people recognize before they've consciously looked. Branding is the asset every other marketing dollar spends against.

STAGES 01-02

## Advertising is the reach.

How strangers learn to want you — emotion, delivered at scale, consistently enough to build memory. Advertising doesn't close the sale; it makes the sale possible before it starts.

STAGE 03, AMPLIFIED

## Marketing is the machine.

The whole commercial system: product, price, place, promotion. Branding and advertising live inside it — next to distribution, retail, and the offer itself.

ALL FIVE STAGES

Agencies sell these separately because they're organized separately. Consumers never experience them separately — a great ad for a brand you can't find is a favour to your competitor, and perfect distribution for a brand nobody remembers is a warehouse cost. The system exists so the memory, the reach, and the machine are built by the same hands, pointed at the same number.

# Built for brands bought in seconds.

The system assumes a buying moment – a shelf, a menu, a scroll. If your product can be wanted on sight, it applies. Three buyers use it, and they map to the three ways to work with us.

01 – LAUNCH

The challenger that hit the ceiling

Product-market fit, distribution starting to open, and growth that came from hustle and performance ads – which just stopped scaling. No codes, no memory structure, no system yet. The Crave System gives them the big-league discipline they could never hire à la carte.

02 – ALWAYS-ON

The regional leader that has to stay current

Multi-location food service and retail. They don't need a rebrand – they need momentum that never drops: seasonal moments, social cadence, retail programs, shipped weekly by one team that never loses the codes.

03 – ALWAYS-ON / REFRESH

The big brand that needs challenger speed

Global brand books, AOR bureaucracy – and a local market that moves faster than either. What scale structurally can't buy is craft at market speed with retail execution attached. That's the system's one-roof advantage.

The common thread is the decision-maker: someone who owns a revenue number, not an impressions number. And the honest edge of it – if your purchase takes a nine-month procurement cycle, craving isn't the mechanism. That's not us, and we'll say so.

# What to expect.

**01 A recommendation on the first call**

No long pitch. You describe the problem; we come back with a point of view and a plan. If we can see the answer, we'll say it in the room.

**03 Work in market in weeks, not quarters**

A weekly working cadence with decisions in the room. Consumer brands live on moments — a system that takes a quarter to react misses all of them.

**02 The people who plan it, make it**

Strategy, creative, and production are one team under one roof. Nothing is lost in a handoff because there isn't one.

**04 The truth, before the invoice**

If the real problem is the offer, the price, or the distribution, we'll tell you before we make a single ad. We'd rather lose a project than run a campaign we know can't work.

WHEN WE'RE NOT THE RIGHT FIT

- You want the cheapest possible media buyer, full stop.
- You want a strategy deck and no accountability for what happens after it.
- The product isn't ready, and advertising is being asked to cover for it.

We'll say so on the first call — and where we can, point you to who is.

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START A PROJECT

Have a brand people  
should crave?

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Toronto · Miami — Founded 2012

You'll hear back within one business day — with a recommendation, not a pitch.