

SHAKEN, NOT DETERRED.

Absolut is a quality premium vodka company, strongly rooted in Swedish values of diversity and inclusion. For more than a century, the company has operated under a *one source, one community* philosophy, where its processes from wheat harvest to water collection to distillation and production exclusively take place in and around the village of Åhus, Sweden.

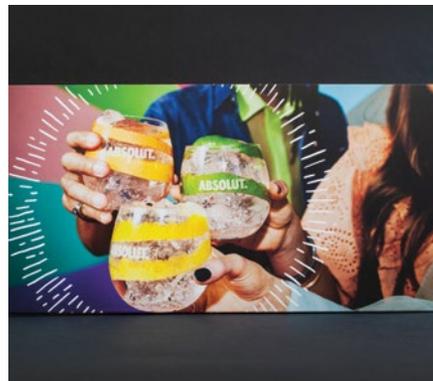
The worldwide brand has successfully cemented itself into popular culture. It has cultivated a persona of fun and creativity with revellers and collectors thanks to its deceptively simple bottle with distinctive blue lettering, appearances on the screen filling the glasses of James Bond and Carrie Bradshaw and iconic print advertisements in partnership with world-renowned artists like Keith Haring, Annie Leibovitz and, most famously, Andy Warhol.

CHALLENGE

Every year during the winter holidays, the brand's licensed distributor, Corby Spirit and Wine, issues a special edition of this classic libation. Absolut fans keep an eye out for the limited run, so the bottles have a following among collectors. Traditionally, Corby has supported this special product with a multimedia campaign and made good use of in-store displays and point-of-sale elements.

The 2020 holiday season, however, put a chill on that.

Pandemic-inspired safety measures meant liquor stores were open, but to create space for physical distancing, they weren't allowing as many in-store displays. Corby still needed to reach its customers and drive sales to Absolut's special edition bottle, but now faced the challenge of doing so without its favoured tool.



RELEVANCE

Absolut was not alone. Creating meaningful connections with customers whose world was rapidly changing [almost by the day] required brands to constantly reconsider and re-evaluate their media mix in order to remain relevant. The home environment and gifting became a critical component of the holiday strategy to ensure sales remained strong. And, according to Kantar's cross-channel study, physical media is among the most impactful touchpoints for food and drink.

With pandemic lockdowns in place, most brands turned to digital communication. That presented an opportunity for Absolut. *"We thought it was a good time to test and learn,"* says Anika Sharma, Assistant Brand Manager for Corby. With other channels clogged, trying something new – namely a print message – let the company stand out.

For this special edition bottle, Corby targeted urban millennials. Research proves that groups respond well to direct mail if it's relevant to them. *"We're not used to getting mail; it's all digital culture for us,"*

COMPANY: Corby Spirit and Wine | PRODUCT: Absolut Vodka | COUNTRY: Canada | AGENCY: Havas Media Canada

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says Sharma. She also knows that campaigns that use physical and digital outreach drive higher recall. *"It was the perfect time to kick it in an old-school kind of way,"* she says.

INCITING ACTION

Canada Post identified neighbourhoods with a high percentage of young, downtown professionals. To drive awareness for this new bottle, Corby would send 250,000 pieces of direct mail in combination with social, digital and targeted out-of-home.

With its sophisticated targeting capabilities, direct mail shows it can deliver specific demographics with unrivalled precision – in this case, younger adults in condos within urban centres near specific retail outlets. Each one had to count. *"If we're investing in that many pieces,"* says Sharma, *"we want to*

make sure they're going to the right 250,000 people, not a random collection."

Neither Sharma nor Havas, Corby's agency, had ever worked with direct mail before, so they enlisted Canada Post expert partner Marketing Kitchen, to help. *"The Expert Partner made it turnkey for Corby,"* says Robin Nordlander, Canada Post Business Acquisition Manager.

Corby targeted neighbourhoods in Ontario and British Columbia where the holiday bottles were available.

Working with Havas, Corby developed a three-panel print piece. Sharma explains that it included three perforated gift tags *"to elevate the gifting proposition,"* as well as recipes for inspiration and a QR code where people could find a location close to them that had the bottle. *"The material was high quality and vibrant to push the premium cues,"* says Sharma.

RESULTS

What Corby saw was a 70 per cent increase in sales of the limited edition bottle compared to 2019, when the campaign didn't include direct mail media.

"I can tell you we haven't done this level of sales in any of the past years. It was phenomenal. People were walking into LCBO carrying the DM piece," says Sharma. *"Direct mail is not a space that's tapped into enough. It's not overly cluttered in our category, the way digital and social are. So we get more brand recall that way. Direct mail provides an elevated customer experience you don't get through digital. If there's another opportunity, we will consider direct mail for sure."*

As a result of this campaign, Havas is now recommending direct mail for other clients.

Case Study Debrief

BRAND Absolut Vodka

INDUSTRY Food & Beverage

Inciting Action

Corby's reconsidered its usual media mix for Absolut Vodka, turning to direct mail to drive in-home use and gifting for its premium LTO.

Results

Using direct mail for the first time as part of an integrated campaign achieved a 70 per cent increase in year-over-year sales.

Conversion Funnel

Dots indicate where direct mail was used to incite action.



Data Sources

Postal code data

Media Formats

Canada Post
Neighbourhood Mail™

Activation Pillars

- Physicality
- Data
- Connectivity

Key Takeaways

- > Constantly re-evaluate channel mix against current market conditions.
- > Direct mail offers the targeting bandwidth needed to reach specific audiences.
- > Physical media helps brands stand out in cluttered categories.
- > Direct mail is a timely activation channel that reinforces premium brand cues.

“ Direct mail lets us hit people where they are... at home. This was the perfect opportunity for us to test and learn with an elevated piece of direct mail. In the end, sales were phenomenal. ”

– Anika Sharma, Assistant Brand Manager, Corby Spirit and Wine.

