

FROM COLD CASE TO **GOLD CASE**

Peter Ampe

PREFACE

It's always a pity when a great idea doesn't get the case study film it deserves. Compare it to your last holiday. You ploughed through miles of snow, climbed a 3,000-meter mountain, just in time to experience an amazing sunset. Tell the story poorly, and it sounds like you hiked the Belgian Ardennes on a Wednesday afternoon. Tell the story right, and your audience will actually relive your experience.

Yet still, case study films remain every creative's nightmare. That's because they have become a medium on their own, almost demanding film directors skills from those making them. It is this observation that led to this guide. It's a combination of all my experiences of the last fifteen years, the structure is based on the idea that case films have a lot in common with short movies. This handbook will teach you to go from copywriter to screenwriter and use Plot, Genre and Structure to evolve from complacent to compelling, from messy to seamless – from case to story.

By sharing my observations with you, I hope your next idea will get the case study film it deserves.

Peter Ampe
CCO

PART I:

**THE IMPORTANCE
OF CASE FILMS**

but what if your favourite author has already passed away?

The impossible
Signing sessions



Advertising Agency: DDB Belgium

Client: bol.com

Campaign: The Impossible Signing Sessions

Year: 2017

Why every CFO should like case films

On a bright day in April 2016, my former CFO at DDB stopped me in the hallway with a grave look on her face. It was not the first time she had stopped me in the hall with that look, but this time I knew it was not to unkindly – or ‘kindly’ – remind me to complete my timesheets. This time it was about the hours our inhouse editor had spent on the case film for e-retailer bol.com.

“97 hours to be exact. All unbillable”, she said.

“They will be billable once this case gets us a new client”, I replied.

Deep down, however, I knew she was right: we did not count the hours on this one; we just wanted to get it right. Even the editor was getting slightly annoyed and started explicitly naming the edits V15, V16, Def, almost Def, Def final and Final final, hoping I would get the message.

In June that year, the same CFO stopped me in the hall once again, this time with a smile on her face. She was extremely happy with the Gold Lions award we had just won in Cannes. Just a few weeks later she was even happier, because a leading local mobile provider had invited us to work for them after seeing the case on our reel. From that moment on my CFO learned to appreciate case films. She even accepted the absurd amount of time we had been spending, because some ideas deserve a case film that’s on the same level as the idea. And, if it takes 97 hours to make a compelling two minutes, then so be it.

**CREATIVES LIKE CASE
FILMS BECAUSE THEY
WIN AWARDS;
CFOS SHOULD LIKE
THEM BECAUSE THEY
WIN NEW BUSINESS.**

No case film, no award

The shift from mono-channel ideas to multi-channel activations, brand experiences, services and product innovations has caused case films to become a necessity. A case film enables you to experience an idea seamlessly, giving you a feeling for the flow, different touch points and, ultimately, the overall results.

It makes a great tool for both agencies and brands alike. Marketing directors use case films for internal and external presentations to showcase the success of a campaign or a platform. Agencies enter them into award shows and put them on their reels to impress new and existing clients.

7,102 case films were made in 2019 (source: Cannes Lions)

But let's face it, award shows are the main reason why case films are made. To give you an idea, 7,102 different case films were produced this year with the sole ambition of entering them in the 2019 edition of the Cannes Lions Festival of Creativity. It shows how essential they are in today's judging system. Can you still win an award without a case film? I challenge you to do so. Can you change the colour of metal by investing time and money in your case film? I bet you can. To put it bluntly – no case film, no award.

However, a great case film will not save a mediocre idea. A bad idea will remain bad, even if you tie a pink ribbon round it. But the same pink ribbon tied to a great idea might have the power to turn Silver into Gold or Gold into a Grand Prix. On the other hand, a bad case film can kill a great idea.

Inside the juror's head

How does a juror's mind work? To give you an idea, let me briefly recall my jury experience during the 2016 eurobest Direct Jury, which took place in Rome. The Italian capital is a fabulous historical place that I had been lucky enough to visit many times before. But when you're part of a jury, it doesn't matter which city you're in, you'll only see the inside of the same room for a few days.

Eurobest is a rather small award show when it comes down to judging conditions. But even so, we were still locked up with eight jurors in a small hotel room for three days. The bed was replaced by a round table and eight chairs. We spent every day watching the flat screen television on the wall, accompanied by the sound of a coffee machine grinding beans in the background. The lucky ones had a chair facing the small hotel room window. The only hope of a mental escape was the sight of the roof of the Basilica Del Sacro Cuore across the street. We were facing a life-size gilded figure of Jesus, shining like a promo star in his gold leaf coat. He was holding up his right hand in the direction of the Villa Borghese, two kilometres further down the road, where we would rather have been than in a standard double room occupied by eight people who were rather embarrassed to be sharing one bathroom. If you were lucky, someone was grinding coffee beans just when you were in there.



Our view from the jury room at eurobest 2016, Rome