



6 Ways to Make Road Users Think

Introduction

This document is intended to give a short introduction to the THINK! brand for any stakeholder that might work with it.

It explains the six principles that are essential to understanding the brand before using it in communications...

- 1.THINK! gets road users to think for themselves
- 2.THINK! tells road users about consequences
- 3.THINK! talks to road users as adults
- 4.THINK! is from government not 'The Government'
- 5.THINK! engages all road users
- 6.THINK! is evidence based

1. THINK! gets road users to think for themselves

The purpose of THINK! is to change people's behaviour.

But it's important to remember that people are responsible for their own behaviour; they're the ones who make the decision to change it.

A campaign from THINK! can't simply tell them what they should do, and expect them to do it. Rather it needs to make them think, and see for themselves what they should do.

Since the brand was launched in 2000, all THINK! campaigns have been developed with this thought in mind: **to get road users to think for themselves.**

This approach has been key to the success of THINK! Road users increasingly describe the campaigns as making them think, and prompting them to take responsibility. Many talk about THINK! as pricking their conscience. Here are some quotes from some recent research with road users.

"It's [THINK!] about safety. It's about everyone looking out for each other really. The police are there to carry out the laws, but they can't be everywhere. It's about you making decisions for yourself." (Male, 15)

"It does go into your conscience... and especially if I'm thinking about the messages about road safety, certainly the one about having killed a kid, that sort of thing. You're going to have to live with that." (Male, 38, Drive for Work)

2. THINK! makes road users think about the consequences

Over the years the THINK! brand has got people thinking about a wide range of road safety issues. Whether it's fastening a seatbelt, or deciding not to drink before driving, the underlying message has always been the same: think about the consequences of your actions.

A number of different consequences have been shown.

They might be the immediate consequences: consequences that are suffered when an incident happens on the road (often these have been more physical). As with the campaign showing the impact a body suffers without a seatbelt.



They might be subsequent consequences: consequences that affect someone's life after the incident. As with the campaign showing the barman warning of the possible consequence of drink driving.



It may be that the consequences are implied: as in this campaign which encourages you to see motorcyclists as people thereby prompting you to think about the very human consequences of hitting them. The ad dramatises a situation where the consequences have been avoided, the motorist sees the motorcyclists, but the possible consequences are implied to great effect.



Again, research has validated this approach. By demonstrating consequences, people are invited to think about their own behaviour, and thus they internalise the message. For a behaviour change brand this is a much more powerful approach than simply issuing commands. To take a specific example, saying 'speed kills' is more likely to make people think about consequences and thus internalise the message than than saying 'slow down'.

"It's giving you responsibility... it is asking you not telling you... THINK! isn't just saying slow down but think as to why you're slowing down. It's about initiating some learning, to ask yourself why." (Male, 20, Biker)

The difference between 'Speed kills' and 'Slow down' is 'Speed kills' isn't telling you... it's telling you to slow down but in a hidden way. It's making you think a bit more than just slow down which can just go through one ear and out the other, really." (Male, 15)

3. THINK! talks to people as adults

It is often said in communications that how you say something is just as important as what you say.

As discussed, talking about the possible consequences of a road user's actions is important in getting them to think. But the tone with which that message is delivered is just as important.

In particular THINK! has always treated it's audience as adults, and addressed them in an informative, non-judgmental way.

Communications must tread a fine line in order to get this right.

On the one hand it should never be the finger-wagging voice of authority, telling road users what to do. It shouldn't be a stern voice of authority

On the other hand it shouldn't try to be the matey voice of a friend, cajoling people to do the right thing.

In research a number of stakeholders have felt that the tone should be a bit more friendly, but this isn't reflected by road users...

"It [being friendly] detracts from it I think. It makes it something it's not, in a way, there needs to be a hierarchy and mate just blurs the boundaries." (Male, 20, Moped Rider)

"Just try and engage people and treat them a bit more like adults than naughty children." (Male, 38, Drive for work)

A campaign that strikes the balance particularly well is for drink driving. The barman is neither too finger-wagging nor too matey. He addresses the audience in an adult way.



Another interesting example is the Tales of the Road campaign aimed at children. Despite the audience being children it still addresses them in an adult way, very clearly presenting to them the potential consequences of their behaviour on the road.



4. THINK! is from government not 'The Government'

THINK! provides a voice that road users will listen to in a way they might not listen to the Department for Transport.

Clearly, this is crucial to the purpose of getting them to think: it's unlikely that a message will make them think if they're reluctant to listen to it in the first place.

In research, road safety stakeholders have sometimes expressed concern that road users associate THINK! too closely with government. But this hasn't been found in research with road users.

*"You could think, people would be like... this is from Downing Street, influencing our lives and stuff, dictating to us in a way. Whereas this has more reason, more focus and people associate THINK! more with.. I don't know... just a more individual thing."
(Male, 20, Moped Rider)*

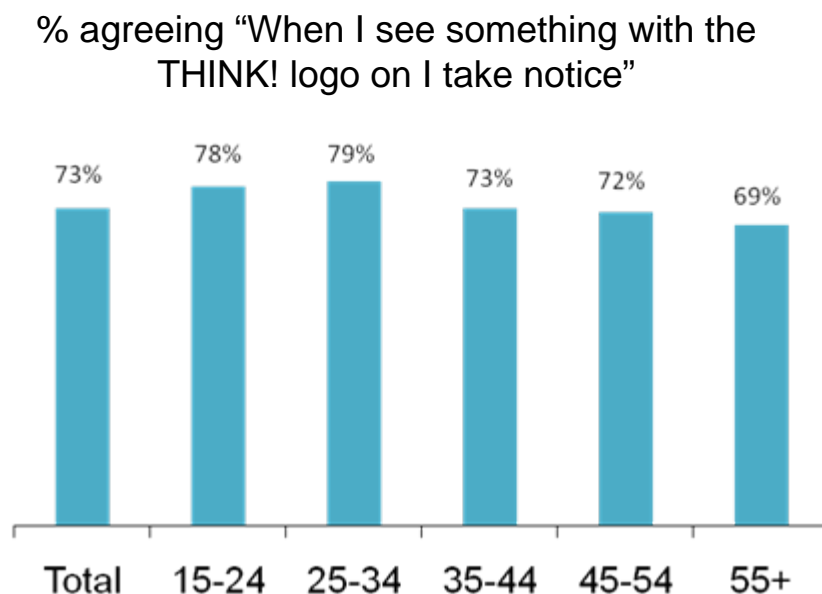
*"THINK! just says 'this happens you need to learn from it.'
...Although it might be a government thing I see it very much within that independentness." (Male, 36, Biker)*

5. THINK! engages all road users

The THINK! campaign is aimed at everyone who uses the road at every stage of their lives, whether they are driving, riding, walking, or cycling.

In research road users tend to associate THINK! with the issue most relevant to them: a child will associate it with crossing the road, a young man will talk about speeding, a motorbike rider will immediately think of motorbike campaigns.

A common misperception amongst those that use the brand at a local level is that THINK! doesn't appeal to a younger audience. THINK! has very wide appeal. Indeed the younger audience are the most engaged with it, as this data shows...



6. THINK! is evidence based

The concept behind every communications campaign featuring THINK! is rigorously researched amongst road users and its effectiveness proven.

This happens in two stages:

Stage 1 prior to the campaign launch: the new campaign strategic and creative idea is researched to establish whether it has the potential to achieve its communications objectives amongst road users. This research is usually in the form of qualitative focus groups where road users can express in detail their thoughts and opinions on the proposed communication.

Stage 2 once the ad has been on air: the new campaign will be quantitatively tracked amongst road users to monitor awareness, comprehension and impact on attitudes to road safety.

The DfT appreciate that often there may not be budget available to conduct bespoke research. In those instances please contact us for advice as there may be some relevant research learnings held centrally that can guide the successful development of your proposed communications.

Alternatively, rigorously researched THINK! campaign assets produced centrally by the DfT are available for all stakeholders to use. They may be subject to usage fees but this could still prove more cost effective than generating materials from scratch. Please contact the DfT for further information.