

Entry no.: 130

4 May 2007,
5:19 PMTags:
advertising,
anniversary,
applause,
Brandient,
design, **video**

Comments: 11

Advertising | Ten years of Connex

THE GREATEST ACCOUNT IN ROMANIAN ADVERTISING

If CONNEX was still alive, it would have turned 10 years old earlier a few days ago, in april. Looking back now, I'm sure that CONNEX was the greatest account in Romanian advertising, bar none. It attracted the best people and the best agencies into a Bermuda Triangle of überpower ecstasy and a free-falling nightmare, somewhere in between a tango dance floor of swift seduction and a fight club basement of bone breaking clashes.

When I say it was the greatest I say the most challenging and spectacular, the most influent and visible. Many were brought into the spotlight by this crusadeous account (people as well as agencies) and quite a few were wiped out — some tasted both. This is why the stories about it come in only two colors: exalted reality-distorted white and still-in-denial traumatic black.

As seen from outside, in its final period the account seemed to collapse eroded by confusion and drifted blindly — like a ghost-ship — until it finally disappeared.

I'm a lucky bastard: I was blessed with the privilege to be one of those who could afford getting addicted to this life-changing (for me, at least) drug twice: once briefly at the very beginning (1997) while working for BBDO, and the again during 2001-2002 period, while working for D'Arcy DMB&B.

MY CONNEX

Out of the (probably) hundreds of projects I was part of — from every conceivable position: art director, copywriter, designer, photographer, director, group creative director etc — I will only write here about three dear ones.

Connex Play campaign

CONNEX "Play" campaign had a life of its own, first shot for presentation purposes almost like a pieces of entertainment meant for setting the tone of the meeting, rejected, then surprisingly approved and re-shot on Betamax. There were many TVCs, some too weird to be aired — we laughed hysterically while shooting all of them, Liviu David, Vali Suciu and myself. Click to play the videos.



Marginalia

KIT·BLOG

This is Cristian -Kit- Paul, graphic designer, founding partner of **Brandient**. Welcome to **Kit-blog**.

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This was the only time I "acted" in commercials. Seeing myself and my colleagues on TV and in cinema theaters felt weird yet tickling cool.



I shot the print and OOH campaign with Cosmin Bumbuț (and a helping hand from Silviu Gheție), and I still remember a sunny yet perversely windy springtime photo-session somewhere on the seaside.

Connex ID

I designed many identities during the years, but this one was my first major encounter with serious branding, a vast corporate identity program and massive deployment. Frankly, this project was THE prequel to Brandient — the timeframe when both Aneta Bogdan (my tough client at the time, my

business partner, team colleague and dearest friend nowadays) and I realized in awe that we could leave the advertising world without looking back and incorporate together the first branding consultancy firm in Romania.

Updating CONNEX identity was a difficult in-flight overhaul job and it took a long time to complete, but it was badly needed mainly because of the functional problems the old logo raised but also because of the increasingly dated visual language the brand was using at the time. The main difficulty of the project was redesigning the logo without alienating the target — preferably with the whole facelifting passing unnoticed.



Connex logo before 2001 brand revitalization...



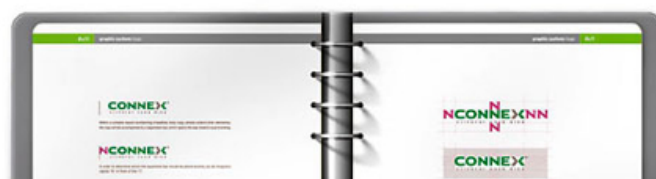
... and after I redesigned it.

I changed not only the logo, but also the color palette, the typography and the visual language used in marketing communication with minimum impact on brand indicators — for instance no drop in awareness whatsoever. The funniest thing was seeing that not even the CEO — Ted Lattimore at the time — remembered that the logo was blue only a few months ago.



The CONNEX ID book was an enormous undertaking for one designer (actually the lively chapter was done by Costin "Pilă" Popescu at "CAP" while I was entirely overwhelmed and Diana Căpățână stood by my side all the way and helped me with the copy) so for many months I designed day and night and tested the designs in real-life conditions.

Every aspect of CONNEX identity was assessed and redesigned as a piece in the new puzzle. Here are a few pages (if you want more read [ID Connex in Articles](#)):

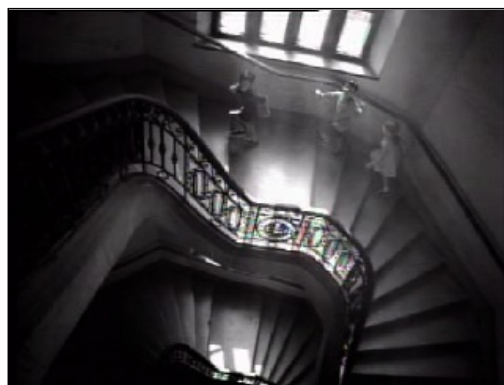




The identity lasted until Wally Olins' Saffron (Madrid division) redesigned it again in 2004. And yes, this one is a logo I miss.

Connex Dare campaign

Probably the largest advertising project I've been part of, Dare campaign was shot by the American Director & DOP Richard Reens in Budapest and Bucharest with an international team comprising local and foreign production studios conducted by Dan Ford, a Canadian Producer and was transferred, edited and graded in Munich at ARRI facilities by german professionals. The creative team was massive (almost whole D'Arcy contributed one way or another), but at the core we were the same Liviu David, Vali Suciu and myself. Here is the CONNEX "Dare" TVC in 60' cut, click to play the video:



As trivia, the commercial was actually shot in colors (for fall-back reasons) and then color graded to black and white — a procedure by no means easier than grading color stock. Also, beside the official version there is a very special *director's cut* seen only by few people until now (thank you, Richard), click to play and tell me if you have ever seen something so beautiful:





And a "behind the scenes" edit that I completely forgot about, click to play:



Photo sessions took place in Budapest and Bucharest with german photographer Johann Sebastian Hanel producing over 2000 shots. Here are some original uncropped scans of Sebastian's slides used in the campaign:





This is *my* side — a bit of *my* CONNEX story. How do *you* remember CONNEX? What was CONNEX to you?

Comments

Reply no.: 1

4 May 2007,
7:31 PM

EROS :

for anyone working in the visual, connex was probably the holy graal of the accounts. for me - just a small puzzle(d) piece connex was simply the stuff of legends. people working with and for them were - as you point out - darn lucky bastards. of whom you hit the top 10 :D but that's another story.

Reply no.: 2

4 May 2007,
8:18 PM

TUDOR:

along the same lines, even for somebody that's not in the visual, seeing the old connex logo and some of the old clips - connex play for instance - sends shivers down the spine. You ad-people should be proud of having created something that sticked well deep into some of us' brains - at least for those, like me, for which connex was part of our youth ...somehow...in some way
well, i'll stop being pathetic - good job, guys!

Reply no.: 3

5 May 2007,
1:04 PM

IANCU :

Connex Play Lab was my favourite, I remember when I bought my first phone, a Nokia 5110 (the most popular among students at that time) that I so much enjoyed that phone ring that my pals eventually asked me to change it because they were so sick of it :))

And after all these years, hearing that phone ring from time to time, in the subway or in the street, brings back memories :)

Reply no.: 4

6 May 2007,
1:50 PM

KIT :

I've appended the *director's cut* and a *behind the scenes* edit, both courtesy of Richard Reens — thank you.

Enjoy — I know I did.

Reply no.: 5

7 May 2007,
8:36 PM

TUDORV:

I was working at Grapefruit Design in 2000/2001. Connex was their biggest client at that time, and boy, did we work our ass off... There were so many things I did, watched and learned during that time, I can honestly say that my career as a graphic designer was influenced by Connex.

Reply no.: 6

8 May 2007,

VALI SUCIU:

11:39 AM

Yeah, it was fun. A huge energy behind this account. Endless nights. And it produced advertising that still cannot be matched today. I was talking these days with a 20 years old that wanted to get into advertising (client service). She asked me to tell her some of the campaigns I've worked on. I've started to tell her about Connex. She knew none of the campaigns. Sad. I felt so old. Anyway, commercials are like news, they have a short life. Maybe that's why Kit choosed to go into design, it stays in people life longer:)

Reply no.: 7

8 May 2007,
12:53 PM

KIT:

Thank you Vali for joining in.

Wild days and endless nights. Heaps of print ads and TVC scripts. Gazillion presentations and Aneta making us rethink and redo everything until it's perfect. Rock and roll like there was no tomorrow.

I'd do it again.

Reply no.: 8

8 May 2007,
6:18 PM

LIVIU:

Hi guys.

I remember thinking "I'd love to get some sleep now. I hate doing ten projects a week, but damn I'll miss it"

And I do miss it, because we were all passionate and maniacs with details, while nowadays I can't find a lot of people (both clients and creatives) with the same drive and passion.

Thank you, Kit, Vali and Aneta, for keeping my standard so high. My life could have been much easier without it, but who needs a boring life? :)

Reply no.: 9

8 May 2007,
7:06 PM

KIT:

Liviu, look at the *Making of*. we were suicidal and young.

It's been an honor serving with you, Sir. Thank you.

Reply no.: 10

13 May 2007,
9:28 PM

TED LATTIMORE:

Hey, I don't remember ever forgetting that Connex had some blue in the logo! But regardless, it was fun and heart warming to read this blog. I believe Connex represented the same things to many people as each of you have mentioned in your correspondence. Difficult, challenging work for sure. But exciting and rewarding when everything came together. And you knew when it was right. Thanks for the walk down memory lane.

Noroc,

Ted

Reply no.: 11

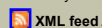
14 May 2007,
11:23 PM

KIT:

Mr. Lattimore, designer's courtesy always prevents me from arguing about colors with an ex-client I had dinner with only once (in Cannes that is, if you remember).

That being said, thank you for the kind words.

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