

ENGLISH LEARNING FOR CURIOUS MINDS



Thank you - your ongoing membership makes Leonardo English possible.

If you have questions we'd love to hear from you: hi@leonardoenglish.com

Episode #010
The Most Successful Advertising Slogans of All Time
December 20, 2019

[00:00:02] Hello, hello, hello, and welcome to the English Learning for Curious Minds podcast.

[00:00:08] It's December the 20th, just five days before Christmas.

[00:00:12] And I guess for some of you, this might mean you're **scurrying**¹ around trying to find last minute presents for your loved ones.

[00:00:20] So we are going to be talking about something related to buying stuff or related to how people think about companies when buying stuff, and talk about one of the things that makes us decide whether to buy something from one company or from another, from one brand or from another brand.

[00:00:38] Before we get right into the heart of the podcast though, I wanted to remind those of you listening on Spotify, Apple Podcasts or wherever you might get your podcasts, that you can get the transcript and key vocabulary for this podcast on the website, which is leonardoenglish.com.

¹ (of a person or small animal) moving quickly with short quick steps

English Learning for Curious Minds | Episode #010

The Most Successful Advertising Slogans of All Time

[00:00:56] If you're listening to this on the website with the transcript and key vocabulary in front of you, then congratulations, you are one [step ahead of the game](#)².

[00:01:05] Also at the end of the podcast, I'll reveal how one huge multinational company made a terrible mistake with their messaging when they went to China.

[00:01:17] Okay, so Christmas presents and slogans.

[00:01:22] I don't need to tell you that Christmas is obviously a big time for shopping.

[00:01:27] It's [boom time](#)³ for high-street shops as people [manically](#)⁴ try to find gifts before Christmas Day.

[00:01:34] Some retailers, some shops, especially those selling things like games and toys, do about 30% of their entire sales just in December.

[00:01:44] And companies are doing everything they possibly can to [stand out](#)⁵, to be remembered, to make you choose them over one of their competitors.

[00:01:53] I used to work in marketing, so I've got a bit of experience with how some of this stuff works, and it basically [boils down](#)⁶ to this:

[00:02:02] There are a few categories of things in life that you might be tempted to buy - stuff you need, stuff you want and sort of don't need and stuff you'd really don't need.

² to already be in advantage, to already be already prepared

³ a period in which there is a surge of prosperity for a person, place, or industry

⁴ (informal) in a busy, excited or anxious way

⁵ be different from

⁶ can be summarised as

English Learning for Curious Minds | Episode #010

The Most Successful Advertising Slogans of All Time

[00:02:11] With all of this stuff, there are normally hundreds or thousands of different companies that can sell you basically the same thing. Maybe it tastes, looks or feels a little bit different.

[00:02:26] In many cases, yes, you can tell the difference and you prefer a certain kind of bread, shampoo, clothes, watch, whatever it might be, but in many cases it does basically exactly the same thing.

[00:02:40] Especially with expensive branded goods, they are often almost exactly the same as the cheaper version.

[00:02:47] But you're paying for something [intangible](#)⁷, something that you can't feel, something you can't sense.

[00:02:54] It's because it makes you feel different, it makes you feel like you're part of something, like you're buying into something that's bigger than just the products.

[00:03:03] This is all part of what's called branding.

[00:03:06] Now, branding is a complicated subject. I don't claim to be an expert on it at all, and there are thousands of branding agencies that will charge hundreds of thousands of dollars to help [craft](#)⁸ a brand, and we may even have a few guests on the podcast next year to talk about this if it's of interest to listeners.

[00:03:27] But today, as we are just five days away from Christmas, I wanted to talk about one tiny slice of branding, and that's something called a slogan.

[00:03:39] Now, perhaps you haven't heard the word slogan before. It's defined - if you look it up in the dictionary - you'll see the definition as 'a short and striking or memorable phrase used in advertising.'

⁷ difficult or impossible to define or understand; vague and abstract

⁸ exercise skill in making

English Learning for Curious Minds | Episode #010

The Most Successful Advertising Slogans of All Time

[00:03:53] For example, McDonald's - and I choose this one because it is translated into lots of languages - in English. It's I'm lovin' it, Ich Liebe es in German, C'est tout que j'aime in French, Me encanta in Spanish, or wo jiu xihuan in Mandarin.

[00:04:10] The idea is that a slogan should be [catchy](#)⁹ and functional, reminding consumers of why they like a brand in a single [bite-sized](#)¹⁰ phrase.

[00:04:23] It should make you as a, as someone who might buy the product, should make you feel that the slogan reflects how you feel towards the company or brand.

[00:04:33] It's all trying to make what might otherwise seem like a boring and uninteresting product seem more interesting and [aspirational](#)¹¹.

[00:04:44] Today we are going to take a look at three of the most powerful, or at least three of my favourite, slogans in history. In English, of course,

[00:04:55] We're going to look at how they work, why they work, and we'll go through any clever [twists on language](#)¹² that they use.

[00:05:04] These three are all very different - in different industries, different countries, and completely different products.

[00:05:12] One, you definitely would have heard of.

[00:05:15] One you might have heard of, although I don't think so.

[00:05:19] And one I'm pretty sure you will not have heard of.

⁹ easy to remember

¹⁰ very small or short

¹¹ desirable, having or showing a desire to achieve a high level of success or social status

¹² clever uses of words

English Learning for Curious Minds | Episode #010

The Most Successful Advertising Slogans of All Time

[00:05:23] Okay, so let's start with the one you definitely will have heard of. Some of you may even be wearing a t-shirt with this emblazoned on.

[00:05:34] It's Nike.

[00:05:35] Their slogan is, as you may know, Just Do It. Just Do It.

[00:05:42] It has been the [key](#)¹³ message for Nike or Nike, I should say, if I'm American, since 1988 and has been [going strong](#)¹⁴ for 30 years now.

[00:05:52] Nike's brand is all about [empowering](#)¹⁵ people to achieve their goals, to not let anything get in their way.

[00:06:01] And Nike wants to be the tool to allow them to do exactly what they want to, to allow everyone to be an athlete.

[00:06:08] So let's take a look at this slogan. We can break down these three words and look at exactly why they work, right?

[00:06:13] The three words are not complicated.

[00:06:15] Just Do It.

[00:06:17] So the first word is 'just'.

[00:06:21] When 'just' is used at the start of a sentence before an imperative, it's like an order, right?

¹³ very important

¹⁴ to continue without stopping

¹⁵ make (someone) stronger and more confident, especially in controlling their life and claiming their rights

English Learning for Curious Minds | Episode #010

The Most Successful Advertising Slogans of All Time

[00:06:27] It **reinforces**¹⁶ the need to do something. It also adds a sense of urgency. So 'just shut up' means to ask someone to be quiet right now.

[00:06:39] You can use 'just' as a term to **reinforce**¹⁷ an imperative. Just shut up, just go away, just give me it. That kind of stuff.

[00:06:50] The second word of the slogan is do.

[00:06:54] Okay, so you know what this word means, it's a, it's an active word. Do is an active term. It's also the opposite of don't, the negative term you would use when telling someone not to do something.

[00:07:09] And the final word of the slogan is 'it'.

[00:07:13] Using the pronoun it here without having previously referred to what 'it' is means that 'it' can be anything you want it to be.

[00:07:26] When you put these three words together, Just Do It, you get a term that makes people think that they can do whatever they want, and that Nike is the tool to **empower** them to achieve their goals. It's clever, right?

[00:07:41] Just Do It.

[00:07:43] Just Do It.

[00:07:44] And for anyone who might be doubting the power of a slogan like this, just imagine two identical white t-shirts.

¹⁶ strengthen (an existing feeling, idea, or habit)

¹⁷ see empower

English Learning for Curious Minds | Episode #010

The Most Successful Advertising Slogans of All Time

[00:07:52] One is completely blank, just nothing on it. And the other has the words, Just Do It on. Now think of what the [price tag](#)¹⁸ might be on each one, and that gives you an idea of the value of the brand and of the slogan.

[00:08:10] Secondly, here's one you might have heard of, but unless you're living in the US you probably haven't. It's from the American company Dollar Shave Club, which started out making razorblades and selling them by subscription, by delivery.

[00:08:26] The idea was that you could buy a razor blade for a dollar and they will be delivered to your door every week or month. It was a slogan that they used in 2015 shortly before they were bought by the Dutch [conglomerate](#)¹⁹ Unilever for over a billion dollars.

[00:08:45] So the slogan is, and listen carefully here, it's shave time, shave money. That's shave time, shave money with the 'sh' sound.

[00:08:57] Can you see why this one is clever?

[00:08:59] Well, it's a play on words, both visually and audibly. Meaning that shave sounds very similar to save. And also when you see the words written down, the only difference in the spelling is the addition of the H in shave.

[00:09:19] Dollar Shave Club is a very playful brand, and this play on words fits right in with the rest of their marketing. If you haven't seen their launch video yet, the video they made when they launched the brand, just search for Dollar Shave Club on YouTube and have a look. It's hilarious, and you'll see exactly what I'm talking about. I'll also put a link in the show notes.

¹⁸ the ticket on a piece of clothing that shows the price

¹⁹ large collection of brands or companies

English Learning for Curious Minds | Episode #010

The Most Successful Advertising Slogans of All Time

[00:09:44] So shave time, shave money is playful, yet **reinforces** the two core benefits of the service, which are that the company helps save you time because they deliver it to your door and they help save you money because they are cheaper.

[00:10:04] Finally, this is one that you probably won't have heard of, but if you are listening in the UK, then you might have.

[00:10:12] It was one of my mother's favourites when I was growing up. It's from the British home and garden goods company, Ronseal

[00:10:21] Ronseal makes things like **varnish**²⁰, **sealant**²¹, protective things for fences, doors, and that kind of stuff. Basically, really boring products that no one would ever have really thought you could build a fun brand around. There's nothing fun about buying paint for your kitchen floor or garden fence.

[00:10:45] But Ronseal have a pretty fun and memorable slogan.

[00:10:49] Their slogan, which has been in use since 1994 is It Does Exactly What It Says On The **Tin**²². So I'll repeat that.

[00:10:59] It Does Exactly What It Says On The Tin.

[00:11:03] It's so well known in the UK that even the ex-Prime Minister David Cameron used it to describe his government.

[00:11:12] In a world where companies were trying to come up with more and more **aspirational** slogans and catchphrases, which their products couldn't really **live up to**²³

²⁰ a liquid used to protect wood, metal, or other materials

²¹ a liquid used to stop liquid getting into material

²² an airtight container made of tinplate or aluminium

²³ meets expectations or promises

English Learning for Curious Minds | Episode #010

The Most Successful Advertising Slogans of All Time

, Ronseal decided to go completely the opposite way and create a incredibly simple slogan.

[00:11:30] It Does Exactly What It Says On The Tin means only that the product will work in the way that it says it will, that it will do what it says it will do on the outside of the tin.

[00:11:42] It's hardly the most aspirational claim by a company, but it really appeals to the British sense of [self-deprecation](#)²⁴, of [putting oneself down](#)²⁵.

[00:11:53] And it worked. I mean, it really worked. The slogan [catapulted](#)²⁶ Ronseal well above its rivals, and it's now the market leader in the UK for goods in its category.

[00:12:04] If you're in the UK and you hear someone saying It Does Exactly What It Says On The Tin, then you'll know where this phrase comes from.

[00:12:12] That's sort of the best possible thing that a brand can hope for, that its slogan becomes used in language and [common parlance](#)²⁷.

[00:12:23] People then just talking between themselves are in effect doing the marketing and doing the advertising for a company for free.

[00:12:33] Okay, so that is a quick pre-Christmas summary of three of the most successful company slogans of all time

[00:12:40] Nike's Just Do It.

²⁴ modest about or critical of oneself, especially humorously so

²⁵ being critical about yourself

²⁶ moved quickly upwards

²⁷ normal speech

English Learning for Curious Minds | Episode #010

The Most Successful Advertising Slogans of All Time

[00:12:43] Dollar Shave Club's, Shave Time, Shave Money, and Ronseal's, It Does Exactly What It Says On The Tin.

[00:12:51] Before we go though, I've just got one quick story about a slogan that went wrong. Or rather a translation of a slogan that went wrong.

[00:13:00] You've actually already heard it right at the start of the podcast. It's the McDonald's slogan, I'm lovin' it.

[00:13:08] In China, it was translated as wo jiu xihuan.

[00:13:13] This technically means something like, I just like it, but the second word 'jiu' is normally used to contradict someone who has said something different previously.

[00:13:26] So the [implication](#)²⁸ is that the person saying the slogan is defending McDonald's food to someone who has said it's disgusting.

[00:13:36] So the English equivalent might be something like, but I like it.

[00:13:41] The idea is that someone said, Eugh, why do you eat that disgusting stuff?

[00:13:45] And the slogan is, but I like it.

[00:13:48] In any case, it does sound a bit stupid when it's pointed out, but it hasn't stopped the success of McDonald's in China.

[00:13:55] Okay then.

[00:13:57] As always, if you've enjoyed this podcast and you want to give me a Christmas present that will not only take you 20 seconds to do, cost you nothing and leave a big smile on my face, then you can leave a review of the podcast.

[00:14:10] Each review helps more people find the podcast, and the more people who listen well, the better it'll get for everyone.

²⁸ the conclusion that can be drawn from something although it is not explicitly stated

English Learning for Curious Minds | Episode #010
The Most Successful Advertising Slogans of All Time

[00:14:18] There'll be another podcast coming out next Tuesday, so that's on the 24th where we'll be telling the story of how one book made Christmas, what it is today.

[00:14:27] And no it's not the Bible.

[00:14:28] The only clue I'll give you is that it was written 160 years ago in Victorian London.

[00:14:34] You've been listening to the English Learning For Curious Minds podcast by Leonardo English.

[00:14:39] I'm Alastair Budge, and I'll catch you in the next episode.

[END OF PODCAST]

Key vocabulary

<u>Word</u>	<u>Definition</u>
Scurrying	(of a person or small animal) moving quickly with short quick steps
Step ahead of the game	to already be in advantage, to already be already prepared
Boom time	a period in which there is a surge of prosperity for a person, place, or industry
Manically	(informal) in a busy, excited or anxious way
Stand out	be different from
Boils down	can be summarised as
Intangible	difficult or impossible to define or understand; vague and abstract
Craft	exercise skill in making
Catchy	easy to remember
Bite-sized	very small or short
Aspirational	desirable, having or showing a desire to achieve a high level of success or social status
Twists on language	clever uses of words
Key	very important
Going strong	to continue without stopping
Empowering	make (someone) stronger and more confident, especially in controlling their life and claiming their rights
Reinforces	strengthen (an existing feeling, idea, or habit)

English Learning for Curious Minds | Episode #010
The Most Successful Advertising Slogans of All Time

Empower	see empower
Price tag	the ticket on a piece of clothing that shows the price
Conglomerate	large collection of brands or companies
Varnish	a liquid used to protect wood, metal, or other materials
Sealant	a liquid used to stop liquid getting into material
Tin	an airtight container made of tinfoil or aluminium
Live up to	meets expectations or promises
Self-deprecation	modest about or critical of oneself, especially humorously so
Putting oneself down	being critical about yourself
Catapulted	moved quickly upwards
Common parlance	normal speech
Implication	the conclusion that can be drawn from something although it is not explicitly stated

We'd love to get your feedback on this podcast.

What did you like? What could we do better?

What did you struggle to understand?

You can email us at hi@leonardoenglish.com.