“Grab a Bucket and Mop!”
Finding QSC when we need them most.

By Julius C. Dorsey Jr.

Owning the cleanliness position has been the basis for great sales performance before. Little did McDonald’s founder Ray Kroc know how much the restaurant industry and others would need him today. Ray’s dedication to core operations led to the acronym, QSC, which stood for Quality, Service & Cleanliness.

Post- COVID-19 McDonald’s would probably love to bring back the commercial that started it all, “Grab a Bucket and Mop” and the campaign that it launched, “You Deserve a Break Today.”

There’s no doubt we could all use a break and a safe place to take it.

The You Deserve a Break campaign and its first commercial, Grab a Bucket, were written by legendary ad man, Keith Reinhard. Six of us here at Dorsey & Company worked with Keith as fellow McDonald’s account or creative staff or, as some of us did, on both the agency side and then as McDonald’s national marketing staff.

The jingle stems from great creativity applied to something operationally fundamental about McDonald’s that made it different and better than competitors, providing a competitive advantage. Notice - In the entire commercial, not one image and just one word about the food!! This shows advertising giant David Ogilvy was right: “The most powerful element in advertising is the truth.”

McDonald’s owned the clean position until long after the campaign ended. Just read a few words from the 1971 commercial:

Grab a bucket and mop,
Scrub the bottom and top.
There is nothing so clean
As my burger machine!

With a broom and a brush,
Clean it up for the rush!
Before you open the door,
Put a shine on the floor!
When we’ve finished, what then?
Start all over again!
Tell me, what does it mean?
At McDonald’s it’s clean!
You deserve a break today!
So get up and get away!
To McDonald’s! McDonald’s! McDonald’s!

Advertising comes after the hard work
Even before the advertising folks developed the iconic campaign, the hard work of delivery had to come first. Reasons to believe advertising claims can’t be based on hope, dreams and cleverness; they have to be reliably and consistently delivered. Only then can promises, big claims and big ideas drive outstanding sales results.

Claims are OKAY, but to quote another bit of great QSR advertising: “Where’s the Beef?” For the most part, we haven’t seen it yet, but that’s no fault of restaurateurs or others. The performance standard for safety post COVID (set ultimately by the customer, not regulators) is still evolving. Meanwhile, restaurants and others scramble to restock, reformat service and seating, and retrain staff to resume operations. Unfortunately, exactly what will make everyone feel safe is unsettled at best or worse, unknown.

For some restaurant, retail and service brands, big opportunities await because “clean” is such an important issue today – it’s suddenly more top of mind for every consumer. Advertisers everywhere are now touting their efforts to make things clean and safe for customers and staff.

Some will find the "secret sauce"
Brands with insight will engineer sanitation, safety and service processes into operating procedures to be top of mind, word and deed for every employee, every time. This can be achieved by most with sufficient desire and follow through. But more sales production is available from this effort only for a select few.

Who will step up past the words to present an elegant combination of operating performance, brand positioning and creativity to own “clean” in the future? Who will, who can, who should take something EVERY CUSTOMER will say they want and EVERY provider will say they deliver and turn it into a principal reason to select and sustain use of their brand?

Julius C. Dorsey, Jr. is founder, President and CEO of Dorsey & Company, a consulting firm providing services in competitive and marketing strategy, market research, and strategy and tactical implementation. Prior to founding Dorsey & Company, Julius worked for J. Walter Thompson and Burrell Advertising, and while at McDonald’s was responsible for test marketing and national launch of breakfast, McChicken, McNuggets and McRib where he also worked with Advertising Hall of Fame inductee Keith Reinhard. Julius currently serves on the board of the Ohio Restaurant Association.