



## BusinessWeek

### A PRODUCT-PLACEMENT HALL OF FAME

In the generically minded film world of a generation ago, an on-screen soda bottle was simply labeled "root beer" and a tennis shoe was -- well, any old shoe. Nowadays, the movie and TV industries are molding products, logos, and slogans into the very building blocks of popular culture -- often without audiences realizing it.

Here is an informal product-placement Hall of Fame, transcendent instances in which movies or TV shows changed the fate of real-life products, services, or brands. placement lessons that, if adapted successfully, could help your product land in the spotlight, too.

**Hey, this is for real!:** **Reese's Pieces, ET (1982).**

The decision to feature Reese's Pieces in ET catapulted the product-placement craft into the Hollywood mainstream. Reese's Pieces leapt onto kids' mental menus and sales shot up 65%; Mars, the maker of M&Ms, had passed on the opportunity.

**Pitch your weakness, not your strength:** **Budget Rent-a-Truck, Home Alone (1990).**

Budget was a major player in car rentals, but its truck-rental business was being obscured by household names like U-Haul and Ryder. Budget struck gold when it put polkameister John Candy and his merry band -- along with Jan Hooks, playing Macaulay Culkin's mom -- in a Budget moving van making the long haul back to Chicago.

**Selling high:** **Red Stripe beer, The Firm (1993).**

Placement can enhance brand value at strategic times. When Tom Cruise visits Gene Hackman in the Cayman Islands, Hackman suggests that he "grab a Red Stripe", so Cruise opens the fridge for a bottle of the Jamaican-brewed beer. Within a month of the film's release, Red Stripe sales in the U.S. increased by 50%.

**Don't be afraid to laugh at yourself:** **Junior Mints, Seinfeld.**

Warner-Lambert Co.'s Junior Mints brand was just one beneficiary of the *Seinfeld* product-placement bonanza. But unlike most placements, which try to paint a product in the most positive light, Junior Mints willingly became comic fodder. "Some

companies didn't want to see their candy falling into the cavity of a patient: They overanalyzed it and lost the humor in it," recalls advertising executive Patricia Ganguzza. "Now everybody knows that episode as the 'Junior Mints episode.'"

**Goodnight! Product placement in the bedroom?: The Buchman Bed in NBC's *Mad About You***

Swamped by calls from viewers wanting to know where to buy Paul and Jamie Buchman's bed, NBC was forced to wet up a web link and special phone number to handle requests.

**Face time is fat city: Ray-Ban sunglasses, *Risky Business* (1983), *Men in Black* (1997)**

Because they adorn the on-screen faces of the stars, sunglasses have come to occupy a prime role in product placement. This summer, the Swiss Army brand will place its logo on a pair of plot-critical remote-control specs used in the asteroid thriller *Armageddon*.

**Too much is never enough, 007: BMW, Aston Martin and James Bond**

The placement of BMW's Z-3 in *Goldeneye* helped turn the roadster's launch into one of the most successful new-car introductions ever (industry sources estimate that the placement sold \$240 million in cars in advance sales alone). So successful, Ford spared no expense to put Bond back behind the wheel of an Aston Martin in *Die Another Day*.

**Product Placement makes horse sense: EquiSearch in *The Horse Whisperer* (1998)**

A 30-second shot of EquiSearch's website, which lists horses and equestrian equipment for sale worldwide, increased traffic 40% and improved ad revenues 400%.

**You don't have to be big to succeed in product placement: RAM Sports Inc.** With \$10 million in sales and 50 employees, RAM Sports Inc spends 20% of its marketing budget on product placement for RAM's line of sport balls. Co-owner and CFO Randy Jones says: "When we have an exposure, our phone rings off the hook."

**You've got instant customer traffic: AOL in *You've Got Mail* (1998)**

The placement of AOL in *You've Got Mail* revolutionized product placement and promotional marketing. An AOL constructed website for the movie drove over 2.5 billion visits to AOL. (**Note:** Front Row Media Vice President, Mimi Clarke, negotiated the agreement between AOL and Time-Warner for this placement and promotion.)