



BY  
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# It Takes Courage

**RUSSELL FINDLAY BOLDLY ESCHEWS THE  
TRADITIONAL FEAR-BASED INSURANCE PITCH  
FOR A RETAIL-ORIENTED MARKETING APPROACH** 

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**USSELL FINDLAY** has an unusual background for an insurance marketer. He spent his early years at Unilever and PepsiCo, and even served as the first chief marketing officer for Major League Soccer. Now, as senior vice president and head of marketing at Hiscox Insurance, he's overseeing an unusual and counterintuitive campaign, "Encourage Courage," to help extend the British company's 10-year presence in the U.S.

Instead of the traditional fear-based insurance pitch — "Buy insurance or you'll be sorry someday!" — Hiscox's groundbreaking campaign promotes entrepreneurship and well-considered risk-taking needed to succeed in business. "My CPG years were in hypercompetitive categories, and that requires a deep understanding of the consumer," says Findlay, who has been with

Hiscox since 2013. “What drew me to the insurance space was the challenge of selling an intangible product in a low-interest category.”

Findlay embraced two goals for the 115-year-old company as he embarked on the 2014 launch of the Encourage Courage campaign: to expand Hiscox’s U.S. market beyond a network of brokers selling reinsurance and high-risk coverage, and to drive brand awareness and affinity directly to the end users of its insurance products for small businesses, professional and general liability, and information technology, among other categories.

In just the first year of the campaign, unaided brand awareness increased five times, aided brand awareness more than doubled, brand affinity increased a hundredfold, and inbound information requests increased 20 percent. These great results were fueled in part by Hiscox’s innovative video series, *Courageous Leaders*, which has received 72 million native ad impressions, one million organic video views, six million social impressions, and 15 million earned media impressions.

Findlay, who was named “2014 Internationalist of the Year” by *The Internationalist* magazine, provides more insight on the Encourage Courage campaign, and how it’s upending the traditional notion of insurance marketing.

Q:

**Hiscox sells insurance coverage to industries in specific niches, not to consumers. What prompted you to take such a retail approach to marketing?**

A:

That even though it may be called B-to-B marketing in name, the owner of the small business is the business. And that their business means quite a bit to

them on an emotional level. A more consumer-driven message can have a big impact.

**Describe the marketing landscape at Hiscox when you joined the company.**

In its first six years in the U.S., Hiscox focused mainly on the broker business. We’re the world’s largest underwriter of kidnapping and terrorism insurance and, in addition, cover large art collections, things like that. We’re also one of the largest media, entertainment, and live event underwriters. We had reps in the U.S. for some of these lines, so we were able to build some market share here. When I joined, we were selling business insurance directly to consumers over the Internet. We were transacting with consumers but we weren’t connecting with them. We didn’t have a unified brand message and we weren’t talking about what we stood for in the U.S. because we hadn’t yet developed that portion of our brand message.

**Talk about the development of the Encourage Courage campaign, and how you came up with it.**

We looked around at the competitive landscape and found lots of messaging around fear, and I didn’t like it. Fear is a short-term motivator and that’s not the kind of company and brand we want to build at Hiscox. Our culture is very different and I wanted to build a brand that reflects who we are and what we stand for. My team and our agency worked on six different positioning themes based on key insights, and one of those insights was about our DNA, the guts of who we are and the kinds of things we insure. In short, without somebody taking a risk along the way, nothing of merit in the world has ever happened. It’s quite a broad concept, but an irrefutable truth. Courage is one of our core values because of our customers’ courage. One issue we faced is that the word “risk,” in the insurance industry, is a defined term, so we avoided it. In one of our planning sessions with our agency, the words “encourage” and “courage” were next to each other on a wall, embedded among 60 or more activation ideas. I said, “Hey, that really encapsulates what we want to do!” We tested it — and bang! — we had Encourage Courage.

**How was the theme received by Hiscox? Did you experience any pushback?**

Very well. Our culture is to embrace risk so it felt natural. It felt like us. And therefore, it felt like something special. We’re not encouraging risky behavior. It’s not about the adrenaline-driven mountain climber who loves the possibility of peril. In fact, it’s almost the antithesis of that. It’s about the person who is nervous, scared about taking opportunities, but manages through that. Consider the small business person. There are these seminal moments, these “points of courage,” when somebody stops dreaming of opportunity, resigns from a



## THE 5 BEST PRACTICES OF HISCOX'S RUSSELL FINDLAY

**1 CUSTOMER FIRST AND ALWAYS.** Standing on the side of the customer is safe ground. Get as much feedback as you can, but always think about the customer first.

**2 MARKET YOUR MARKETING.** Create advocates in your organization by showing how they too can benefit from marketing's efforts, and how it fits the company's overall growth strategy.

**3 EVERYONE IS A MARKETER.** Marketing is too important to be left to the marketing department alone. Educate, empower, and inspire all employees to take an active role in building the brand. Sometimes that means protecting it from decisions being made in departments that may not have brand equity top of mind.

**4 IT'S A MARATHON.** Brands are built over the long term. What looks like a shortcut is probably a dead end. Some of the biggest mistakes I've seen in business were made in haste.

**5 OPTIMIZE DISTRIBUTION.** The best campaigns won't perform in the wrong channels. Make sure your brand is getting in front of the right people.

— C.H.

company, and embarks on what he's dreamt of doing. Or it's the day someone realizes they won't make a profit this year and takes a pay cut, or hires their first employee, or decides to actually lease space, or goes after this big client. You're scared not because of the rush, but because you're facing a demonstration of what you're made of.

### Talk about some of the key ingredients of the campaign.

We advertised in appropriate magazines, those aimed at small business owners and the broker industry, as well as in general publications. Beyond print and digital ads, we did a sponsorship at the Austin Film Festival because we're large underwriters in that industry. At the festival we launched the inaugural Hiscox Courage Award, recognizing the festival film and filmmaker that best represents courage. We also partnered with *Forbes* and created the Hiscox American Courage Index, which polls small business owners on how courageous they feel about, say, borrowing money to start a business, championing a new business line, or hiring new employees. You can take the survey yourself at [encouragecourage.com](http://encouragecourage.com) to see how you stack up courage-wise with the rest of America. We also have our *Courageous Leaders* video series. For example, we interviewed Dennis Crowley, the cofounder of

Foursquare, and asked him about the dark days of losing his job and his girlfriend in the same week.

### How does such a campaign resonate with the insurance brokers Hiscox has been cultivating in the U.S. for the past decade?

It's gone over well. And it fits with their business mindset. Insurance brokers need to be smart and creative and enjoy serving their clients well to be successful. They have to find the best solutions to clients' problems, and they need a partner they can trust. They're very competitive and like anyone else, they want to grow their own careers and books of business. Thus, Hiscox encourages courage among brokers as well.

### You're an American charged with developing an English brand in the U.S. What kind of challenge did that present?

My dad's side of the family was English so it hasn't been too hard. And the Hiscox marketers in London know what good marketing looks like. You have to understand the British mentality versus the American mindset in making decisions. For one thing, Brits don't like to be reminded that they're being advertised to. They like to be entertained, with the mental gymnastics of trying to figure out what the advertiser is trying to say. On the other hand, we're more direct. The English think we're blunt, but sometimes I think we Americans just want to save time. Encourage Courage actually does both things well.

### B-to-B marketers often are concerned about the perception of marketing as a cost center, not as a business growth driver. How are you changing this perception at Hiscox?

We share what we measure and what our marketing tactics are with our entire business so they understand the sales value that marketing brings. And the bulk of our marketing spend goes to acquisition so it's easy to link that portion of our marketing spend to sales. Additionally, our marketing over the past two years has transitioned to more of a strategic thought leader and growth driver. We measure the B-to-B marketing initiatives, which range from brand awareness to affinity building and more immediate response tools, and we can correlate the market response. Measuring and reporting help the organization understand the sales-driving benefits that marketing delivers.

### Can you share any miscues, mistakes, or things you'd do over again with the Encourage Courage campaign?

I probably would have asked for more money and pushed the campaign even harder and faster. 