

Car Wars: Toyota vs. Godzilla

Watching the latest Toyota Tundra commercial, and realizing what it really means, reminds one of watching Mike Tyson fight when he was young...there is a creeping feeling of dread and inevitability concerning the outcome. Having identified the next automotive frontier to conquer, Toyota has commenced the process of dismantling their opponents, and--in the very best Sun Tzu (legendary general and author of 'Art of War') tradition--they are using their own tactics against them. In the long run, it may not matter that U.S. automakers have been building great trucks for decades and still do. Because 'The Great American Truck' has long been marketed as a masculine icon, nearly all previous advertising campaigns have been an effort to out-macho the next guy. There is a rich tradition in the truck-commercial world to have the gruffest, manliest voice talk about the product in an inspiring way, but Toyota has dangerously upped the ante with this latest Tundra voice-over actor...this guy makes Sam Elliott sound like a giggling schoolgirl. As soon as American ad guys realized that folks knew that Toyota was building many of their cars and trucks here in the States, they switched to an old-time 'History of America' pitch. You know..."We have been building these since they were flying over Pearl" and the like. But these little sideshows are really just a distraction from the real game: At some point, it will come back to the product-- the price, the quality, the cost of operation, the rate of depreciation...the money. In Toyota plants across the world, a single worker is expected to stop the assembly line if he thinks there is a problem or if he believes that there is a way to improve the process. In the U.S., labor unions are quite effective at fostering a variety of things, but creative thinking and individual initiative ain't among 'em. Not to say it doesn't happen, couldn't happen, but it is difficult to imagine one of our guys stopping the assembly line. Well, you know, without being hit in the face with a baseball bat. The U.S. automakers most directly in the line of Tundra fire are obviously Ford and Chevy. This might actually be a good thing, because if people take the time to put all their options through the paces, they may find (to their surprise) that there is little--if anything--to choose between makes. But what if we find that we are unable to fight them in the quality arena? That our powers of persuasion are blunted by superior voice-over actors? How soon will it be before we start thinking the unthinkable...that awakening their ancient foe from his Mothra-induced slumber might really be our last, best hope? And what message would that send to our children, when they ask--and they will ask--if there was any other way we could have competed for this business? "Daddy, why did we wake the monster"? Oh...the humanity!

About the Author

To claim your copy of the blockbuster report 'The 7 Biggest Mistakes that Car Buyers Make' please visit <http://www.car-fu.com> Peter W. Robinson is the founder of Movinmetal, Inc., a car buying and consulting service located north of San Diego, and author of 'CAR FU: Self-Defense for Car Buyers'.

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