

## Van Burnett – Point Of Pride Transcript

[00:00:00] **Van:** I've done a lot of memorable work in my time at Simantel, so it was hard to choose just one moment for this Point of Pride. I selected one of my early creative or copy projects that called for a smart, organized approach — not just a cool or fun idea that I'm typically pegged to do. At the time, I felt like this was my marketing baby. Developing the Take a Closer Look messaging framework for Cat® filters and fluids was a labor of love and it is my Simantel point of pride.

[00:00:41] **Misty:** Hey there friends. Thanks so much for checking out our Point of Pride series. In celebration of our 40ish anniversary, Simantelites are sharing stories about the work they're most proud of that made a difference for Simantel, the client and perhaps most importantly, themselves. I'm excited to share this story with you today from Van Burnett.

[00:00:59] Van started at Simantel in client services and built a knack for creative strategy before jumping over to copywriting and experience strategy and is now an associate creative director. He's been a core team member on several award-winning campaigns but has chosen a little less glamorous work for his point of pride. Have a listen.

[00:01:28] **Van:** My point of pride at Simantel is leading the messaging framework for Cat parts and components called Take a Closer Look. I'm Van Burnett, an associate creative director, and in December, it'll be seven years since I joined Simantel. Caterpillar is a very highly matrixed organization with many different business units operating independently of one another.

[00:01:48] We were approached by two teams, Cat filters and Cat fluids, or oils and greases, that worked separately at the time to find a way to review and align their messaging and digital marketing with the ultimate goal of bringing together the two under one umbrella. I started by taking a look at their content, the way they spoke, the features and benefits of each group and the overall strategic position of both Cat filters and Cat fluids.

[00:02:13] The initial goal in my head was to find the lowest common denominator for messaging that was both true and compelling for both product groups. I wanted to answer two questions: what do both product groups need to say and, also how should they say it?

[00:02:28] But even that early on in the process, we had an inkling of the ultimate goal or opportunity that this alignment project could impact so much more than just the Cat filters and fluids teams. To get the project rolling, I did a qualitative audit of their content that was out there. I worked to identify the differences, but most importantly, the similarities.

[00:02:48] This was more or less painting the challenge and the opportunity. After showing them where we were at, the fun part was giving them options for where we could go. We presented several messaging concepts with rationale and behind-the-scenes framework aspects like messaging pillars that helped go through sort of a what, why, how for filters and fluids.

[00:03:07] The client team is terrific in seeing the current issues, working with us on the solution and driving it forward. A small roadblock was helping people understand that this wasn't an awareness campaign, so to speak; this effort was to create a common consideration level messaging framework to help aftermarket product groups — basically get the house in order.

[00:03:28] Fast forwarding to the success the project has seen, the biggest roadblock truly has been regulating the evolution and rapid growth of Take a Closer Look. Cat brand has also had some guidance around not making it feel too much like a brand slogan, which we view as a compliment. So, we moved it to the front of videos instead of at the end, and small things like that.

[00:03:48] But hey, when you get feedback like that, you know, you've created something that's making some waves. Both selling it and bringing it to life made this project memorable. When we were initially selling the concept, we set up a large meeting with over a dozen stakeholders across the globe at the Cat Edwards Demonstration Center near Peoria.

[00:04:05] The room kind of felt like a lecture hall with people in the crowd, and we were up front presenting. We reviewed their materials and presented some solutions, and it was a terrific meeting. The clients were eager and excited to help us toward the solution, and bringing it to life was very exciting. We ended up capturing over 50 interviews of customers, dealers and Cat experts in America and Europe, all talking about filters and fluids in a way that align to the Take a Closer Look messaging.

[00:04:32] The project lives on today and essentially spread like wildfire throughout aftermarket parts groups. For our media clients, filters and fluids became the benchmark for aftermarket product groups sharing their value story with digital marketing. The materials performed well in media as Cat centric value messages to be paired with more disruptive commercial awareness campaigns.

[00:04:53] But the broader client being Caterpillar, that was a true impact. At this stage, we've worked with nine different product groups — all with aligned messaging and visuals telling customers to take a closer look at their value story. This alignment feels like one cohesive push for parts and components as Caterpillar aims to double parts and services revenue by 2026.

[00:05:14] It may or may not have been the first, but it was a shining example of how a messaging framework can create paths for organized messages and marketing. In addition, it found a great sweet spot of creative evergreen content that can last years and years and impact the consideration level of the marketing funnel.

[00:05:31] I'm not sure if Simantel's done anything to this scale that compares. From a business standpoint, there are probably five product groups who came to us or our clients and said "we want our Take a Closer Look stuff". This was one of my early creative copy projects and one that called for a smart, organized approach, not just a cool or fun idea.

[00:05:50] It certainly felt like my marketing baby at the time, and I'm not sure there's a project I work on today without thinking through what the messaging pillars are, what the common denominator of the value message is. From a more practical angle, it led to massive bodies of work I learned to be proficient at like messaging, strategy, animation, videos, interviews, webpages and more.

[00:06:11] I've done a lot of memorable work in my time at Simantel so it was hard to choose just one for my point of pride, but something about the Take a Closer Look work just feels different. I've worked on awareness campaigns that are much more fun, much more reflective of my personality and with splashier results.

[00:06:27] But Take a Closer Look had deeper roots. It was closer to the true value story, it sprawled across four years, nine product groups and multiple industries, and it's still growing to this day. Ultimately, it helped unify an entire arm of Caterpillar, which was otherwise a mishmash of content and messaging directions.

[00:06:50] *Misty:* I love how sometimes the most meaningful work we tackle isn't always the splashiest, as Van put it. The fact that the Take a Closer Look concept has touched nine product groups and is still growing, is a testament to the value this work delivers. Thank you, Van, for all the effort you've put into this project and countless others. I'm grateful you're a part of the Simantel team.