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Advertising Only a Copywriter Would Love

A few years ago in Wellington, New Zealand, during the question and answer session of a public lecture about advertising, a woman who had just returned from her vacation in San Francisco asked, “Why are New Zealand commercials so bad?” The simple and obvious answer was that most of them aren’t bad at all, not really.

The real “problem” behind her question is that New Zealand’s total national population is smaller than the number of people in the metropolitan areas of U.S. cities, such as New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles. Companies spend a small proportion of the total budget on production—this is not a formal rule that anyone is forced to follow, but a general practice stemming from various pragmatic constraints—and since the size of the potential media audiences sets the budget, most of the smaller-scale, tinier-audience, New Zealand commercials probably have weaker production values than the national (or even some local) commercials that she and her husband saw in the United States. But a cheaper-quality video style or acting at the level of an Ed Wood movie doesn’t necessarily make New Zealand advertising bad.

The source of most bad advertising is not a lack of creativity, entertainment value, or money for production. Actually, a lot of really bad

print ads and commercials are creative, entertaining, and well produced because misplaced marketing can readily be found in some of the most expensively produced campaigns from the largest advertisers and agencies.

It is easy to forget a basic dictate found in any undergraduate's textbook (and, as a practical matter, it is often ignored by too many people in business): a good idea badly presented is still better than a bad idea that is well presented. And with the misplaced marketing behind some advertising efforts, the men and women involved in making many print advertising or broadcast commercials failed to consider the audience interests that a marketing perspective would require.

THE DILEMMA AND BANE OF BUSINESS TERMS

The business term for advertising writing and writers contributes to many misdirected views of message quality. The people involved with the day-to-day decisions of advertising message planning and writing are called "creatives"; they work in the "creative department"; and their job description involves "creative strategy and tactics." For many years, Coca-Cola's advertising was produced by Creative Artists, a group that, like many big names in the business, was known only for their work in producing interesting and unique advertising messages.

By placing so much emphasis on this being a creative job, business assessments often allow entertainment interest, artistic value, or simple originality to outweigh concerns for the advertising as a message that has a pragmatic job to inform or persuade a target audience. And some of this emphasis loses track of a focus on *management* of the message or planning how and why the message might play a role in the marketing plan.

Many advertising agencies allocate large sums of money to decorate the work areas (or floors) where copywriters are housed. They believe that clients who see the decorations will therefore know that very creative people are working on their advertising (as if decorating a room or a hallway translates into business communications). In an agency with a conservative dress code for account executives or media planners, people involved with message strategy and tactics have more freedom to look different and convey their personal, creative style in the clothes they wear. Similarly, good copywriters might be criticized if their sartorial tastes run toward conservative suits. Years ago, the undergraduates in the advertising program in which I taught were angry that Fred was teaching the course titled "Creative Strategy and Tactics." They could not believe a person who always wore

an expensive business suit, a white shirt, and an in-style (but conservative) tie could know anything about good advertising writing, despite Fred's very solid credentials as a successful businessman prior to his getting a doctorate.

To a certain extent, this is easy to explain: so little is known about how or why advertising works (or if it works at all). As the dean of the University of Illinois College of Communications, Kim Rotzoll, has often noted, the uncertainty of the advertising process explains more about all advertising thought and practice than any other variable. To people in the business, this becomes the "creative dilemma." Since they are uncertain about just which advertising ideas would work or why, assessments of the advertising itself turn on creativity, values, and aesthetics. And since there is typically no closure for most mass-media forms of advertising, the people who write and produce those messages often seek feedback from the praise of peers or awards.

Unfortunately, few awards make any reference to assessments of success in doing the marketing job and, of those that do, the actual assessment is usually intuitive, ad hoc, and only weakly related to any pragmatic accomplishments.¹ In one direct comparison of this issue, a sample of viewers were found to respond positively to commercials if the message touched on their personal concerns, regardless of whether it was a past award winner, while creative department employees responded best to commercials that won awards.²

EYE-CATCHING AND ENTERTAINING BUT NOT COMMUNICATING

Years ago, Mike was assigned to prepare the commercials for a new type of car battery. Possessing one-and-a-half times the cold cranking power of what was then a commonly perceived standard for a powerful battery, the Sears Die Hard, the new battery would offer a major benefit to people starting their cars during the bitter cold winter mornings in places such as Minnesota or North Dakota. The selected approach for strategy was a demonstration that started with a question: "How do you get the power of 1½ Sears Die Hard batteries?" In the preliminary television commercial, Mike's script gave two answers. First, you could saw a Die Hard in half and strap it to another battery, as the "demonstrator" did on camera with a chain saw and booster cables. Or, using the product as a solution via the second answer, you could get the new brand of battery.

Time was tight and secrecy was important, so they could only pre-test the rough commercials with a few small focus groups. But the results were consistent.

"Where did the battery acid go when he used the chain saw?" several people asked. "Does sawing a battery in half give you half the battery's power or just a mess?"

"Why would anyone want to cut a battery in half?" some people wondered.

"I can't see how cutting the battery and strapping it to another with cables gives you more power [or 1½ batteries]."

In other words, the demonstration was eye-catching, but distracting from the message. Most respondents did not even notice that the first battery was the then-famous Sears product and no one seemed to remember the advertised brand's name or what it could do. The commercial had to be scrapped. And Mike was livid with rage.

"I could have won a Clio award," Mike angrily snapped at all who passed by for the next few days. He would name all the members of the creative team who thought his original storyboards were a real "breakout" effort—they say that a lot in the business, "breakout," meaning different—and he insisted that their creative assessments should outweigh the "dumb research." How can anyone get an award, he asked, if you depend on research? Prior to the research, his fellow creatives all thought it was a good idea and that should have carried more weight than a copytest, or so he thought.³ No one seemed able to make him understand that he was missing the basic point: The idea was so different and unusual that the attention-getting idea was the only thing that left an impression on the audience, while they did not remember anything about the client's product.

At least in this case, the agency and client realized the problem and scrapped the original commercials that were unable to do the job. In many other cases, millions of dollars are spent on commercials that never had the consumer in focus.

In fall 1988, the then-new CBS News program *48 Hours* spent the two days "on Madison Avenue."⁴ Among the various activities covered in the program was the filming of commercials for a new Reeboks advertising campaign, including interviews with the people who created the effort for what was then the top-selling brand of athletic shoes. The commercials featured a collection of vignettes of people doing all sorts of possibly strange and certainly different things—a group of people running up a hill with bicycles on their shoulders; a man walking back and forth with a false third leg; a woman coming out of the subway wearing a fairy-tale wedding gown and running shoes; a camera shot that focused on the distended stomachs of fat people wearing brightly colored lycra tights while doing exercises. The advertising theme proclaimed that "Reeboks let U.B.U.," with "U.B.U." typed on screen, lest viewers not catch the cute label.

On camera in an interview for the program, one of the commercial's creators working on the account said that the ads should evoke a longing for the milieu of innocence and other aspects of an inner drive in the psyche of the populace, speaking in a syntax and style than might get a spark of attention at a doctoral seminar in psycholinguistics or semiotics or even in a popular culture seminar presented in an English professor's deconstructionist dialectic. The CBS interviewer cut away from the audio of this rambling statement by the advertising manager about what he "hoped" to evoke in consumers, stating in a voiceover of the still-viewed interview his personal impression about this clearly creative speaker: "He's hip. He's articulate. I have no idea what he is saying."

And, apparently, the commercial audience was equally lost. The campaign lasted less than two years and the formerly top-selling brand lost market share during that period. But, then, one wonders why the commercials were even produced. Even if consumers understood the commercial message, it could have been a good campaign idea *only* if people would buy athletic shoes as an expression of personal style and individuality. If people did not seek these types of shoes to be different, if the primary motives for buying them were performance, current styles, or emulating a favored athlete, then the ads were a simple case of misplaced marketing.

That same CBS program also included several interviews with noted advertising creator and agency owner George Lois, filming him as he had meetings, planned, or produced campaigns for a variety of clients: Lifestyles condoms; Jiffy Lube; the *New York Post*; Mug root beer; and a new, yet-to-be-introduced coffee substitute. As he often does in such interviews, George talked about his 1972 autobiography, since it had what he thought was an appropriate title for describing why he has been a success in the business, *George, Be Careful*.⁵ The title was selected because everyone always told him to be careful, but, as he said, you have to take risks in this business. And he's right, since there is so much uncertainty about what works and no one can research every detail or potential misstep.

As commercial clutter increases, consumers seem to be more able to physically avoid advertising or mentally tune it out. Every advertiser has a pragmatic need to stand out. As they focus on developing messages that stand out, too many of them forget that their focus should be on the subject of the message, not the message itself.

A basic marketing question starts from consumer perspectives and asks what consumers consider important.⁶ Beyond wanting the advertising to get attention, it also has a communications job, and if the marketing perspectives are misplaced, the advertising effort will probably not do that job, regardless of how creative or original it might appear.

ATTENTION AND DISTRACTION

A lot of advertising seems to get attention but do little to sell a product. Many people think that if they have the audience's attention they have done the job. However, an attention-getting device that is unrelated to the message will not attract readership or viewers interested in what the advertiser has to say. At best, the audience will remember the device and not the message.⁷ This loss of focus on the audience and message makes for a lot of misdirected advertising.

In one of his advertising reviews for *Advertising Age*, Bob Garfield once noted that there are two things that could be done by a fool with a lot of money: (1) run for president promoting some crackpot idea, even though you have no charisma or intellectual appeal; or (2) mount an elaborate advertising campaign, featuring expensive celebrities with no connection to your product whatsoever. His point was that no one (except Steve Forbes) would ever be so foolish as to undertake the expensive and humiliating effort of the first but, amazingly, many business owners will quickly go after the latter. "As we have said repeatedly, celebrities are seldom used in support of an advertising idea; they're used in place of an advertising idea."⁸

This is not to say that celebrities should never be used in advertising. Many decades ago, George Lois's ads for Maypo cereal had to fight the product's image as something just for small children. Since people saw it as something children would "outgrow," he used Mickey Mantle and other rugged sports heroes, crying "I want my Maypo." The star presenters' images were tied to the message. Maureen O'Hara, whose movie star image included her beautiful hair, appeared in advertising for Lustre-Creme Shampoo. A more contemporary good use of a celebrity in marketing is when Olympic winners are on the Wheaties box, because the cereal is "the breakfast of champions." A movie or television actor whose media-generated image is of a demanding person who is trusted might be a useful consumer-trusted presenter for an investment firm.

Unfortunately, many celebrities are used in advertising in a way that can only be a waste of money. In addition to the costs of hiring a good actor to take a part, the star celebrity also costs a high-priced premium for his or her appearance. But if the image of that star does not fit the advertising message, the audience will only recall the celebrity, not the product. In these cases, the advertising message costs more to make but does not improve its communications to the audience.

Bill Cosby's talent with children probably helped communicate the fun message of various Jell-O products. However, featuring William Bendix in advertising for the American Meat Institute four decades ago probably did more to promote his television program, "The Life

of Riley," than it did to encourage people to eat more meat. Michael Jordan's championship image is a good fit for selling Gatorade or Nike shoes, but it is questionable as to whether his personal charm enhanced the images of MCI's long-distance service or McDonald's restaurants. Charles Barkley probably did not sell many Hyundais, though he certainly increased the cost of the advertising, and Chevy Chase did not enhance the appeal of Dollar Rent-a-Car.

Similarly, advertising that makes direct comparisons with competing brands also needs to take the consumers' mind set into account. Just because the other brand is a better seller or more famous does not mean that there is a value in making comparisons. A comparison advertisement is a good idea only if the compared brand is the target audience's standard for a quality product and the advertising message would show a consumer-desired benefit for which your brand is better. Lots of comparison advertising forgets this, using the better-selling brand for just the attention getting value, and having an audience that remembers only the competitor.

Entertainment values or outright humor *can* help a selling message. Federal Express' jokingly made strong illustrations of how deliveries "absolutely, positively have to be there overnight," turning the company into an icon of the reliable overnight delivery business. More commonly, irrelevant humor gets large numbers of people to watch the commercials or read the ads, but fails to encourage those people to buy the products or go to the stores. Audiences remember the joke, or the entertaining ad, but all too often they don't remember the sponsor or the advertised reasons given for them to become customers. As was repeatedly observed on numerous business news programs, the sometimes-entertaining Internet company commercials on the 2000 Super Bowl, which cost millions of dollars per spot, did not generate an upswing in visitors to the sponsors' Web sites.⁹

And then there's sex.

An advertisement for a pizza place near a college campus ran an advertisement in the school paper that said, "Put a hot piece between your lips. We're hot and easy, fast and cheesy." In another city, a Mexican restaurant showed a woman dressed in lycra and posed with her hands on her hips over the headline, "Tickle my taco." Running for years in various sporting magazines is a bold-type proclamation, "Better than five-gallon jugs," over a picture of a bikini-clad woman with most of her large breasts visible as she bends over to fill the boat gas tank with gas from the product—"gas dock"—an extra large gas tank built on a wheeled cart. As the movie *Eyes Wide Shut* filled the news, newspaper advertisements for a gardening supply store in New Zealand ran the headline "Eyes Wide Open for Spring," with a picture in the center of the page of the rear view of a person's thigh to mid-back, covered only by bikini briefs.

In each case, the advertiser probably thought it was good advertising, not realizing that the irrelevant use of sex distracts the target audience, hinders communication, and fails to persuade. It is intuitively obvious that a product is sexually relevant for marketing communications only if people buy it for a sexual reason. While breath mints, clothes, or exercise equipment may be purchased to enhance sex appeal, it is doubtful that anyone buys pizza or tacos in anticipation of an orgasmic experience, even on a college campus. The garden shop advertisement draws so much attention to the sexy body part that it would only be read by people in search of the latest bun-tightening video or maybe an exercise gym.

The issue, though, is more than just simple misdirection and distraction. The people who wrote or produced these ads lost track of what they were trying to say to the target audience. A California pager company ran newspaper advertisements asserting that its product is the brand preferred by pimps and hookers to “keep in touch,” thinking perhaps that these “working people” are a consumer-perceived standard of working men and women who need to keep in touch. In the print advertising for a shower gel brand, the body copy is in the middle of two pictures: The product sits on a shower stand to the left; on the right is a naked man from the thighs upward (discreetly sideways), with a headline “The one on the right can also stimulate your mind.” This could be considered an effective message in a woman’s magazine only if the audience would perceive a shower gel as a sexual and mental turn-on.

After years of talking to advertisers and watching them produce these less-than-optimal efforts, one comes to the ineluctable but reluctant realization that some of the advertising creators are so myopic that they believe that publicity prompted by offending people is always beneficial. They do not see it as being a distraction from saying positive things about the restaurant or store. Instead of communications, attention of any kind—to anything, at any cost—is their goal. The man who wrote the “Tickle my taco” advertising thought it was the greatest campaign he had ever written because the numerous complaints generated publicity.¹⁰

However, advertising is a very limited and limiting form of communication, costly to undertake and difficult to carry out successfully. The marketing question of how to best communicate is a conservative one, but it is also an effort to maximize the likelihood of a favorable consumer response. Because, in the end, there is a communications job to be done.

In the newspaper advertisement from Los Angeles, the woman wearing only jewelry with her hands covering her breasts and exclaiming, “What do you mean they’re not real?” might convey an association

and image that helps sell imitation and fake jewelry. The message to either a male or female audience is definitely not about sex. And yet it must be noted that the message's various innuendos and associations also would carry the negative connotations about breast implants while gratuitously offending many people, both of which would get in the way of communicating anything to anyone about fake jewelry.

SEX AND THE TRUCK CALENDARS

Some marketing textbooks give "specialty advertising" its own section and definition as an advertising medium that uses imprinted, useful, or decorative products. Numerous companies make all sorts of products available for this special printing of advertising messages with company names, logos, slogans, addresses, and phone numbers. Many of the men and women selling the products are top-notch marketing planners, helping the clients use this unique medium to solve advertising communications problems. Unfortunately, people buying the products sometimes let their interest in the communications tactic override their marketing strategy.

Many years ago, Lou's company serviced the various trucking companies in Chicago, repairing seats and canvas tarpaulins as well as providing various products used in cargo hauling. An undifferentiated service with non-unique products, his success depended on his customer contact abilities and his willingness to be available for customers who needed him. In an area of work where business cards are thrown in drawers and lost (I guess, just as in many other businesses), there was a unique opportunity for advertising specialties to keep Lou's business and phone number in front of every customer if they needed his services between his regular sales calls.

And therein arose a puzzling problem. All his colorful wall calendars were grabbed up by everyone as fast as he could print them, with some people asking for three or four (or more). Illustrated with a set of explicit sexual pictures in a style often found in many of the men's lockers—I don't have to spell it out, do I?—most truck drivers loved that calendar! Yet when he would call on the small trucking companies that made up the bulk of his business, they couldn't remember Lou's company name or his phone number.

Of course, the unasked first question was this: "Who calls Lou when they need him: the truck driver, the company owner, or a secretary?" The answer was the office secretary, who set up the purchase order or other paperwork.

"Were these secretaries former truck drivers?" No. While the dispatchers or company owners were former drivers—usually men—the secretaries at these mostly small businesses were often wives or daugh-

ters or other women hired to do a clerical job. Even if men were doing the work, rarely were they former drivers.

Knowing that Lou's wife often came into his office, the next obvious question was what Margie said when she saw the calendar in his office. Of course, I knew the answer: He didn't have any of his own calendars in his office because he knew she wouldn't like them.

The solution was easy. Knowing that many of the blue-collar men and women working in these offices were weekend campers and (sometimes) hunters, Lou commissioned some specially designed outdoor and wildlife scenes that they would be happy to look at day after day on the office wall.

In these litigious times, when all sorts of charges are raised against pictures in an office that might create a "hostile environment" for the women who work there, Lou's attorney would have stopped him from even thinking about making his first type of calendars. But, then, recently visiting the back areas of a small shipping and storage company, the "bare bodied" calendars for various service firms were still in evidence on inside doors of the men's lockers. But beyond any potential for offending employees, the marketing question still involves first assessing who makes decisions for a purchase, who needs the information on service suppliers, and what type of specialty advertising product the purchaser would find useful.

Marketing gets misplaced in a lot of specialty advertising when the advertiser forgets the basic definition of the medium: The usually short advertising message is placed on *useful* products. The "useful" part of the definition of specialty advertising is what often gets lost, since they must be useful for the target market. As happened in Lou's case, sometimes even questions of who might be the target are forgotten.

In all areas of marketing work, there is the "danger" that tactical decisions sometimes lose track of the initial marketing plan and its strategy. With the buying of specialty products, the problem is compounded, since advertisers are buying a product that is to be given to the audience and also carry the message. So it is easy to forget that a useful pen is one the target audience will use to write notes, not a pen that is so cheap the customers will quickly toss it aside. Marketing planners want the target audience members to hang the calendar over the desk and not to give it to a friend. A name on a coffee mug is supposed to be a reminder and aid that would encourage customers to make a purchase, though the mugs selected (or maybe all mugs because the target receives so many) might get tossed onto a collection shelf along with those from all competitors.

The reality is that various advertising specialties, such as pocket knives, radios, coffee mugs, and a host of other products, are often bought by advertisers for all types of reasons unrelated to marketing

strategy or tactics. Sometimes the marketing manager just spotted a new toy he or she would like to own or give away, and the manager is seldom a typical consumer. Yet important questions of marketing strategy still need to be asked about the target audience and what it considers useful. If these are forgotten, the specialty itself becomes useless from a marketing point of view.

NOT-SO-SUPER COMMERCIALS AT THE "SUPER BOWL"

The annual National Football League championship game, the Super Bowl, has become a major advertising event. Arguably, the Super Bowl draws the largest single mass-media audience in any given year, with Americans throwing parties tied to television viewing of the game. So advertisers repeatedly pay record high prices for the time for the commercial spots run during the game. Each year they pay more than advertisers did the year before. And, many times, the advertisers do not make good use of their money.

Understanding why marketing views get misplaced while spending millions of dollars first requires a brief background on how TV advertising time is bought or sold.

For any consumer-goods advertiser, the bulk of the budget goes to the purchase of media time and space. As the audiences for any given vehicle are increasingly fragmented, the number of options available and the process for deciding what to buy has become more complicated. Media buyers and planners have access to a huge array of data on media audiences; computer programs provide increasingly detailed ways to mix, match, and compare options. Yet the final decisions are still regarded by many as "more art than science."

The reasons for this are easy to understand. The data are not provided free of charge, so the data any one firm may use are limited in their potential detail, since more precise data cost more money than few are willing to pay. In addition, the information is not pruned and collated through a central source, so making comparisons, even with the best information, can be very confusing. Most important, computer programs can weigh quantitative concerns, but not all variables relevant for media decision making lend themselves to numerical assessments, such as how closely an audience reads a magazine or how much a media vehicle lends itself to communicating a particular type of message. It can all get very confusing; hence, the "art" aspect of the work.

In addition, media space or time rates are not offered at a set price; the final sale is more like an agreement for purchase of a farm commodity. The major broadcast networks do not even have printed rate cards with prices, letting "marketplace" discussions with buyers de-

termine price, so the price paid depends on the negotiating skills of the advertiser's representative.

In the end, the final decisions about how much to pay and what to buy basically comes down to the media planner or buyer's specialized expertise. Unfortunately, while the specialized expertise involves a marketing perspective, this is sometimes misplaced or flat-out ignored to meet all sorts of irrelevant concerns of managers.

A former student told me that his computer-manufacturer client had a fixed rule against advertising in *Playboy* magazine. Even though the magazine's readership was very heavy in the types of people who were interested in the advertised product, management felt that the publication denigrated women. This same firm also required that advertising space be bought in the political, gay-oriented publications *Out* and *Advocate*, primarily because a large number of gay men and lesbian woman worked for the organization. At the time, this meant that a struggling company's computer products appeared next to ads for padded underwear, which claimed to help readers "Get Shapelier Buns Instantly."¹¹

There exists a degree of prestige from airing a commercial during the Super Bowl, and almost every Super Bowl advertiser has their brand name repeated in a few news stories. But they also need something to say and something that would be targeted toward that audience. Everyone is still talking about the Apple Computer ad, titled "1984." The commercial ran just once, but has been repeated many times in a wide range of news stories. A well-placed and interesting advertising effort can generate a huge amount of positive publicity, well beyond the initial exposure.¹² However, publicity and value do not come from placement alone. Most of the Super Bowl commercials are forgotten by the next morning, which is a quick way to blow more than \$2 million without gaining anything except bragging rights for having a commercial on the program.¹³

For the January 2000 event, the so called "dot-com" firms went crazy. For some strange reason, a large number of them felt they had to be on the program to make a mark. These are firms that are repeatedly noted as having overvalued stocks for firms that have yet to show a profit. Just to be on a high-profile sports program, they were paying grossly overpriced rates for the privilege. They bought out the time and, with heightened demand for the limited time, increased the price.

Many long-time advertisers opted out of the program in 2001, deciding that the audience might be large and attentive, but not *that* large. In fact, the ratings have been stagnant to declining for many U.S. sporting events in recent years. For the limited and inane value of being a part of the show, the advertisers are overspending and probably accomplishing little of pragmatic value.

THE REAL PROBLEM OF “BAD” ADVERTISING

I find myself repeatedly telling my students that just because the slickly produced commercials they see are part of an expensive campaign by a large firm, it does not mean that the campaign is based on a good marketing strategy, or, for that matter, that it had *any* strategy behind it. The commercials can be successful or not. Reviewing the advertising from out in the audience, we have no data on results, and “accidents” do happen. So, for our discussion, I ask them under what conditions could this be a good advertising idea. It is amazing how often we can’t even conceive of a situation in which the advertising would do a worthwhile communications job, even when the eighteen-to twenty-five-year-old consumers in my class are the apparent primary audience for the advertising effort. Instead, they conclude that it is misplaced marketing and, therefore, bad advertising.

My students’ conclusions fit with an experience that is repeated many times when I sit in on advertising agency presentations to clients. After giving detailed data on the present and potential consumers, followed by a specific goal statement of what the campaign is to accomplish, the advertising planners then describe their recommended advertising strategies and tactics that have, at best, a tenuous relationship to the first part of the presentation. Tactics are done without strategy and the “strategy” (if it exists at all) is presented without reference to consumer views.

I sometimes ask why they even bothered to collect data and set goals if they were going to ignore their own preliminary work. Producing a “breakout” advertisement or an “attention getting” campaign does not do any good if they get the attention of the wrong people for the wrong reasons. An instructor who has a loud case of gas in the front of the class will certainly get attention, but I doubt if the students would hear or recall anything that instructor said for the fifteen minutes after the event.

It misplaces marketing when decision makers set out to be creative only for the sake of winning creative awards. Instead, they should be designing original and entertaining messages that appeal to the purchase interests and values of their customers. If consumers strongly think the shoes are ugly, a good-looking celebrity will not change their minds. If sex is irrelevant to the purchase decisions, then a sex appeal will only have the audience remembering the sexy pictures. A funny joke unrelated to the product’s benefits could have many people talking about the commercials but not making a purchase.

Some very bad advertising will succeed due to either outstanding products (for which any advertising is superfluous) or simple inertia from prior profits. But with a lost marketing focus, there is a disservice to many potential customers and many firms are spending money on messages that appeal to no one.

NOTES

1. Sandra E. Moriarty, "Effectiveness, Objectives, and the EFFIE Awards," *Journal of Advertising Research*, vol. 36 (July–August 1996), pp. 54–63.
2. Arthur J. Kover, William L. James, and Brenda S. Sonner, "To Whom Do Advertising Creatives Write? An Inferential Answer," *Journal of Advertising Research*, vol. 37 (January–February 1997), pp. 41–53.
3. If anyone intended the creative team's intuition to carry so much weight, the advertising would not have been subjected to testing in the first place. Admittedly, many copytests are done to support decisions that have already been made, or to plan a defense if things go wrong—"I don't understand what happened! It tested well"—but such problems are just examples of how office politics and paranoia can generate bad business decisions and wasted money.
4. This was *48 Hours* title for that day's program, even though show personnel did not spend very much time in offices actually located on that street.
5. George Lois with Bill Pitts, *George, Be Careful* (New York: Saturday Review Press, 1972).
6. Howard Luck Gossage, *Is There Any Hope for Advertising?* K. Rotzoll, J. Graham, and B. Mussey, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987). David Ogilvy, *Confessions of an Advertising Man* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1963).
7. Ogilvy, *Confessions of an Advertising Man*.
8. Bob Garfield, "TD Waterhouse Makes Trade With Celebs," *Advertising Age*, vol. 70 (November 29, 1999), p. 79. While the first four paragraphs of this column repeated his prior observations about misuse of celebrities in advertising, he then pointed out how and why he (reluctantly) felt that the new TD Waterhouse on-line brokerage campaign was using them effectively.
9. Jennifer Gilbert, "Top 10 Ads Score Raves, Not Hits Post-Super Bowl," *Advertising Age*, vol. 71 (February 7, 2000), p. 63; Phillips Graham, "Not-So-Super Ad Bowl Says Y&R's Phillips," letter to editor, *Advertising Age*, vol. 71 (February 14, 2000), p. 30. At that time, many business analysts on television news programs reviewed these commercials and not one was able to state what the spots were supposed to accomplish for the companies.
10. The owner of the restaurant could easily have won a "stupidity in community relations" award. He angrily called the university's Woman's Resource Center, which he felt was the source of most complaints, telling the students that it's "too bad you broads ain't got a sense of humor." He was out of business within a year.
11. In order to attract more "quality" advertisers, the *Advocate* has since eliminated most of its sex-product advertising. The magazine's improved image, as both an advertising vehicle and a source for political commentary, can be attributed (at least in part) to that change of policy.
12. The classic discussion of this is found in Miller Harris and Howard Gossage's *Dear Miss Afflerbach, or The Postman Hardly Ever Rings 11,342 Times* (New York: Macmillan, 1962).
13. Bonnie Tsui, "Bowl Poll: Ads Don't Mean Sales," *Advertising Age*, vol. 72 (February 5, 2001), p. 33.