
Chapter Twenty Four

Miscellaneous Advertising Wit and Wisdom

I'm not sure you ever gain wisdom in advertising. That comes from living more than working I think. Still I've collected a few nuggets along the road. Here's a list. I'll just throw them out for your pondering pleasure.

Screw in a light bulb

How many copywriters does it take to change a light bulb?

Copywriter: I'm not changing anything.

How many art directors does it take to change a light bulb?

Art Director: Does it have to be a light bulb?

How many account executives does it take to change a light bulb?

Account Executive: I don't know, but I'll get back to you.

How many clients does it take to change a light bulb?

Client: I don't know, let me call my agency.

The Genie's Lamp

An art director, a copywriter and an account executive are walking down Madison Avenue in New York. They find a genie's lamp. They rub it.

A genie appears and says, "All right, I'll grant you three wishes. But only three wishes between you"

The three advertising people agree to each take one wish.

The art director says, "Genie, I have no problem with a single wish. I know what I want. I want to be on in a villa overlooking the water in the South of France where I can pursue my lifelong dream to paint in the tradition of the French Impressionists of the late 19th century"

Poof. The genie clicks his fingers, a puff of smoke and the Art Director's wish is granted

The account executive and writer look at each other in awe. The writer quickly takes his turn with his wish, "Genie, I also

have a lifelong dream. I would like to go to Europe and Write the great American novel and live like Ernest Hemmingway as an expatriate in Paris.”

Poof. The genie again clicks his fingers and again a puff of smoke and again the wish is granted leaving the account executive alone in front of the genie.

The account executive in disgust, puts her hands on her hips and says, “I want those two assholes back here right now.”

Poof.

(Account Executives have the job of being the party poopers because it's their job to keep the work moving. The humorless among this breed have zero tolerance for the creative process. And many secretly envy what looks like a laid-back work ethic. If you think that way, try writing a 30 second commercial for a bank that's informative, relevant, engaging and the client will buy. If it doesn't your career is in the toilet.)

Degree of Difficulty

It occurs to me on a visit to a ski resort one time that advertising projects could be marked like ski slopes. A circle for a beginner, square for intermediate skill level and a black diamond for experts. That way the creative director can assign creative teams to projects that match the markings. It seemed very logical to me. A small space trade ad could go to a junior copy/art team and a bigger budget TV spot could be assigned to double-diamond experts. (The practicality of this system broke down when a creative director pointed out to me that more people break their legs on the bunny slope than anywhere else.)

Nuggets

- Nothing erodes client confidence faster than bad listening.
- Most problems have more than one solution.
- Advertising will not force people to buy something they don't want. (Occasionally consumers are disappointed when they buy a product that doesn't deliver. They don't buy the product again, no matter how funny or artful the advertising.)

- Advertising does not lead to sales if the product isn't available. (It's a fair question to ask sometimes. You'd be surprised how often clients forget this. If you've got distribution problems, advertising probably isn't the way to solve them.)
- Integrated marketing efforts are more efficient. (A consistent message. A consistent tone. Reach and frequency.)
- Advertising is most powerful when it demonstrates benefits that are relevant and compelling to the audience.
- Knowledge is power. (Ask if you don't know something.)
- ASAP means nothing.
- The greatest challenge in advertising is to communicate a "point of difference" in a parity product.
- Little things are big things.

Classic Client comments

- "Make the logo bigger."
- "Why do you guys always design spreads."
- "Great, I like it but..."
- "Are we gonna make our closing dates?"
- "If your creatives want to do it so badly, let them pay for it."
- "This sure is an expensive ad."
- "Will this ad sell product?"
- "I know we asked for a lot of changes but this ad looks like Hell."
- "What else do you have?"
- Advertising Acid Test:
 - Does it communicate a product benefit?
 - Is it relevant?
 - Is it respectful?
 - Can we be proud we produced it?

More Nuggets:

- If you want it good, fast and cheap. Pick two.
- Quality = design + materials + workmanship + durability
- Advertising is not brain surgery.
- "How big can we get before we get bad?" (Jay Chiat said

that, I think.)

- Respect the value of time. Time is money.
- Be a member.
- Get Famous. (Do great work. Stuff people will remember.)
- Set goals. Set New Goals.
- Under promise. Over-deliver.
- Network (make it easy to help and be helped.)
- Follow up.
- React to news.
- Be connected.
- It's not easy being anybody. (But no-one is better at being you than you.)
- Feel good. (Take care of yourself.)
- Add value.
- Manage down time.
- Celebrate Success.
- Be the best.
- Your best work is ahead of you.
- Make your breaks. (People will think you are lucky.)
- Ask yourself, "What is the very next step?"
- Make honest assessments of limitations and barriers.
- Be positive.
- Be a mentor.
- Give something back.
- "The only cats worth anything are the cats who take chances." (Thelonius Monk)
- Remember people when you have a hit movie.
- Do the right thing. (Spike Lee)
- Life is what happens while you're making other plans. (J. Lennon)
- Be in touch with pop culture.
- Be creative.