

# Advertising Design and Typography

Alex W. White

Preface viii

Introduction: What is Advertising Design? 1

- Ad agencies
- Art directors vs designers

## Section 1 Strategies 8

Ch1 Strategy vs Execution 10

- Consumer, institutional, and business-to-business
- Information vs persuasion
- Make a single point per ad
- Research + communication = knowing your client and audience
- The creative brief: problem as strategy
- Features and benefits
- Parity products and positioning
- Positioning
- The Unique Selling Proposition (USP)
- One shot vs campaign advertising
- An identifiable look for every client

Ch2 The Four Levels of Advertising 30

- What makes an ad "good"?
- What makes an ad successful?
- Thinking verbally and visually
- Paper is dimensional
- Poor idea/poor execution to great idea/great execution
- Advertising's greatest hits

Ch3 How to be Seen in Noisiness 48

- Advertising is everywhere
- Getting attention in a crowded marketplace
- Magazine and newspaper noisiness

## Section 2 Executions: Design 58

Ch4 Design: Visual Presentation 60

- Why is design important?
- Layout vs design
- Kinds of design: editorial and advertising
- What makes readers respond
- Overdesign and underdesign
- Primary and supportive materials
- Branding and identity
- Guerilla marketing doesn't look like advertising

Ch5 Design: Unity and Clarity 78

- The three design elements: space, image, and type
- Other design components



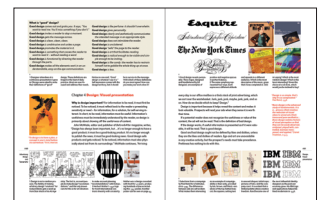
10



30



48



60



78

**Ch6 Design: Words and Pictures 102**

- Focal point
- Internal and external structure
- Relating type to image
- Shared form
- Design transparency: the Ayers No.1
- All-type ads
- Charts and diagrams

**Ch7 Design: Print Design vs Billboards, TV, Web and Interactive, and Radio 130**

- Print vs billboard design
- Print vs television design
- Print vs Web and interactive design
- Print vs radio design

**Section 3 Executions: Typography 140**

**Ch8 Type Knowledge 142**

- The Incunabula
- The Industrial Revolution
- Type basics
- Typographic spacing
- Tone of voice, contrast, repetition, balance, dominance, and unity
- Hierarchy: three levels of type
- Typographic craftsmanship

**Ch9 Display Type 170**

- Logos
- Primary type
- Secondary type
- Captions
- Taglines

**Ch10 Text Type 192**

- How to make text type inviting
- Space and text
- Text abstraction
- How to set perfect text

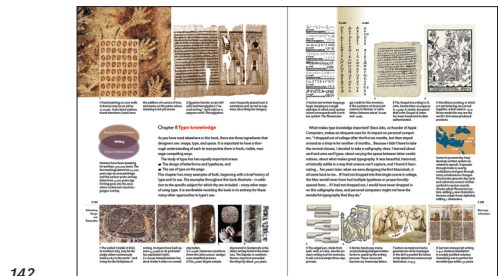
**Glossary 200**

**Bibliography 204**

**Appendix 206**

**Index 208**

**Colophon and Credits 210**





**Business needs storytellers**

## Section 1

### Strategies

Business needs people who can bring facts to life. Where's the story in this image? This machine is shown life size. It is one of a set of the finest model replicas ever made, housed at the American Precision Museum in Windsor, Vermont. More than a mere "toy machine," it is a study in precision: every component in this one-of-a-kind model is hand-tooled and individually fit to exact tolerances. The methods for mass production – interchangeable parts and precision machining – was pioneered in 1846 in Windsor by the Robbins and Lawrence Armory, who supplied field-repairable rifles for the Union army prior to the Civil War. Their techniques spread throughout the northeast and the midwest U.S., where precision manufacturing was based for the following hundred years.

**Advertising explains facts.** It turns features, which are facts about a product, into benefits, which are reasons for someone to try the product. It does this by telling a story.

Converting facts into a story has two parts: *strategy* and *execution*. Strategy includes knowing the facts about your product; simplifying the facts – which to leave out and which to emphasize – and positioning against competitor products, typically prepared by others in a *creative brief*; and determining the *Unique Selling Proposition*, the statement that separates your product from all others.

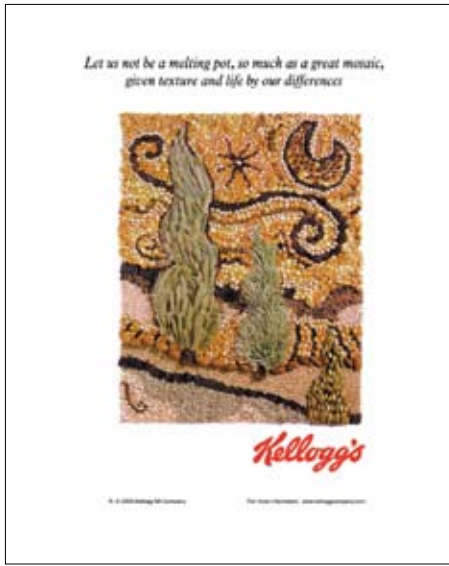
Developing an *execution* is the realm of the creative department. We translate the message so it makes people identify with the product, recognize its status, and desire it. We also give every client an identifiable look.

Section 1 also discusses verbal and visual thinking, the *Four Levels of Advertising*, and how to be seen in an environment of noisiness.



1

1 There are three main areas of advertising: **Consumer ads** induce a likely prospect to “try” it (see it at a store, visit its Web



2

site, call its 800 number, test drive it, drink it, etc.). **2 Corporate advertising** promotes the company rather than



3

a particular product. The purpose of corporate advertising is to make the public think better of the company.

**3 Business-to-business ads** (or *trade ads*) induce sales to retailers or other businesses who use the product.

*“Advertising is a game of tactics and strategy, not chance. When you bid for public response, be sure to play the trump card of effective design.”* Westvaco Inspiration for Printers, Number 194, 1953

*“Promise, large promise, is the soul of an advertisement.”* Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)

## Chapter 1 **Strategy vs Execution**

Hank Seiden, the author of *Advertising Pure and Simple* wrote, “A good practitioner of advertising can convince a logical prospect for a product or service to try it one time.” Let’s break this definition down. *Convince* means a rational appeal to another person’s intelligence. *Logical prospect* means a person who is at the moment looking for such a product, has a need for it, and can afford to buy it. *Try* means a single use. *Buy*, on the other hand, indicates regular use: after having tried a product or service once, the product will be evaluated on its own merits.

Seiden concludes, “Advertising doesn’t make customers. Only products make customers.”

What we have here is a definition of advertising that *limits its power*. That makes the practice realistic and a lot more approachable.

1 10

Advertising  
Design  
and  
Typography



1

1 An institutional ad from Coca-Cola means to increase the public’s feelings of warmth and humanity toward the brand. This ad is not meant to



2

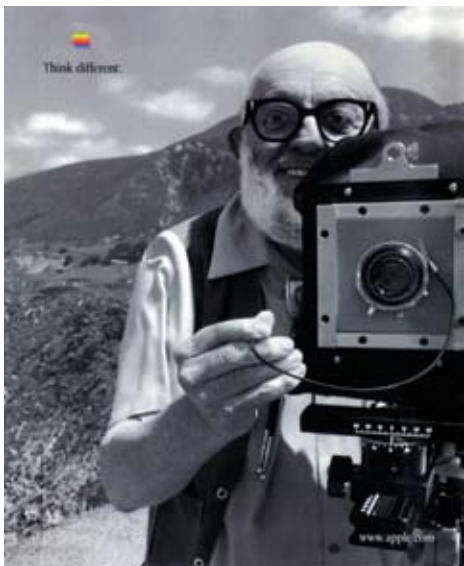
directly affect sales of their product line. Institutional ads are often seen during a business crisis, and their messages are typically received with a large

grain of salt by the public. **2** This fantastic Dutch Art Deco vehicle could stop traffic today just as well as it must have in 1928 as it announced the exis-



3

tence of a radio manufacturer. **3** Grey Healthcare Group’s statement of goals posted in the reception area of their Manhattan headquarters.



1

1 Strategy: Apple presented their product, computers with a different operating system, by showing pictures of people who saw or thought differently.



2

This is Ansel Adams, who died in 1984, just as personal computers became available. 2 His ability to see and record nature more acutely than



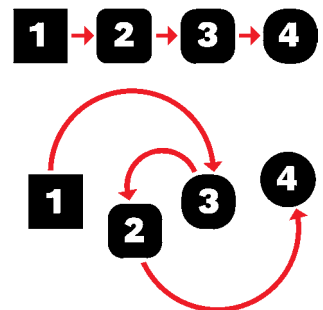
3

others is demonstrated in his photo (top) and another showing the same scene years later, proving the precise date of the original's having been taken.

3 Self promotion for an ad agency shows, with elegant simplicity, the value they (and other agencies) add to achieve results.

**Consumer, Institutional, and Business-to-Business Advertising** problems fall into three categories. Each has its own purpose and each is equally valuable to the business owner. Consumer advertising speaks to the end user of a product; institutional advertising speaks to investors, employees, and the public in a public relations-style soft sell promoting our feelings about the sponsoring company; and business-to-business advertising promotes products from one business to another.

**Information vs persuasion** Advertising creatives convert information provided by the research and account management teams into persuasive arguments. We add value to a raw message by making it connect with an audience, by making it stand out, and by making it memorable. If we haven't added the element of persuasion, we haven't done our jobs. This is a simple yardstick to measure creative efficacy.



Logical thinking is linear (top). Creative thinking is non-linear and occurs in starts and stops in a circuitous route (above). Creative thought transcends the expected, so a wholly different result – represented by a perfect circle – can be realised.



1

1 Headline as label: every rule is made to be broken. The text explains that this particular vehicle (1 in 50) failed its inspection and won't be purchased



2

until it is made right. Now *that's* a benefit. 2 Music is shown to have a legitimate, inherent value. Hidden down by the logo is the message:

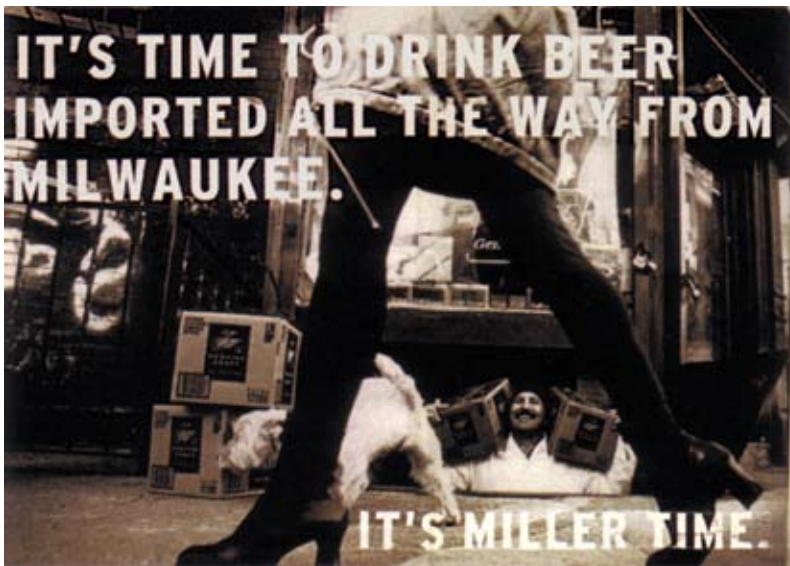
Tax Sheltered Programs, Tax Deferred Programs, Mortgage Finance, Commercial Finance, Private Placements, Mutual Funds, Venture Capital, Variable Annuities, Computer Programming, Executive Benefit Planning, Medical Expense Reimbursement Plans, Estate Analysis, Life Insurance, Deferred Compensation, 501(C)(3) Annuities, Disability Income Insurance, Pension Plans, Profit Sharing Plans, Employee Stock Ownership Trusts, Hospitalization & Major Medical Plans, Self-Employed Retirement Plans, Individual Retirement Programs, Equity Investments, Keyman Protection, Stock Retirement Plans, Stock Redemption Plans, Section 79 Programs, Group Dental, Estate Tax Conservation and Section 303 Programs, Field Planning Corporation 41 East 42nd Street, New York, N.Y. 10017  
Telephones: (212) 687-4744 (800) 223-7446 Cable: Conrafrank

Conrad Frank, C.L.U., President

3

stop music piracy. The distance between the simple message and its interpretation is the value added by art directors and copywriters.

3 How do you say, "this business has many products?" This business card shows them all, making it interesting *because* of its lengthy text.

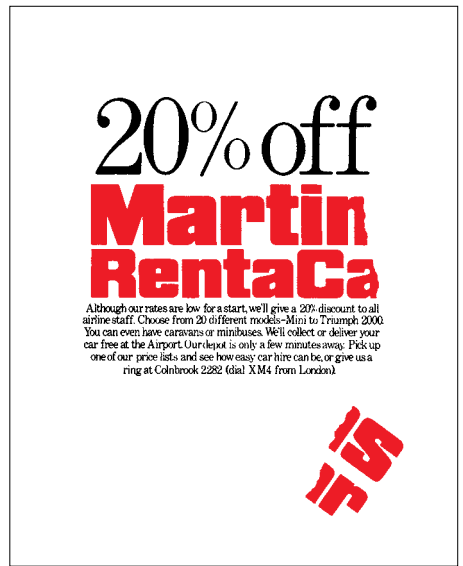


1

1 One idea: our beer is gritty, honest, and without pretense. To make an ad look unpolished, you have to be pretty

sophisticated. This one has a no-frills headline with plenty of attitude, the photo looks like a snapshot, and the type has

been damaged. The design would not look like this without careful and very conscious intervention by the art director.



2

2 This doesn't just say 20% off, it shows 20% off. The cheap production values reflect the frugal car rental prices.

*"What makes a good advertisement? Merit of illustration and merit of copy - neither in itself is enough. The effect of the advertisement as a whole makes it succeed or fail. Both the (writers) and (designers) must focus their efforts on a single selling thought."* J. Walter Thompson Company, 1925

*"There's no point in doing decorative design. It would just interfere with what I had to say."* Scott King

**Make a single point per ad** Marty Neumeier, editor of the excellent and defunct *Critique* magazine wrote, "The Modernists, in their attempt to sweep away all irrelevancies, turned clarity into simplicity. Artist Hans Hoffman felt that to achieve clarity we must 'eliminate the unnecessary so that the necessary may speak...' Albert Einstein's formula for clarity was that 'everything should be made as simple as possible,' adding 'but no simpler...'"

The mind resists that which is confusing and embraces that which is clear. Clarity is achieved through *predigestion of material*. Predigestion implies a thorough going-over of material in order to extract the nutritional, beneficial, attributes for others. If this sounds like hard work, it is.

The speed with which we have to get a message through is increasing to almost impossible measures. As Ernie Schenck wrote in *CA* magazine, "Nothing is fast enough any more. Nothing is short enough. Everything is



1

Make a single point per ad to keep the message clear. 1 This product helps you bend your stiff, achy knees. No discussion of smell, value, or cost.



2

2 "The New Beetle Cabriolet" is single-minded advertising: round car with no top. Period. No discussion of color, engine size, stereo add-ons, or mileage.



3

3 An award-winning photo gets a minimal, though sophisticated, design treatment (*bottom right*) to identify the product. The only visual hint in the image is



the distinctive shape of a BMW grille as windows. The design does not clarify the message with a caption, but it does give a Web address.

The definition of creativity is

# The synthesis of

combination, unification of parts

# seemingly disparate ideas

on the surface, apparently

dissimilar, unlike

thought, image

# into a new and useful whole.

fresh, original

advantageous, appropriate

unity, totality

1

1 Creativity must reflect a newness, a freshness, an unexpectedness, as well as a usefulness to solving a particular advertising problem. The definition of creativity is from James L. Adams' book *Conceptual Blockbusting: A Guide to Better Ideas*.

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Adams' book *Conceptual Blockbusting: A Guide to Better Ideas*.

too long... We've got maybe three seconds to get our hooks into somebody's very resistant and not exactly advertising-friendly brain... A brilliant concept, if it's anything, is a fast concept. In a heartbeat, a fast concept drives its hook into your cerebellum and that's that. The problem now is that the heartbeat has become something closer to that of a hummingbird on amphetamines than a person... It's almost impossible to describe how fast an idea has to be now."

With the speed necessary in today's environment, there simply isn't time for more than one idea per ad. But having a single idea itself isn't enough without a design that stops the reader.

Having a single focal point is essential to breaking through readers' barriers. The focal point is most frequently an image with the headline and subhead acting as secondary elements.

Good design is not about addition, but subtraction.

*"By eliminating details, I achieve impact. By using fewer colors, I attain more contrast. By simplifying the shapes, I make them bolder."*  
George Giusti

*"Muddiness is the cloak of confused thinking. Clarity does not require the absence of impurities, only that the impurities contribute to understanding."* Critique magazine editors, 2000

**Advertising** The use of paid media to sell products or services or to communicate concepts and information by a sponsor or advertiser. *Sales, marketing, promotion, notice, message, testimonial.*

**Publicity** So-called "free advertising," though comparatively uncontrolled in that the publicity source does not purchase time or space from the media. *Exposure, awareness, advocacy, notice, announcement, familiarization, alert, dispatch.*

**Design** A process of organization in which less important material yields and more important material dominates through contrast; organization is made visible through similarity; and value is added to raw information on behalf of the reader or user. *v Plan, intend, mean, arrange, compose; n purpose, strategy, composition, layout, motif, pattern.*

**Art** Treatment that causes the viewer to see or think differently. *Abstraction, invention, style.*

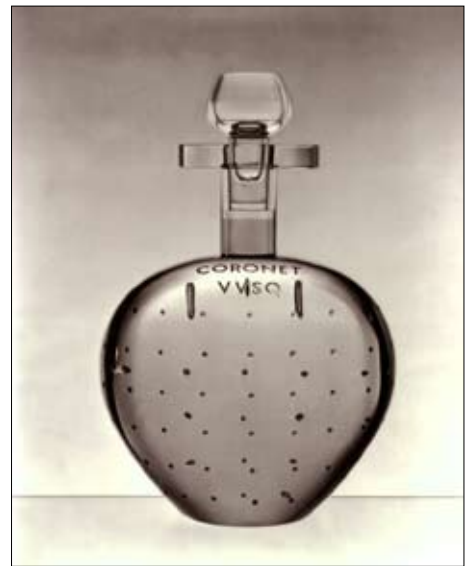




1 How do you reach designers in Communications Arts Magazine? Show them Paul Rand, an icon of advertising and design innovation. George Lois said,



2 A calendar cover for a printing company uses collage in this



1942 sample. Photocollage was used in Europe for a decade or more, but had not made the jump to the U.S. until Rand introduced it.

3 A 1942 special-edition gift decanter shows Rand's design abilities extended to product design. Though it is 65 years old, it utterly contemporary.

**On focus groups:**

*"If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses."*  
Henry Ford

**On research:**

*"As usual, you're information stinks."* Frank Sinatra in a telegram to Time magazine

**On knowing your audience:**

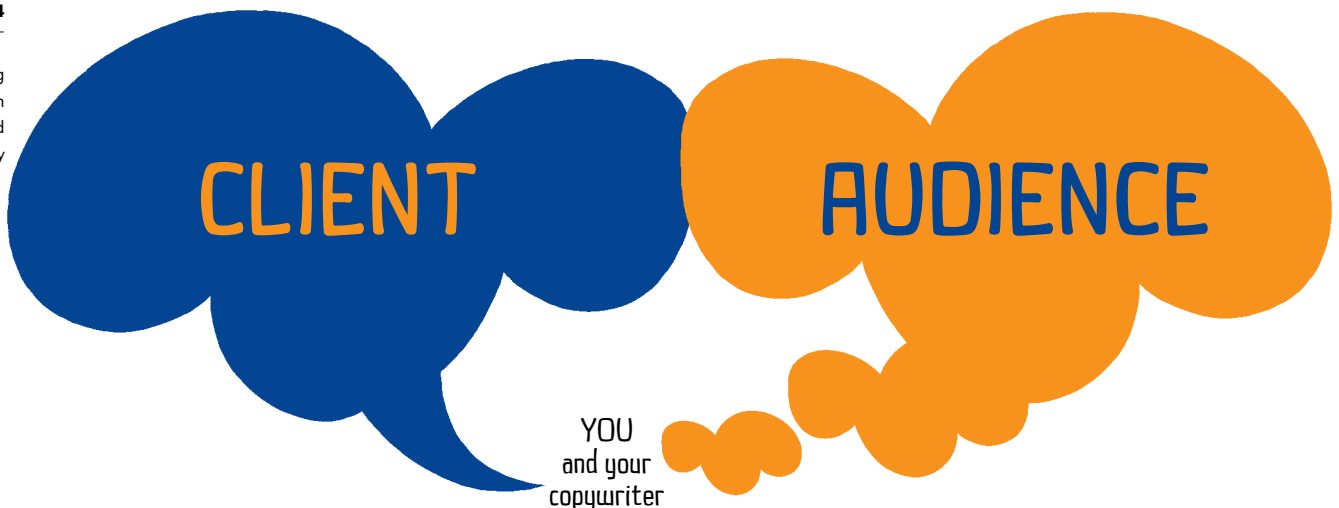
*"If you want to catch a trout, don't fish in a herring barrel."*  
Ann Landers on singles bars

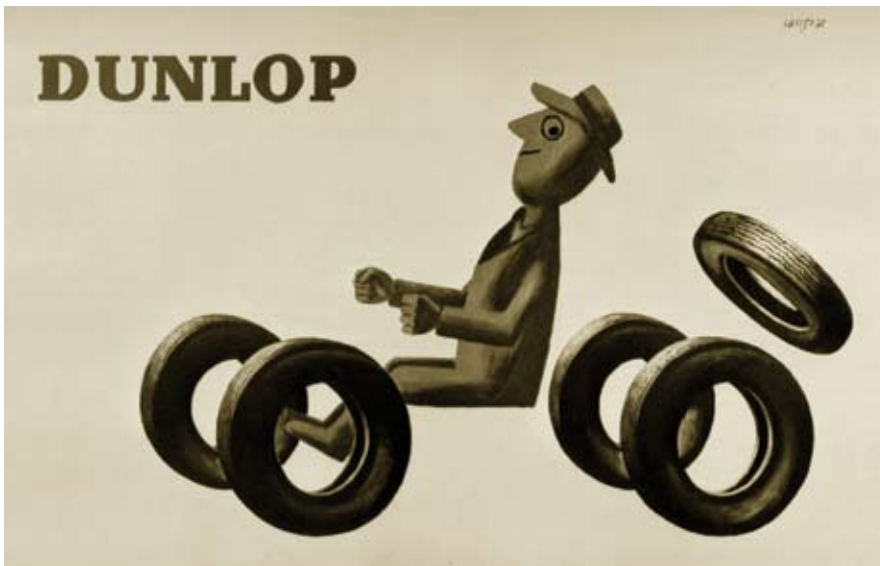
**Research + communication = knowing your client and audience**

Being given research is not nearly as valuable as doing your own research. You will see things others have missed. Your creativity will pick out an anomaly and be able to work it into an idea that no one else would have noticed.

A few thoughts on clients: Make the product the star. ➤ Get to know your client. Learn his language, answer his questions, and make his message your own. ➤ Can you tell the client she owns the idea? If not, get another idea. ➤ Turn a product similarity into a unique point. ➤ Turn a product disadvantage into an advantage. ➤ The guy who came up with "Lather. Rinse. Repeat." doubled shampoo sales instantly. Don't charge by time spent on a project: charge by the idea.

A few thoughts on audiences: People don't buy if they feel they are being sold to. ➤ Direct mail is called "junk mail," e-mail pitches are called





1 Post-War European advertising tended toward the witty, as in this 1954 poster by Savignac. It was not necessary – or had not yet become necessary – to

say much more than that a product existed. 2 “Keener competition in the market and shrinking purchasing power have driven (British



2 “Keener competition in the market and shrinking purchasing power have driven (British post-War) advertisers to two extremes: pleasing so-called public taste or presenting the public with a surprise.” Charles Rosner, co-editor of *Graphis Annual*. This sounds a lot like entertainment: neither of these directions includes product benefits or reasons to try a product.

“spam,” guerilla ads are called “grafitti.” ➤ Ads don’t work if they chase, harrangue, or interrupt people. Advertising should seduce, it should attract. ➤ Be controversial. ➤ Your ads are like free samples of the product or service: entice! ➤ If you make them care first, people *will* read body copy. ➤ Be dramatic: people are in rush to see the news/Ferrari/naked lady/sports.

A few thoughts on satisfying both clients and audiences: It is your job to interpret: take the product, digest it, and spew out its good points. ➤ If you don’t add creativity and freshness, it won’t get added by anyone else. Be outrageous in the face of sameness. ➤ Don’t stop digging for the idea too soon. ➤ A creative trick is not a trick if it is more than a thought from left field, if it has something strongly to do with the product. ➤ If a part of an ad isn’t fun, replace it – it’s a sign of difficulty. ➤ Observe ads and commercials: did those creative teams have fun?

*“The manufacturer is more often right than wrong when he says, ‘My business is different.’ Often it is exactly that difference which is fairly crying out for expression.”* The Blackman Company, Advertising, 1925

*“A designer is duty bound to push the client as far as they will go.”* Mark Farrow

*“Do it big or stay in bed.”* Larry Kelly, opera producer

**Bob Beleson is an advertising and liquor branding consultant. His rules for effective advertising:**

- Have a specific marketing objective in mind. ➤ Segment the market and identify new user groups that your brand can own. ➤ Consider the competition. What are they saying? ➤ Have a relevant message and be sure your target audience cares about your angle. ➤ Use tactical advertising where ads are placed in specific media. For example, people who sail like rum. Rum makers know this so they place their ads in sailing magazines more than other publications. As a further consequence, rum ads, wherever they appear, often show sailing or sailboats. ➤ Be single minded in your message. ➤ Develop a unique personality. ➤ Production values count. ➤ As the art director, you are 100% responsible for the ad. Allow yourself to drive everybody else nuts to get the best possible results.

**Client:**  
**Job#:**  
**Product:**  
**Date:**

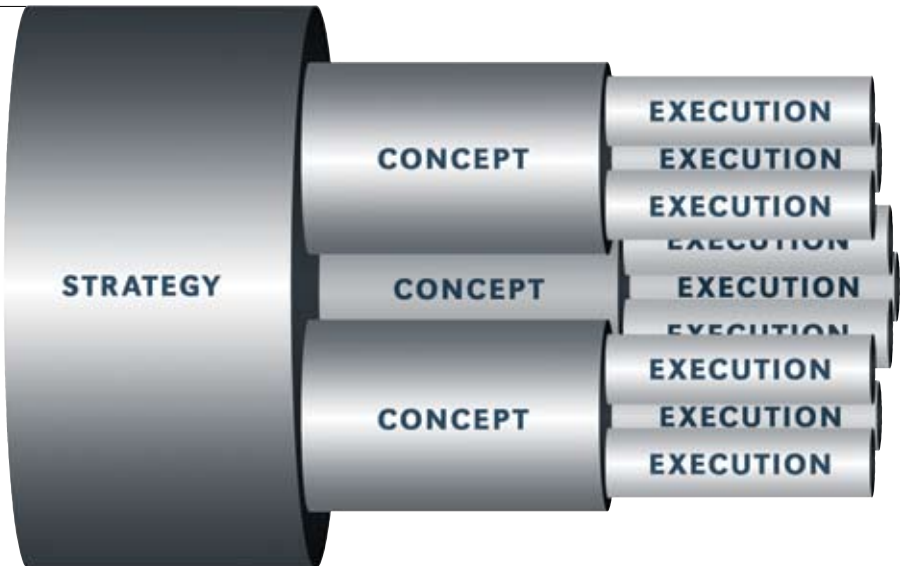
**1. CREATIVE STRATEGY**  
 Who are we selling to? [Relevant facts about people who buy and use the product or service.]  
 Who are we selling against? [Our principle competition.]  
 What will our product do for the user? [Key benefits.]  
 How does our product provide these benefits?

**2. KEY FACT**  
 (About the market or the user from research, if available. The one thing most relevant to the design.)

**3. THE PROBLEM WE MUST SOLVE FOR THE USER**  
 (Grows out of the Key Fact. It is what the user needs and it is something the design can affect.)

**4. DESIGN GOAL**  
 (Stated as an action. What the design must do in terms of the users' attitude or behavior.)

**5. MUSTS & MUST NOTS**  
 (Client/agency preferences)



1 This is the initial document one New York ad agency uses in its creative department. It covers all the essential starting points for a new assignment.

2 The creative brief is given to the creative department in a face-to-face meeting and the strategy is carefully reviewed. These are the issues that the

client will expect to see addressed. Now the creative machine chews up the brief and mulls it over and develops a few concepts – best kept simple

by avoiding details by drawing with a fat marker on a pad of white paper – and each approved concept receives a few interpretations, or executions.

**Roger Von Oech, a creativity consultant, suggests**

- 1 Never state a problem the same way it was given to you.
- 2 Anything that is surprising is useful.
- 3 Play in your work: it will show in your results.
- 4 Be sure you have recognized the obvious.
- 5 Inspiration comes from regularly scheduled work sessions.
- 6 New ideas are resisted because no one likes change: expect that resistance and be prepared for it.

**The creative brief: problem as strategy** Creatives are usually given a creative brief, one or two pages of very specific information that the marketing and account people have prepared. A typical brief has one-sentence descriptions of *audience, situation, opportunity, key customer insight, key customer benefit (positioning), promise, reasons to believe, brand character, core brand insight, and mandatories* like colors, naming requirements, and the deadline for creative development. The brief takes weeks for the account people to prepare. But the creative process often takes unexpected twists and turns – and minds are changed as studies begin to appear. We should consider a creative brief as a somewhat fluid document while “delivering the goodies” that it calls for. Your work will be evaluated by how well you have addressed the particulars in the brief. Having produced ads that respond to the brief’s specifics, persuasive arguments can be made for *additional, alternative* directions.



1 The newspaper wants to sell more classified advertising. Bob Gill simply and elegantly shows the *positive results* of small space listings.



2 How do you say “tattoos last forever”? The black and white images on the left fade away after a rain or a few weeks in the sun. The red type remains.



3 No words necessary to show bright whiteness underfoot. **Right** Marlboros were positioned as a woman’s cigarette in the early 1950s.





1

1 How do you show the importance of sound effects in print? Did the German recording

studio client really ask for this treatment?  
2 What is *fart* in German? You



2

can bet the creative brief did not mention cartoon panels or goofy comic book visual sound

effects. This is the creative department's contribution as it added its storytelling skills.

We transform the problem defined in the brief into words and pictures that will resonate with consumers. One of the best ways to generate ideas is by *brainstorming*, a technique in which the goal is to discover as many solutions as possible. There are distinct rules to this process, which was invented by Alex Osborn of BBDO. Charles H. Clark, a creativity consultant in Kent, Ohio, codified the process as follows: **1** Select the problem and state it as an action, "How can we...", "How to..." **2** Set a target number of solutions, with a minimum of 35, and a time limit, typically five minutes. **3** Suspend judgment or criticism of any kind during the brainstorming session. Judgment is negative and kills creativity. There will be time later to sift through the ideas and rank them. **4** Encourage and build off each others' unusual, peculiar ideas. Join two ideas together to make a new one. **5** Quality grows from quantity. Be an idea-generating machine.

**Brainstorming judgment phrases that should never be used:** That's a terrible idea. 🚫 We don't know that. 🚫 Be sensible. 🚫 We tried that. 🚫 The client isn't ready for that. 🚫 That's too risky. 🚫 The boss won't like it. 🚫 I thought of that before and we didn't use it then. 🚫 It will cost too much. 🚫 You've got to be kidding. 🚫 Sure, but... 🚫 We'll never get it approved. 🚫 It isn't possible. 🚫 The public will laugh at us. 🚫 It's not a new concept. 🚫 What for? 🚫 Your ideas stink.

**On getting ideas (Dom Marino and Deana Cohen, influential teachers at SVA):** Love the product.

- 🚫 Trust your gut reactions. 🚫 Use "what if..." It's your most important friend. 🚫 Love the product. 🚫 Be crazy: go too far and be brought back by someone else. 🚫 Discovering a fact is not an ad. You must dramatize, interpret, and illustrate the fact to make it an ad. To test an idea, ask "Could an account executive have done this ad?" 🚫 Don't use tricks, copy-quirks, or jokes: they don't sell because they primarily throw light on the creative team rather than the product by saying, "This ad was made by a clever person." 🚫 It's got to sound like normal conversation: would I say it this way on the phone to a friend? 🚫 Would you want to go to the shoot: is the visual interesting enough? 🚫 "Walk on snow that's never been walked on before".
- 🚫 Take a chance. 🚫 Ads are answers, not questions.

## 5 ways to sell mud.

- 1. Mud is an inexpensive medium for artists.** It's easy to use and can be used for a wide variety of projects. It's also a great way to get your name out there.
- 2. Mud is an inexpensive medium for artists.** It's easy to use and can be used for a wide variety of projects. It's also a great way to get your name out there.
- 3. Mud is fun for kids.** It's a great way to get your name out there.
- 4. Mud is useful for landscaping.** It's a great way to get your name out there.
- 5. Mud is relaxing.** It's a great way to get your name out there.



**MARVIN & LEONARD**  
Marvin & Leonard Advertising, 117 Temple Street, Boston, MA 02102-3121

## 5 ways to sell a glass of water.

- 1. Water is essential to overall good health.** It's easy to drink and can be used for a wide variety of projects. It's also a great way to get your name out there.
- 2. Water is the world's most popular drink.** It's easy to drink and can be used for a wide variety of projects. It's also a great way to get your name out there.
- 3. Water is the perfect drink for any occasion.** It's easy to drink and can be used for a wide variety of projects. It's also a great way to get your name out there.
- 4. Water has no calories.** It's easy to drink and can be used for a wide variety of projects. It's also a great way to get your name out there.
- 5. Water helps fight cavities.** It's easy to drink and can be used for a wide variety of projects. It's also a great way to get your name out there.



**MARVIN & LEONARD**  
Marvin & Leonard Advertising, 117 Temple Street, Boston, MA 02102-3121

## 5 ways to sell garbage.

- 1. Garbage is a valuable energy alternative.** It's easy to use and can be used for a wide variety of projects. It's also a great way to get your name out there.
- 2. Garbage is an inexpensive fertilizer.** It's easy to use and can be used for a wide variety of projects. It's also a great way to get your name out there.
- 3. Garbage is a useful building material.** It's easy to use and can be used for a wide variety of projects. It's also a great way to get your name out there.
- 4. Garbage is an ideal landscaping aid.** It's easy to use and can be used for a wide variety of projects. It's also a great way to get your name out there.
- 5. Garbage is a cavity fighter.** It's easy to use and can be used for a wide variety of projects. It's also a great way to get your name out there.



**MARVIN & LEONARD**  
Marvin & Leonard Advertising, 117 Temple Street, Boston, MA 02102-3121

1 A self-promotion campaign by a Boston agency in the mid-1980s showed their skill at selling things thought to be without value. Mud is "an effective

facial cleaner; an inexpensive medium for artists; fun for kids to play in; a useful construction material; and relaxing and therapeutic."

2 Water is "essential to overall good health; the world's most popular drink; the perfect drink for any occasion; calorie-free; and a cavity fighter."

3 Garbage is "a renewable energy source; an inexpensive fertilizer; a useful building material; a landscaping aid; and found art."

### Jay Wolff's Ideas

- 1 Clearly identify the basic function of the product.
- 2 Identify other possible functions: cost, value, design's size/softness/smell, USP, intangibles, quality, consumers' product awareness.
- 3 Develop a good line of thinking in one or more directions and execute each clearly and persuasively. Draw from your own experience at all times – from what you *know* and have *experienced*. Make it believable.
- 4 When you get down to it, nobody *knows* what will work, so follow your own experience honestly.

### Features and Benefits

One of the fundamental communication assumptions behind successful advertising states that the "features" of a product or service can be expressed as "benefits." Chris Zenowich, a copywriter and professor of advertising at Syracuse University, has used the following description of features and benefits in his classes: "What is a feature? A feature is an attribute, usually physical, of a product or service, e.g. 'contains retsin,' or 'overnight delivery.'

"You *create* the benefit for any given feature by expressing – either verbally or visually or both – how or why that feature fulfills a need basic to the roles of the audience you're addressing.

"Sound simple? It is, assuming you approach the project having fully familiarized yourself with the product, and with a clear definition of who your audience is. A *well-informed creative person with limited talent can produce acceptable advertising*. To be truly successful, you must select

Radioactive words that should never be used. This is an incomplete list:

Hey (your city here)...  
For people who... AMERICAS FAVORITE...  
Finally... Introducing...  
How to...  
Improved!

## Questions to uncover relevant features

Try to describe the product as if no one had ever used it.

- What is it made of?
- How well is it made?
- What does it do?
- How can it be identified?
- What does/doesn't work about it?
- What movements are necessary to use it?
- What does it cost?
- How does it compare with the competition?

## Charles Whittier's questions to uncover product benefits

Will the product:

- Make the purchaser feel more important?
- Make the purchaser happier?
- Make the purchaser more comfortable?
- Make the purchaser more prosperous?
- Make work easier for the purchaser?
- Give the purchaser greater security?
- Make the purchaser more attractive? Better liked?
- Give the purchaser some distinction?
- Improve, protect, or maintain the purchaser's health?
- Appeal to the purchaser as a bargain?

1 Seeing accurately is part of the process of defining features. Have childlike eyes and see freshly. Nothing is insignificant and nothing should be overlooked.

2 Converting and reinterpreting features into benefits takes both intellectual and emotional sensitivity. You need to under-

stand their demographic and you have to project yourself into the target users' lives to feel their needs and wants.

the features of your product or service which offer the strongest benefits to your target audience.

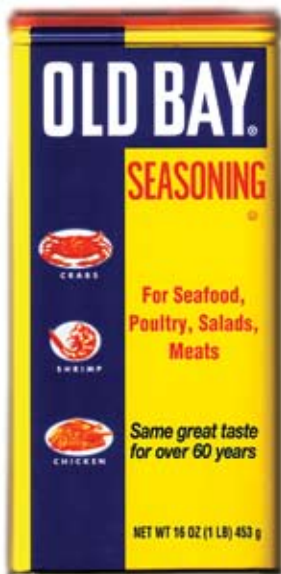
"When you are lucky, the features of your product or service will be unique and offer benefits that are compelling and relevant. But more often you must cope with a 'parity product' – one with essentially the same features as the others in its category. You must then seek out 'advantages,' and state those advantages uniquely and memorably.

"Charles Whittier, longtime Creative Director at J. Walter Thompson/Chicago, suggested that there are ten basic questions you can ask to uncover the benefits suggested by the features for a product or service (see *above right*). Each of these questions directly or indirectly addresses one of our basic needs: food, shelter, health, love, and acceptance. But notice how dull advertising is when these questions are translated directly into advertising benefits, merely saying, 'You will be happy when you use this!'"



**Benefit shown** Only one car has a single set of footprints and the ability to have been started and driven away in the cold.

**The working process** Feel guilty if you're not having fun. ➤ Have enthusiasm. ➤ Dig deeper. Expose yourself. Don't play safe. ➤ Keep climbing out on a limb, even if you fall off again and again. At least you'll be remembered. ➤ Have emotion and use it. Channel anger, frustration, exhaustion, or happiness into ideas. ➤ The ad must be more than an observation about the product. The truth is not enough to make a good ad. ➤ The ad should reveal its creator as an exciting person. ➤ The idea must be big enough to campaign. What's the second ad? What's the twenty-fifth? ➤ Be prepared and able to defend the ad's idea. ➤ Don't make your ad sound important: that's advertising-ese. Make ads that are personal, human, and accessible. ➤ All's fair en route to getting a hot ad. Do whatever is necessary to get the best results: moonlight with a friend if necessary. ➤ Make a decision and stick to it. Don't compromise. Keep it pure.



1 Mix together the following ingredients and you get seasoned salt: salt, sugar, spices, pepper, onion, garlic, celery

seed, oregano, paprika. They are recommended for "use on beef, chicken, pork, potatoes, popcorn, eggs, beans, rice, pasta, salads, vegetables,

soups, and sauces." They are direct competitors, though each has its own mixture ratio and, more importantly,

unique positioning. One is for seafood, one for steak, one for Dominicans, one for Cajun cooking, and one for everything and everyone.



*"What if your product really is just like the other guy's? Simple: invent a difference. In marketing, perception is as important as reality."*  
Anonymous

**Parity products** Parity 1) Equality, as in amount, status, or value. 2) Equivalence, or resemblance. Parity products are products that have no real, substantive differences. For example, Tide powder detergent is identical to Cheer and half a dozen other brands. In order to make a particular brand stand out – for it to have a USP (see page 22) – the advertising agency often suggests changes in the product. Adding blue speckles and calling them "ZX2" is one. Packaging in a new spouted box is another. Even claiming that "this is the detergent for cold water" will work. What is important is recognizing that there are no inherent differences in your product, researching what your competitors are saying, and carving out a niche by developing something you can claim makes your product desirable. Say, by positioning it as the detergent for really old clothes, or for 100% cotton fabric, or for toddler's clothes, or for loving spouses, or for a particular ethnic group, or for...

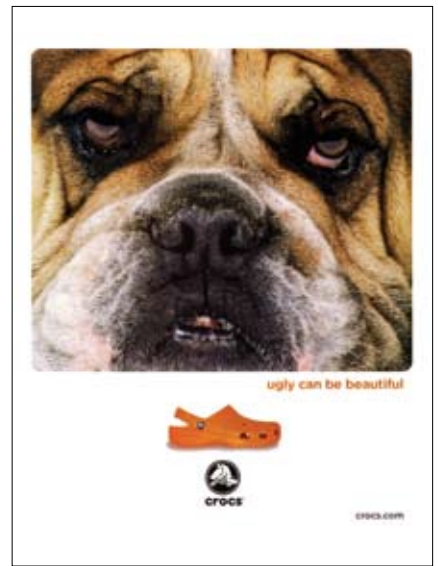
**"Don't ask someone if they love you if you don't know they'll say yes," or How to win** Make sure you get something *from* your work. 🍀 Drop boring people from your life. 🍀 Take a different route to work every day. 🍀 Lighten up. 🍀 Be a sponge. 🍀 You are always working for yourself. 🍀 Ask "what's in it for me?" The "me" is the client, the consumer, and yourself: a good ad must benefit all three. 🍀 Don't show an ad that is being developed. It is too young and vulnerable. 🍀 Present your ideas to your boss when she's in the best mood. 🍀 When presenting an ad, introduce it with a setup line. Pose the question the ad answers. It makes the ad look better than it is. 🍀 Look at ads to see what's been done. Then never settle for "it's been done." 🍀 A portfolio is what you want to do, not what you've done. 🍀 Your book must show you are an interesting person. 🍀 When in doubt, leave it out. 🍀 Win where you are before moving on.



1 What if a radio is a car? The AM mono radio was standard until the late 1960s, so this was a significant improvement.



2 What if a car is a spaceship? Man landed on the moon in 1969, the year of this ad. VW had been mining the "ugly but

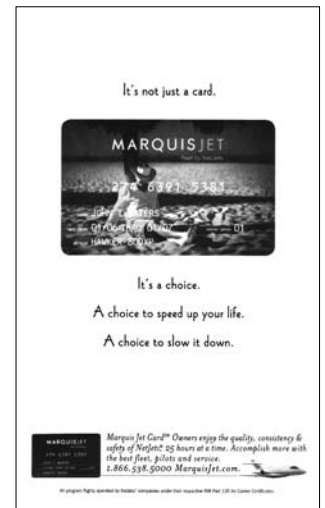


3 What if a shoe is a dog? A 2006 variation of the VW ad promoting a shoe rather than a car.

**Positioning** *Positioning* is the creation of a distinct identity in the marketplace so a product appeals to a defined segment of the public. No one is "everybody:" ads for everybody tend to be ignored for that very reason. So pick a segment of "everybody" and sell to them. Each of us is looking for a reflection of ourselves in ads, so the better you reveal your selected part of "everybody," the better you show me to myself, they better I will respond.

The product: timeshares of a private jet. The image: a man resting on a remote beach. The positioning: a service to get the hardworking away faster *so they can slow down sooner*. The headline says: "It's not just a card. It's a choice. A choice to speed up your life. A choice to slow it down."

A few thoughts on positioning:   
 1. Research and define enemies: who is our competition? What are they doing?   
 2. Use positioning to eliminate as much of the competition as you can.   
 3. Select a position *only you can own*.   
 4. Try on different roles. Be a mirror.



Position begets attitude begets campaign.



1 Contrasting positions are shown in two 1962 automotive ads. Understated elegance with the headline, "Coupe d'Etat," French for *a violent*



*change in government*, though being used here as a play on words for *coupe of state* vs cold war drama with text reading "The only missile you



can inspect without a security clearance."   
 2 Outrageous visuals were a staple during the dot.com boom in the late 1990s. It was thought



that merely getting eyeballs on a Web site would lead to financial success.   
 3 Mercedes again selling more than a mere hunk of metal.





1 Three ads from one edition of an advertising trade magazine show three ways to say the same thing: *Congratulations to*

*ourselves and our competitors for winning a desirable award for creative excellence in advertising.* There are always

alternative ways of breathing life into a project brief. Which solution you choose begins with your creativity, but also

depends on the taste and courage of your colleagues and clients. In these examples, those groups are one and the same.

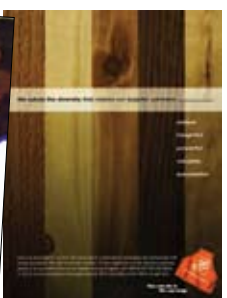


Rosser Reeves defined good advertising as that which sells the most, not that which pleases us the most.

**The Unique Selling Proposition (USP)** A product or service will probably have several features worth talking about. But its advertising must select a *single one* that will separate it from its competitors in the minds of prospective buyers. This is known as the Unique Selling Proposition, a term that Rosser Reeves, of Ted Bates & Company, coined. The USP creates the *brand image, brand personality, position, or promise.* It is used repeatedly to make the one point over and over: this brand is different (and beneficial) from all others. Repetition is key: back in the day, callers to Reeves' agency were greeted with, "Good morning. Ted Bates, Ted Bates, Ted Bates."

It is essential to understand that the benefit does not need to actually *be unique*, just that *it is the only brand to be claiming the benefit* in its advertising. It must be the only one *talking about that benefit.*

It is up to the creative team and the marketing planners to decide which

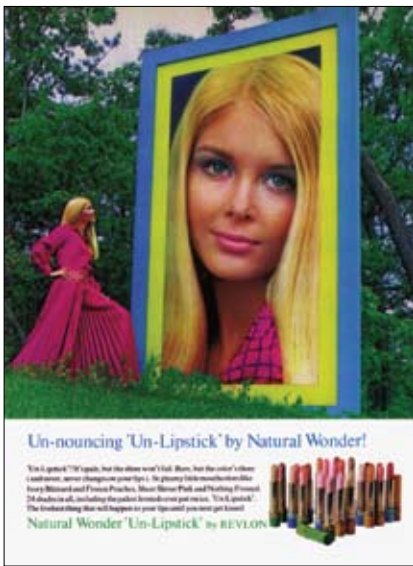


1 Here are six ads from different sponsors and art directors. They appeared in a single issue of a magazine for a minority audience. Each ad has the same

message: our company honors diversity, so you should consider working for us. Because they appeared all at once in one magazine, it is impossible not

to perceive them in direct competition. Which of these ads goes beyond the message and stands out? Which is most persuasive, most creative, most

effective? Another consideration is which of these ads has a Unique Selling Proposition, offering a promise none of the others is making?



1 Market research defines segments of the audience and what kinds of messages and symbols they respond to.



2 1 What if this lipstick makes you look good *without looking like you are wearing makeup*? What if this is the “un-makeup”?  
 2 What if this car is *naughty*? Who would buy a car that is doing pranks? The same who might “grab life by the horns”?



3 Even a country can be positioned: What if Brasil is for people who are enthusiastic and joyful about nature?

of the advantages a product offers should be given priority. It may be a color, an ingredient, or a social standing. Everything in the ad, the campaign, and every branding effort should promote that single objective.

Hank Seiden, writing in *Advertising Pure and Simple*, describes the USP: “Every successful product has got to have a Unique Advantage. Without it, the advertiser is wasting his money. (Unless he can overwhelm competition simply by outspending everyone, which in itself becomes the product’s Unique Advantage.) But before you can promote the Unique Advantage, you’ve got to isolate and recognize it in your product. Here are several ways to do so: **1** First and easiest is when the Unique Advantage is inherent in the product itself. It’s either visible or otherwise readily identifiable. The advertising must then point out why this unique feature will be to their benefit. **2** The Unique Advantage may be difficult to find, and once found, may not be an advantage at all, or may not even be uni-

*“Art is I, science is we.”* Claude Bernard (1813-1878), French physiologist Art in advertising is a truly rare commodity: “art direction” is often “layout management.” When art becomes “we,” when decisions are made by committee, what is being fooled with will almost certainly no longer be art, if it ever was.

**Happy marriages, or How to work as a team** Have one ad. 🗡️ Two people as a team are one. Work to build an idea together. 🗡️ Both members of the team must be 100% responsible for 100% of the ad. 🗡️ A design-savvy writer is as valuable as a verbally-adept art director. 🗡️ Brainstorming is a game in which there are only two rules: 1] *criticism is not allowed* and 2] *don't be the one who lets an idea stop*. 🗡️ For ideas you don't like from your partner: look at it from a different point of view and “return it over the net.” 🗡️ Phrases to keep creativity flowing: “what if...,” “let’s let that cook...,” and “these are not the words, but...” 🗡️ Be willing to abandon a toyed-with ad to protect its integrity. 🗡️ It is a question of perspective between being thought of as a prima donna and being a strong defender of your ideas. 🗡️ Recognize unwinnable situations – in clients, products, account executives – and get reassigned.



**A Technique for Producing Ideas** has just 62 pages. These are the key points it makes, but the context is missing, making this a bit tough to absorb. Go to the original and see why it's a classic.

◆ Ideas are prepared as if on an assembly line. Their creation follows a formula.

◆ People may be divided into two groups: those who accept the way things are but don't challenge it (chumps), and those who are "preoccupied with the possibilities of new

combinations." Those interested in advertising are inherently in this second group.

◆ There are two parts to ideation: Principles and Methods.

◆ Facts by themselves are not significant.

◆ **Principle 1** An idea is the combination of old materials.

◆ **Principle 2** One must be able to perceive relationships to make combinations.

◆ **Method, Step 1** Gather raw material, which is in two forms, specific (about the product, category, and consumer) and

**A Technique for Producing Ideas** is a small, invaluable book written in 1960 by James Webb Young. It is a concise

process of digestion and recombination that anyone who is willing to put in the necessary work can follow. Relevant

and dramatic ideas are the soul of advertising, and this process is as likely to produce them as anything ever devised.

Reading the book is essential to understanding the technique. These are the points distilled in the briefest language.



*"You must be an extensive browser of all sorts of information. For it is with the advertising person as with the cow: no browsing, no milk."*  
James Webb Young (1886-1973)

que at all... In a majority of cases, something will eventually be found in the appearance, ingredients, use, manufacturing process, packaging, or distribution of a product that offers prospects a compelling reason to try it. It may or may not be truly unique. So long as no one else is talking about it, it becomes unique to your product by reason of preemption.

3 Sometimes the Unique Advantage is in reality a unique disadvantage which can be turned around... At one time all tuna fish sold was pink. A new company came on the scene with a white tuna – a tremendous disadvantage – in a market used to pink tuna. The white tuna people didn't think so, and advertised their tuna as guaranteed not to turn pink, thereby implying that something was wrong with pink tuna... They did it so well that all tuna marketed since then is white. 4 Occasionally, no matter how hard you try, nothing unique can be found about a product. It is then the agency's responsibility to recommend the addition of a par-



"Advertising expresses the life of the era from which it stems." Westvaco Inspiration for Printers, Number 200, 1955

1 Do you see distinction among matchbooks, or do you see a quaint advertising medium and kitschy art? These matchbook covers were designed

a couple of generations ago. They are obviously a reflection of the times: people smoked, there were no disposable lighters yet, so matchbooks were

carried by many and used often. Today's advertising media is different, but it is similarly awash in content: how do you stand out?

general (about life, history, and events). An advertising idea comes from the combination of specific information about the product with general knowledge about life. For this, you must have an appetite for information for its own sake and have an eagerness to learn about any subject.

◆ **Method, Step 2** Chew on the material. Turn it over. Inspect it. Define it. Write down ideas until you can't get any more.

◆ **Method, Step 3** Digest the material. Set the problem aside. Arrange for the subcon-

scious to take over. Take a brief period, an afternoon, maybe a day, to let your mind do its work. Provide emotional or intellectual stimulation on another subject entirely.

◆ **Method, Step 4** The idea will appear on its own. Ideas come after you stop straining for them – if you have genuinely prepared the mind in Steps 1 through 3.

◆ **Method, Step 5** Refine the young, fragile idea so it is useful and truly satisfies the problem. Adapt it to the practical and specific conditions in which it must exist.

Having spent his career at J. Walter Thompson, Young was asked to deliver a presentation on developing creativity

to graduate students at the University of Chicago's School of Business. He prepared his notes the day before and sub-

sequently edited them for publication. Young was a person who absorbed, condensed, then regurgitated facts in sim-

plified form with truth revealed. It is little wonder that he had the capacity to succinctly describe the process of ideation.

ticular feature to a manufacturer. Or the agency must create a Unique Advantage for the product by repositioning it... In my experience, there are very few products for which an exclusive claim cannot be made or a new position found. Usually the agency that fails to do this is at fault; it is rarely the fault of the product. There are far more parity agencies than there are parity products.”

So it is up to the creatives to play with a product, to feel it, to know it, and to recognize – or invent – what makes it special, which may be either a positive or a negative that is turned into a positive. A friend tells of buying a luxe Briggs umbrella in London. Pointing at a nearly-invisible scar on the underside of the beautifully carved burl walnut handle, the salesman said, “I regret this small flaw, sir.” The salesman understood the value of the *absence* of machine made perfection in a finely-crafted, one-of-a-kind object. His observation and comment assured the sale.



1 The most inane creative approach possible is to show a product simply as it is. There is no Christmas bonus waiting for the art director who says,

“I’ve got a great idea: let’s show a lawnmower in our lawnmower ad!” Add *something*: what if a lawnmower were a car? It would be adjustable to fit the

“driver.” A *feature* of this lawnmower is its adjustable handle. It is turned into a *benefit* by comparing it with a car’s adjustable steering wheel.

## What is the product?

Use the mind to:

Collect facts

Be methodical and comprehensive

Define how it feels, looks, and works

Determine target user

Identify what is good or bad about the product

## What is the benefit?

Use the mind and emotions to:

Evaluate facts

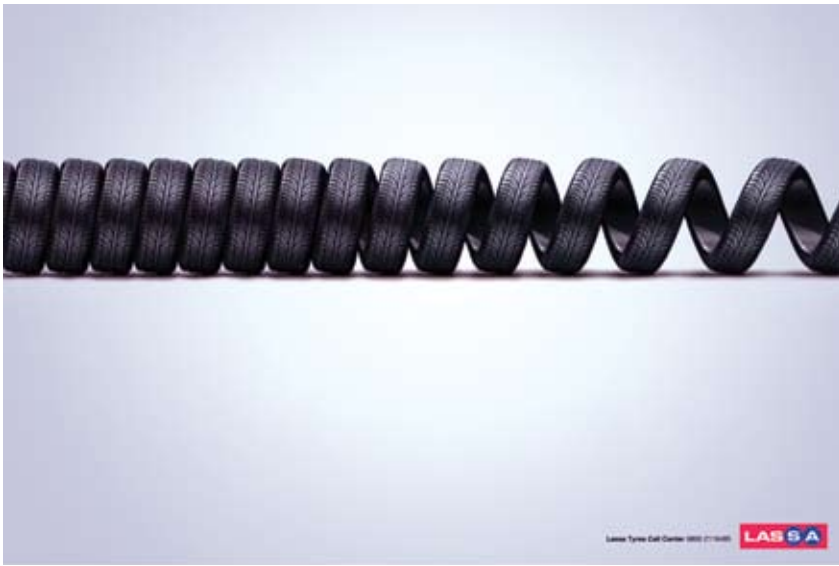
Determine the position

## How have similar products been positioned?

Can their positions be coopted?

What position envelops theirs?

Can an opposite position work?



1

“Big ideas are so hard to recognize, so easy to kill. Don’t forget that, all of you who don’t have them,” said John “Jock” Elliott, Jr., on his retirement as the chairman of Ogilvy &

Mather International in 1982. “I was a pretty good copywriter, but not good enough. I could execute campaigns, but never came up with the big ideas, so I went into a less demanding

kind of work. I became an account man.”  
**1** A one-shot ad is an idea that can’t be realised more than once. This combination of tires and telephone cord, promot-



2

ing the manufacturer’s call center, is wonderful in its simplicity, but it can’t be repeated.  
**2** The unique attributes of the product and humor are used to make this one-shot ad.



A startling demonstration of an insect control service is a one-shot ad. The billboard has stickiness in the shape of letters which, over time, glue passing bugs and make the message visible. But can this be done in, say, a dozen permutations? Or is this installation about the end of the road for the idea – as well as for the bugs?

**One shot vs campaign advertising** Coming up with a single ad that has a clear point made memorably is not an easy task. Creating a one-shot ad requires a compelling idea, fresh visualization, and clear, distinctive typography. Challenging as making a great one-shot ad is, clients almost always need an idea that is big enough to be freshly interpreted dozens or even hundreds of times over the course of a multi-year campaign. Such an idea, an idea that is campaignable, is called, naturally enough, a Big Idea. Creatives who can develop the Big Idea are in a minority of advertising professionals. Their skill is an extremely valuable commodity.

A campaign is an extended series of ads that are connected and unified by a common theme or idea. The theme can be expressed by maintaining a consistent attitude through the ad series (“Ugly is only skin deep and we’re proud of being ugly”), or by repeating one headline (or by making



1

**1** Though this is a great idea – that this toothpaste is natural and refreshing – and the ads are beautifully realised, this



campaign is really multiple iterations of the same ad. If you cannot easily imagine what the

tenth (or hundredth) version of the ad will be, you are not working with a Big Idea.



1 A campaign must have similarities, if not exact identicalities, in attitude, purpose, and de-

sign. Three ads from a 1959 Olivetti series show the product, a well-designed typewriter, as

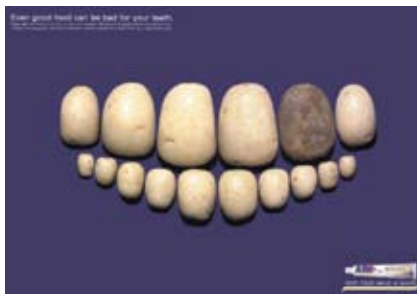
an evolutionary step forward in the history of writing. The layout changes, but the spa-

aciousness, colors and transparent overlapping treatment remains constant.

only slight alterations to a headline), or by using the same design throughout. A campaign must cross over media, as well. An idea might be wonderful for tv because it requires movement, but it must be translatable into print and be just as potent.

Ads in a campaign are never seen by the public in a cluster, the way they are presented on a critique wall. They are placed in publications or broadcast in intervals, so that repeated viewing makes an accumulated impression. Days or weeks may go by between viewings, so the ads must have a certain repetitiveness to them.

An advertising campaign can be made of scores of ads before it is retired and a new approach is developed in response to a changing business environment. Presenting a campaign usually consists of three print ads and two or three television commercials. These quantities suggest the campaignability of the Big Idea.



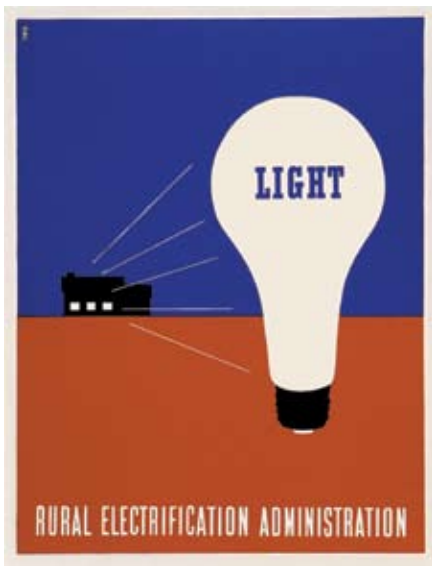
1 A campaign is a continuation of a defined attitude plus an idea big enough to be interpreted many times, each time as freshly as the first. Both the

idea and the attitude must be flexible. 1 This campaign's strength is the idea that teeth can be represented by foods that teeth

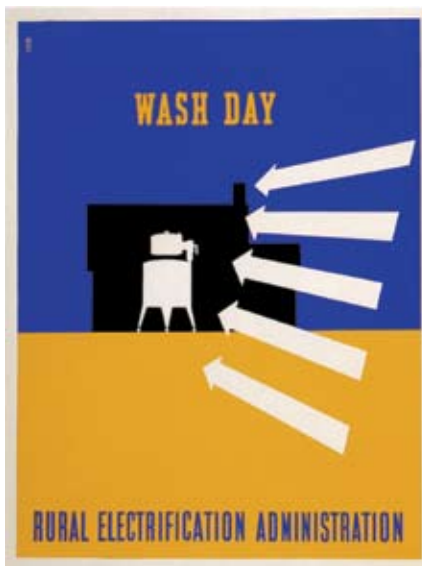
chew, like toast and potatoes. Can you imagine the twentieth ad in this campaign? It'll have to at least evolve into food that is not white if it is to be visible.



Camping equipment positioned as natural protection and expressed through simile: a tent is like a turtle's shell. Campaignable, Big Ideas are tough to develop. The creative process is best done as a two-person team, where ideas can be shot back and forth and improved upon and evolved from an unrealistic "what if?" to a polished idea. This campaign would be more fun to work on than the Aim campaign at left.



1 Lester Beall's poster series for the R.E.A. in 1937 promotes expansion of the U.S. electrical system.

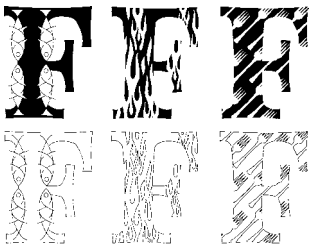


2 Beall (1903-1969) saw no distinction between art and professional practice. These posters were silkscreened so their



graphic simplicity was made necessary partly by technology and mostly by Beall's interpretation of Modernism.

3 Note Beall's thematic use of arrows and lines to indicate dynamic progress, and his use of colors, typefaces, and sizes.



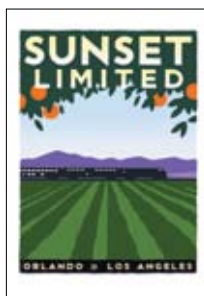
Developing a distinctive logo requires abstraction of both the type and imagery. This student's project develops three variations of a letter and object translation in assigned ways to help see similarities of shape.

**An identifiable look for every client** How to make your advertising stand out from the ordinary, the work that we have all trained ourselves to ignore in all media? Understanding consumers and what they already see is part of the solution. Persuading clients to risk their advertising budget is another. But it starts with us, with our willingness to take risks and develop a look for each client for whom we work. It is a significant part of branding, or creating a consistent visual approach for all a company's materials that come before the public. A weak visual personality handicaps a branding effort: if a discernable character isn't recognized, your brand is seriously handicapped. A strong marketing character requires the risk of being different.

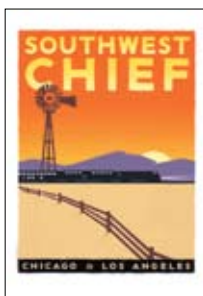
Get a message noticed by manipulating elements in an unexpected way. Abstraction of imagery and type produces new design solutions that a client can *own* without making the core idea unreadable.



1 Neville Brody for Nike, 1988: uses scale contrast of Franklin Gothic, print grows from tv commercial with moving type: young, hip audience.



2 Amtrak's campaign picks up the look of old railroad posters from the 1940s, which reinforces already existing ideas about scenic rail travel.



3 Torn paper and a loose painting style define this 1964 ad. **Opposite** Kurt Schwitters' 1924 ad for an writing ink manufacturer broke the design rules of



the day. Schwitters was an artist associated with the Dadaists and helped found the *Circle of New Advertising Designers* in 1927.



SIGNETENTWURF FÜR DAS WORT PELIKAN VON KURT SCHWITTERS

PELIKANTINTE

94



4001 Beste Buch- und Schreibinte. Eisengallustinte, fließt bläulich, wird tiefschwarz. Liefert Schrift von unbegrenzter Dauer. Angenehm leichtflüssig.  
5001 Buch- und Kopiertinte. Eisengallustinte, fließt bläulich, wird schwarz. Liefert auf der Kopierpresse 2 bis 3 Kopien. Kann auch in Böchern verwendet werden, ohne darin abzuklatschen.  
3001 Starke Kopiertinte. Echte Blauholzinte, fließt violett-schwarz. Schrift und Kopien dunkeln schwarz nach. Gibt auf der Kopiermaschine 3 bis 6 Kopien. Auch nach längerer Zeit noch kopierfähig. Nicht für Böcher bestimmt.



3001 4001 5001