

VOICE

EVERYONE'S GOT A VOICE. LET YOURS BE HEARD. LOUD AND CLEAR.

“

Your publication is beautifully designed and we look forward to each issue. Congratulations on your success and keep up the great work!

Katherine Filice
Articulate Solutions, Creative Director

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1908

Tracing back to 1908, the Dallas Ad League is the oldest professional and civic organization in Dallas.

Source: Dallas Ad League

EXPRESSION

WILL AD AGENCIES CONTINUE TO LOOK LIKE GROCERY STORES?



BY JOE FOURNET

Why do companies equate the value of professional creative services to that of a loaf of bread or a quart of milk at the local grocery store? Why is it that the following equation does not add up: Communicator = CPA/Accountant/Doctor/Lawyer? Why are the practitioners of creative communications viewed as merely providing a commodity?

Well, the short answer is that we're undervalued as professionals. We don't do a good job of differentiating ourselves. Shopping for creative services is like going to the grocery store: commodities down every aisle priced to attract consumers. Value, for the most part, doesn't enter the equation.

Here's a bulletin for you: Thinking still matters. Strategy matters. It's all a part of the value proposition, which is constantly being under appreciated by the client. If we don't do a better job of differentiating ourselves from our competitors, our agencies will be nothing more than communications grocery stores.

According to a recent American Marketing Association presentation in Houston by Bob Pritchard, an international business and marketing consultant, our industry has been mired in commoditization because 1) we don't take responsibility; 2) we don't talk the language of business; and 3) most marketing and advertising does not work.

Why? According to Pritchard, we've forgotten the basics, we don't do our homework, and, perhaps most importantly, we don't measure what we do. I'm not saying that everyone in our industry falls in this category but, unfortunately, a lot do.

We can't be "order takers" and expect to get the client's respect in the same manner afforded to a doctor or attorney. We have to be innovators, thinkers, creators. Take responsibility, but dare to be non-traditional. Act on what you suggest, and walk away from conservatism.

We must deliver viable solutions to the client's business problem and demonstrate a return on investment in the process. Houston advertisers, for the most part, don't do a good job of differentiating themselves from their competition. Their advertising message contains no big idea, no distinctive selling points to attract the consumer enough to act and, thus, buy. Very seldom are there parameters set by which to measure a campaign's success.

Is it any wonder then, why advertising doesn't work under these commoditized circumstances?

Fighting the commodity label means fighting the price war. If a client insists he can get the work done for less, he can. He also may not be worth having as a client. If he knows you'll meet his cheaper rates, just think of what he'll continue to do on future projects. So, don't be afraid to say no.

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VOICE

WHERE IN THE WORLD?



Associate Editor Sandra Carr takes a break from zooming around on her Stella scooter to read the Summer issue of *Create Magazine* at Lake Eola Park in Orlando, FL.



Create Magazine's designer Brenda Raza's peeps and her husband hang out in Times Square, New York City. (l-r) Rolando Ruppert, Rafiq Raza and Ruben Ruppert

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This type of client truly doesn't value what our greatest asset is to his business – creative mind power. Bust the commodity issue by bringing values to Mr. Client not previously there: Experience, depth of knowledge, a unique and different perspective, think time and professionalism.

Our industry needs more intelligence added to its creativity. We need fresh talent who think strategically rather than cutesy, and innovative thought that will complement the creativity.

The creativity and innovation in this Bayou City has stagnated in recent years. Where are the ideas? Where's the creativity? Well, in some instances, there is none because it's buried in stupidity.

Advertisers, you need to listen! Whether it's furniture, cars or whatever, schlocky advertising is bad advertising and deserves to be referred to as a commodity or worse. It's a disservice to Houston or anywhere else.

Craftsmanship and innovation in more than just advertising adds value to one's arsenal. According to Chuck Porter of Crispin Porter + Bogusky, "The pendulum is swinging away from size and experience to innovation and new ideas." In Houston, like other parts of the country, a new breed of "communications agency" has been on the rise. They partner with complementary businesses to attract clients while strengthening the resource value and the ability to provide non-traditional media solutions to a client's problems.

One such Houston group goes by the moniker, PerceptiveCom.com. According to the company's Web site, "We don't provide costly solutions. We provide alternative thinking. That's not typical, and neither are the cost savings we pass onto the client!"

Alternative thinking leads to differentiation, which does away with the commodity label. Future success in the industry will depend on how well we adapt. ■

A Louisiana-native with extensive experience in the advertising and marketing industry, Joe Fournet moved to Houston to become regional manager of the Bozell Worldwide office. Afterwards, he opened his own marketing consultancy, Ideas & More (www.ideasmore.net), where he served such clients as Halliburton, Bechtel, and various consumer businesses. A presenter at the 2005 American Creativity Association International Conference, Fournet specializes in concept development, strategy, copywriting, creative direction and presentation counseling. Past-president of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) Houston, and member of the Houston Advertising Federation, Fournet serves on the Only in Houston's education and advertising committees.

LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD.

Got any comments, feedback, statistics, questions, thoughts or photos that you would like to share with us? Send them to feedbacktex@createmagazine.com.



QUESTION OF THE ISSUE

What are the pros and cons of working as a freelance creative?

E-mail your answers to feedbacktex@createmagazine.com and sound off!



Image courtesy of Ablestock

DID YOU KNOW?

Houston's WorldFest International Film Society was founded in 1961. It became the third competitive international film festival in North America, following only San Francisco and New York.

Source: WorldFest