

“The Idea Rules”

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Ideas & MORE

On behalf of the Houston Advertising Federation, Greetings! And congratulations to the newly installed officers and board of the Lake Charles Advertising Federation, and to you, the members for your continued support of the club.

Please join me in a somewhat silly, but nevertheless, sincere toast:

May your ideas be stellar,

May your bad ones be kept in the cellar,

May your ads be true,

May your skies stay blue, and

May your Addys all be gold.

To an adver-freakin-terrific 2007 and 8! CHEERS, Mes Amis!

I'd like to echo what Bryant just said about District 10 and involvement. Your ideas and spirit affect the District and vice versa. We're all in this together. Lake Charles is indeed not an island unto itself. And for those of us in Houston and surrounding areas, we consider you an extension of our advertising families.

So, have you got your iPhone yet? It'll be interesting to see how this captivating product delivers and how much more innovation Steve Jobs can pack into it. How might it affect advertising and idea generation? Well,

When asked of the different forms of cellphone advertising, from text links tied to search results to a promo ad when turning on the phone, the overwhelming majority of respondents in a Harris Interactive survey found them "not acceptable at all."

Says Greg Sterling, principal of Sterling Market Intelligence, "When presented with relevant advertising when people are looking for something, they're much more accepting." Relevant advertising . . . what a novel concept.

Peter's Email Announced the Title of Today's Talk as "The Idea Rules."

I'd Like to Add, "and Then There's the Crayon."

(More on this in a moment)

How do you generate selling ideas that work?

1.) Apply ample dose of creativity

2.) Listen. Listen. Listen. To your clients, colleagues, everyone and everything.

3.) Refer to #s 1 and 2.

Have you ever wondered when that next great idea is going to hit you? Regardless of what aspect of the creative process involves you, creativity is key; it's a state of mind. And when the mind is having fun, creativity is boundless.

What is creativity? Creativity occurs when people perceive there are no limits; the ability to see, feel, touch, think and imagine what one has not seen, felt, touched, thought or imagined before; solving a communications or marketing problem in order to stimulate demand.

My favorite definition is "intelligence having fun." It doesn't matter whether you're an artist, wordsmith, media planner, financial planner, sales guru or receptionist. Each one of us represents a different perspective, a different creative slant. We're talking thought and mind power today; the power of ideas, and creativity is the spark.

Listen, listen, listen! Be aware of your surroundings and learn what your clients want and discover what they need. How do you do that?

Start by asking probing questions beyond what is normally asked. Nothing is out of bounds or closed to discussion until someone says it is. Then, ask why. Eventually, you'll discover new and different points of view.

You're also discovering advertising's new role: Provoke conversation. Think of it as a new mind set, of being like an investigative reporter. You're constantly refining the questions, especially when you use a few of the last words spoken in the previous answer. The more you get the client to converse, the better informational foundation you lay for idea generation.

Provoking conversation to kick-start some ideas is one perspective. Once ideas develop into a form of advertising, another type of conversation takes place. The more innovative the idea, the more interesting the conversation.

Okay, Let's Play!

Some Suggestions on Generating Ideas

Creativity Survival Kit – Get any sort of container (old, cleaned out paint can is great) in which you place whatever makes you FEEL creative and THINK creatively. A music CD, crayon, gum, Post-it Notes (for that next, great idea) are all wonderful examples.

Awake the Artist Within AKA Don't Let the Kids Have All the Fun – CRAYON

EXERCISE – Remove a crayon or two from your Ideas & MORE crayon pack. Why a crayon?

Crayons are the essence of creativity. Take a look at one and then close your eyes. Concentrate on the crayon: its feel, shape and scent. Think about the sensations you feel and the memories that come to mind.

Open your eyes. What memories came to mind?

When in your office or any quiet place, you'd start sketching whatever comes to mind while your eyes are closed. You'd continue to sketch for about 2 or 3 minutes. Don't worry about what it'll look like. You won't be judged. Let your imagination come out and play.

When you open your eyes and see your new creation, you may not recognize anything (after you've stopped laughing hysterically). After a while, though, an idea or two or three may emerge. You're subconsciously generating ideas and that's the best way. When you actually try to do so, often times you come up with nothing. Oh, if you need bigger ideas, get larger crayons.

Jekyll & Hyde Approach – See the same problem/challenge from different perspectives to arrive at several solutions. Say a designer invents a logo; he then re-invents it, not looking at all like the first one. A writer composes a draft for an ad or speech. One may be humorous, the other serious. Either way, the objectives can still be met but the solution is not limited to just one version . . . or one medium.

Okay, while having some fun and being a little silly, these exercises center on one thing: The idea reigns. Or should. An idea can come from anywhere and anyone. We're all in this

together. Content is king and even though how it's conveyed is important, the idea should be media and discipline neutral. Otherwise, you limit yourself. It's what we do with the idea that matters. Clients only care about how we're going to make it work and be relevant. There's that word again.

Okay, once we have an idea or two, what do we do?

Figure out what needs to be said and how that might be told. Sales folks and account people play integral roles in soliciting that type of information from the client. As ideas are developed, make sure their essence is refined. In other words, make sure your ideas are clear and that you can explain their basic value in about 20 seconds. This makes it easier for the idea to gain acceptance.

We must deliver what clients need most: *creative solutions to business problems*. We need to be creative business thinkers as well as storytellers. We should think of ourselves as the designated "devil's advocate," the trusted resource with a different perspective.

SOME EXAMPLES OF GOOD IDEAS AND WONDERFUL EXECUTION

According to Advertising Age, the future for the best marketers will be discipline-and media-agnostic. Nike Plus epitomizes the increasing convergence of ideas and utility. It's a user-friendly product because it enhances the experience of running by allowing runners to measure and compare performances over time and with others by using their iPod to sync with the sensor inside the shoe. But it's also a smart marketing tool to drive sales of Nike running shoes and

apparel -- much as Swiffer created the need to buy Swiffer pads and Gillette razors created the need to buy expensive blades.

It will be interesting to see how Apple and Chiat Day keep the iPhone in the public eye through in-store experiences within both Apple and AT&T. Plus, there are already countless blogs critiquing every little nuance of the device. The consume experience will have a great impact on its success because of the sky-high expectations. Just imagine what other kinds of ideas and innovations are likely to follow.

AdAge's Jonah Bloom recently said he feels awards shows like Cannes should have the final and grandest prix of all going to the "best and biggest creative business idea" -- not to an ad that fits in a particular media channel.

IN CONTRAST, SOME EXAMPLES OF "VERY QUESTIONABLE" IDEAS

In the "what were they thinking" category:

Sorry boys and girls, I know it's a sensitive subject . . . but . . . Maxipads (think it was Stayfree), their "Have a Happy Period" campaign. "Happy Period" -- talk about an oxymoron. I understand the decision to go forward with this was made by mostly, if not all, male product managers.

Where the heck were the female communications advisors?!

In the "falling flat" category:

Coca Cola -- remember the New Coke (pretty forgettable)? Now we have Diet Coke Plus, with

vitamins and minerals no less! However, one can only furnish 25% of your daily value for niacin and vitamins B6 and B12, and 15% of daily value for zinc and magnesium. Think I'll stick with 1-a-Day.

But You Don't Have to Take My Word for It.

Before Heading to the Cannes Film Festival, Legendary Adman Lee Clow Talked With AdAge's Bob Garfield.

Some excerpts --

Mr. Garfield: Where do you think advertising is headed?

Mr. Clow: The world has evolved to a place where brands that need to speak to their audience have to understand that everything they do is media. Everything they do is telling their story. As opposed to just being this new digital age, I think it's this new age of transparency and kind of obligation that everything that a brand does is a message, and it needs to be done artfully and truthfully and intelligently. And I think ultimately brands are going to become media.

Mr. Garfield: Has the creative community not been informed that there's a digital revolution going on?

Mr. Clow: It's been a little bit of dragging traditional creative people kicking and screaming into the notion that we're going to do complete media expressions for the brands we work for, and we aren't going to start with TV; we're going to start with ideas.

Creative people are 50% ego and 50% insecurity. They need to constantly be told they're good and they're loved. And nobody's figured out a way to celebrate the people who do interesting, multimedia accomplishments on behalf of brands. Sometimes it ends up being looked at as just

kind of integrated marketing, where everything uses the same typeface and the same color. And sometimes it's viewed as, that's the interactive guy's job, and I'll do the main media. ...

Mr. Clow on Compensation: We have to figure out a way to get paid for our ideas, own some of our ideas in perpetuity. I'm a huge champion that we're going to -- we should move to a compensation model that has to do with our talent, our creativity and our ideas and the storytelling ability that we have in all media. If we don't do that, we are going to either be sliced up or eclipsed.

Mr. Clow on Taking Risks: So it comes with being daring that you're going to screw up. But I'd rather apologize than to be so timid as to not try and do anything smart or brave.

Wrapping Up

Creativity needs to become more synonymous with “FUN!” Ideas foster creativity and vice versa. When imagination is thrown into the mix, ideas can be nourished through the creative process so they will resonate with personality. In order to innovate and create, move beyond the conventional. Don't ever underestimate the power of the mind or your imagination. Don't ever be afraid to ask, “ Why, Why not or What if . . .?”.

If you want to generate interest, you need to be interesting. Says David Murphy of New York agency Barrie D'Rozario Murphy, a respondent in a recent study by the Corporate Executive Board's Advertising and Marketing Communications Roundtable, “Clients are hungry for more innovative marketing ideas. The agencies that are adding value are those that can fuse together an amazing community of talent both inside and outside their agency. True innovation springs from the collision of different experiences and perspectives.”

Regardless of what you do or how you do it, remember: Trying to satisfy everybody never got anybody anywhere. We must convey the message as straightforward and innovative as possible. The marketing strategy behind it must be clear, concise and on target. We're the experts and we need to make sure the client feels comfortable with that.

Will there be mistakes made? Sure. According to Scott Adams in The Dilbert Principle, "Creativity is allowing yourself to make mistakes. Art is knowing which ones to keep." When you have a media-neutral idea, you have no boundaries on the canvass.

I'd like to draw this to a close with my toast to you:

Here's to your limitless creativity. May the ideas keep coming forth! Cheers!

Thank you very much.