

AdSpeak

The Vocabulary of Advertising

Every Language Needs a Vocabulary

During the early stages in the development of an ad campaign, the client and agency converse in the common language of marketing. Both parties are generally comfortable discussing things like macro-environmental trends, strategic brand building, unique selling propositions, ROI, R&D, and various other terms and acronyms. They may disagree on certain issues along the way, but at least everyone feels like they're speaking the same language. These meetings are usually quite lively. Everyone participates. At some point, though, there's one department in the agency that takes hold of the process and then translates all those "conversations" into the advertising itself. That department is the Creative Department. Ooooh. The CREATIVE Department. Just the sound of it is off-putting. Or highfalutin. A department for creativity. Everyone else sort of backs off from the process at this point in order to give these "creative" people a chance to be "creative." For the Art Director and Copywriter, the conversation continues, more lively than ever. They're mulling over the strategy, examining the facts, and creating the work in a sort of "incubation bubble." As suddenly isolating as this is, it's actually advantageous for everyone. Copywriters and Art Directors can get cranky if there's always someone looking over their shoulders. Clients, who can be intimidated by the "creative mystique," are often happy to yield control at this point in the process and wait for what comes out on the other side.

Business professionals aren't exactly sure what goes on in the Creative Department of an advertising agency. And that's understandable. There actually *are* things that happen in there that don't really happen anywhere else. For one, creative professionals have the uncanny ability to turn a strategic objective into a selling idea or creative concept. As it turns out, developing a creative concept is a very difficult thing to do, and the Art Directors and Copywriters who do it are both naturally gifted and trained in the discipline. It actually *is* a bit of magic when a narrowly defined business objective is transformed

into a compelling message capable of changing the way the masses think. Indeed, this is why clients seek out agencies in the first place. So there really is validity to the “creative mystique.”

There are two major pitfalls, however, to this period of isolation. First, it creates an “us” versus “them” mentality. In the extreme, this can result in a hostile work environment that’s counterproductive. In moderation, however, this dynamic has a perfectly acceptable function. Creative people are often fueled by competition and a healthy disrespect for authority. They need to feel a good sense of “otherness” in order to justify their creative being. Therefore, the mentality itself is not a pitfall as much as how that dynamic is managed (which we’ll discuss in the second half of the book).

The second major pitfall of putting the creative process into a bit of a bubble is that the work emerging from it seems a bit foreign to those not directly involved in its creation. Only a few short weeks ago, everyone seemed like they were on the same page. Now a few select people are off on their own working so uniquely, it’s as though they’re on another planet. How else could all that research, scientific data, and marketing analysis be turned into a colorful concept able to fit into the confines of a single page or a 30-second television commercial? Well, that’s creativity in action. And to those unfamiliar with it, it can seem surprisingly alien. Of course, everyone is hoping that the big creative presentation will have an element of surprise; otherwise, the Creatives haven’t done their job. But the trade-off to having this wonderful “voila” moment is that it’s often followed by an awkward silence with clients sheepishly saying, “Can we get back to you on this?” It would be terrific if that simply meant the work was so good that words can’t adequately capture the client’s happiness. But that’s usually not the case. Creative work just happens to be hard to interpret, difficult to judge, and tough to talk about.

Let’s be clear: The “voila!” moment is good. And if it’s followed by “eureka!” you’ve hit the jackpot. What’s tragic, though, is that this powerful and desirable outcome often makes the process come to a screeching halt. If the business-minded people in the room don’t know what to say during the creative presentation, a great opportunity for collaboration has been squandered. The moment for the business-minded people to reenter the process has been lost.

Here’s the remedy. Everyone must be fluent in AdSpeak. What exactly *is* AdSpeak? It’s a more comprehensive understanding of how those basic marketing terms are translated into the creative product. AdSpeak doesn’t create new terminology. Indeed, it’s a fairly small lexicon that’s so basic and familiar, many terms are recognizable to the marketing-savvy consumer. When you first see them, you’ll immediately recognize them from Advertising 101. But only knowing the textbook definitions is an illusion of knowledge. Without greater dimension, these words aren’t enough to sustain anyone during a critique. So AdSpeak goes beyond definitions to reveal the deeper meaning and fuller expression of each term in action, that is, when embodied in the work itself. Creativity brings these words to life. By exploring this lively transformation, the terms take on greater meaning. Understanding that meaning allows every participant in the process to better evaluate the work. They not only have a more exact language at their disposal, but that language is now tied to something visual and concrete. This is what makes critique possible.

THE BASIC TERMS OF ADSPEAK: *They'll Change the Way You Judge Advertising . . . and Talk About It*

Even though Art Directors and Copywriters are the ones giving these words meaning, much of what they do is intuitive. Therefore, the link between language and outcomes is not easily articulated. Business-minded professionals use these terms with such fluency throughout the process that they don't fully appreciate how nonfunctional they are when evaluating the creative product. Hence, all parties know the vocabulary on some level—but not on the *same* level. Imagine the frustration of having the same vocabulary but not truly speaking the same language. Therefore, the objective here is to do a holistic exploration of these key terms—define them more deeply and then see them expressed in actual work—so that everyone involved is on the same page and can share the nuances of the language that will facilitate a more meaningful critique.

The Creative Strategy

AKA “The WHAT”

You know how people always tell you to “think outside the box”? Well, I hate that expression. I get the broader meaning of the phrase: to look for unexpected solutions that defy convention. Nothing wrong with that. But to me, advertising is all about thinking *INSIDE* the box. And advertising is full of boxes—or limitations, frameworks, and concrete realities. The budget is a box. The dimensions of the page are a box. The ingredients in the product are a box. The most important box of all is the strategy. If you can come up with a great creative idea that fits within the confines of the strategy, then you're a genius. Come up with a great idea that's wildly off the mark and *NOT* strategic, then you're an artist, not an advertiser—go mount an exhibit at the Met. This is not to say that you can't wail against the box. Or try to change the dimensions of the box. But at its very essence, advertising can only truly be advertising when it is a clear outgrowth of the box. The cleverest among us realize that the greatest fun of advertising is seeing how far we can go with an idea, an execution, a new media placement and *still be in the box*.

That's why we start our AdSpeak vocabulary list with that most important box of all: the strategy. This is probably the most basic term in the business. There are entire textbooks devoted to strategic development. And rightly so. It's critically important. So what is it? Simply stated, the advertising or creative strategy (sometimes called the creative brief) is a document, developed in partnership with the advertising agency and its client, that outlines *the objective* of the advertising *prior to its creation*. The strategy is initiated in response to this most fundamental marketing question: *WHY?* As in, why are we advertising? Once a key challenge and/or opportunity are identified, the strategy helps to *position the product* in the minds of consumers. It often does this by identifying the uniqueness or advantage of this product as compared to similar products that already exist in the marketplace.

The Four Basic Functions of an Advertising Strategy

1. To aid in the *coordination* of a more comprehensive marketing effort

This function is important to note because it reminds the ad agency that their client is working on marketing plans above and beyond the advertising. Ad folk sometimes think that they're at the center of a marketing effort. And even if that's true in some cases, the advertising does not happen in a bubble. Plus, in a 360-degree world, it's more important than ever for everyone to be aware of the whole marketing effort in order to be synergistic with it.

2. To get all levels of management in *agreement*

It would be wrong to say that strategies are static documents since there's always room for refinement. However, it shouldn't be a moving target while the creative team is generating the work. Why waste considerable effort and energy exploring ideas that will never be viable? So make sure that ALL levels of management have signed off on the strategy before creative development begins. This not only establishes a mutual starting point but forces people who aren't part of the day-to-day operations to get involved and become aware of the magnitude of any project. Sometimes a project doesn't seem "real" until a formal, important-looking document is generated. The strategy serves as that formal document. You'd be surprised how often the mere distribution of a formal strategy statement makes the project come to a screeching halt because someone who was supposedly "on board" actually reads the words on the page and realizes that this wasn't at all what he had in mind. Heads roll. Mayhem ensues. But it's better to crystallize issues at the strategic stage than to throw out some terrific campaigns that are already beautifully mounted but now horribly irrelevant. One final caveat: The word *agreement* can be subjective; most people are REactive rather than PROactive when judging creative work so be prepared for the strategic direction to be reconsidered AFTER the work is presented. Then you have to go through a whole new round of "agreements." But whether it's the first round or the twentieth, never, ever, EVER work on creative development until everyone signs off on the strategy.

3. To give *direction* to creative development

When people are asked what a strategy is for, this is usually the first thing that comes to mind. And with good reason. Copywriters and Art Directors need clear direction in order for their work to be strategic. Most people think that creative people hate strategies because they stifle their creativity. But here's the unexpected kicker: Good Creatives LOVE a good strategy. Why? Because the more smartly articulated the challenge, the more smartly articulated the solution.

It's just like when you ask a kid, "How was school today?" The question is so generic and broad that the most likely answer will always be "good." And unless you were being rhetorical, you haven't really learned anything about that kid's day. But if you ask, "Which

question on the science test gave you the most difficulty?” or “Who did you sit with at lunch today?” then you’re bound to spark a really fruitful conversation filled with detail and insight. Strategies are like that, too. When they’re generic and broad (“to communicate that our peanut butter tastes better”), the work will also be generic and broad . . . and uninteresting.

4. To aid in the *assessment* of outcomes

Interestingly, this is the function that most first-year students give little thought to. They’re usually too fixated on the third function as though the strategy is merely a road map; once you’ve reached the destination, you can put it back into the glove compartment. Not true. It is this fourth function—which puts the strategy to use after the creative work has been developed—that is the absolute backbone of critique. Bringing the strategy into the creative presentation (mentally if not necessarily physically) and seeing how the work measures up to its objectives is one of the key responsibilities of agency account managers. Once you get into the “zone of creativity,” it’s the strategy that helps anchor the critique back to the land of the quantifiable and serves as the more objective filter for judgment. I often hear that “creativity is subjective,” meaning that the only criterion for judging an ad’s effectiveness is one’s personal opinion. This couldn’t be further from the truth. Assessing an ad through a strategic framework is a crucial element to determining whether an ad will work or not. For example, an ad campaign that you personally love may not be remotely effective if it is not strategic. And vice versa. The reality is that an ad is a complex mix of science and art, objectivity and gut reaction. So being articulate and specific about how the advertising works against strategy is what makes critique substantive and persuasive.

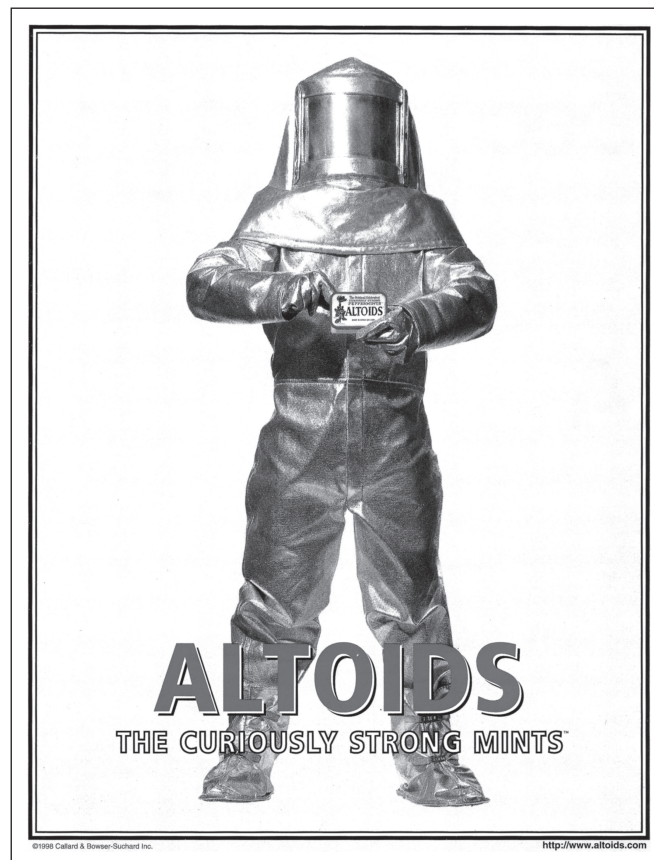
In the first three functions outlined above, the strategy exists as a discrete document, neatly formatted, typed, and easy to read. But in the fourth function, once the advertising’s been created, the strategy has been transformed and is now embedded in the advertising. It’s no longer a static text document; it’s now actively doing its job in a way that the consumer can relate to. Creativity has made this transformation possible. Creativity has also made the strategy in this consumer-friendly form more elusive to the people who created it. This is where critique comes in to help everyone better assess whether the advertising is delivering on strategy. Here’s how we start. Like many of the terms in AdSpeak, it’s important to not only understand each term as thoroughly as possible but also distill them down to their truest essence so you can make clearer connections to the work. This helps us isolate the elements in an ad for easier analysis.

At its most basic, the strategy is the WHAT . . . as in: WHAT is the single most important thing that the ad wants the consumer to remember about the thing that is being advertised? As we’ve already discussed, a lot of research and thinking go into a strategy. A lot of elements make up a strategy. There are a lot of ways to format, phrase, and configure a strategy. But when you’re staring at an ad trying to figure out if it’s strategic, the most productive thing that you can consider is how well it answers this single question: WHAT is being communicated about the product? If your answer matches your communication objective to your satisfaction, you’re in business.

Distilling the strategy down to “The What” also allows us to assess the effectiveness of the strategy as well as the ad. If, for example, we find that the ad is all over the place yet still strategic, we may begin to realize that the strategy is what’s truly flawed. Advertising works best when it’s razor sharp and focused. Knowing the essential meaning of our terms ensures that our critique tools are as sharp as the actual advertising itself.

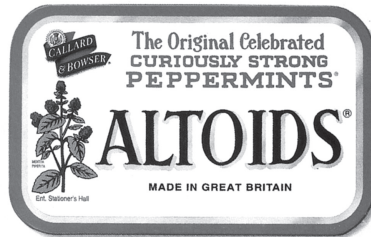
The Strategy in Action: A Facilitated Critique—Altoids

Let’s give the strategy for Altoids Mints a chance to speak to us through its campaign. Spend some time really scrutinizing the ad below and then ask, WHAT does this ad want us to know about the product? There is no body copy to tell us. No headline. The visual



is striking, but straightforward—no real narrative or demonstration in the classic sense. Here’s what we’re seeing: a retro photo of a person in some sort of protective suit. But protective of what? Something dangerous? Toxic? We’re not sure, but it must be pretty potent. And it’s probably whatever he’s holding in his hand: a tin of Altoid Mints. Once

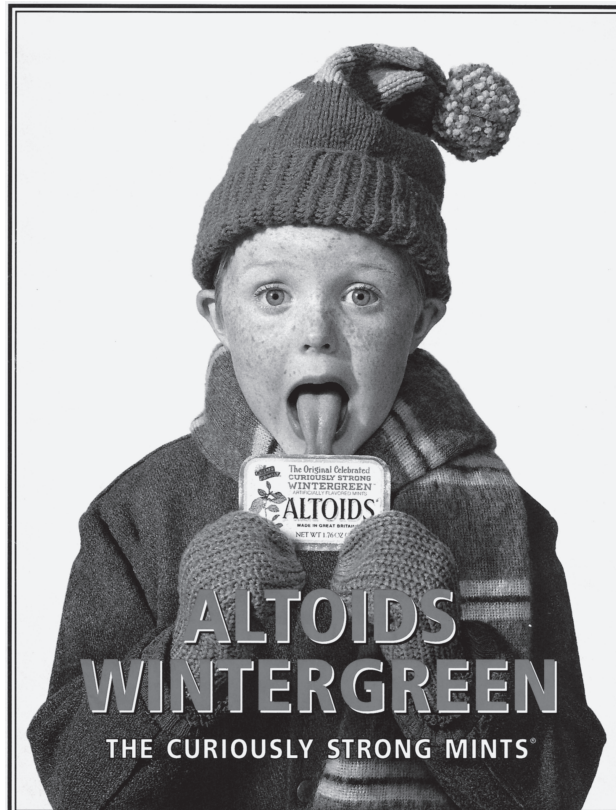
**REFRESHES YOUR BREATH
WHILE YOU SCREAM.**



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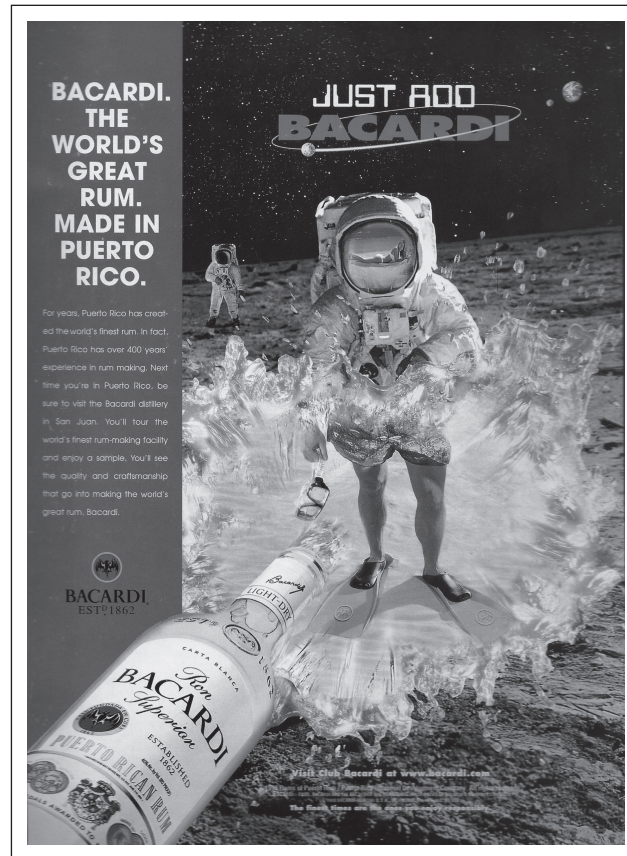
we read the tagline, “the curiously strong mints,” we’ve taken in all the critical information that we need. And it all adds up to this “WHAT”: Altoids are very, very strong. Is that this campaign’s strategy? Yes, it is. Other brands may be trying to communicate how long their mints last (Breathsavers), how easy it is to get a quick hit of freshness (Tic Tacs), or how they make your breath more kissable (Certs). Altoids is strategically staking out the positioning that its mints are powerfully strong. The tagline tells you this, the packaging tells you that (it’s made of tin, for goodness sake!), and so does its advertising. The same can be said about the two other ads featured here from this campaign. And despite the fact that the first one simply features the product and the second ad is for a line extension, “The What” is the same and clearly communicated in both.

No matter how you interpret these ads, one thing is clear: Altoids is one potent mint. In advertising, we’d call this campaign a great success. These Altoids ads are effective because they clearly know WHAT they’re supposed to be communicating: potency. This message of strength is not just communicated in the collection of data points mentioned earlier. Potency is also communicated in the crisp visuals that have a strong personality. Potency is communicated in the fresh and dominant color of the background that will pop out of whatever media environment it’s in. Potency is in the bold use of typography, the phrasing, the word choice. Nothing flowery here. Everything is right in your face. Therefore, creativity has taken this single strategic message and embedded it in nearly every aspect of the page. So when critiquing whether the ad delivers on strategy, we need to examine all aspects of the page, not just its major elements to see if they answer “The What” to our satisfaction.

The Strategy in Action: A Facilitated Critique—Bacardi

There are a lot of ways for an ad to go wrong. But its odds for success are increased by starting out with a smart, focused strategy. With such focus, the ad is able to deliver its singular message on the many levels in which advertising communicates. It bores down to make its point rather than making a big mess of itself. The chance for the reader to “get it” increases tremendously. The flipside is an unfocused strategy leads to ads that must deliver many different points all at the same time. This is not effective. Here’s an analogy: Try throwing a dozen balls at someone all at once. It’s impossible to catch a single one. In fact, the impulse is to give up, shield your face, and try not to get hurt. Absolute chaos. But throw a single ball directly at the target and chances are, he or she will make the catch. That’s the difference between an ineffective ad with a fuzzy strategy and an effective ad with a focused strategy.

Here’s a case to demonstrate this point. Let’s look at two ads from the same advertisers but from different campaigns. Both are for Bacardi Rum but were produced a decade apart using different strategies. The first campaign, “Just add Bacardi,” was introduced in 1992 and capitalized on Bacardi’s Puerto Rican heritage. We get some of that from the headline in the blue sidebar on the left side of the page. But that’s really just an isolated element added on to the main ad. Instead, consider the main strategic message contained on the right side of the page. By looking at this ad, WHAT do you suppose Bacardi want us to know about its rum?

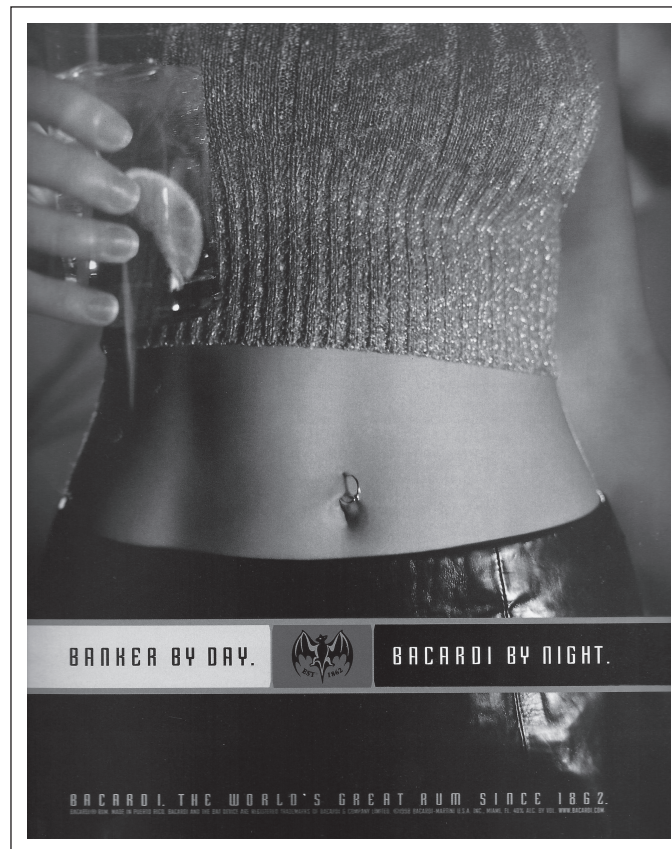


Visually, there's a lot going on here. However, as part of a long-running campaign, most readers would have been quite familiar with the format: a main photographic scene of a serious situation that turns into something more tropical and fun in the spot where the Bacardi has been splashed. The image and headline/tagline, "Just add Bacardi," combine to communicate that Bacardi is responsible for this transformation. The strategic message, therefore, is that drinking Bacardi is like being on a tropical vacation. That's "The What" of this campaign. This is what Bacardi wants consumers to know about its rum.

The problem with this particular ad, however, is that the page is simply filled with too much information. First of all, the main campaign, visualized on the right, has "jumped the shark." In other words, it's trying too hard to communicate a simple message. The extremes are TOO extreme here. The man on the moon is so far from the ordinary that the consumer no longer connects to the message. But beyond this, the sidebar on the left adds information that competes with the main image. There are now two headlines on the page that use two different typefaces. One is bold and straightforward; the other looks like something from a science poster. Which should the reader

look at first: “Bacardi. The world’s great rum. Made in Puerto Rico” on the left or “Just add Bacardi” on the right? And isn’t it confusing to be looking at a visual of a man on the moon while reading a headline that refers to the earth? Clearly, the advertiser figured that the sidebar on the left would just “borrow” a bit of real estate from the main campaign; who’d notice that the two messages don’t quite work together? Well, the readers. They expect an ad to work as a cohesive whole. When it doesn’t, the brain gives up and disengages. Why bother being confused when you can just look away? So rather than enhancing the ad, this extra bit of information turns the entire page into a communication mess.

After producing many ads in the “Just add Bacardi” campaign, Bacardi decided to move in a new strategic direction. Of course, this meant that they needed an all new campaign. Perhaps they saw the vacation mind-set as too restrictive. After all, not everyone wants to feel like they’re on vacation at the end of a hard day. They just want to relax. So Bacardi came up with a new strategy and created the “Bacardi by Night” campaign. Here’s one from that series of ads:



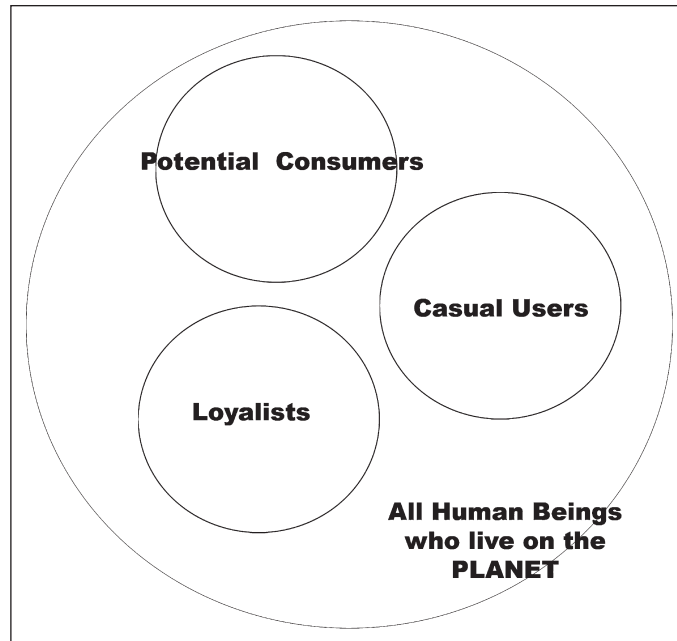
So where's "The What" here? We need to take in the main elements of the ad in order to figure that out. Let's start with the obvious: the belly button shot. It's not all that provocative to see body piercings these days. But the copy "Banker by Day" tells us that only hours earlier, this woman was dressed up in a corporate suit. Taken together, we're curious to know what's responsible for that transformation. The answer comes from the other half of the headline, "Bacardi by Night." Taken together, the campaign's strategic message is pretty clear: Bacardi is what you order after a hard day at the office and want to be your true, more relaxed self. That's "The What" that we want readers to take away from this ad.

Note that the tropical vacation strategy is no longer in evidence in this ad. The message is no longer about where the rum is from. It's has nothing to do with the fact that it's made from sugar cane and mixes well with other sweet things such as cola, pineapple juice, or coconut milk. There's no beach. Or splash of rum. The idea of transformation, however, is still a part of the strategy. But this time it's a bit broader than in the "Just add Bacardi" campaign. It's more open to interpretation. That's one reason why the photo is cropped so tightly: The close up of the belly button doesn't overdefine the target. That could be YOUR belly button that Bacardi helps to expose. It's provocative and intimate, yet still vague. The woman in the picture remains a mystery and open to interpretation. This is by strategic design. What does relaxation mean? That's up to you. It no longer means being on vacation. It no longer transports you to the Caribbean. After years of positioning Bacardi as a tropical alcohol, the tropics are gone. Bacardi's now got a seat at the bar, saddling up with vodka and scotch. Yet nowhere does this ad explicitly spell out that strategy. And yet the ad itself is very strategic. It resonates with consumers because it delivers the message through creativity.

The Target Audience

AKA "The WHO"

The target audience (or target market) is defined as the group of people who you think will be most receptive to your advertising message. This is not to be confused with the *consumer*, a term we throw around pretty loosely. The target is based on the marketing challenge or opportunity and refined in the advertising strategy based on what you want the ad campaign to accomplish. That means that the target audience of today's campaign may not be the target of tomorrow's—even if the product user remains constant throughout. For example, are your efforts trying to attract new consumers? Galvanize brand loyalists? Entice existing customers to use the product more frequently? Advance information about a product promotion or attribute? Enhancing or repositioning an existing brand image? Introduce a product extension . . . to new customers? Brand loyalists? And so on.



Since so many people use the terms *target* and *consumer* interchangeably, here's a chart to clear up the distinctions. The size of the outer circle is based on sheer population data and includes every member of the human race. Even when the marketing goal is to increase sales, we need to be realistic and acknowledge that not every product is right for everyone on the planet. Therefore, not everyone on the planet can be defined as "consumers." We need to be a bit more discerning. So let's look at the inner circles. The size of the two inner circles, "existing loyalists" and "casual users," is determined by sales figures. These circles are filled with our actual consumers. The size of the third inner circle, "potential consumers," is based on research that's determined who you think might have the greatest potential to buy your product but who currently isn't. So when you think of your product's consumers, you can narrow in on these three circles. However, these people are not necessarily our target. The target is up to you, the marketing expert. Depending on your marketing challenge, you can find your target in ANY of these four circles—although it's probably not cost-effective to simply aim your message randomly at the entire population of the planet.

The characteristics of your target audience are based on a demographic, psychographic, and geographic analysis. Distilled to its very essence, the target is "The WHO," as in WHO are we speaking to in this ad? WHO is on the other side of the ad? WHO needs to be motivated by and engaged in this advertising effort?

The target audience is one of the main elements of the strategy statement. But we isolate it here because a full understanding of "The Who" and how it is manifested in an ad is critical to critique. Knowing who you're talking to will undoubtedly affect the way that your strategic message is delivered. It will be embedded in both the substance and the style of the campaign. If an ad doesn't both capture and communicate with "The Who," there's no guarantee that the reader will want to pay any attention to "The What."

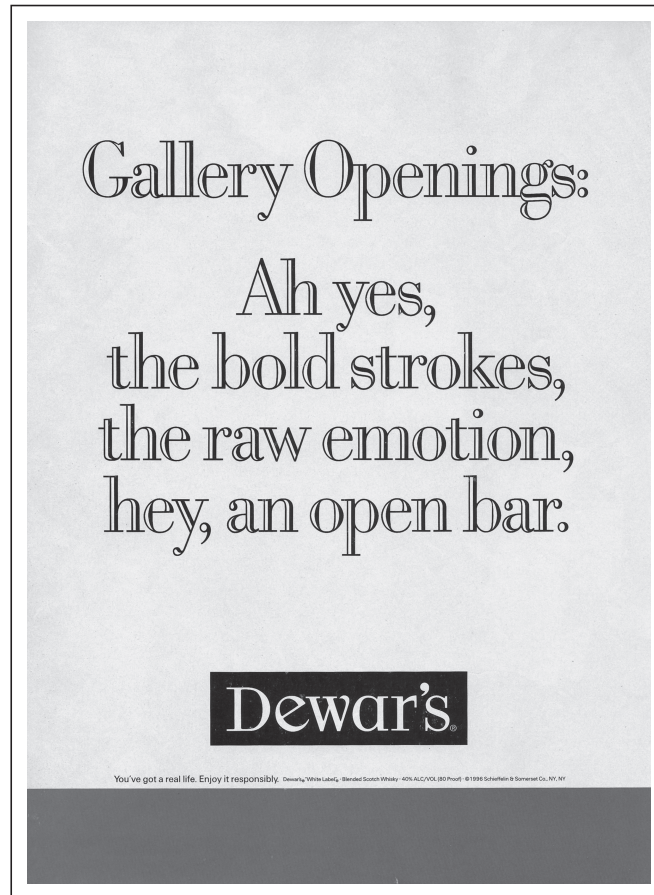
To fully appreciate this, I often tell students to imagine being at a lively, overcrowded cocktail party. You don't HAVE to talk to anybody you don't want to. It's all about who captures your fancy. Now say you've just bought a Harley Davidson and you're looking to strike up a conversation with people of similar interests. There's a good chance that you'll find yourself more attracted to the folks wearing leather than the ones wearing tweed. The operative word here is *attracted* because the cocktail party is a metaphor for how we engage in advertising. And ads are all about attraction—especially in a crowded environment where many things vie for the attention of a fickle and distracted consumer. So back to the cocktail party: In a sea of strangers, you're likely make a snap judgment. You might be wrong—the guy in the tweed might be the one with all the expertise on motorcycles. But that's okay since it's a cocktail party, and being wrong is of little consequence. People feel that way about ads, too. They're not hugely important to their lives. So it's that immediate connection that must attract. And it's the same sort of chemistry that you'd find at a cocktail party.

The Target Audience in Action: A Facilitated Critique—Dewar's

Speaking of cocktail parties, let's talk about scotch. In the late 1990s, Dewar's Scotch found itself in the middle of a magical marketplace moment. Times were flush. One of the economic engines of the era came from the rise of the Internet. The "dot.com" bubble was partly driven by a surprising segment of the population: young computer geeks in their twenties and thirties who had never before had their talents so richly or quickly rewarded. Being young and entrepreneurial, they preferred to go to work in blue jeans or pajama bottoms. Their work spaces often looked like romper rooms. Many were making so much money that they dropped out of Harvard or Wharton before they had their degrees in hand. It was great to be loaded and young! The only problem was that sometimes—not all the time, just sometimes—they wanted the world to take them a little more seriously. They displayed few of the visual cues that usually telegraphed success—no gray hair, corporate suits, or advanced degrees hanging on their wall. How could they stay true to youth and still let the rest of the world know that they had arrived?

Enter Dewar's Scotch. Up to this point, scotch had been traditionally associated with rich older men in oak-paneled studies who sipped it in front of a roaring fireplace. Or with high-level business executives who needed a strong belt after a bad business meeting. It's a fairly expensive hard liquor with a distinctive, acquired taste. Indeed, this explains the "old, wealthy guy" aura; it takes a long time to be able to both afford a bottle and acquire a taste for what's inside. So what would make Dewar's suddenly go after guys in their mid to late twenties? Because going to a bar and ordering a "Dewar's and soda" would be an easy way for dot.com entrepreneurs to telegraph their wealth and substance to the rest of the world. (This also accounts, incidentally, for the sudden surge in the popularity of cigars and fedoras.) So who exactly is "The Who" for this campaign? Fairly affluent men, 25 to 45, who are younger than traditional scotch drinkers but older than beer-chugging frat guys. Why bother ignoring your steadfast customers in this effort? Because Dewar's had faith in their loyal base and were thinking of the future. They could shift their focus for a short time period, seize a magical marketplace moment, and plant the seeds of loyalty. Rarely can a scotch aim so young without missing the mark.

So why not lower the target further and capture an even larger audience? After all, the drinking age starts at 21. The reason is clear: If the advertising were aimed too young, it would need to be louder, more boorish, and sillier. Think of the way that Budweiser speaks to college kids. Dewar's couldn't do this without diminishing the product's cache, which demands a sophisticated palate. So the target here is a delicate balance. This campaign may not have been aimed at their regular customers, but Dewar's had no intention of alienating them, either. That's why the target is so clearly and narrowly defined. See what I mean about a "magical marketplace moment"?



Now you know the background and have some sense of how the target audience is defined in the strategic document. But where is the target in the ad above? To the untrained eye, it may be difficult to assess because there's no photo of the target in the ad. Yet "The Who" is manifested in all sorts of ways. One way is through the tonality of the headline. Indeed, it is the voice of the target himself (remember, we're talking to men here). It's one side of a dialogue without the quotation marks. It has a certain wise guy quality to it without being juvenile. The person behind the quote is an emerging sophisticate, maybe even

a poser who doesn't particularly care if he's exposed. After all, this target was born cynical; sudden affluence doesn't change that. In fact, it kinda reinforces it. Note the language choice; it is colloquial, yet not too slangy. It walks a fine line. Adding "dude" after the "hey," for example, would be going too far. Note also that in just a few words, we're IN situation. Even though there are no visuals, we see it all in our minds: a small gallery, a large crowd, a bar in the corner. It is a situation that is ripe for visualization, but the statement itself is so evocative, no visuals are necessary. It's an aspirational setting where culture abounds. Yet our target guy is more genuinely interested in the opportunity for a free drink. Again, this captures the exact moment in this target's life when he wants to exhibit the "trappings" of the moneyed class but can't yet emotionally measure up. And he knows it—hence the wink in the headline. Let's chart it out it:

"Gallery Openings: Ah, yes, the bold strokes, the raw emotion, hey, an open bar."

It starts with an establishing phrase, references that with an obvious cliché (i.e., those things you're supposed to say), and then exhibits a clear case of ADD as it's interrupted by a sincere observation and opportunity to escape (i.e., a drink). The fact that this drink is Dewar's scotch brings together the best of both worlds: desired sophistication and escape to "dudeness."

As added proof that creativity has transformed the term *target audience* and manifested it in an ad, let's remove the creativity and consider what the headline would sound like if it were a more literal expression of the strategy: "Hey, successful young professionals! Want everyone to think that your sophistication level is as high as your salary?" This embeds the target audience in the headline, too, but much more directly. It would be impossible to miss who the ad is trying to reach—which might make some clients very happy. But it also wouldn't be a particularly engaging headline. It is strategically clear but uninteresting. In addition, this sort of strategically obvious headline makes readers feel like marketing pawns being overtly targeted. They'd rather feel like they're part of a conversation about something that they're interested in. So the ad needs to attract their interest first and foremost. In this ad, the first step to that attraction is its conversational feeling. The ad is no longer just a piece of paper but the target come to life—sharing a moment with you, a likeminded pal. Imagine: no visuals of the target, no sound, yet it speaks to us with great animation. There's no doubt that the target is embedded in this ad. And there's no doubt who that target is. So being literal is not better. And it's no more true to the strategy than when creativity works its transformative powers.

Other elements of this ad are also creative translations of the term *target audience*. The typeface, for example, accomplishes many of the same things that the headline achieves. Remember how narrow our target is. So everything here must walk a fine line between not being stodgy but not too immature, either. The open-faced Caslon font is elegant yet has a modern feeling to it. The font says "grown up." The bold placement on the page says "risky." The colors help here, too. They relate to the Dewar's label, which is smart. But the way that they're used on the page also speaks to the target. The strong red and creamy yellow are boldly graphic as noticeable elements and not just as decoration. This pops, for sure, but also tells our target that this product is like them—straightforward, confident, strongly restrained, yet still colorful. Ultimately, "The Who" has a presence all over this ad. It not only speaks to the target but also is the manifestation of the target. Considering that this ad is also all about Dewar's Scotch, that's a pretty mean feat. But this is what's possible through creativity.

The Concept

AKA “The HOW”

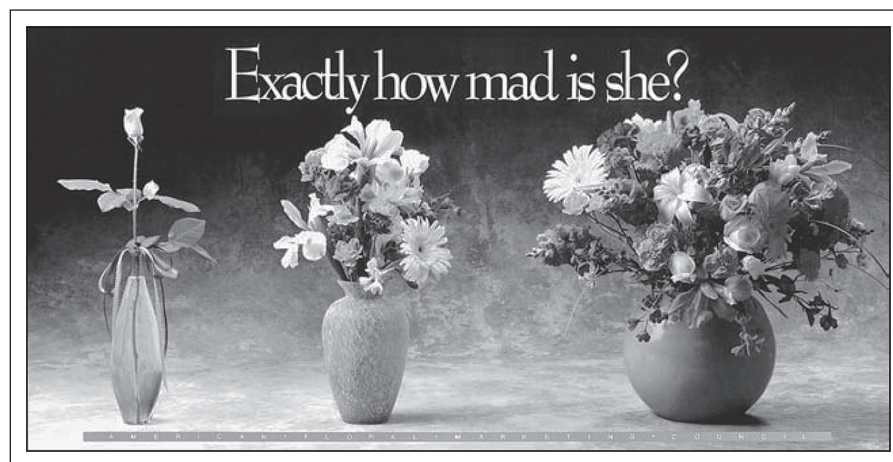
This is one of the hardest terms to define yet the key to whether your advertising will be great or just wallpaper. A concept is a creative idea born of the strategy. It’s also often called “The Big Idea” or simply “The Idea.” As you can imagine, these words get thrown around a lot without full comprehension of their meaning. One reason is because the words *idea* and *concept* are part of our common language and in use everyday. But in the world of advertising, they have very specific meaning. Ad concepts are elusive; since they’re abstract, they’re easier to understand once they’ve been executed and are more concrete. Executions can be described, but ideas can only be articulated. Putting an ad concept into words is one of the great challenges for everyone, from Account Managers to Creatives. But defining and identifying a concept is probably one of the most valuable critique skills you can master.

George Lois, one of the first “idea men” in advertising, recently wrote a wonderful book called *The Big Idea* in which he defined a concept as “the shock of a thunderbolt that seemingly comes out of the blue (always a combination of thinking *and* intuition), the mythical and artful blending of context, image, words, and art can lead to magic, a juxtaposition of opposites that are dramatically connected visually. Concepts spring forth from the earth, and if they are big enough, are earth shattering. Great graphic communication depends on understanding and adapting to the culture, anticipating the culture, criticizing the culture, criticizing changes in the culture, and sometimes helping to change the culture.” As one of the iconoclastic Art Directors of the Creative Revolution back in the sixties, you’d expect George Lois to be an eloquent champion of The Big Idea. But the invention of The Big Idea was not about showing off one’s creative prowess; it was an act of survival. In the sixties, as advertising expenditures passed the \$2 billion mark, Bill Bernbach (remember? He is a god to me) of Doyle Dane Bernbach determined that in order to cut through the clutter of competitive voices, a commercial needed to be distinctive. In order to be distinct, an advertiser needed to not just consider the content of the message but also the way in which it’s delivered: through unique “concepts.” Today, in the age of 360-degree advertising, The Big Idea is more important than ever. More clutter. More media options. More emphasis on brand building. The strategy, of course, is always critically important. But as Bill Bernbach would tell you, it’s not just what you say in advertising; it’s how you say it.

This brings us to that succinct definition of the term *concept* that will aid us in our critiques. The concept is “The HOW” as in: HOW is this ad delivering the strategic message? A single concept is the sustainable idea or overriding theme behind a campaign. It’s what allows the particulars of each ad to change but for the campaign to remain the same. A concept is dynamic in that it forces the brain to do a bit of work in order to create meaning. An idea is often created through this equation: art + copy = meaning. It’s YOUR job to add it up. Or figure it out. Unlike the strategy, which should lay out all its insights clearly and unambiguously, the concept is a bit mysterious. If it did all the work for you, you wouldn’t engage in the ad. In this way, the concept is abstract; it doesn’t exactly live in the ad. It lives in your brain. (FYI: The concept can be more elastic when leaving the print realm, but we’ll discuss that later.)

The Concept in Action: A Facilitated Critique: American Floral Marketing Council

Once articulated, a concept can sound pretty simple—even if it’s a stroke of genius. But it’s not as easy to put into words as you might think. Even the person who spends sleepless nights giving birth to the concept will have trouble stating it plainly. The most important thing is to distinguish it from “The What.” This is especially critical during a critique because unless you can’t first identify the strategy, you can’t measure the effectiveness of the concept you’re evaluating. In the above ad, the *strategy* is to communicate that flowers are emotionally meaningful. HOW is this message delivered in the ad? The *concept* is to use the size of the arrangement to visualize how deeply you feel. Notice that this isn’t a description of the ad, but the idea behind it. Also note that even though the ad itself is funny, the concept doesn’t sound very funny. It sounds a bit dry and clinical. That’s okay. It’s the way that it’s executed that makes it funny—and describable. So how does this concept come to life executionally? By asking a simple question in the headline (“How mad is she?”) and showing three flower arrangement options. The reader doesn’t need anymore information to get the joke: Sorry comes in three sizes. This ad is wonderfully strategic, conceptual, and executed simply, yet with universal humor. In other words, a great success. But before we go any further with more examples of advertising concepts, we need to more clearly understand how it differs from the execution. So let’s move on to a definition of the execution, the next key term in AdSpeak.



Execution

It’s often hard to distinguish between the concept and the execution. One reason is because many ads—even effective ones—are executionally driven. Since not all ads have strong concepts (and some have none at all), it’s easy to get confused if you’re

looking for one. We're conditioned to believe that there's an idea behind every ad. That's why students will often squint at an ad for hours trying to figure out "the idea" rather than acknowledge that it simply doesn't have one. But whether an ad is conceptually driven or not, it always has an execution. Because an execution is what you're looking at. It's what ends up on the page. The execution is the way in which the concept is visually and verbally expressed. Executional elements of a print ad include the copy (headline/body copy/tagline) and the art (design/type treatment/visual components). A single concept can be executed many, many ways. That's because a concept is BIG and broad. An execution is more specific, yet must remain stylistically consistent within the context of a campaign. If the concept is the advertising's substance, then the execution is its style.

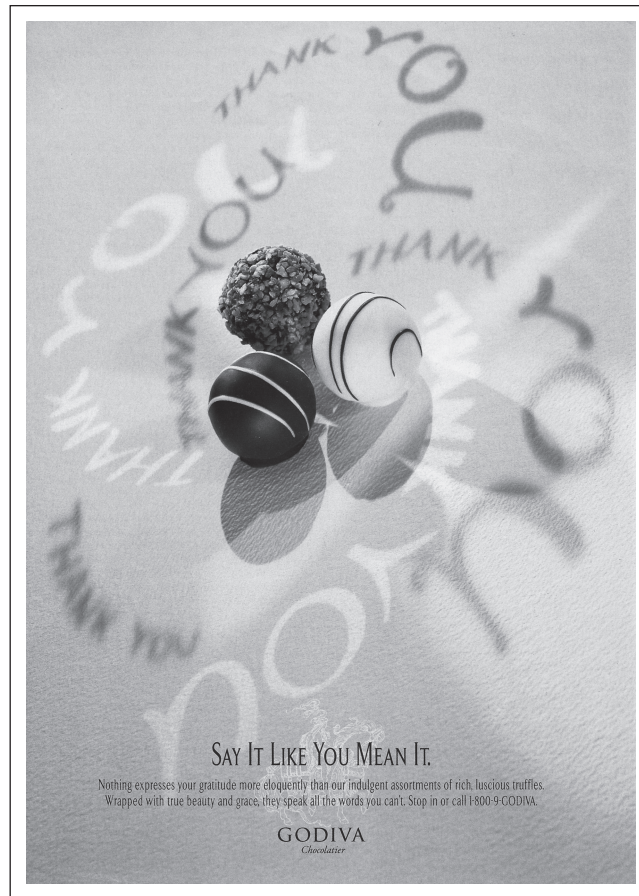
Every executional element on the page should play well with each other. The execution also needs to work really, really hard in many ways: to pay off the concept (if there is one); to deliver the strategic message; to connect with the target; to convey the brand personality; to make an impact all its own. That's a lot of work.

The more AdSpeak we learn, the more we appreciate how much an ad communicates on many levels, both discreetly and in relation to each other. When making a presentation on a piece of advertising, it's important to lay out those levels of communication in a fairly systematic way that mimics the process: You start with the strategy (including the target audience), move on to an articulation of the concept, and then describe the execution that works off of that concept. From there, the presentation can be more circular, doubling back over how one aspect relates to, supports, reinforces, or works off of another. A good critique works this way, too. First, there's the discussion of the linear progression from strategy to concept to execution. But then the critique doubles back and around, pulling elements apart and seeing how they relate to the whole.

While the execution is the most immediately visible thing about an ad, it's one of the last aspects that should be discussed during a presentation or critique. To the consumer, it's the only thing about an ad that matters. To the professionals, the execution is the outgrowth of a long process; you must have a sense of context in order to judge its merits.

The Execution in Action: A Facilitated Critique—Godiva

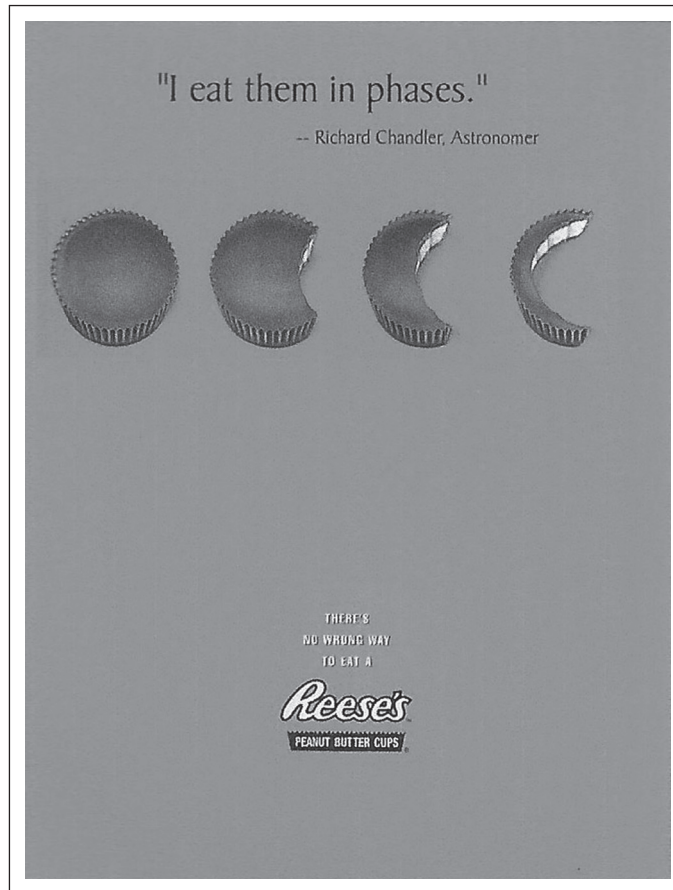
In order to critique the execution of the Godiva ad below, let's establish this ad's strategic framework and determine its concept. The strategy here is to inform upscale consumers that Godiva is an exclusive chocolate. At its most basic, this is WHAT this ad is supposed to communicate. HOW is it doing this? While this is not a heavily conceptual ad, a concept statement might be: "The idea behind this ad is to treat the product like it's a precious treasure." So let's move on to the execution. As with most things that are positioned as high-end, everything on the page must work very hard to deliver the strategic message. This ad is executed as a still life in which the products are photographed like jewels on the page. The headline, "Say it like you mean it," reinforces the importance of chocolate.



So what is it about the execution that tells us that Godiva is an exclusive chocolate? First, the product itself is displayed as a still life: Only a few are perfectly placed on the page, and they are beautifully photographed with delicate shadows. The background is a rich, textured gold with layers of overlapping type that read out a message so artfully, it's as much a part of the design as a text element. The headline, "Say it like you mean it," has a bit of wit to it, but it's not slapstick funny. The font is quite elegant. There's not much body copy; instead, the lusciousness of the product does most of the talking.

To illustrate just how hard the execution works to deliver the strategy, compare the execution of the Godiva ad to that of this ad from a long-running campaign that Ogilvy & Mather created for Reese's Peanut Butter Cups. Let's forget about the concept for a moment and stick strictly with the execution. Here's a description: The product is prominently featured on the page, but rather than looking like a still life or being in situation, the candy appears almost as a graphic element and in various stages of being eaten. The headline

is handwritten and in quotes: "I eat them in phases." The quote is attributed to "Richard Chandler, Astronomer." The ad wraps up with a tagline, "There's no wrong way to eat a Reese's."



Without considering anything else about this ad besides the execution, name five things that communicate that Reese's Peanut Butter Cups are less exclusive than Godiva Chocolate:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Here are some things that you may have included: The ad has no real dimension or texture; it looks flat—purposely so to mimic the colors of the Reese’s packaging. The background color looks like something out of a crayon box; it’s childish, not elegant. The candy on the page has already been eaten . . . not at all precious like Godiva. In fact, it looks like someone’s been playing with his or her food. That’s not something that would happen to an upscale chocolate. The headline is handwritten; this is very personable but not elegant. The tagline seems very inclusive: “There’s no wrong way to eat a Reese’s.” On the other hand, the Godiva ad almost makes me afraid to pick up the product . . . am I worthy? The Reese’s ad uses a more relaxed humor. It’s clever but not witty.

If we went by the executions alone, ask yourself this: Which product would you give to your hostess as a housewarming gift and expect to be invited back? A box of Godiva? Or a Reese’s Peanut Butter Cup? Clearly, the execution goes a long way to communicating a lot about an ad’s product.

Despite the distinctions between the terms *concept* and *execution*, it’s easy to get confused. So let’s review.

<i>Concept</i>	<i>Execution</i>
Abstract—easier to articulate than to describe	Concrete—a manifestation that’s “describable”
Broad—not tied to specifics	Specific—particular and changeable from ad to ad
Substantial—deep in meaning and sustainable	Stylish—the outward expression of the message

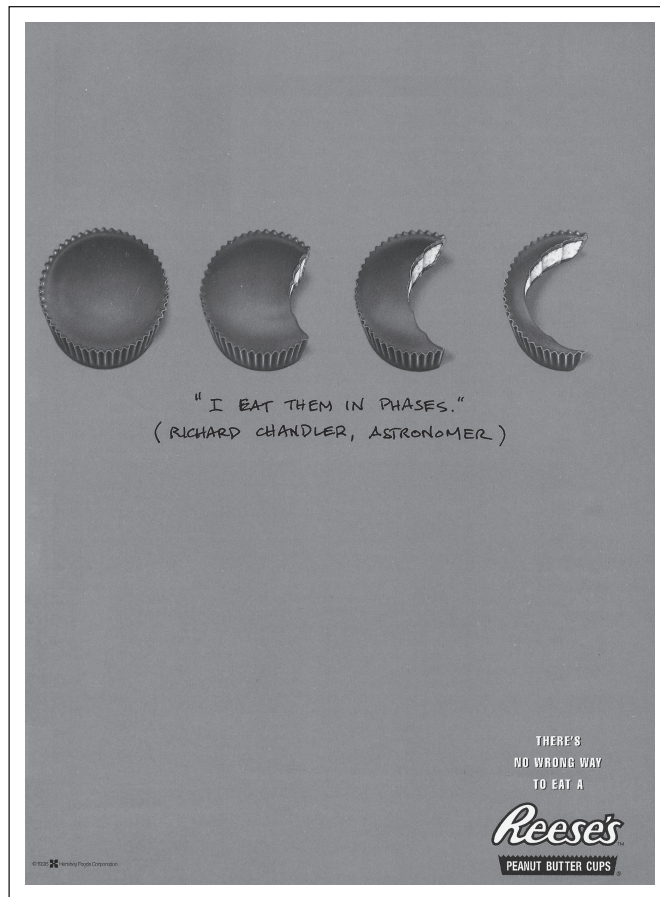
Executorial Study: Reese’s Peanut Butter Cups

Still unclear? Remember that a concept is big and can be executed many different ways. So to prove it, let’s do a hypothetical exercise of the Reese’s Peanut Butter Cup campaign. If the creative team had decided to go a different executorial route, what might this campaign have looked like? Let’s play around and take a look. Of course, we need to begin by identifying the existing strategy. Here’s WHAT the message is: to convince adults that eating a Reese’s Peanut Butter Cup is a uniquely fun eating experience. The WHO is folks with quirky tastes. So HOW are we going get this message to our audience? Basically, the concept is to show how people’s personalities are expressed through the way that they eat the candy.

Keeping the concept the same, here are three different executorial approaches. See which one you think best expresses the concept. The first ad is from the campaign that was actually produced and ran in national magazines.

Executorial Approach Number 1

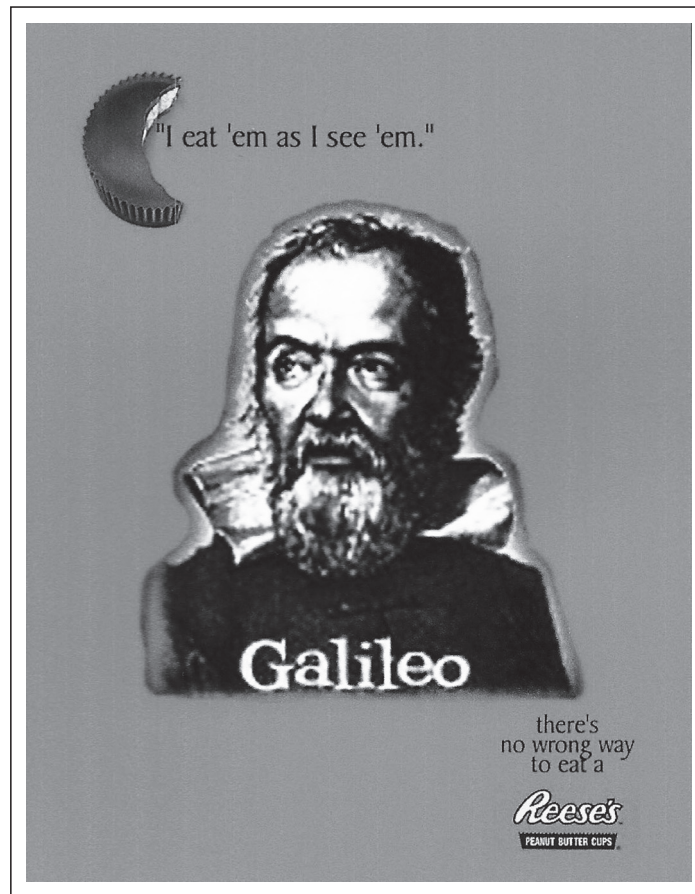
This execution expresses the personality of the eater by visualizing the candy after he's put his own personal stamp on it. As described earlier, the product is prominently featured on the page, but rather than looking like a still life or being in situation, the candy appears almost as a graphic element and in various stages of being eaten. The handwritten headline, "I eat them in phases." is attributed to "Richard Chandler, Astronomer." The ad wraps up with a tagline, "There's no wrong way to eat a Reese's."



Executorial Approach Number 2

In this execution, famous people are featured as they proclaim their personalized approach to eating this candy—an approach that is linked to their interesting professions or offbeat ideas. Here, the famous person is Galileo with his portrait centered on the page.

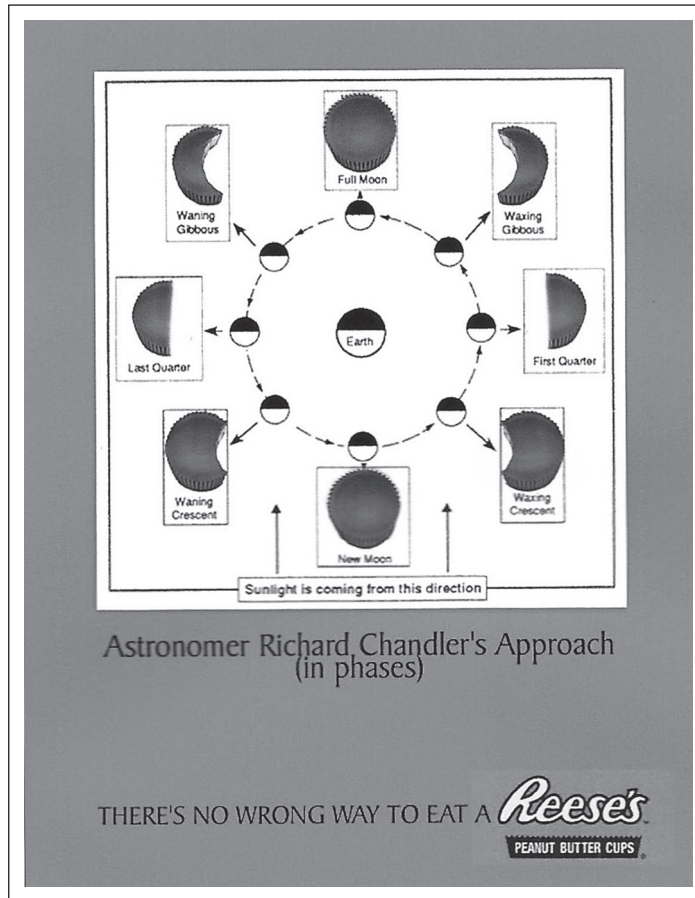
The product is eaten into a moon crescent which hovers above his head. The headline, "I eat 'em as I see 'em," is in quotes to indicate that this is Galileo's own explanation for why he chooses Reese's. The tagline is the same.



Executional Approach Number 3

In the third executional approach, the concept is expressed by showing the inspiration behind the featured individual's personalized approach to eating the candy. In this ad, the individual is once again Richard Chandler, a "noncelebrity" astronomer. He's not visualized in the ad, but the headline lets us know that he's the source of the pictured astrological chart that replaces the moon phases with the product in various stages of consumption. The headline, "Astronomer Richard Chandler's Approach

(in phases),” is treated more as the caption of the chart than as a more prominent headline. The tagline is the same.

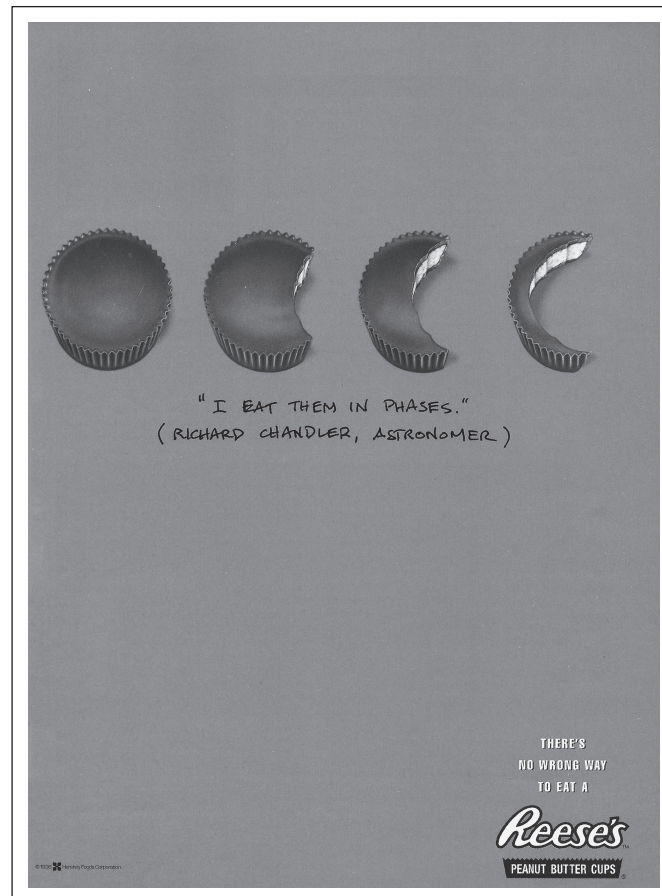


All three ads look different—too different to be considered all part of the same campaign. Yet they communicate the same strategic message. And they play off of the same concept. Of course, the agency only created the first execution and then followed that with a series of new ads that worked off the same concept and stayed within this executional style. By the way, are clients ever privy to such an executional exploration? Not really. By the time that the client sees a campaign proposal, its execution has already been hammered out. In fact, most creative teams don't even explore their own concepts in this way; they often come up with the concept and execution as a single bolt of inspiration. This hypothetical exercise is just to reinforce the meaning of these two important AdSpeak terms.

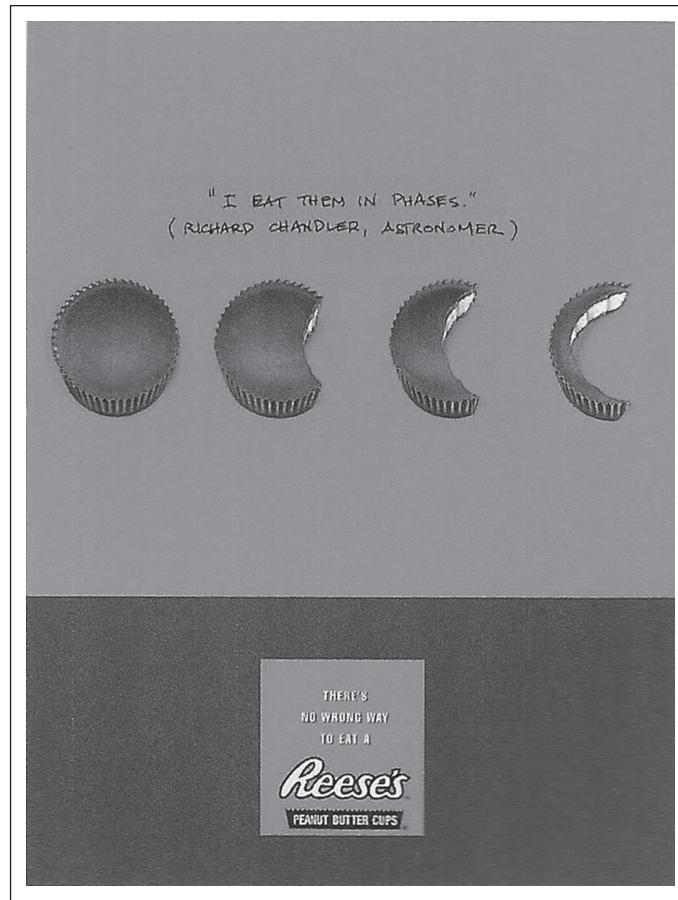
The Layout

The definition of the layout is pretty straightforward but can sometimes overlap with what we think of as the execution. While the execution refers to the style and content of an ad, the layout is how the elements of the execution go together on the page. Just as the finer aspects of the text are the domain of the Copywriter, the layout is truly the Art Director's territory. A well-designed layout is the final tipping point of communication. Every other part of the ad may be perfect, but with a misplaced headline or poorly chosen font, clarity may falter to the point of failure.

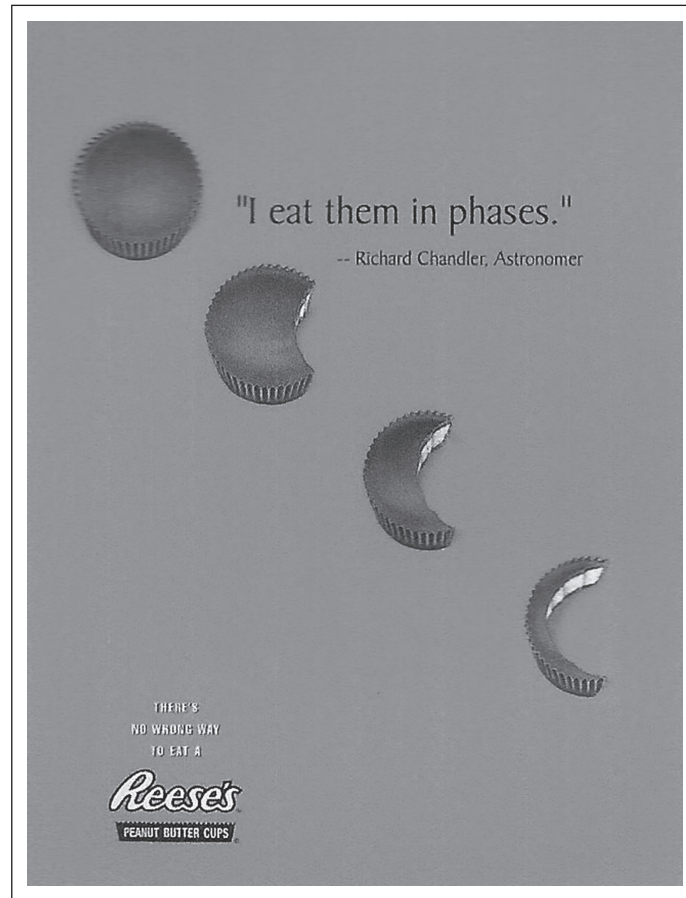
It's easiest to understand what a layout is by seeing a bunch of different ones for the same ad. Let's play with that Reese's ad once again. . . .



Here's the original ad. Layout elements include the placement of the headline, the product, the logo, and tagline, as well as the color and the typeface choice.



The alternate layout switches the order of the headline and product; there's a chocolate-colored band that breaks up the solid background. The candy loses a bit of its prominence here. Since the visual needs to do the heavy-lifting in terms of communicating the concept, this is a weaker page design.



The layout in the ad above features the product in a prominent way, but rather than a horizontal placement, the candy is “eaten” on a downhill diagonal. This has a certain drama to it—although some might argue that it’s a less pure depiction of the passage of time than the straight horizontal placement. The real problem here is the headline’s typeface. It’s in a straightforward serif font that would seem to go with the casual nature of the candy. And it’s easier to read. But it’s also a bit boring. It’s not as quirky as the handwritten headline in the actual ad. And since there is no person visualized in this ad, the headline has to work extra hard to communicate the person behind the candy. The fact that Richard Chandler is identified as an astronomer is critical. But so is the handwritten message; it’s more personable. Just as this man makes a mark on the candy, his handwritten message leaves his mark on the page. Since the strategy demands that we communicate quirky tastes, the handwriting in the actual ad is clearly a better way to go.

A Brief Message From Your Sponsor

The strategic message. The concept. The execution. The layout. At this point, we've parsed the elements of a print ad—ad nausea. So what's the value of seeing these distinctions? Because during the critique, you really need to know specifically what it is that you're evaluating. And if you can't deconstruct all the layers of meaning, you're apt to respond too generally. This is fine if you're a consumer; he or she is allowed to love or hate something whole cloth. But if you're too vague during a critique, the process stops. Bad work has no chance of becoming better. The same goes for good work. (Question: Why *not* stop at "I love it"? Answer: because knowing *why* will help lead to loveable advertising on the next project.) Now that you've learned that the concept isn't the same thing as an execution or the layout, your comments can be more specifically actionable. You can distinguish between loving a concept and hating an execution. Now you're less likely to allow a beautiful execution to seduce you away from appreciating how ineffective the strategy is. This is the real beauty of understanding AdSpeak: You can pull an ad apart and figure out which parts of an ad are effective and which aren't—rather than throwing out an entire campaign because you can't quite figure out what's wrong—or right.

Campaign

Tomato ketchup in a bottle. None'll come and then a lot'll.

—Ogden Nash

A campaign is a series of ads or commercials that is driven by a single concept. Each ad in a campaign should have its own impact while remaining true to the basic, overall concept. Mounting a successful campaign is advertising nirvana. A campaign is a way for consumers to immerse themselves in your message. With a single engaging concept and consistent executional approach, a campaign allows you to experience the same strategic message in different ways and in difference venues. It's redundant without being repetitive; familiar and fresh at the same time. A campaign can span a period of time. The longer a campaign lasts, the more interactive it becomes. Once a concept's premise has been established, each ad has a built-in awareness that makes us immediately connect to it—whether we like it or not. Our minds begin to make relative judgments: Is this a better execution than before? Is it funnier? Our minds begin to look for subtle differences: What's new? What's added? Subtracted? An orphan ad doesn't invite these kinds of questions. In a campaign, each ad not only communicates on its own but has a cumulative effectiveness that results from the campaign's focused and increasingly familiar thinking. Campaigns build a relationship with the reader. The first ad that you see may make no sense. Perhaps the second or even third ad in the campaign doesn't click for you. But by the fourth, you not only understand the ad but also come to like the campaign (we often confuse familiarity

with appeal). By the fifth ad, you get real excited and start to look forward to the sixth . . . when will another one come out? Sometimes clients don't have the patience to stick with a campaign. But it's like the ketchup bottle. If you believe that the first few hits determine the outcome and don't wait for the big payout, you'll end up with a dry burger.

The Campaign in Action: A Facilitated Critique—California Milk Processor Board

In a way, a campaign not only works off a single concept but proves that you've got one. The dramatic simplicity of the original "got milk?" ads launched in 1994 by Goodby, Silverstein & Partners for the California Milk Processor Board helped establish this as one of the most recognizable campaigns in advertising history. This campaign is also a great teaching vehicle for clarifying the differences between a concept and an execution as well as defining what a campaign is.





We can really appreciate the strategic message of the “got milk?” campaign for two reasons. First, because so much has been written about it. Second, because the message is so clear in the advertising itself. Distilled down to its essence, the WHAT of this campaign is: Milk is uniquely satisfying; indeed, when it’s paired with certain foods, nothing else will do. Focusing on milk’s supporting role is not only a better way to get consumers to appreciate the value of milk but also a good way to ensure that you won’t run out . . . or you’ll be sorry. What makes this a particularly powerful strategy is that Goodby, Silverstein & Partners figured out a way to give milk a sense of urgency—no easy feat given that milk is a pretty low-interest product.

But HOW can the ads themselves get consumers to appreciate this supporting role? Through an absence of milk. And HOW do we communicate milk’s absence? By *only* featuring foods that are usually paired with milk; this way, we’ll crave what’s missing. To instill an even greater sense of urgency, each food item has a single bite taken out of it—as though the consumer couldn’t resist sinking his teeth into that cupcake or that cookie. Only when we see the words “got milk?” artfully placed near that tasty bite do we

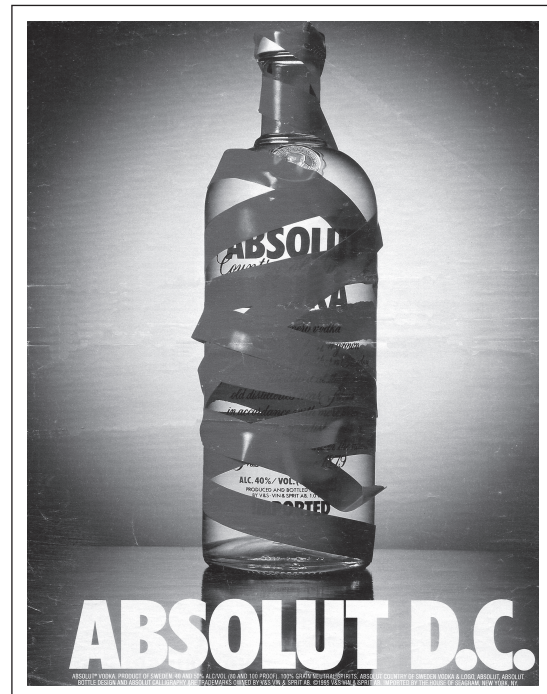
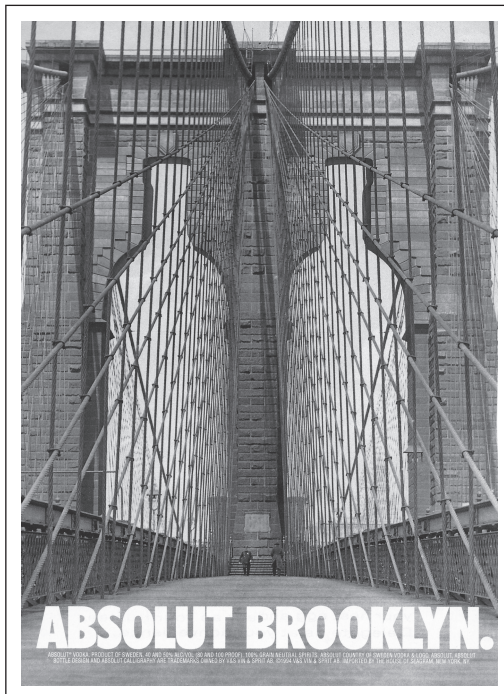
fully realize that milk isn't part of the deal. Suddenly, we've never wanted a glass of milk so much in our lives. We appreciate just how uniquely satisfying it can be. The concept doesn't just get us to understand the strategic message; it makes us experience it. All without ever seeing a visual of milk. Amazing, eh? A milk campaign that doesn't show milk. Yet clearly communicates "Don't run out . . . or else."

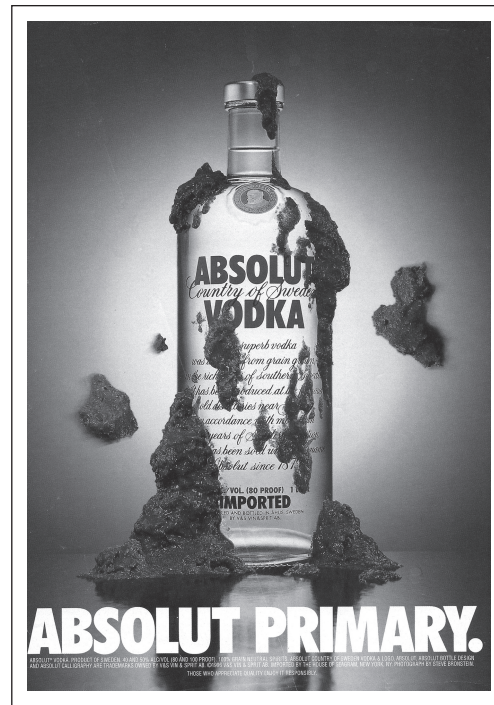
The print ads in this campaign are simply executed in a way that really brings the concept to life. Each ad focuses on a single food item, such as a cookie or a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, that would be unthinkable to eat without a tall glass of milk. The foods are graphically photographed against an all-white background in an appetizing close-up that fills the page so that the consumer is focused only on the food; indeed, it seems as though it's right under his nose. The tagline, "got milk?" is always as close to the bite as possible.

Seeing the series of "got milk?" ads on pages 41–42 not only helps define what a campaign is but also brings to life these three other AdSpeak terms: the strategic message, the concept, and the executional approach. It's impossible to miss the cumulative power of a campaign here. You wish there were more ads. And you can't help wondering, what's next? Each of these ads has its own strength in delivering the message. But the repetition of the idea with different particulars makes the message particularly compelling and believable. The ads are fresh the first time you see them yet also familiar. You're already bonded to the concept before the next ad comes out.

The Campaign in Action: A Facilitated Critique—Absolut

A conversation about campaigns wouldn't be complete without discussing the campaign that introduced Absolut Vodka to America. Cited by *Advertising Age* as one of the 10 "Best





Campaigns of the 20th Century,” it ran for over 25 years. Each ad was like a small puzzle, challenging—and certainly engaging—the reader to make sense of the art and copy elements in order to determine the ad’s full meaning. Yet they always added up to the same thing: perfection as defined by Absolut. Some were wildly successful. Others faltered. But that’s one of the beauties of a strong campaign; weak ads can be forgiven as long as you deliver enough of the good stuff. For decades, people not only loved these ads but also collected them. They even looked forward to the next one (imagine . . . actively seeking out an ad!). What other advertising could inspire a coffee table book with a collection of nearly 500 ads from the same campaign?

When this product was introduced to America in the 1979, the marketing goal was to introduce a Swedish brand of Vodka in a way that distinguished it from the dominant vodka brands from Russia. The key was to not just make the distinctive shape of the bottle instantly recognizable but to communicate that **WHAT** was inside the bottle was perfectly pure. So the conceptual **HOW** of this campaign plays with the bottle in such a way that, when coupled with two words, “Absolut **BLANK**,” the ads create a definition of some form of perfection. There is no better demonstration of how “art + copy = meaning” than the Absolut vodka campaign.

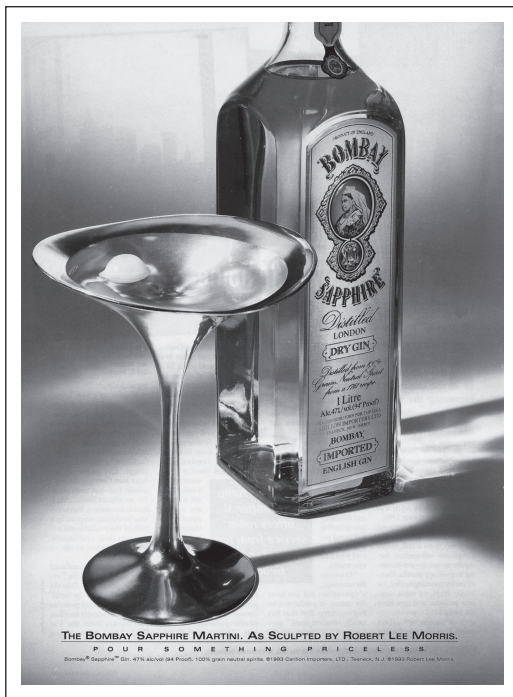
In each execution, the bottle (or its shape) is photographed as the hero of the page. It is manipulated or contextualized in some way. The headline (which also doubles as a modular tagline) always sits boldly and graphically underneath the image so that the art and copy read together. Hundreds of ads later, this campaign adheres to the same strategic message, stays true to the same concept, and only rarely deviates from its basic executional approach.

As with most established campaigns, the more ingrained it becomes in the consumer mind-set, the more elastic the execution can be. One pitfall to that, of course, is if the audience really loves you, some of the loyal purists can get peeved—not a bad problem to have!

The Campaign in Action: A Facilitated Critique—Bombay Sapphire Gin

To really nail home the definition of a campaign, here's one more that'll help make it crystal clear. This one's for Bombay Sapphire Gin. The strategic message is pretty straightforward: to convince drinkers that Bombay Sapphire Gin is uniquely exceptional. Unfortunately, this message is not particularly unique or exceptional. But fortunately, it was brought to life by an effective concept: Bombay commissioned renowned artists, craftsmen, and sculptors to create one-of-a-kind martini glasses. Why? Because the gin is so uniquely exceptional, no ordinary glass will do. Each ad is executed like a still life: The lighting is dramatic. The colors are softly subdued. The bottle of Bombay Sapphire Gin acts as a backdrop for the true work of art—a specially designed glass filled with a perfectly poured martini. Together, these ads don't just make up a good campaign, they make the strategy look good.

Campaigns are a great way to reinforce the same strategic message over a period of time, especially if you have a sustainable concept that consumers will continue to find interesting ad after ad. That's the case with the Bombay Sapphire campaign. The first two ads shown here were produced when the campaign first ran in 1992. In the second set of ads on the next page, Bombay manages to freshen up the campaign with a more stylized execution that is still faithful to both the concept and the strategy.





Tagline

A tagline or slogan is an enduring catchphrase that positions the product or the company. Famous examples include “Just do it” for Nike, “Be all that you can be” for the Army, and “A diamond is forever” for DeBeers. Sometimes it acts as the pedestal that the company sits upon or as the distillation of the product’s unique selling point or as the summation of the advertising concept that drives the campaign. It can sometimes stand alone. Sometimes it makes no sense unless an entire ad comes before it. About a decade ago, Volkswagen introduced its tagline by setting it up with a “pre-tagline”: “On the road of life, there are passengers and drivers. Drivers wanted.” Once the campaign was established, they dropped the setup and just went with “Drivers wanted.” A campaign is bonded by a single tagline. However, sometimes a tagline is so well known, it will outlive the campaign that spawned it. Sometimes, it ends up where it’s least expected. Here’s an example of that.

“Got Milk?” Versus “Where’s Your Mustache?”

In the mid-1990s, two separate campaigns for milk were launched. One was first seen regionally on behalf of the California Milk Processor Board and carried the tagline “got milk?” As critiqued earlier, this campaign is the epitome of success: conceptually flawless, pitch perfect, and commercially effective. Every element of this campaign works extremely hard. And nothing works harder than the tagline. “Got milk?” is the succinct summation of the campaign’s message and captures it with a sense of urgency. One quick question. Two short



words. The hope, the desperate hope, that the answer is, yes! Yes, I do have milk! If the campaign did not end with “got milk?” we’d be left feeling incomplete, waiting for the other shoe to drop. We might even miss the point entirely. Need proof? Take your thumb and cover up the tagline. Does the ad make sense any more? No, it does not. In fact, this tagline delivers so much information that it practically has the status of a headline AND a tagline. Combined. Today, this line is extremely well known and lives independent of the campaign while still carrying the message of the campaign concept. It’s probably among the most well-known taglines in advertising history. But it needed the campaign to give it meaning.

The other milk campaign was created by Bozell Worldwide for the National Fluid Milk Processor Promotion Board. The very first ad in this long-running campaign featured a portrait of supermodel Naomi Campbell shot by famed photographer Annie Leibovitz. It looked like a typical fashion shot except for the fact that Naomi sported a mustache of milk above her upper lip. This was followed by thousands of other ads featuring celebrities of the hour wearing a milk mustache. The campaign was immediately well received by consumers and remains popular today. The strategy is pretty broad: Milk is for everybody. The concept is pretty straightforward: By leaving telltale traces of milk on celebrities, the campaign proves how far-reaching milk consumption is. Unlike the “got milk” campaign, there’s no need for a tagline to complete the communication. The milk moustache tells the whole story. So it ends up with a less important role. In fact, since its inception, this campaign has had three different taglines. The first was “Milk. What a surprise!” The second, “Where’s your moustache?” lasted a bit longer. It was a solid tagline that reinforced the action on the page.” As a question, it invites readers in. It’s short and to the point. But it doesn’t resonate like “got milk?” because it’s not integral to the campaign’s communication. “Where’s your moustache?” is an interesting afterthought. “Got milk?” seizes upon that moment of desperation that the campaign creates.

While the moustache campaign has many fans, it was not the marketing success of the “got milk?” campaign. However, it’s still going strong, featuring recent celebrities such as Taylor Swift and Beyoncé. So in an effort to achieve some of the effectiveness of “got milk?” this campaign did an amazing thing: It dropped its second tagline and adopted a third. You guessed it. The tagline is now “got milk?”



This unusual turn of events creates an interesting case study for us. It begs the question, are taglines truly interchangeable? Is “got milk?” so powerful that it works just as well in the National Fluid Milk Processor Promotion Board’s campaign? Does it make it better? We know that it’s become part of the cultural lexicon and is instantly recognizable, even unattached to an ad. So has it helped the effectiveness of the moustache campaign? Yes and no. It still does a lot of heavy lifting, but in a different way. In the original campaign, it helped complete the message and add meaning to the visual. Here, the campaign message doesn’t really rely on the tagline for meaning; however, it does take advantage of the line’s independent power, which, in turn, transmits some of the insight, urgency, and fun of the California Milk Processor Board’s campaign into the milk mustache campaign.

“Just Do It” Versus “Planet Reebok”

Perhaps one of the most powerful taglines of the past few decades is “Just do it” for Nike. Created by Weiden + Kennedy in 1988, the line is so beloved that it’s become part of the vernacular. In fact, when they tried to kill “Just do it” a few years ago, public outcry resurrected it. It’s been around for so long and so poorly mimicked that we’ve begun to take its value for granted. We’ve also begun to read into this line a lot more than these three words intended. But there’s no doubt that it encapsulates a brand personality that’s allowed Nike to become one of the world’s largest resources for athletic shoes and apparel.

Just what’s so great about it? “Just do it” is a command. The “just” signals that we’re closer than we think to getting off our butts. That’s tough love. It pushes us off the couch and into the gym. Or on the courts. Or the running trail. Or wherever. It’s not dictating what it is that we should “do” as long as we become active. “It” let’s us decide that for ourselves. At no point does the tagline demand that we buy a particular product. We don’t feel like we’re being sold to. Indeed, we’re somehow grateful to Nike for this kick in the pants.

Structurally, the line is no nonsense, rhythmic, and direct. It moves forward, linearly like an athlete sprinting toward the finish line. No extra clauses or descriptors. It is goal oriented. Each word is short, sparse, a pop in our mouth. There’s nothing flowery here, yet it has its own poetry; compact like haiku and full of interpretive meaning. It’s a pithy punch—less talk, more action. It’s broad, yet personally motivating; it feels like it’s intended for me while not alienating anyone who’s not me.

When Nike ran the first ad with “Just do it,” Reebok was the market leader. But a few years later, Nike was breathing down its neck. Reebok responded by trying to capture the cool that Nike was not just instilling in its product but in its advertising. The “Planet Reebok” campaign, created by Chiat/Day, hit the airwaves in 1993. Asking consumers, “What is life like on Planet Reebok?” it featured extreme athletic activities and concluded by stating, “No excuses. No lawyers. No winners. No losers.” It was punctuated by the tagline: “Planet Reebok.” While this affected a certain attitude, the campaign didn’t have Nike’s authenticity and ultimately fell flat. “Planet Reebok” embodied the tone-deaf nature of the campaign. It was corporate-centric rather than consumer-centric. There was no athleticism to it. This was a place, not an action. It sounded passive and alienating. Who wants to live on Planet Reebok? In response to this, the tagline evolved into “This is my planet” in 1995 and was soon dropped entirely not long after.

Both these examples reveal the communication potential of the tagline. It can embody the message, be a conceptual element, or bond together the campaign. Or it can feel like a few obligatory, thrown together words at the bottom of the page. You choose.

THE MORE ADVANCED TERMS OF ADSPEAK: *Sharpen Your Tongue . . .*

Brand Identity and Equity

People relate to brands, not companies. But what exactly does that mean? If a company has clearly communicated who it is using consistent products, messages, tone, and imagery, it develops a brand identity. This is what captures the imagination of consumers, not the

company's spreadsheet, its bricks and mortar, or research and development. Without a brand identity, the company doesn't exist in consumer consciousness. Clearly, then, it's important for a brand to create a brand identity and build awareness of it.

Brand equity works a lot like a savings account—or at least how your grandparents described how a saving account worked. With each consistent brand-building effort, brand identity gets solidified in a consumer's mind. It's built up bit by bit and over time; then one day, you realize you've got something substantial and sustainable on your hands. That's equity, and it can be found in many different elements of brand identity, such as an attribute, symbol, message, even a typeface that comes to represent and encapsulate that product/corporation in consumers' minds. It requires a lot of exposure, a certain length of time, and meaningful quality to build up brand equity. But when done well, it's an instant read for consumers with built-in meaning. That not only makes equity a powerful communicator, but representative of power itself. Having equity means you're established and important. Once in a while, you can flaunt it and, like that savings account, cash in on some of that equity. But you've also got to protect it by constantly contributing to the equity bank. That's because equity is hard to build up but easier than you think to bankrupt through lack of support or weak communication. Elements of brand identity that have a lot of equity include the swoosh for Nike, the lion for Dreyfus, Mountain Grown® coffee for Folgers, and the cowboy (and the color red) for Marlboro.

This series of ads exemplifies the power of brand identity and equity. Before revealing the brand, examine each ad and see if you know who the advertiser is.





Okay, did you guess? About a third of the people who look at these ads know who the advertiser is. That's amazing since there's no product being visualized. No company name. And if you're in the third who guessed, you probably feel pretty smart for figuring it out. This means that a company has the ability to make you feel smart without overtly selling you anything. Doesn't that make you feel good about the company? And how were you able to identify the advertiser? Through your own observational skills and the power of equity. In a sort of "Where's Waldo" puzzle, the product is represented by its logo, which appears discreetly in each ad. If you missed it before, now go back and look again. See it? Look in the butterfly wing. Marilyn Monroe's beauty mark. The thingy that you push down on the service bell. See the tri-star logo? Now you've got it. So who's the advertiser? Mercedes Benz, right? If a significant portion of readers can figure out that these ads are about Mercedes Benz without seeing a car, then that tri-star logo, which is part of Mercedes Benz's equity, is pretty powerful. And that tells you something about the power of their brand. Of course, Mercedes can't keep running ads like this or else the logo will begin to lose its meaning. But once in a while, ads as oblique as this really do demonstrate the sheer power of the brand. Which in turn enhances the brand equity.

"Ownability"

Whether your advertising is conceptually or executionally driven, its success will depend on how "ownable" it is. In other words, are you the only company that can justify your positioning, look, and feel? Usually these qualities are rooted in the distinctiveness of

the strategy, but “ownability” can also be found in the smallest details. During critique, a good question to ask is, Can we “own” this ad? That’s one of the gold standards of effective advertising. If you don’t have it, you become part of the wallpaper. Here’s proof:

The next few ads appeared in the same newspaper section of *The New York Times* that ran one Sunday called “Education Life.” The first three ads were for different

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 Philadelphia, PA
 tel. 215.898.7326
 summer@sas.upenn.edu

for program information and course listings
 www.sas.upenn.edu/CGS

universities that all felt that they offered a world-class education. While this is most certainly true, the problem is that many universities can say exactly that. And all three did. In their ads. In the same publications. On the same day. As a result, it was hard to distinguish one ad from the next. Which meant that these three universities came across as virtually the same institution. But Columbia University isn't at all in character or content like St. John's University. And neither is the University of Pennsylvania. However, that would easily be the net takeaway for consumers who were reading the newspaper on this particular Sunday.

Now take a look at the fourth ad from Pratt University. This ad has something “ownable” to say. It featured a sculpture from George Segal, a renowned artist and Pratt graduate. The headline, “I Made It,” references both the creation of his art and his professional success. The tagline, “Build it. Create it. Make it,” speaks not just to the school's particular expertise but to its outcomes. Together, no other ad in that section on that particular Sunday could've looked anything like this ad. It was “ownable” only to Pratt. And that's the difference between standing out and looking like part of the wallpaper.

I Made It

Pratt
Build it. Create it. Make it.

George Segal, Sculptor, Pratt '47 "Although my mother and father said I'd never make a living at it, I always loved art and found it magical. But it was Pratt that really inspired my earliest interest in fine art.

I actually felt gaily at Pratt because I enjoyed every class so much...the painting, the model drawing, especially the art education classes. And like every other art student at the time, I was exposed to the forces of abstract expressionism. It took a lot of nerve to disagree with that powerful movement, but I found myself rebelling and refusing to give up my interest in the human body. I drummed up the idea of taking ordinary people and placing them in very specific locations, which became known as "environmental sculpture." What was revolutionary about it was taking sculpture off the old plywood box and making it the center of a specially constructed installation. It became accepted as one of the driving forces of the Pop Art movement.

When I was commissioned to create part of the FDR Memorial in Washington, I felt the Depression was one of the most significant events of that era and the bread line seemed like the perfect image. Funny enough, the figure at the head of the line is based on an old friend, the only person I know who actually stood on a real bread line."

Pratt Institute
270 10th Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11201
718-624-3665 ext. 220 or 800-221-8634 ext. 221

Pratt Institute
270 10th Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11201
718-624-3665 ext. 220 or 800-221-8634 ext. 221

Name _____
Address _____
City _____
State _____
Zip _____
Phone _____

Brand Personality

Capturing a brand's personality in an ad is critical to any branding effort. That's because ads don't just deliver information about the brand, they represent the brands themselves. This means that our feelings about a brand often originate with or are reinforced by the way we

relate to its advertising. Simply stated: Companies and products are physical entities; brands exist in the hearts and minds of consumer. And how does it exist in a consumer's heart and mind? One way is by actually experiencing the product or service. Another way is by authentically experiencing the product or service through the advertising—which means that an ad cannot just convey information about the brand, but must capture its personality as well.

The essence of a brand's personality can often be found in the company's vision (i.e., what singular value it's adding to the universe, society, our lives). For example, the Italian design company Alessi doesn't sell tea kettles; it adds poetry to your life. Starbucks isn't about gourmet coffee; it's about providing affordable luxury to everyday people. Kodak isn't a film company; it creates memories. Elements that reflect or symbolize the vision, such as logos, typefaces, and colors, make up a brand's identity. That identity is often expressed through a personality that is amplified by advertising in order to develop a relationship with the consumer. If a company doesn't have a vision, elements used to create an identity have no real meaning. This makes it difficult to create a brand—like a person with no personality. Of course, a company or product can still advertise. But the results are more short-term and concrete.

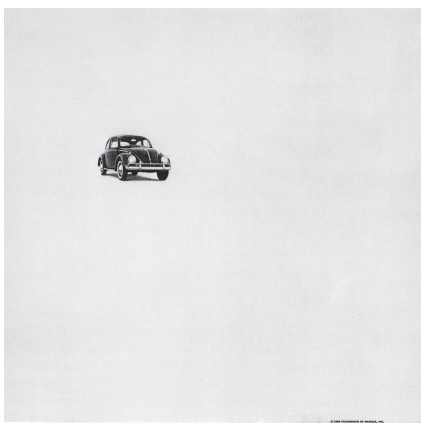
So how does the brand express its personality in an ad? A great example is Volkswagen, which has had a pretty consistent brand personality since it introduced the Beetle to America back in the sixties. Doyle Dane Bernbach did such a good job establishing a brand identity for this quirky-looking German vehicle during the postwar brand boom that it still prevails in the hearts and minds of American consumers. It has faltered over the years, but it regains its footing when it sticks to that core essence: fun functionality. Or maybe a bit more broadly: non-elitist engineering. This is clear with the famous "Think small" ad of 1964 as well as the relaunching of the Beetle more than 30 years later.

Let's take a look. See if you can recognize Volkswagen's brand essence in the "Think small" ad, created by Doyle Dane Bernbach in 1963.

Fast forward more than 30 years. By looking at the spread right below it (created by the Arnold Agency), what do you suppose Volkswagen's brand essence is? Same thing, right? Fun functionality and non-elitist engineering.

Despite many different models and advances in engineering technology, the brand essence hasn't changed. The cars are different. But the brand isn't. These two ads—more than 30 years apart—help tell this story. The particulars on the page differ, but the personality is pretty much the same. Which tells you something about how much of a brand's personality is delivered through advertising. Here in the United States, our initial perceptions of that weird little car were based on the advertising that introduced it to the masses. Before the average person saw the original Beetle on the street, he probably saw it in an ad. Or in a commercial. The advertising framed the reality so instead of seeing an object, the consumer reacted to a personality. The ads didn't just give voice to the personality; they helped shape it. So much so that 30 years later, both the new Beetle and the ads that "re-introduced" it feel like old friends.

As first established back in the sixties by DDB, the Volkswagen brand personality is communicated on both a conceptual and executional level. The idea here is to use the car as an ironic icon—it doesn't look like a conventional car, which gives it permission to function in ways that you wouldn't expect. Executionally, both of these ads isolate product. No winding Pacific coast roads. No beauties slung over the hood of the car. Just the car itself against a seamless background. The Beetle IS a weird-looking car in the context of the automobile market here in the United States. But by not hiding behind any props, the ads acknowledge this on your behalf. The car isn't just weird-looking but small—especially to




Think small.

Our little car isn't so much of a novelty any more.
A couple of dozen college kids don't try to impress us with it.
The pop on the gas station doesn't ask where the gas goes.
Nobody ever stares at our design.
Nobody ever asks how it drives or little.


Never don't even think 22 miles to the gallon is going any great good.
Or using five parts of oil instead of five quarts.
Or never needing anti-freeze.
Or making up 40,000 miles in a test of five.


That's because once you get used to

some of our accessories, you don't even think about them any more.
Except when you squeeze into a small parking spot. Or when your next repair check. Or pay a small repair bill.
Or trade in your old VW for a new one.
Think it over.



Is it possible to go backwards and forwards at the same time?



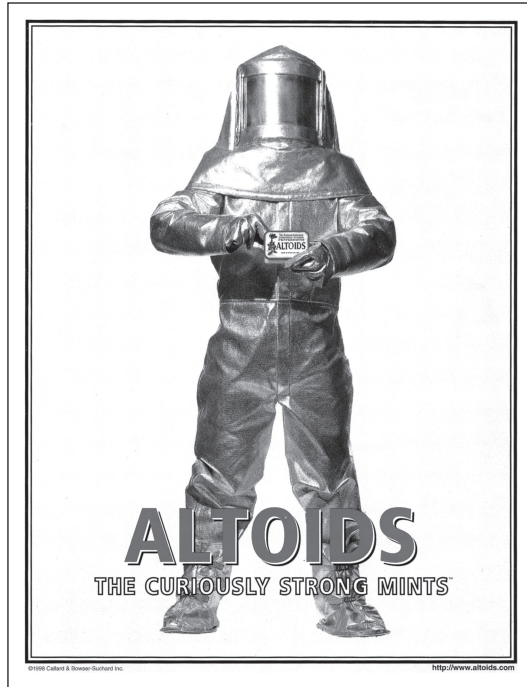
Drivers wanted. 

©1998 Volkswagen. 1-800-DRIVE-VW or WWW.VW.COM

American eyes. The ads actually accentuate the smallness. This gives the car a measure of pride; it's not embarrassed by its smallness, so why should you be? Immediately, then, we start assigning personality traits to this object. It speaks to us from the page.

Now onto the text elements. When juxtaposed with the visual, the headlines ask you to realign your thinking. This gives you permission not only to acknowledge the car's quirkiness but to also consider how that quirkiness can work for you. The ads playfully deflate some of that hyperbole so often used to sell cars. This lets you relax. Yet the facts are quite serious about the engineering. This validates the seriousness of the purchase. The typeface is modern but not sexy. Again, a confident choice that almost mocks more conventional typography found in this category. When you consider the brand essence and then see these ads, they are one and the same. And that's a good thing.

Page Personality



An ad can't just capture the personality of the brand; the page must have a personality of its own. Why? Because it must stand out among all those other forms of advertising that constantly bombard the consumer. The real trick is making these two personalities one and the same. When all of the elements of the execution work together to create an effective, emotionally powerful print ad, it seems to come alive with a personality of its own—a personality that should be consistent with, *as well as* help convey, the brand personality. This is truly the domain of a great Art Director. But as someone in the critique seat, you must also be able to recognize its importance when evaluating the work. The ad might deliver every single bit of communication demanded by the strategy, but if the page has no pizzazz, it will all be for naught. Here are a couple of examples where everything on the page comes together to deliver the strategic message and the brand, all at the same time.

Altoids is a great example of advertising that communicates its strategic message of strength in a brand-consistent, yet unexpected way. One of the less obvious elements that creates page personality is the powder blue background. A strange choice to telegraph strength. Yet it has meaning on many levels. For one thing, it makes the visual pop. And gives it a clinical harshness. In context, the color looks frosty rather than wimpy. The starkness makes it stand out—whether the ad is on a phone kiosk or in a magazine. If the Art Director had described this ad rather than showing it to you, you'd be skeptical that making pale blue a dominant element of the page would deliver on all of these things. But seeing is believing.

Another great example is the Hummer ad. The car nearly breaks off the page. But rather than use some gimmick to do that, it's just about the car itself, some bold photography, and good cropping. The page is powerful in the same way that the car is—a bit boxy and rugged. In this way, the brand personality is reinforced by the page personality. Supported by a strong headline in no-nonsense type, the ad has stopping power all its own.

Demo

AKA “The Proof”

This is a real basic term that's easy enough to understand but difficult to execute with real believability. We are sophisticated consumers skeptical about all forms of advertising. Yet despite the hokey quality of most demos, we're still fascinated by them. Why else would

Separated at Birth.
{ A Tale of Two Sweaters }



They started out exactly the same. Identical sweaters. Beloved delicates. Then their lives dramatically changed. The top one was put into the gentle cycle thirty times with a leading regular powder detergent. The bottom one was washed just as many times in the gentle cycle, safely and gently with Ivory Snow® powder. When you're treated with the utmost of care and respect, it obviously shows.

Safe care for the things you love to wear.




© 1963 1005


we watch infomercials about really sharp knives until way past our bedtime? But do we truly believe them? Doing a side-by-side comparison while screaming into the camera doesn't work for many products. We are dubious, on one hand. On the other hand, we want the claims to be proven, verified, and authenticated. So how do we bridge this divide? We need to find ways to create convincing demos that balance cleverness with credibility.

The ad for Ivory Snow detergent is a terrific example of how a straightforward, side-by-side comparison can be engaging and convincing at the same time. The headline is clever and sets up what we're looking at. But it's mostly the contrasting sweaters that do all the talking. It's an attractive ad without looking fake. And somehow, the elegance adds to the believability.


INSTANT PICTURES
CAN ENCOURAGE
POSITIVE BEHAVIOR
BETTER THAN A CANDY BAR.
WITHOUT THE STRANGE SIDE EFFECTS.



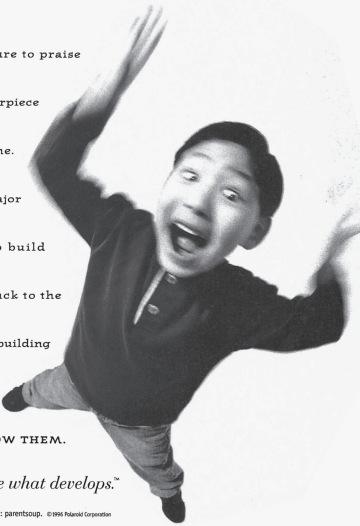
Try using a Polaroid instant picture to praise your child when they create a masterpiece




or share their toys for the first time.



Whether it's a solid attempt or a major success, show them. It will help build confidence without ending up stuck to the couch cushions. For an informational brochure on building self-esteem, call 1-800-778-0868, ext. 213.



DON'T JUST TELL THEM THEY'RE GREAT. SHOW THEM.

 **Polaroid** See what develops.™

Visit us at <http://www.polaroid.com> or in the Calendar section of www.parentsoup.com or AOL keyword: parentsoup. ©1998 Polaroid Corporation

The campaign concept of the above ad for Polaroid actually revolves around the notion of “proof” and brings to life one of the great axioms of advertising: “Don’t say it,

be it.” In other words, advertising works best when it doesn’t just deliver a message, but dramatizes the message. This is exactly what Goodby Silverstein did in its campaign for Polaroid. The ads don’t include a demo; they ARE the demo. Here, Polaroid is positioned as a sort of “proof machine.” And so the concept behind the campaign is to offer up the photos as the proof necessary to validate various situations. The situations are fun and engaging and embedded in real life. But the demos are on clear display nonetheless. In this way, the ads demonstrate the power of Polaroid by *being* demos. If that explanation sounds a bit confusing, the ads are not. They’re clear, engaging, and convincing. We immediately appreciate the value of instant photography. That’s why the invention of digital photography was such a hit. Unfortunately, it also made the Polaroid camera fairly obsolete a few years after this campaign was launched. Advertising can’t save everything. . . .

The Terms: A Cheat Sheet

Brand Identity and Equity: How a brand is made evident and sustains value

Brand Personality: The characteristics of a brand brought to life—often through advertising

Campaign: A series of ads based on a single concept

Concept: The HOW as in “How is this ad delivering the message?”

Execution: The way in which the concept is manifested

Layout: The way in which the elements of an ad are designed on the page

Ownability: A positioning, identity, and style that make an ad unique

Page Personality: How an ad comes to life

Proof: Demos that are believable

Strategy: The WHAT as in “What does this ad want us to know?”

Tagline: A pithy phrase that captures the essence of the campaign

Target Audience: The WHO as in “Who is this ad talking to?”



Visit the student study site at www.sagepub.com/tagstudy for additional online resources including web links, video clips, and recommended readings to learn more about advertising and the creative process.

Critique Exercises

1. Select five “good” ads and five “bad” ads (i.e., effective and ineffective) from magazines you might not usually read. Deconstruct in terms of each ad’s WHAT, WHO, and HOW.
2. Go to <http://www.textart.ru/database/slogan/list-advertising-slogans.html> and select three taglines from the same product category. For each, identify the strategy and list five reasons why the tagline is effective. Consider the mechanics of the line as well as the message.
3. The MPA Kelly Awards were established in 1982 by the MPA (Association of Magazine Media) and are bestowed annually to agency creative teams and advertising clients whose magazine campaigns demonstrate both creative excellence and campaign results. Pick an award-winning campaign from the Kelly Gallery (http://www.magazine.org/advertising/kelly_awards/kelly_gallery/index.aspx) and list at least 10 ways in which the brand speaks through the ads.
4. Select favorite campaigns from the Kelly Gallery. Articulate the concept of each campaign and then describe the execution of the ads.
5. The Advertising Education Foundation (AEF) has a case study of Levi’s integrated campaign that won an AME (Advertising and Marketing Effectiveness) Award in 2006. Go to www.aef.com/exhibits/awards/ame/landing to enter the exhibit. Review the Levi’s campaign and read the case study. Pull apart the ways in which the campaign has “ownability,” relies on Levi’s brand identity and equity, and exhibits both brand and page personality.
6. Reexamine the concept behind the “How mad is she ad?” on page 29. Keeping the same concept, execute this ad another way.

Suggested Viewing

If you ever want to see the exact moment in a creative presentation when a client doesn’t know what to say, watch the first scene of the John Hughes’s movie *Planes, Trains, and Automobiles* as the client (played by William Windam) silently debates the merits of a print presentation while the agency reps (played by Steve Martin and Lyman Ward) squirm in their seats realizing that with each second of silence, they’re closer to missing their plane ride home to Chicago.

Suggested Reading

Twenty-Two Tips on Typography by Enric Jordi. You don’t need to be a typographer or an Art Director to appreciate how every little detail in an ad is a communication opportunity.