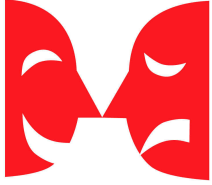


E-LESSON #12: Creative: Benefits and Results Instead of Cliches

GENERAL AGENDA



EXPLAINING THE ELEMENTS OF A GOOD COMMERCIAL By Paul Weyland

Mastering this section will give you tremendous insight into just how bad broadcast creative really is. Use this bad news to your advantage. You could improve the efficiency and effectiveness of most advertising by EIGHTY PERCENT, simply by removing cliches and replacing them with language that a listener or viewer who is ON for the client's product or service could understand and relate to.

Remember that a good spot always contains three important elements. In the previous lesson we discussed the first rule:

1. Use an emotional headline immediately.

In this lesson, we'll discuss the second rule:

2. Explain benefits and results to your listeners or viewers, without using clichés.

Explain benefits and results to the listeners or viewers...WITHOUT clichés

Again, by simply knowing the differences between good and bad advertising and then being capable of explaining those differences to your client, you become much more of a resource to your local direct clients. From what you learn in this lesson, you'll find holes in local business's advertising strategies that dinosaurs could walk through.

Our commercials are INFESTED with advertising CLICHES. And recall that CLICHES are nothing more than worthless AD-SPEAK. And it's not just radio and television salespeople who are responsible for bad copy. Some of the biggest advertising agencies in the country are also writing AD-SPEAK and diminishing the effectiveness of their client's advertising.

Webster's dictionary describes "cliché" as a "trite phrase or expression." I call clichés "meaningless words or phrases that take up space and have no place in your client's advertising." Veteran spot producer Tony Schwartz says that people have a lifetime of experience believing or not believing what they hear. He's right. So why do our spots have to sound so artificial?

The second thing you must do in every commercial is ***explain benefits and results to your listeners or viewers...without using clichés***. In other words, how will the listener or viewer directly benefit from coming to the client's business? This rule ties into your client's USP or Identifiable difference. Always ***sell the benefit or result, not the product or service*** without using clichés that say things like, "Best service in town."

Think about it. For example, exactly what does your client mean when he wants to say to your audience that he has the "best service in town"? Does he mean that if he's not there in 20 minutes that the call is free? Does he mean that if you drop it off, it will be ready in an hour? Because, if that's what "Best Service" really means, then why not EXPLAIN IT? Listeners or viewers who are ON for one-hour service would appreciate hearing that. Listeners or viewers who are ON for "If we're not there in 20 minutes, the call is free," would love to hear that from your client.

So when your client gives you a cliché benefit or result, dig a little and find out what he really means. Then in your copy, you can explain to your audience what's really in it for them...how they really win by calling or visiting your client.

"Best service" alone means absolutely nothing. It's just a tired empty, cliché phrase and we hear it over and over and over again.

In order for a spot to work properly, every word needs to be meaningful and contribute toward the goal of getting the listener or viewer to do business with the client. But instead, we are sabotaging the client's message (and ultimately our relationship with the client) by loading up their spots with these trite and meaningless clichés.

Here are some common advertising clichés.

Common clichés:

- Call our staff of professionals
- Talk to our knowledgeable, trained staff
- Come see our friendly staff of professionals
- You'll love our loyal, dedicated employees
- Talk to our top-notch sales staff
- (Eight) convenient locations to better serve you
- Best service in town
- Serving (your town) since 1995
- Dedicated to serve you
- Service second to none

- Our motto is to serve you
- Working hard to serve you better
- The best kept secret in town
- For all of your _____ needs
- Hurry in today
- But hurry...with prices like these, selection won't last long
- Your premier (product or service) headquarters
- Your low-price headquarters
- Choose from a wide variety of...
- It's a Holiday Tradition...
- Save on a wide selection of...
- Our loss is your gain
- We're slashing prices to the bone
- You've got to see it to believe it
- Where the customer is king
- We're saving the best for you
- Your low-cost leader
- Come visit our beautiful, spacious showroom
- We've got the wheels and the deals
- You can count on us for the friendliest deal in town

BUT WAIT...THERE'S MORE...

- Shop the best and leave the rest to us.
- This is it!
- It's our red-tag event!
- Just in time for the Holidays...
- We just can't be beat
- We guarantee the lowest prices
- We've withstood the test of time
- We're tried and true
- Everything drastically reduced just in time for this sale
- It's our biggest sales event of the year
- We'll shoot straight with you
- We're number one
- You'll save like never before
- Check out the deals we have in store for you
- We guarantee the lowest price or else!
- Prices have never been lower
- Unheard of
- Unbelievable
- The sales event of the decade
- Family owned and operated

- Time is running out
- Plus...
- Everybody's talking about it
- Huge selection
- But only for a limited time
- Everything must go
- We're declaring war on high prices
- This is one sale you don't want to miss
- We've lost our lease
- Sizzling red-hot summer sale
- You'll want to bring the whole family
- Free balloons and popcorn for the kids
- We won't be undersold
- A (your town) institution
- Not to mention our great food and happy hour specials
- Plenty of eager salespeople to assist you
- Midnight Madness

We've heard clichés so many times in radio and television spots that they literally “go in one ear and out the other,” to use a cliché. Most people are so used to hearing clichés in spots that they actually believe that that's the way a spot is supposed to sound. And that's why most spots sound the same and don't stand out. Instead of “best service in town”, you could say something like,

“When you call AAA plumbing, we guarantee that we'll be at your door to fix your problem within twenty minutes of your call or it's free.”

As media reps, we should be asking ourselves every day, “How hard am I making it for our audience to do business with this client?” Wouldn't you agree that if you produced the advertiser's spot in a foreign language that it would be much more difficult for the audience to understand your client's message? Well, that's what we do when we use clichés in our spots. We're trying to communicate in a language that no one really speaks.

Don't be a CRAPMASTER!

Consider this scenario. The broadcast salesperson finally convinces the client to buy a schedule on his station.

Client—“Okay, okay...I'll buy it. But what are we going to do about the copy?”

Salesperson-“Yes sir, I’ll help you with the copy. You know, I’ve been in the media sales business for six years now...in fact, I’ve been through three murders and executions.”

Client-“You mean MERGERS AND ACQUISITIONS.”

Salesperson-“Yes, that’s what I mean. And, I’m highly qualified to make your commercial. You see, I’m an expert at taking bits and pieces of CRAP from this list of cliches, and putting them together with other bits of CRAP...so that you’ll have a commercial that looks and sounds just like every other commercial.”

Client-“Gee...You could do all of that for me?”

Salesperson-“Yes sir. You see, I’m a certified CRAPMASTER.”

Client-“A CRAPMASTER? Man, that sounds impressive. Well, be sure to put my business hours in that spot, even though they’re the same as everybody else’s. Oh, and be sure and include that we’re FAMILY OWNED AND OPERATED. Nobody really cares...but put it in the commercial. By the way, could you show my kids and my dog in that spot? And, put in there that we have plenty of loyal and eager salespeople. Oh, and could you include the fact that we’re number one and that it’s our sizzling red-hot summer sale? That should bring in a few folks.

Salesperson-“Yes sir! You just tell me what you want and I’ll turn it right in to our production director. We’ll make a commercial that looks and sounds just like all of the other commercials on the station. I can do that for you. You see, I’m an expert at shoveling ten pounds of crap into a five pound bag! I’ll include all of those things. Could we also include the fact that you have a huge selection, but only for a limited time? Maybe we could call this sale something REALLY SPECIAL! I know...let’s call it THE SALE OF THE DECADE!

Client-“Well, you’re the expert. I sure hope it works.”

Broadcast people always laugh at the above scenario. Why? Because sadly, it’s pretty darned close to the truth. Unfortunately, the truth has serious consequences that affect our pocketbooks. When the Crapmaster spot fails to deliver, the client cancels and blames the medium or your station.

“Okay,” you say. “This copy thing really is a serious issue. But how can I be sure that there is no CRAP in MY copy?” I’m glad you asked. Just use a simple test on every single piece of copy you write.

Use the Best Friend Test on your Copy

If you don't believe what I'm saying just use the BEST FRIEND TEST on every piece of copy. If you wouldn't say those *exact same words* to your best friend, then they have no place in your spot.

For example, could you imagine yourself saying to your best friend, "(friend's name) , this is one 'Sizzling' red-hot Summer Sale we can't afford to miss! They'll have plenty of loyal and eager salespeople to assist us and their service is second to none! But, time is running out. We'll love their beautiful and spacious showroom and their HOLIDAY CHEER. PLUS, their prices just can't be beaten! But only for a limited time and only at participating stores!" If you said that to somebody, they would think that you had lost your mind. However, you'll hear it over and over and over in the average radio or TV commercial.

Remember to Use the Blank Sheet of Paper Test on your Clients.

Make your client aware of all of the AD-SPEAK his competitors are running. Here is where you could use that blank sheet of white paper and ask the client, "If you were trying to sell this sheet of white paper, would it make sense to hold it up against a white background or a black background?" Of course it would make sense to hold it up against a black background in order to **stand out**. In other words, for a commercial to be effective, it must **stand out from the other commercials on the station**. Then, teach a rule to teach your clients.

Collect Cliches

Start becoming a student in the difference between good and bad advertising. Be a Student of Bad Advertising. That means that you should listen critically to radio and television advertising and watch and listen for cliches. When you hear one, repeat it to yourself and smile. Because once you get really good at recognizing the waste we have in commercial scripts, you'll look like an advertising genius to your clients. You won't believe all of the AD-SPEAK you'll hear and see when you really start paying careful attention. You'll find that almost every spot you see or hear will be loaded with stupid cliches. Clients always appreciate listening to somebody who could help them increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the advertising they are spending their hard-earned money on.

Again, you could back up the claim that you could improve the effectiveness and efficiency of advertising your client is already doing by 80 percent...simply by removing cliches AD-SPEAK and replacing the crap with benefits and results that your listeners or viewers would really care about.

Collect advertising cliches. It's a lot cheaper than collecting cars or jewelry. Take the list of cliches I'm providing for you here and add to it when you hear new ones. Become an evangelist with this knowledge. Go out and show your clients how they could out-smart their competitors by writing more effective and efficient scripts.

No more wallpaper spots.

“A spot that looks like or sounds like a spot is camouflage. And nowadays, where the average person is inflicted with a minimum of 2,500 commercial impressions per day, camouflage means sabotage.”

Teach the client that *we don't want a spot that sounds or looks like a spot*. If the spot is different, it will stand out. Remember that if a spot is not outstanding then it won't stand out at all. Use the Best Friend Test on every single piece of your copy.

There is an on-line companion video provided with this lesson.

*Paul Weyland is president of Paul Weyland Training Seminars.
Please call him with any questions regarding this session. He can be reached at (512) 236-1222 or
www.paulweyland.com*