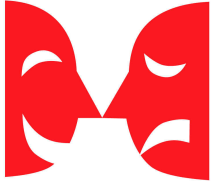


E-LESSON #13: Creative: Call to Action

GENERAL AGENDA



EXPLAINING THE ELEMENTS OF A GOOD COMMERCIAL

By Paul Weyland

There is no question that creative knowledge means power in this business and distinguishes you from not only Chiquitas at the other stations, but also from rinky-dink little Crapmaster advertising agencies. Most of these parasitic goobers don't know anywhere near as much as you do when it comes to the difference between a good and bad spot. If you don't believe me, just pay attention to some of their commercials. Little po-dunk agency creative is usually INFESTED with clichés.

So far, we've discussed the following elements in writing good advertising scripts.

1. Use an emotional headline within the first five seconds.
2. Explain benefits and results to your listeners or viewers, without using clichés.

Now, we'll go over the third and final element and wrap up this series on the DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GOOD AND BAD ADVERTISING.

3. Make sure that your client's call to action is crystal clear.

A good spot has a SPECIFIC call to action

The third and final element we must communicate in a good spot is the **call to action**. The Call to Action is precisely what it says...what the client wants the listener or viewer to do. Our job is to make sure that the client's call to action is CRYSTAL-CLEAR for our audience. Unfortunately, we regularly mess this part up and that's a big mistake. Here's an example of how easy it is to mess up the call-to-action. "That number again is 484-2597. Family owned and operated since 1967." Even if you're ON for what the client is selling, how difficult is the Crapmaster making it to remember the telephone number? 2-5-9-7? Or was that 1-9-6-7? What in the heck was the number? How difficult is the Crapmaster making it for the listeners or viewers to do business with the client? Pretty darned hard if the audience member can't remember the client's phone number or the client's address or the client's website.

The call to action is always the very last sentence in the script.

The client's CALL-TO-ACTION should always be the very last thing in the script. NEVER follow the call-to-action with a client's cliché slogan or

ANYTHING ELSE. The call-to-action MUST be mentioned several times throughout the spot and then should be the very last thing in the spot.

One Call to Action is Better than two or three

If your client is in a service-oriented business like plumbing, there is no reason to direct your listeners or viewers to the client's physical address. The client does not want your listeners or viewers driving to his location and seeing all of the old toilets out in the front yard. The phone number in this case, is the only call to action you'd need to emphasize. You'd want to repeat that phone number frequently and remember that the phone number would also appear as the last thing written in the spot.

If a client wants people to come to his business location then obviously you'd mention the address frequently. There would be no need to mention a phone number.

If the client wants listeners or viewers to go to his website, you would teach your audience the website. You will confuse listeners and viewers by trying to teach them multiple calls to action.

Complicated addresses

What if the client's location is not easy to find, or his location is hard to describe? Location problems mean marketing problems. You would be wise to advise your client that you are aware that he has a marketing problem but you will do what you can to guide your audience to his address.

Tony Schwartz said that you should think of your listeners or viewers not as TARGETS for advertising messages, but as a WORK FORCE that will HELP YOU TEACH THEM about your client. So in a case of a difficult to find location, I might begin my script by pointing out the biggest intersection or landmark closest to my client's business.

“Can you visualize the intersection of Manchaca at William Cannon Drive? Can you see that intersection in your mind?”

What about situations when the client does not want to use a famous landmark to make their location easier to find, because it “cheapens” their business? I usually tell the client to get over it. Why doesn't the client try draping a huge camouflaged tarp over his neighbor? That landmark, perhaps a box store or a fast food franchise is probably not going to go away. Get over it and use the landmark. The idea is to make it as easy as possible to get to the client's business.

On television, I can keep a map up on the screen. But I must also TELL viewers how to get to the client's business. Why? Because many people "watch" television from a different room than the one with the set. They're listening. So vocalize the call to action at the end of the television spot to give these people a chance to hear the location or phone number.

Complicated Phone Numbers

Vanity phone numbers are just wonderful. We should call them MEMORY numbers instead, because that's exactly what they are. I had a client in the carpet and upholstery business who had the number 47 CLEAN. I asked him how he got the number and he told me it was the best \$300 he'd ever spent. He just called the number. It turned out to be a residential listing. He told the homeowner that he'd give him \$300 for his phone number. The homeowner said, "Heck yeah!" He had no idea that his phone number spelled 47 CLEAN.

"Call 4-PIZZAS," would be much easier to remember than some random number. If vanity phone numbers are available in your area, the phone company will help your client get one. Several offer free searches for vanity numbers. For example, Verizon has one at <http://www22.verizon.com/Vanity/>.

Tell your client that it is logical to make his phone number as easy as possible to remember. Encourage your client to get a vanity telephone number, because logically, he needs a number that is as easy as possible for your listeners or viewers to remember.

If for some reason vanity numbers are not available in your area, do what Tony Schwartz advises and teach your listeners or viewers THE HARDEST PART FIRST. Here's how that works. Let's say the number is 474-9016. There are fewer prefixes in a market than there are suffixes. Some markets might have fewer than fifty telephone number prefixes. But there are thousands of possible combinations for suffixes. So, teach the suffix first, then the prefix. The spot would work something like this.

"This important fire safety information is brought to you by Quality Electric. Statistics prove that eighty percent of all house fires start with an electrical problem. If you want to avoid fires in your home, remember ninety-sixteen. If you've noticed lights that are dimming when they're not supposed to, you might have an electrical problem. Remember Ninety-sixteen. If you have electrical outlets that aren't working any more, you have a potential electrical fire. Ninety-sixteen. If your home was built more than forty years ago, your electrical system could be faulty and that could result in your house catching on fire. Ninety-sixteen. Call 474- NINETY SIXTEEN and a licensed Quality electrician will locate and repair an electrical problem before it turns into a fire. Call Quality Electric now at 474- (PAUSE) NINETY SIXTEEN."

The pause before the last suffix helps the listener or viewer to mentally state the last numbers for you, further entrenching the telephone number into his or her memory. Many larger markets have a variety of area codes, which further complicate the call to action problem. Just remember that there are far fewer area codes than there are prefixes. You would teach the number the same way, starting with the suffix. Then introduce the prefix. And in the very last line, introduce the area code.

When dealing with phone numbers, you might want to refer listeners or viewers to THE WHITE PAGES of the phone book. In other words, you might say, “Call 474 NINETY SIXTEEN or look up QUALITY ELECTRIC in the White Pages.” Don’t refer your audience to the Yellow Pages. Because when a person goes to the Yellow Pages, they will then have the opportunity to shop all of your client’s competitors.

Finally when dealing with phone numbers, you might be able to say, “Call 474 NINETY SIXTEEN or call this station and ask for the telephone number of QUALITY ELECTRIC. If your station management doesn’t have a problem with your receptionist giving out client telephone numbers then this method might be a terrific way to help your client with his phone number problem.

When a Web Site is the Call to Action

We estimate that there are anywhere from one to six BILLION pages on the Internet right now. If your client’s call to action is a website, then make it easier, not harder for your viewers or listeners to go to your client’s site. You do NOT have to say, “Go to Http slash slash www.” any more. I still hear that on occasion and it’s a complete waste of time. Just say, “Go to paulweyland.com” for example, and people will know what to do.

But rather than saying, “Go to,” I have another idea for you. Provided that your copy gives your audience compelling reasons to do so, tell your viewers or listeners to BOOKMARK your client’s website. Tell them to “bookmark Paul Weyland dot com,” for example. Typically, people bookmark fewer than fifty web sites. If I were your client, I think I’d rather be one of fifty than one of FOUR BILLION.

One more thing regarding web sites. If your client has a web site, then they should have ***no trouble with buying overnight or weekend spots*** from you. Because if a client has a website, he’s open **24 hours a day, seven days a week.**

Wrapping it Up

So, provided that you have come up with a good unique selling position (ID) for your client, the rules for knowing the difference between good and bad advertising are really easy, aren't they?

1. Use an EMOTIONAL HEADLINE.
2. Discuss BENEFITS AND RESULTS WITHOUT CLICHES.
3. Make the Call-to-Action CRYSTAL CLEAR.

If you mess up just one of these three rules, you might destroy the entire campaign.

Side Notes on Creative

Tony Schwartz reminds us that people have a lifetime of experience believing or NOT believing what they see and hear. So when you are planning your script and production, think about some of these things.

- Avoid two-voice skits. They hardly ever turn out the way you think they will. They usually wind up looking or sounding fake and hokey and unprofessional.
- Big disc jockey voices are cliché. We always have the same two or three big voices doing all of our spots. Hardly anyone really talks that way. Instead, whenever you can, use real people in your spots, either satisfied customers or business owners. These people are usually EVANGELISTS, with strong beliefs in the client's product or service. Their enthusiasm is infectious and helps create desire in listeners or viewers who are ON for what your client is trying to sell. But don't allow them to read scripts. Instead, ask provocative questions. You'll get real answers from real people, the way real people really talk. Leave in an occasional speech error, like an "um" or two. It makes the subject of your spot sound even more normal and real. Remember, the idea is to create spots that do not look like or sound like wallpaper Crapmaster spots.

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*