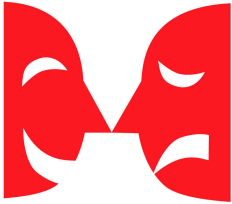


E-LESSON #9: The Difference Between Good and Bad Advertising

GENERAL AGENDA

The Creative Problem By Paul Weyland



You can bet your bottom dollar that ninety percent of the time, horrible creative had a huge role to play in the advertising campaign that “didn’t work”. This is a huge problem that can be easily corrected, whether you think you’re a creative genius or not.

At a NAB Europe event I met a Russian promotions director named Anna. Anna had attended my creative workshop in Lisbon. She said, “You are so correct about the horrible creative situation. We have a big automotive client in Moscow. His commercial was driving away our listeners. He was running a song by Pink Floyd (ASCAP/BMI violation) but he has changed the lyrics to his own stupid song. Listeners were calling us and telling us that he was wrecking their lives by screwing up one of their favorite songs and that they would no longer be listening to our station.”

Anna went to her sales director and told her that the commercial had to be changed. The director told Anna that the client had paid cash in advance for a year and that she was not going to call and bother the client, but that it was okay if Anna called. So Anna did. She met with the automotive dealer and here is her version of the conversation.

Anna-“Think of your commercial as the front of your building. You want it to be inviting to people who come in. But your commercial is HORRIBLE and it makes YOU look BAD.”

Client-“I like my commercial. Listeners like it.”

Anna-“No they don’t. They hate it. Think of it like this. What if I took a photo of BIG, FAT HAIRY MAN BUTT and blew it up real big and pasted it on the front of your building? That is how your commercial makes you look.”

Client-“You can’t compare my commercial to BIG HAIRY FAT MAN BUTT.”

Anna-“Yes, I can. Your commercial makes you look like BIG FAT HAIRY MAN BUTT.”

Finally, the client understood what Anna was saying and he changed his commercial. How many BIG FAT HAIRY MAN BUTT spots are running

on your station? Most of them make the client look bad and they are not effective in luring listeners or viewers to client's businesses.

These next few E-Lessons deal with the subject of CREATIVE. By the time you finish these sessions, you'll be an expert on the difference between good and bad advertising, whether you think you're a creative genius or not.

The other benefit you'll get from these upcoming sessions is a great new way to get appointments. By the time you're finished with this creative series, you will be able to say something like this to a client. "I saw/heard your ad/spot (on another station or in the paper or in the Yellow Pages). There's nothing wrong with that station (or other media) but in twenty minutes I could show you a way that you could increase the effectiveness and the efficiency of the advertising you're doing by EIGHTY PERCENT, whether you use my station or not." If someone came to me with a claim like that, I think I'd give them twenty minutes. But first, let's look at the creative problem.

Why Advertising Doesn't Work

Americans alone will spend over 200 BILLION dollars on advertising in all media this year and eighty to ninety percent of this money will be completely wasted. And when a client thinks that his advertising campaign isn't working, guess where he'll cast the blame? On the medium or station that he's using. But blaming the medium or a station for ineffective advertising is wrong. All media are good, but you have to use media correctly in order to make it work for the client.

When a client says that he "tried radio or TV once and it didn't work," one or two or three or four or ALL FIVE of the following things had to go wrong.

1. Wrong demographic
2. Thin schedule
3. Marketing problems
4. Mismatched expectations about results
5. Horrible, horrible creative

Creative problems and mismatched expectations about results are the two biggest problems.

So at this point, we begin working on the CREATIVE process. Unfortunately, most broadcast creative is just horrible. Instead of producing copy that would modify the behavior of listeners and viewers and drive them to our clients, we produce cliché-infested, wallpaper crap that has little chance of breaking through the 2,500 commercial

impressions that the average listener or viewer is exposed to in a single day.

The Blank Sheet of Paper Test

Think about this. If you were trying to sell a piece of white paper, would it make logical sense to hold that paper up against a white background, or a dark background? The obvious answer is the dark background. Why? Because the white paper would stand out against the dark background. Holding that sheet of white paper against a white background would be camouflage, like wallpaper.

Use the blank sheet of paper test on your clients because the same principle applies to advertising. The last thing we want are spots that look like or sound like spots. That would be camouflage. And nowadays with the 2,500 commercial impressions per day that we're all exposed to, camouflage would mean sabotage. The last thing any of us would want to do is sabotage a client's advertising message. But we do it all of the time.

The reason is, we in media sales and the clients we're working with all believe that a radio or TV commercial is supposed to sound like or look like a commercial. This is why, when it's time to talk advertising creative, that we begin using a foreign language, a foreign tongue that we only speak when we're talking advertising. I call that foreign language AD-SPEAK. AD-SPEAK is a language that is made up entirely by advertising cliches like, "But hurry...with prices like these selection won't last long," or, "It's a holiday tradition," or, "Plenty of loyal and eager salespeople to assist you," or, "We're family owned and operated."

In radio and television advertising, we have thirty or sixty seconds to create the ultimate seduction to a percentage of our listeners or viewers. Every single word must count. We have no room for cliches and we certainly cannot afford to sabotage a client's advertising message in the commercials that we produce.

Think about this. The commercials that we air on our station are OUR PRODUCT. Creative is such an important part of what we do that there is absolutely no room for "winging it". But typically the broadcast account executive knows no more than the average client about the difference between good and bad advertising. Consequently, the "tail winds up wagging the dog." The client, who is completely uneducated about the difference between good and bad advertising, shoots in the dark and tells the account executive what should or should not be in the spot. The account executive dutifully writes down everything the clients tells him to, and then delivers it to the production department. The production people may realize that the copy points are weak, but they're so busy that they

overlook those weaknesses and quickly “crank out” another crappy spot. By default, the production department becomes a CRAP FACTORY.

My production associate Jim Kipping likens production directors to air traffic controllers. They may have only two runways (production facilities), but they always have eight aircraft (salespeople) trying to land planes. There is very little time for production people to come up with creative masterpieces for every one of your clients, especially when the copy points you’ve given them to work with are total crap.

When you run ho-hum spots, you get ho-hum responses from your audience. And then when the campaign “doesn’t work” guess who the client blames? YOUR STATION or YOUR MEDIUM.

Just because we got into this business by mistake is no reason to do business by mistake. If you are an account executive for a broadcast station, you MUST be knowledgeable about the creative process. There is no room for “winging it” when it comes to such an important part of the media sales process.

You don’t have to be a creative genius to know the difference between good and bad advertising. You just need to understand the rules. If you know the rules of a game it’s much more likely that you have a chance of winning. When it comes to spot creative most broadcast salespeople just don’t know the rules. This creates many problems, including your client’s mismanaged expectations about advertising results on your station. So, here are the simple creative rules we’ll be studying.

1. Establish an Identifiable Difference for your client.
2. Come up with an EMOTIONAL HEADLINE for your spot.
3. Explain BENEFITS AND RESULTS to your audience, WITHOUT CLICHES.
4. Make sure your CALL-TO-ACTION is crystal-clear.

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*