



"Fighting With the Right Ammunition"

'Course, it could read "Don't Try to Fire the W-R-O-N-G Ammunition" just as well. Sorta like asking if a glass is half-full ... it depends on your perspective. Anyway, load a gun with the wrong size cartridge (bullet or load) and either it won't shoot - or it'll blow up. Advertising with the wrong creative can do the same thing. And, Lord knows, the whole wide everlovin' world is full of creative geniuses. Just ask somebody about ads they've seen or heard (including yours!) And see what they have to say.

Some of the best (as judged by the ad industry) advertising that's ever been created hasn't necessarily sold a whole lot of product. Somehow that doesn't surprise me. I had a dog once that could work a field in trials better than any in the country - put that same dog in a real hunt and he wouldn't ... couldn't stand the sound of guns. Advertising is like that too, an ad or commercial might look good before it hits the public but doesn't do anything but win awards (ad industry awards) afterwards. Take that one to the bank and see what its worth.

One of the things we've been doing throughout this tour of duty has been to constantly reiterate the basics of advertising, stressing a lot of the things that everyone knows - but somehow always seem to forget. One of the best ways to figure out what your advertising needs to say and look like is to take a competitive inventory: i.e., clip ads from newspapers and magazines; videotape tv and record radio ads. Look at them.

Listen to them. Now separate them according to those you really like, those you think do a decent job, and those you wouldn't want your name associated with - like ninety-nine percent of auto dealer ads and commercials (it's amazing how horse-tradin' hasn't ever changed). Imagine how much more fun it would be if cars had teeth!

I have tried to follow the order of battle and come up with some really great examples of good, solid, advertising - but it's been a little like lookin' for a lemon tree in Virginia so Stonewall can think straight before a battle (Ed. note: General Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson was known to suck on lemons before, and during, battles during "The War"). Anyway, here are a few examples:

Blue Cross & Blue Shield

They have several things on their side: everybody is concerned with healthcare so they are going to get attention, whatever they say; they use a lot of "white space"; eye-catching visuals; readable type; short paragraphs; and they sign-off with their logo in the right place. They have been able to stop me, get me to read the headline and look at the visual and, sometimes, read a little of the copy. I will admit that



sometimes the stuff is too cute and the copy is a stretch for what the headline and visual seem to convey but overall the ads follow the basics very well.

The Grocery Store

Who could miss these ads? Their newspaper ads have the stopping power of a 12-pound Napoleon. You may not be interested, but you will remember who they are. The tv, again, has no relation to the newspaper but it is consistent. A problem with doing this type of strategy week-after-week is that it gets tougher and tougher to be effective without be sophomoric.

Dick Strauss Ford

Good radio and tv (newspaper is typically terrible). It is good because it is refreshing to have a car dealer who isn't screaming about being "Number 1" or having the lowest prices (when everyone knows they aren't and don't, and couldn't care less if they did).

Marc Jeffries

Great small space newspaper ads. Clean, simple, consistent. Good layout, headline, copy. Any more? Oh, a couple here and there but none worth mentioning considering that the bugle sounds once again and there's the distinctive smell of cordite in the air. It's been fun, as usual, just remember to measure your powder and make your bullets with the right mold. Aim straight and squeeze the trigger. And for heaven's sake keep your head down. 'Til next time.
