



“How to Get an Edge on Your Sword”

Look at the advertising that’s going on around you. Kind of “reconnoiter” what your friends and enemies are doing. Take a couple of minutes and cut-out, and/or tape (VCR or audio), the ads and commercials YOU like. Now cut-out and/or tape the ads your competitors are going to market with. Now put all of these next to YOUR ads.

See anything different? Sure you do. Now, let’s set aside the ads of the companies that are successful in the market. Is there still a difference? Of course there is, and the difference is probably becoming more apparent.

Now let’s ask the simple question, “Why?”.

It doesn’t take a genius to figure out that the best ads have a lot in common:

- they are basically uncluttered;
- they have a strong visual and headline;
- they take advantage of the space available to them;
- they do not try to get too many points or products in one ad;
- they communicate to the people they are trying to talk (sell) to.

Years ago somebody once told me that you knew you had a good ad when you could cover up the name of the company and everyone would still know who the advertiser was. You know, that really has not changed; except now you have add “... and they have a product/service I need/want”.

You have to remember that your customers are people who respond like you do; they react to the same stimuli. But you have to THINK like they do before you create or approve your next ad or commercial. I know, your ads and commercials are better than anybody’s - that’s why you’re where you are and your competitor(s) just made a public offering. Kind of like Joe Hooker saying he’ll show Bobby Lee how much better his troops can fight. And you know who won that argument (then again, maybe you don’t). I could also tell you that ol’ “Fightin’ Joe” lent his last name to something else - today they’re called “ad agencies”.

No, the key to good advertising is r-e-a-l simple: come up with an ad that make people, the people that you want to reach - read (or see/listen to) it.



Mass media (radio, TV, and, to a lesser extent, newspapers) require a more subtle and universal approach to be effective. These media are intrusive, costly and require either a lot of money or a lot of thought to be anywhere near effective. Bad ads mean you have to spend a lot to get anything back, good ads mean you spend can less, but you better be right in what you say and who you say it to (we'll cover broadcast creative tips next time).

Print advertising is becoming a lost art because most people do not read newspapers or magazines to the extent that they used to, therefore, less emphasis is given to doing good creative. Far too many advertisers attempt to do much in an ad and, in the process, fail to accomplish their objective:

- Grab the readers attention
- Get the reader to notice what the ad is about and who the advertiser is
- Catch the point the advertiser is trying to get across
- Remember the ad
- Act on the ad

Research has shown that most people look at an ad in a “Z” scan; left-to-right across the top, diagonally from upper right to bottom left, then across the bottom from left-to-right. That why most ads have a headline at the top, usually over a visual, subheads scattered through the body copy (to keep the reader interested), and place the company's name, address and logo in the bottom right corner. Notice too, most ads that follow this pattern are not overburdened with copy. The idea is that you don't have to tell the reader everything, only enough to have them want to act on the information you have provided.

Well, the bugle sounds and we're off on another ride around “Little Mac”.
