CREATIVE EXECUTION AND USER EXPERIENCE

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What makes a good creative for consumers?

1.   Shoot for the Brain - or the proverbial Heart, which requires a Brain

Helping to fund quality journalism, advertising enables consumers to have the right to information and free choice in modern economies, as it feeds most of our free and democratic access to news, knowledge and information. This value exchange should not be abused and instead, is treasured by the majority of brands who want to build meaningful relationships with their target audiences. Consumers should therefore not be subjected to shoddy or inappropriate advertisements. Advertising should not be manipulated, advertising should not be easy puns, advertising should never be blatant hard selling, advertising should not be a collection of 'lifestyle', 'aspirational' imagery/sounds cobbled together in the hope that the so-called *stupid masses* follow your brand, your service or your product.

As David Ogilvy so aptly put it, back in the 1960's, "The consumer is not a moron, she's your wife". Read your partner, your father, your best friend. It still holds true and, hopefully, it will always hold true, lest we become a society of blind followers of the latest social media trend - or *trender*, or pseudo-political figure, for that matter.

So speak to your audience's brain (and/or a proverbial heart, which requires a brain). Is it harder? Yes, but it pays in the end, for a lot longer. Once the ones with a brain (and/or a proverbial heart, which requires a brain) opt for your brand or message, they will know why, they will stick to their decision, they will follow their emotions and they will go through the trouble of spreading your good word.

2. Inform, Amaze or Move - but always Tell a Story

This really is so simple that it becomes amazing itself why it is not followed consistently. For countless millennia, humankind has gathered around 'the campfire' - in whatever form, shape or electronic channel it took along the years - to listen to stories. Does anybody really believe we, as a species, have changed over the tiny blink of the last one hundred years? Really?

Your story may be **informative** - telling people what they didn't know - as long as it is true, never, ever, forget that, or you'll be met with the unpleasant surprise of finding out that the fastest way to kill a bad product or service is to give it a grand advertising campaign.

Your story may be **amazing** - telling people something they did not know in such a way that their jaws drop to the floor. Again, truth and honesty should be a golden rule. If your service/product is *not* amazing, maybe the people using it are, or maybe *the way* they use it is, or maybe even *the story of the brand* is. Do you know why jeans are called 'jeans'? Look it up, it has to do with Italian sailors. Do you know where the term 'Denim' comes from? Again, search it - it is related to a French port of sailing. Orr Young, founder of Young & Rubicam, wrote almost 100 years ago that "there are no boring products, only boring copywriters". If you're in doubt about what he was talking about, find the one-page print ad he wrote about a steel nail, and I rest my case.

Your story may simply be **funny** (but really, it has to be really funny, no easy puns) or it may simply be **moving**. Eat, Pray, (Laugh), Love. When you consider that the human species is the only one on the planet that will go out of its way to eat expertly cut raw fish - something any respectable bear would simply gobble up with no further ado - these four activities are so inherently human that we should often employ them in communicating with said species.

In digital video advertising, is it really hard to tell a story in the 5 seconds it takes to "Skip ads"? Yes, it is - it's nearly impossible to tell a story in 5". But if you have a good story and manage to *tease-it-in* properly in those 5 seconds people tend to skip the skip. Unfortunately, it often happens that digital video ads are mere adaptations of TV executions, so the storyline was just not devised thinking of the first 5 seconds, but rather of the last 5. Good digital video advertising simply needs to address this.

So even if the human being is by nature homo sapiens so tempted to save his energy, digital ads should not be a copy of traditional TV ads.

In summary, if your creative piece is able to draw a few drops of instant saliva, a fervent bead of adoring sweat, a couple of tears from a hearty laugh or two degrees of unexpected warming in the pectoral region of your target group, you have done your job well.

3. If you don't love Advertising, quit your job. Now.

Good creativity is incompatible with ignorance and laziness. It takes a lot of research and work to mine the *interesting*, the *unknown*, the *amazing*, the *moving* or the *funny* nuggets you can use from the often garbled sludge that most of today's briefing docs (if there even is one) seem to produce. But it is always worth the trouble. People view it or read it. People share it. People often shed a tear, or share a laugh, or re-post it or even (outlandishly) buy what you   are   trying   to   sell!

4. Great creative executions are useless if you can't deliver them properly

Think about something you ordered from Amazon - or any other ecommerce platform or outlet, for that matter. You wanted it, you chose it, you paid for it and, admit it, you're secretly yearning for the sound of that doorbell on the expected date. And then the bell doesn't ring, on that date or any other. Instead, you get an email saying that "a delivery attempt was made", and you have to trek or drive down to the nearest collection point - right across town, through maddening traffic - to get your package. Sound familiar? Does it not ruin at least half of the experience?

Now imagine that you didn't want it, you most often have not chosen it, you paid for it with your precious time, and it is inconveniencing you by delaying what you'd really like right now. That's digital advertising, when it's poorly delivered.

You may have the greatest advertising campaign on earth; if it is not delivered properly to the media outlet your consumer is using, it will most probably backfire. User experience is now the motherlode of any successful campaign. The Coalition for Better Ads is a worldwide initiative that directly addresses this issue.

User Experience

Many campaigns have outstanding creative ideas and amazing content, yet they fail. Assuming they were well targeted, this is usually because they were not delivered properly to the consumer. It's not the content, it's the shape and form - the body as the delivery mechanism. And this conundrum is at the very roots of the Coalition for Better Ads.

Advertising helps support valuable free content, robust journalism and social connections across the internet. Consumers, however, are increasingly frustrated with ads that disrupt their experience, interrupt content and slow browsing.

Leading international trade associations and companies involved in online media formed the Coalition for Better Ads to improve consumers' experience with online advertising. The Coalition for Better Ads has leveraged consumer insights and cross-industry expertise to develop and implement new global standards, the Better Ad Standards, for online advertising that address consumer expectations.

Establishing Global Standards for Digital Advertising was always the ultimate goal of the Coalition. In order to achieve this, massive and groundbreaking research was conducted using Consumer-centric methodologies. The research goal was to measure consumers' preferences about the types of ads they least prefer, in order to help the global marketplace take steps to deliver a better ad experience.

In the first phase of the Coalition's research, more than 25,000 Internet users in North America and Europe were surveyed about their preferences for different types of online ads. The research included desktop web (55 ad experiences) and mobile web (49 ad experiences). The results of the Coalition's consumer-focused research defined Better Ads Standards that identify the ad experiences that fall beneath a threshold of consumer acceptability. Better Ads Standards revealed the least preferred, most annoying ad experiences that are also most likely to cause consumers to adopt ad blockers.

The research methodology was then used to measure consumers' preferences in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. The research found strong alignment of consumer preferences across countries and regions for the most- and least-preferred online ad experiences, supporting the adoption of the same Better Ads Standards for desktop and mobile web globally. To date, more than 66,000 consumers in countries representing 70% of global online advertising spending have participated in the Coalition's research for desktop and mobile web. The research process itself is worth looking into here.

The Coalition plans to continue its research and test other digital advertising environments beyond desktop. mobile web, and short-form video. The Better Ads Standards as they stand should be a clear and present source of verification for both creative and production teams as they shape creative executions.

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