**Chapter 9**

**The Creative Side**

◆***CHAPTER CONTENT***

**Key OBJECTIVES**

1. Describe the role of creativity in integrated marketing communication.
2. Explain creative thinking and you get the Big Idea.
3. Identify key message strategy approaches.
4. Define issues affecting the management of creative strategy and its implementation.

**Chapter Overview**

Effective marketing communication is successful because the right media deliver the right message to the right target audience at the right time. Like two hands clapping, media and message must work together to create effective communication. This chapter concentrates on how the message is created. It opens with a discussion of the role of creativity in IMC, explaining how the art and science of marketing communication come together to develop a creative strategy. Focus is placed on the importance of Big Ideas and ROI. Suggestions are given for increasing creative potential on both the individual and group level. Next the creative brief, message objectives, and message strategies are explored. The chapter closes by providing an overview of management issues impacting creative strategy and its implementation.

**Chapter outline**

**WHAT IS THE ROLE OF CREATIVITY IN IMC?**

* Creativity can be defined as the generation of fresh ideas and solutions to current problems or challenges. This definition sounds simple but creativity is complex and multifaceted, especially in the digital age. Creativity is all around us. You don’t have to be an artist to be creative. The ability to think like a problem solver and the courage to take risks and try something new are requisite skills for creativity.
* ***Principle****: Creative strategy solves problems and problem solving demands creative thinking. Both Big Ideas and Big Plans call for creative thinking.*
* “Creative work must communicate a truth about the brand that moves the organization toward a key goal,’ according to Meg Lauerman. We often talk about ‘creatives’ as the people who design ads. All agencies have copywriters and art directors who are responsible for developing the creative concept and crafting the execution of the idea. They often work in teams, are sometimes hired as teams, and may work together for years.
* The **creative director** manages the creative process, plays an important role in focusing the strategy of ads, and makes sure the creative concept is strategically on target. The role of the creative director is evolving rapidly as these team leaders need to be familiar with **user experience design (UX)**, which involves the interactive conversation about the brand.
* Anyone in the IMC process can generate fresh ideas and solutions. Those designing multiplatform campaigns also demonstrate creative ways to connect content with audiences. In the world of interactive media, the consumer is also often invited to participate in the creative activity. The ability to generate fresh ideas and solutions sometimes results in the creation of a new business, as well as new products, as demonstrated in the *Inside Story* featured in this chapter about Urban Decay Cosmetics.

### The Art and Science of IMC

* The art and science of marketing communication come together in the phrase *creative strategy.* A winning marketing communication idea must be both *creative* and *strategic*. The message plan is a rational analysis of a problem and what is needed to solve that problem. This logic is built on fresh insight that comes from research.
* Professor Mark Stuhfaut identified significant elements of creativity in advertising, which begin with novelty but include appropriateness as well as authenticity and relevance. Creative strategy goes beyond coming up with a novel idea; rather, it is about generating an idea that solves a communication problem in an original way.
* The twenty-first century has created a huge challenge for brand communication creatives who have to develop breakthrough messages that will not get lost in today’s media explosion. As explained in the *Matter of Practice* feature, we’re in a second creative revolution that challenges creative thinkers to reimagine the way they work.

**CREATIVE THINKING: HOW DO YOU DO IT?**

* All aspects of IMC are creative idea businesses. An **idea** is a thought or a concept in the mind. It’s formed by mentally combining pieces and fragments of thoughts into something that contains a nugget of meaning. Advertising creatives sometimes use the term **concepting** to refer to the process of coming up with a new idea. Big Ideas are also called **creative concepts**.
* ***Principle:*** *When advertising gives consumers permission to believe in a product, it establishes the platform for conviction.*
* To understand what creativity is, it may be helpful to understand what it is not. What’s the opposite of creative? What’s the opposite of creative? In advertising, **clichés** are the most obvious examples of generic, non-original, non-novel ideas. To help you understand how creative people think about strategy and advertising ideas, consider the twelve tips offered by Professor Tom Groth in the *Practical Tips* box featured in this chapter.

**What’s the Big Idea?**

* What we call a **Big Idea** or **creative concept** becomes a point of focus for communicating the message strategy. Big Ideas can be risky because they are different and, by definition, untested. So risky is good for edgy Big Ideas, but how far on the edge is a difficult question. Testing ideas is a good idea to reduce the chances of taking unnecessary risks.
* Where do Big Ideas come from? James Webb Young, a founder of the Young & Rubicam agency, explained in his classic book that an idea is a new or unexpected combination of thoughts. He claims that “the ability to make new combinations is heightened by an ability to see relationships.” An idea, then, *is a thought that comes from placing two previously unrelated concepts together*.

**The ROI of Creativity**

* A Big Idea is more than just a new thought because in advertising it also has to accomplish something—it has a functional dimension. According to the DDB agency, an effective ad is *relevant*, *original*, and has *impact*—which is referred to as *ROI of creativity*. According to DDB’s philosophy, ideas have to be **relevant** and mean something to the target audience. **Original** means one of a kind – an advertising idea is creative when it is novel, fresh, unexpected and unusual. To be effective, the idea must also have **impact**, which means it makes an impression on the audience.
* The essence of a creative idea is that *no one else has thought of it*. Thus, the first rule is to avoid doing what everyone else is doing. In an industry that prides itself on creativity, **copycat advertising**—that is, using an idea that someone else has originated—is a concern.
* ***Principle****: An idea can be creative for you if you have not thought of it before, but to be truly creative, it has to be one that no one else has thought of before.*
* We know that many ads just wash over the audience. An idea with impact, however, breaks through the clutter, gets attention, and sticks in memory. A *breakthrough ad* has stopping power and that comes from an intriguing idea—a Big Idea that is important and relevant to consumers.

**The Creative Leap**

* **Divergent thinking** is used to describe a style of thinking that jumps around exploring multiple possibilities rather than using rational thinking to arrive at the “right” or logical conclusion. The heart of creative thinking, divergent thinking, uses exploration (playfulness) to search for alternatives. Another term for divergent thinking is **right-brain thinking**, which is intuitive, holistic, artistic, and emotionally expressive thinking in contrast to **left-brain thinking**, which is logical, linear (inductive or deductive), and orderly.
* How can you become a more creative thinker? First, think about the problem as something that involves a mind-shift. Instead of seeing the obvious, a creative idea looks at a problem in a different way, from a different angle. That’s called *thinking outside the box*. Second, put the strategy language behind you. Finding the brilliant creative concept entails what advertising giant Otto Kleppner called *the creative leap*—a process of jumping from boring business language in a strategy statement to an original idea. This Big Idea transforms the strategy into something unexpected, original, and interesting.
* Since the creative leap means moving away from the safety of a predictable strategy statement to an unusual idea that has not been tried before, this leap is a *creative risk*.

**Dialing up Your Creativity**

* Creative advertising people may be weird and unconventional, but they can’t be totally eccentric. They still must be purpose driven, meaning they are focused on creating effective advertising that’s on strategy. Figure 9.1 contains a mini-test to evaluate your own creative potential.
* Coming up with a great idea that is also on strategy is an emotional high. Advertising creatives describe it as “one of the biggest emotional roller coasters in the business world.” According to Ingvi Logason, owner of an award-winning agency in Iceland, “Inspiration for my ideas can almost always be traced to things I have done, experienced, seen, heard, or read. In a creative world it is important to try new things and live life like a discoverer.’’
* Logason’s discoverer is why we say that curiosity is the most important characteristic of creativity. Research has found that most people can sharpen their skills and develop their creative potential by understanding and strengthening certain personal characteristics. Research also indicates that creative people tend to be independent, assertive, self-sufficient, persistent, self-disciplined, curious, and possess a high tolerance for ambiguity. They are also risk takers with powerful egos that are internally driven. Here are a few of the key characteristics of creative people who do well in advertising:
* ***Problem solving.*** Creative problem solvers are alert, watchful, and observant, and reach conclusions through intuition rather than through logic.
* ***Playful.*** Creative people have fun with ideas; they have a mental playfulness that allows them to make novel associations.
* ***The ability to visualize.*** Most of the information we accumulate comes through sight, so the ability to manipulate visual images is crucial for good copywriters, as well as designers.
* ***Open to new experiences.*** Over the course of a lifetime, openness to experience may give you many more adventures from which to draw. Those experiences would, in turn, give a novelist more characters to write about, a painter more scenes to paint, and the creative team more angles from which to tackle an advertising problem.
* ***Conceptual thinking.*** It’s easy to see how people who are open to experience might develop innovative advertisements and commercials because they are more imaginative.

**The Creative Process: How to Get an Idea**

* Only in cartoons do light bulbs appear above our heads from out of nowhere when a good idea strikes. In reality, most people who are good at thinking up new ideas will tell you that it is hard work. The unusual, unexpected, novel idea rarely comes easily—and that’s as true in science and medicine as it is in advertising.
* The classic approach to the creative process is portrayed by the following series of steps:
* ***Step 1: Immersion.*** Read, research, and learn everything you can about the problem.
* ***Step 2: Ideation.*** Look at the problem from every angle; develop ideas; generate as many alternatives as possible.
* ***Step 3: Brainfag.*** Don’t give up if, and when you hit a blank wall.
* ***Step 4: Incubation.*** Try to put your conscious mind to rest to let your subconscious take over.
* ***Step 5: Illumination.*** Embrace the unexpected moment when the idea comes, often when your mind is relaxed and you’re doing something else.
* ***Step 6***: ***Evaluation.*** Does it work? Is it on strategy?
* A structured creative exercise from Professor Linda Correll, who developed *Creative Aerobics*, offers a method to help unleash your creative potential. This four-step idea-generating process opens new doors and windows for ideas to enter your mind. The four steps are:
* *Coming up with facts about your product,*
* *Creating new names for your product,*
* *Finding similarities among dissimilar objects, and*
* *Creating new definitions for product-related nouns.*
* Another specialized approach to creative problem solving involves **design thinking**, which stimulates innovation and solves complex problems through collaboration.

**Brainstorming**

* As part of the creative process, some agencies use a thinking technique known as **brainstorming** in which a group of 6 to 10 people work together to come up with ideas. One person’s idea stimulates someone else’s, and the combined power of the group associations stimulates far more ideas than any one person could think of alone. The group becomes an idea factory.
* The secret to brainstorming is to remain positive and defer judgment. Negative thinking during a brainstorming session can destroy the informal atmosphere necessary to achieve a novel idea. To stimulate group creativity against a deadline, some agencies have special processes or locations for brainstorming sessions with no distractions or disruptions.
* The following list builds on our previous discussion of creative thinking. It can also be used as an outline for a brainstorming session. **To create an original and unexpected idea, use the following techniques:**
* ***What if?*** To twist the commonplace, ask a crazy *“what if”* question— for example, what if wild animals could talk?
* ***An unexpected association.*** In **free association** you think of a word and then describe everything that comes into your mind when you imagine that word.
* ***Dramatize******the obvious.*** Sometimes the most creative idea is also the most obvious.
* ***Catchy phrasing.*** Isuzu used “The 205-Horsepower Primal Scream” for its Rodeo headline.
* ***An unexpected twist.*** A road crew usually refers to people who work on a road project, but for the Road Crew campaign, the phrase was twisted to refer to limo drivers who give rides to people who have had too much to drink.
* ***Play on words.*** For example, under the headline “Happy Camper,” an ad for cheese showed a picture of a packed sports utility vehicle with a huge wedge of cheese lashed to the rooftop.
* ***Analogy and metaphor.*** Used to see new patterns or relationships, **metaphors** and **analogies** by definition set up juxtapositions. Harley-Davidson compared the legendary sound of its motorcycles to the taste of a thick, juicy steak.
* ***Familiar and strange.*** Put the familiar in an unexpected situation: UPS showed a tiny model of its familiar brown truck moving through a computer cord.
* ***A twisted cliché.*** They may have been great ideas the first time they were used, but phrases such as “the road to success” become trite when overused. But they can regain their power if twisted into a new context. The “Happy Camper” line was twisted by relating it to an SUV.
* ***Twist the obvious.*** Avoid the predictable, such as a picture of a Cadillac on Wall Street or in front of a mansion. Instead, use an SUV on Wall Street (“fast tracker”) or a basketball hoop in front of a mansion (“slam dunk”).
* ***Exaggeration*.** Take a common situation and exaggerate it until it becomes funny.
* To prevent unoriginal ideas, avoid or work around the following:
* ***The look-alike.*** Avoid copycat advertising that uses somebody else’s great idea. Hundreds of ads for escape products (resorts, travel, liquor, foods) have used the headline “Paradise Found.” It’s a play on “Paradise Lost” but still overused.
* ***The tasteless.*** In an attempt to be cute, a Subaru ad used the headline, “Put it where the sun don’t shine.” An attempted twist on a cliché, but it doesn’t work.

**WHAT ARE SOME KEY MESSAGE STRATEGY APPROACHES?**

* This section helps transform creative thinking into action. It starts with a creative brief that identifies the most appropriate strategy to accomplish the goals of the organization, product, or idea.

**The Creative Brief**

* The **creative brief** (or *creative platform*, *worksheet*, or *blueprint)* is the document prepared by the account planner to summarize the basic marketing and advertising strategy described in chapter 8. It gives direction to creative team members as they search for a creative concept or Big Idea. We make a distinction between creative strategy and creative execution.
* **Creative strategy**, or **message strategy**, is *what* the advertisement says. **Execution** is *how* it is said. The following outline summarizes the key points in a typical brief:
* A***problem*** that can be solved by communication.
* The***target audience*** and key ***insights*** into their attitudes and behavior.
* The ***brand position*** and other branding decisions, such as *personality* and *image*.
* ***Communication objectives*** which specify the desired response to the message by the target audience.
* A ***proposition*** or ***selling idea*** that will motivate the target to respond.
* ***Media considerations*** about where and when the message should be delivered.
* ***Creative direction*** that provides suggestions on how to stimulate the desired consumer response.
* Although a creative brief is terminology generally associated with advertising, public relations has a counterpart called a **Public Relations Plan.** A Public Relations Plan is similar to the creative brief.
* The creative brief and public relations plan explain the thinking behind the creative ideas that emerge from the analysis of these elements. They may also touch on such execution or stylistic direction as the ad’s **tone of voice**.
* Different agencies use different formats, but most combine these basic advertising strategy decisions. The point is that advertising planning—even planning for the creative side—involves a structured, logical approach to analysis. Some agencies, however, may focus on more intuitive, emotional message effects.

Message Objectives

* What do you want the message to accomplish? What message objectives would you specify? Below is a review of some of common advertising objectives that relate to the Facets Model of Effects.
* *See/hear -* create attention, awareness, interest, recognition
* *Feel* - touch emotions and create feelings
* *Think/learn/understand* - deliver information, aid understanding, and create recall
* *Connect* - establish brand identity and associations, transform a product into a brand with distinctive personality and image
* *Believe -* change attitudes, create conviction and preference, stimulate trust
* *Act -* stimulate trial, purchase, repurchase or some other form of action, such as visiting a store or website

Targeting

* The target decision is particularly important in planning a message strategy. It is essential to understand what moves this group.

Branding and Positioning

* The demands of the brand are also important considerations. Brand positions and brand images are created through message strategies and brought to life through advertising executions. Finding the right position is difficult enough, but figuring out how to communicate that position in an attention-getting message that is consistent across multiple executions and various media further heightens the challenge.
* Brand communication creates symbols and cues that make brands distinctive, such as characters, colors, slogans, and taglines, as well as brand personality cues. Today’s new-age characters are ironic and even a little self-deprecating and they speak to the ad resistance of today’s consumers with irony and inner conflict.
* Advertising and other forms of marketing communication are critical to creating what brand guru Kevin Keller calls *brand salience*, that is, the brand is visible and has a presence in the marketplace, consumers are aware of it, and the brand is important to its target market.
* In addition to brand salience – measured *by top-of-mind awareness* – another objective for branding and positioning campaigns is to create trust. We buy familiar brands because we’ve used them before and we trust them to deliver on their promises.

**Translating Communication Objectives into Message Strategies**

* Once you have identified communication objectives, how do you translate them into strategies? Remember, there is no one right way to do brand communication. In most cases there are a number of ways to achieve a communication objective. Planners search for the best message design – the approach that makes the most sense given the brand’s marketing situation and the target audience’s needs and interests.

**Choosing the Strategic Approach That Fits**

What you want to say forms the foundation for the message design. How you say it is the strategic part. First, let’s review some simple ways to express a strategic approach—head or heart and hard or soft sell. Then we’ll look at some more complex models that get a little deeper into the complexities of message strategy.

Head and Heart

* In the Facets Model of Effects, the cognitive objectives generally speak to the head and the affective objectives are more likely to speak to the heart. However, sometimes a strategy is designed to inform the mind as it touches the emotions.
* Another way to refer to head and heart strategies are hard- and soft-sell approaches.   
  A **hard sell** is an informational message that is designed to touch the mind and create a response based on logic. The assumption is that the target audience wants information and will make a rational product decision.
* A **soft sell** uses emotional appeals or images to create a response based on attitudes, moods, and feelings. The assumption with soft-sell strategies is that the target audience has little interest in an information search and will respond more favorably to a message that touches their emotions or presents an attractive brand image. A soft-sell strategy can be used for hard products.
* However, there are examples of ads designed to stir emotions that did not work because they were too manipulative or raised inappropriate emotions. It is possible to manipulate emotions in a way that viewers and listeners resent. But sometimes high emotion works.

Systems of Strategies

* Head or heart, hard sell or soft sell—these terms all refer to some basic, simple ideas about message strategy. Creative strategy, however, is often more complex. Frazer’s Six Creative Strategies and Taylor’s Strategy Wheel offer more complex approaches.
* Professor Charles Frazer proposed a set of six creative strategies that address various types of message situations. Although not comprehensive, these terms are useful to identify some common approaches to strategy. They are *preemptive, unique selling proposition, brand image, positioning, resonance, and affective/anomalous*.
* A description of each strategy and its uses is detailed in a table in the textbook. The preemptive strategy shows up in competitive advertising where one competitor tries to build a position or lay a claim before others enter the market. We saw an example of this when the coffee wars between Starbucks and McDonald’s erupted after McDonald’s introduced its McCafé line of fancy coffees at lower prices.
* Professor Ron Taylor developed a model that divides strategies into the *transmission view*, which is similar to the more rational “head” strategies, and the *ritual view*, which is similar to the more feeling-based “heart” strategies. He then divides each into three segments: rational, acute need, and routine on the transmission side and ego, social, and sensory on the ritual side. In the *A Matter of Principle* feature in this chapter, Professor Taylor explains his model in detail.

**Strategic Formats**

Even though advertising is a search for a new and novel way to express some basic truth, there are also some tried and true approaches that have worked over the years. These tried and true approaches are outlined below.

Lectures and Dramas

* Most advertising messages use a combination of lecture and drama to reach the head or the heart of the consumer. A lecture is a serious instruction given verbally. The speaker presents evidence and uses a technique such as an argument to persuade the audience. Lectures are relatively inexpensive to produce, and are compact and efficient. The phrase *talking head* is used to refer to an announcer who delivers a lecture about a product.
* Drama relies on the viewer to make inferences about the brand. Usually the drama is in the story that the reader has to construct around the cues in the ad. Through dramas, advertisers tell stories about their products; the characters speak to each other, not to the audience.
* Political advertising is a challenge, in terms of how much information versus how much drama is appropriate. In particular the issue of negative advertising, which arouses emotions as well as counterarguments, is a topic of research, debate, and criticism. Although the impact of negative political advertising remains debatable,   
  in the context of the plethora of news outlets, talk show pundits, candidate surrogates, and so forth, it sometimes seems as if the whole media environment, not just political advertising, is filled with untruths and negativity. It is worth wondering what effect this negativity has on our society and our responsibility as communicators.

Psychological Appeals

* The psychological appeal of the product to the consumer is also used to describe a message that primarily appeals to the heart. An **appeal** connects with some emotion that makes the product particularly attractive or interesting, such as security, esteem, sex, and sensory pleasure. Although emotion is at the base of most appeals, in some situations, appeals can also have a logical dimension. Appeals generally pinpoint the anticipated response of the audience to the product and the message.

Selling Premises

* A **selling premise** states the logic behind the sales offer. A premise is a proposition on which an argument is based or a conclusion is drawn. To have a practical effect on customers, managers must identify the product’s **features or attributes** in terms of those that are most important to the target audience. A **claim** is a product-focused strategy that is based on a prediction about how the product will perform.
* Here is a summary of rational customer-focused selling premises:
* ***Benefit***. The **benefit** emphasizes what the product can do for the user by translating the product feature or attribute into something that benefits the consumer.
* ***Promise***. A **promise** is a benefit statement that looks to the future and predicts that something good will happen if you use the product.
* ***Reason why***. A type of benefit statement that gives you the **reason why** you should buy something, although the reason sometimes is implied or assumed.
* ***Unique selling proposition (USP)****.* A **USP** is a benefit statement that is both unique to the product and important to the user. The USP is a promise that consumers will get this unique benefit by using this product only.
* Most selling premises demand facts, proof, or explanations to support the sales message. The proof, or **substantiation**, needed to make a claim believable, is called **support**. In many cases, this calls for research findings. With claims, and particularly with comparisons, the proof is subject to challenge by a competitor as well as industry review boards.

Other Message Approaches

* In addition to the basic categories of selling premises, some common message formulas emphasize different types of effects. The planner uses these terms as a way to give direction to the creative team and to shape the executions. Here are some of them:
* A ***straightforward*** factual or informational message conveys information without any gimmicks, emotions, or special effects.
* A ***demonstration*** focuses on how to use the product or what it can do for you.
* A ***comparison*** is a contrast of two or more products to show the advertiser’s brand superiority. The comparison can be either direct or indirect.
* In **a *problem solution*** format, also known as ***product-as-hero***, the message begins with a problem and the product is the solution. A variation is the ***problem avoidance***message format, in which the product helps avoid a problem.
* Advertisers use ***humor***as a creative strategy because it is attention-getting and they hope that people will transfer the warm feelings they have as they are being entertained to the product.
* The ***slice-of-life*** format is an elaborate version of a problem solution staged in the form of a drama in which “typical people” talk about a common problem and resolve it.
* In the s***pokesperson*** or ***endorser*** format, the ad features celebrities, created characters, experts we respect, or someone “just like us” whose advice we might seek out to speak on behalf of the product to build credibility. A recent FTC rule makes endorsers as well as advertisers liable for false or unsubstantiated claims, so spokespersons have to be very careful about what they say about products they advertise.
* ***Teasers*** are mystery ads that don’t identify the product or don’t deliver enough information to make sense, but they are designed to arouse curiosity. These are often used to launch a new product.
* The use of celebrities as spokespersons, endorsers, or brand symbols is an important strategy because it associates the brand positively – or negatively – with a famous person and qualities that make that person a celebrity. Prior to Michael Jackson’s $5 million contract with Pepsi in 1984, celebrities were often reluctant to appear for a brand because they feared it might tarnish their image. More recently, advertisers have worried about celebrities they have signed who tarnish the brand’s image.
* Another aspect of celebrity effectiveness is their appeal or influence. There are a number of ways to measure a celebrity’s appeal or influence, such as the E score, the Q score, and the Davie Brown Index. These scores are not just related to conventional celebrities. In social media, anyone who attracts a lot of followers can be identified as an ‘influencer.’ Klout and PeerIndex are rating services for social media.

**Matching Messages to Objectives**

What types of messages deliver which objectives? The Facets Model can be helpful in thinking through objectives and their related strategies.

* ***Messages that get attention.*** To be effective, an advertisement needs to get exposure through the media buy and get attention through the message. Getting consumers’ attention requires stopping power. Creative advertising breaks through the old patterns of seeing and saying things—the unexpectedness of the new idea creates stopping power. Intrusiveness is particularly important in cluttered markets, and curiosity is particularly important for teaser strategies.
* ***Messages that create interest.*** Keeping attention reflects the ad’s pulling power.An interesting thought keeps reader or viewer attention and pulls them through to the end of the message. Ads that open with questions or dubious statements are designed to create curiosity.
* ***Messages that resonate.*** Ads that amplify the emotional impact of a message by engaging a consumer in a personal connection with a brand are said to resonate with the target audience.
* ***Messages that create believability.*** Advertising sometimes uses a credibility strategy to intensify the believability of a message. Using data to support or prove a claim is critical.
* ***Messages that are remembered.*** Not only do messages have to *stop* (get attention) and *pull* (create interest); they also have to *stick* (in memory), which is another important part of the perceptual process. Most advertisements are carefully designed to ensure that these memory traces are easy to recall.
* Repetition is used in both media and message strategy to ensure memorability. Jingles are valuable memorability devices because the music allows the advertiser to repeat a phrase or product name without boring the audience. Clever phrases are useful not only because they grab attention, but also because they can be repeated to intensify memorability.
* Brand communication uses **slogans** for brands and campaigns, such as “Get Met. It Pays” (MetLife) or Nike’s slogan “Just Do It.” **Taglines** are used at the end of an ad to summarize the point of the ad’s message in a highly memorable way. Many print and interactive ads and most television commercials feature a *key visual*,a vivid image that the advertiser hopes will linger in the viewer’s mind. Color may be a memory cue, as with Wrigley’s Doublemint Gum.
* ***Messages that touch emotions.*** Emotional appeals create feeling-based responses such as love, fear, anxiety, envy, sexual attraction, happiness and joy, sorrow, safety and security, pride, pleasure, embarrassment, and nostalgia. *Appetite appeal* uses mouth-watering food shots to elicit feelings of hunger and craving, like the photo in the Quaker Trail Mix Bar print ad. A more general emotional goal is to deliver a message that people like in order to create liking for the brand.
* ***Messages that inform.*** Companies often use news announcements to provide information about new products, to tout reformulated products, or even let consumers know about new uses for old products. The news angle, which is often delivered by publicity stories, is information focused. Comparison ads are often heavy on information and used to explain a product’s point of difference and competitive advantage.
* ***Messages that teach.*** People learn through instruction so some advertisements are designed to teach, such as demonstrations that show how something works or how to solve a problem. Educational messages are sometimes designed to explain something. Learning is also strengthened through repetition, which is why repetition is such an important media objective.
* ***Messages that persuade.*** Persuasive messages are designed to affect attitudes and create belief. Endorsements by celebrities or experts are used to intensify conviction. Conviction is often built on strong, rational arguments that use such techniques as test results, before-and-after visuals, testimonials by users and experts, and demonstrations to prove something. Celebrities, product placements, and other credibility techniques are used to give the consumer **permission to believe** a claim or selling premise.
* ***Messages that create brand associations.*** The transformative power of branding, where the brand takes on a distinctive character and meaning, is one of marketing communication’s most important functions.**Image advertising** is used to create a representation of a brand, an image in a consumer’s mind through symbolism. Advertising’s role is to provide the cues that make these meanings and experiences come together in a coherent brand image.
* ***Messages that drive action.*** Even harder to accomplish than conviction is a change in behavior. It often happens that people believe one thing and do another. Sales promotion, for example, works in tandem with advertising to stimulate immediate action using sampling, coupons, and free gifts as incentives for action.
* Most ads end with a signature of some kind that serves to identify the company or brand, but it also serves as a **call to action** and gives direction to the consumer about how to respond, such as a toll-free number, a website URL, or an email address.
* Ultimately, advertisers want loyal customers who purchase and repurchase the product as a matter of habit or preference. **Reminder** advertising, as well as distributing coupons or introducing a continuity program, is designed to keep the brand name in front of customers to encourage their repeat business.

### WHAT ISSUES AFFECT THE ManagEMENT OF Creative Strategy AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION?

Next, let’s look at three management issues that affect the formulation of creative strategies: extension, adaptation, and evaluation.

**Extension: An Idea with Legs**

* One characteristic of a Big Idea is that it gives *legs* to a campaign. By that we mean that the idea is strong enough to serve as an umbrella concept for a variety of executions in different media talking to different audiences. It can be endlessly extended. Extendibility is a strength of the Chick-fil-A, Geico, and Frontier Airlines’ talking-animal campaigns.

**Adaptation: Taking an Idea Global**

* The opportunity for standardizing the campaign across multiple markets exists only if the objectives and strategic position are essentially the same. Otherwise a creative strategy may call for a little tweaking of the message for a local market or even major revision if there is a great deal of cultural and market difference.
* In a case in which core targeting and positioning strategies remain the same in different markets, it might be possible for the central creative idea to be universal across markets. Although the implementation of this idea may vary from market to market, the creative concept is sound across all types of consumers. Even if the campaign theme, slogan, or visual elements are the same across markets, it is usually desirable to adapt the creative execution to the local market.

**Evaluation: The Go/No-Go Decision**

* How do you decide if the creative idea is strong enough to justify the expense of creating a campaign based on it? Whether local or global, an important part of managing creative work is evaluation, which happens at several stages in the creative process. Everyone can learn to be more critical about the brand messages that they see. The first question to ask is, Is it on strategy?

Structural Analysis

* The Leo Burnett agency utilizes a three-step approach for analyzing the logic of the creative strategy that goes beyond just evaluating strategy. It is used to keep the message strategy and creative concept working together, along with the head and the heart appeals. This method, called **structural analysis**, relies upon three steps:

1. Evaluate the ***power of the narrative*** or story line (heart).
2. Evaluate the ***strength of the product claim*** (head).
3. Consider ***how well the two are integrated***—that is, how the story line brings the claim to life.

**END-OF-CHAPTER SUPPORT**

**Review Questions**

**9-3. What is a creative brief, and who is responsible for its development?**

A creative brief is a document that an account planner prepares to summarize an organization’s basic marketing and advertising strategy. It gives direction to the creative team as they search for a concept or Big Idea.

Copywriters and art directors are responsible for developing the creative concept and planning its execution. They work together to generate ideas for the concept and the associated text and images. Their writing and design skills come into play during execution.

The creative director manages the ad creation process and ensures that the ad concept remains strategically on target. Since the account planner is responsible for putting together the strategy in the form of a creative brief, she may also be involved in providing context and direction to the creative team.

**9-4. How do various strategic approaches deliver on the objectives identified in the Facets Model of Effects?**

Common message objectives that relate to the Facet Model of Effects are listed below:

* See/hear—create attention, awareness, interest, recognition
* Feel—touch emotions and create feelings
* Think/learn/understand—deliver information, aid understanding, and create recall
* Connect—establish brand identity and associations, transform a product into a
* brand with distinctive personality and image
* Believe—change attitudes, create conviction and preference, and stimulate trust
* Act—stimulate trial, purchase, repurchase, or some other form of action, such as visiting a store or website

**9-5. Define hard sell and soft sell, and explain how they differ.**

Hard sell is an informational message designed to make a rational appeal and evoke a response based on logic. In such situations, the target audience seeks information on a product and will make a rational decision regarding purchase.

Soft sell strategies use emotional appeals or images to create a response based on attitudes, moods, and feelings. In these campaigns, the target audience has little interest in factual information and will respond more favorably to a message that appeals to their emotions or presents an attractive brand image.

**9-6. Explain the importance of originality in preparing creative ideas.**

“Original” implies something that is one of a kind; an advertising idea is considered creative if it is novel, unexpected, and unusual. Because it is novel, it is surprising and would immediately garner the attention—negative or positive—of an audience.

An idea may seem creative to you if you have never encountered it before; but to be truly creative, it would have to be one that no one else has thought of using before. Using an idea that someone else has originated is a matter of concern because it raises issues related to intellectual property and plagiarism.

**9-7. What are the key points that should be addressed in a communication or creative brief?**

When making a communication or creative brief, these key points should ideally be included:

* Problems that can be solved using communication.
* The target audience and key insights into their attitudes and behavior.
* Brand positioning and other branding decisions—the personality and image of the brand.
* Communication objectives that specify the desired response from the target audience to the message.
* The proposition or selling idea that will motivate the target audience to respond.
* Media considerations of where and when the message should be delivered.
* Creative direction that provides suggestions on how to obtain the desired consumer response.

**9-8. List and describe Frazer’s creative strategies. Explain with examples where each should be used.**

***Preemptive.*** In this strategy, when two or more brands have a common attribute or benefit, one brand tries to get into the market first, thus forcing the competition into a “me too” position. It is used for categories with little differentiation or new product categories.

***Unique selling proposition.*** It capitalizes on differences in attributes to create a meaningful consumer benefit. This strategy is employed when the product category is characterized by high levels of technological advancement and innovation.

***Brand image.*** This strategy claims superiority or distinction based on extrinsic factors, such as psychological differences in the perceptions of consumers. It is used with homogeneous, low-tech goods that have little differentiation.

***Positioning.*** This helps establish the product in the consumer’s mind, relative to the competition. It is used by new entries or small brands that aim to challenge the market leader.

***Resonance.*** This strategy uses situations, lifestyles, and emotions that the target audience can identify with to connect with them. Companies operating in highly competitive, undifferentiated product categories might employ such a strategy.

***Affective/anomalous (or ambiguous).*** Sometimes, an emotional, and sometimes even ambiguous, message is used to overcome consumers’ indifference. When competitors are using straightforward and informative methods, such an opposing strategy may be employed.

**9-9. Explain how brainstorming is used in IMC.**

As part of the creative process, some agencies use a thinking technique known as brainstorming, in which a group of 6 to 10 people work together to come up with ideas. One person’s idea stimulates someone else’s, and the combined power of the group associations stimulates far more ideas than any one person could think of alone. The secret to brainstorming is to remain positive and defer judgment. Negative thinking during a brainstorming session can destroy the informal atmosphere necessary to achieve a novel idea.

**9-10. List four characteristics of creative people. How do you rate yourself on those factors?**

Research indicates that creative people tend to be independent, assertive, self-sufficient, persistent, and self-disciplined, with a high tolerance for ambiguity. They are also risk takers with powerful egos that are internally driven. They don’t care much about group standards and opinions and typically have inborn skepticism and strong curiosity. Following is a list of key characteristics of creative people who do well in advertising:

* *Problem solving.* Creative problem solvers are alert, watchful, and observant, and reach conclusions through intuition rather than through logic. They also tend to have a mental playfulness that allows them to make novel associations.
* *The ability to visualize.* Most of the information we accumulate comes through sight, so the ability to manipulate visual images is crucial for good copywriters, as well as designers.
* *Openness to new experiences.* Over the course of a lifetime, openness to experience may give you many more adventures from which to draw. Those experiences would, in turn, give a novelist more characters to write about, a painter more scenes to paint, and the creative team more angles from which to tackle an advertising problem.
* *Conceptual thinking.* It’s easy to see how people who are open to experience might develop innovative advertisements and commercials because they are more imaginative.

**Discussion Questions**

**9-11.** Divide the class into groups of 6 to 10 people and discuss this problem: *Your community wants to encourage people to get out of their cars and use alternative forms of transportation*. Brainstorm for 15 minutes as a group, accumulating every possible idea. How many ideas are generated?

Here’s how to run a brainstorming group:

* Appoint one member to be the *recorder* who lists all the ideas as they are mentioned.
* Appoint another member to be the *moderator* and suggest techniques described in this chapter as idea starters.
* Identify a *cheerleader* to keep the discussion on the positive and find gentle ways to discourage critical or negative comments.
* Work for 15 minutes, throwing out as many different creative concepts as your team can come up with regardless of how crazy or dumb they might initially sound.
* Go back through the list as a group and put an asterisk next to the 5-10 ideas that seem to have the most promise.

When all the groups reconvene in class, each recorder should list the group’s best ideas on the blackboard. As a class, pick out the three ideas that seem to have the most potential. Analyze the experience of participating in a brainstorming group and compare the experiences of the different teams.

*Here, it would be helpful to review the concept of brainstorming with students. A group of 6 to 10 people work together to come up with ideas. One person’s idea stimulates someone else’s and the synergistic power of the group interaction stimulates far more ideas than any single person could think of alone. The group becomes an idea factory.*

**9-12.** You work as a designer in one of the local advertising agencies. Part of your role is to meet clients throughout the creative process to present concepts, clarify project objectives, and discuss any possible changes.

You will be meeting a new client to discuss a proposal that your agency will handle. Regarding the meeting, complete the following:

1. Prepare a list of questions that you should discuss with your client during the first meeting. These questions will help you understand the project and come up with the best design solution.
2. Develop a creative brief in the form of an Excel spreadsheet or Word document that contains your list of questions and your clients’ answers. Explain the logic you used to develop your brief and its essential parts. Why is it useful? Who should keep a copy of the brief and why?

*The answers might vary from student to student, but in general the following points should be included.*

*These questions should be posed to a client during the first meeting:*

* *What is the project timeline?*
* *Is there a project budget? If so, what is it?*
* *Who is the target audience that the design needs to reach?*
* *What are the project objectives?*
* *What is the main message that must be communicated to the target audience?*
* *Who are the decision-makers involved in this project? In other words, who should be included in the lines of communication?*

*Based on the project overview and its requirements, the essential parts of the creative brief are:*

* *Problem statement*
* *Communication objective*
* *Target audience*
* *Brand position*

*A creative brief is useful for keeping a project on track. At any point, if a client offers feedback that could potentially lead a project astray from the original plan, the creative brief may act as a point of reference in discussions. The brief ensures that everyone is on the same page from start to finish. A copy is provided to both, the designer/account planner and the client.*

**take-home Projects**

**9-13. Portfolio Project:** Find at least two newspaper or magazine advertisements that your team believes are bland and unexciting. Rewrite them, first to demonstrate a hard-sell approach, and then to demonstrate a soft-sell approach. Explain how your rewrites have improved the original ad. Also explain how hard-sell and soft-sell appeals work. Which do you believe is the most effective for each ad? If you were a team of professionals working on these accounts, how would you go about evaluating the effectiveness of these two ads? In other words, how would you test your intuitive judgment of which one works best?

*When preparing this exercise, students must remember that a hard sell is an informational message that is designed to touch the mind and create a response based on logic. The assumption is that the target audience wants information and will make a rational product decision. A soft sell uses emotional appeals or images to create a response based on attitudes, moods, and feelings. The assumption with soft-sell strategies is that the target audience has little interest in an information search and will respond more favorably to a message that touches their emotions or presents an attractive brand image. A soft-sell strategy can be used for hard products.*

**9-14. Mini-Case Analysis:** Summarize the creative aspects of the REI “#OptOutside” effort. What makes this effort and its promotion creative? Brainstorm on an idea for a new commercial that would extend the campaign’s theme and develop this new Big Idea as a proposal to present to your instructor.

*This promotion exemplifies each of the terms used to define the word creative – it was original, different, novel, and unexpected. The key to its success rested in its authenticity. Its target audience is comprised of people who love the great outdoors. The brand demonstrated not only empathy and commitment to this market segment, but also tightened its emotional connection with them when its CEO said, “While the rest of the world is fighting it out in the aisles, we hope to see you in the great outdoors.” Because of its startling willingness to buck the retail industry’s Black Friday tradition, the promotion earned tremendous amount of free media exposure that further reinforced the brand and what it stands for.*

*Students will be challenged as they attempt to extend the campaign’s theme in a way that matches the creativity of the current one, yet remains on strategy.*

**TRACE NORTH AMERICA CASE**

***Creative Multicultural Communication***

Read the TRACE North America case in the Appendix before coming to class.

**9-15.** What is the Big Idea behind the “Hard to Explain, Easy to Experience” campaign?

**9-16.** How would you describe the campaign’s message strategy?

◆***ADDITIONAL MATERIAL***

**Assignments**

**Individual Assignments**

1. Visit www.effie.org and peruse some of the IMC campaigns that have won this prestigious award over the past few years. Choose three campaigns to compare and contrast in terms of the various creative strategies used. For each, discuss its message objectives and message strategies, and identify the Big Idea. Prepare a 15-minute PowerPoint presentation to relate your findings to your class. *(Note: A group subscription to the Effie website is needed to allow your class access. Special rates are available for college advertising courses.)*
2. Read again “*A Matter of Principle*” by Professor Ronald Taylor in this chapter. Working with a partner, use his framework to generate six potential different message strategies for a new line of washers and dryers that your client plans to launch in the near future. Present your ideas in a 10-minute PowerPoint presentation to the class and allow them to vote for the message strategy they like best.

**Think-Pair-Share**

1. In this chapter, Professors Mark Stuhlfaut and Margo Berman tell us that creativity is directed at achieving objectives and solving problems. With this in mind, review some of the classic advertising campaigns mentioned on page 256, such as Smokey Bear, Clairol’s ‘Does she or doesn’t she?’, Apple’s ‘1984’, and Nike’s ‘Just Do It.’ With a partner, determine the problems solved and objectives achieved by these campaigns for their brands, and why these campaigns stood out as breakthrough advertising.
2. As a class, review the “*Practical Tips*” page in this chapter by Tom Groth. Divide the class into small teams so that one team covers each of the 12 tips. Then, have each team select a product they regularly use and apply their assigned tip to that product to extend the creativity level of its current brand message. How far can each team stretch their creativity? Finish this exercise with 2-minute presentations from each team.

**Outside Examples**

1. Revisit Chick-fil-A’s ‘Eat Mor Chikin’ campaign that was introduced in the previous chapter, this time evaluating it from a creative perspective. Describe the message design that was selected to address the brand’s situation and the target audience’s needs and interests. What do you see in its ads that reveal both “head” and “heart” strategies in advertising? What message strategies are being used and in what way were those messages matched to campaign objectives? In what ways does this campaign reflect DDB’s ROI philosophy of advertising? Prepare a brief PowerPoint presentation that summarizes your findings.
2. Go to YouTube.com (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MHXUl1xbXss) to watch the clip entitled *Bill Bernbach on Creative Qualities*. Listen closely to his point of view and then compare it with principles discussed in this chapter. Where do you see similarities? Prepare a 10-minute presentation for your class that summarizes your findings.