

Title:

Be Single Minded

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612

Summary:

As long as the advertising industry has been in existence there has been debate about whether advertising is art or commerce. Quite frankly, this kind of divisive argument is a waste of time and has only helped to diminish what little respect the industry has earned through the years. Besides, the answer is simple. Advertising is the art of commerce.

Keywords:

advertising, marketing, branding, advertising campaign, copywriting

Article Body:

You've read about the importance of being courageous, rebellious and imaginative. These are all vital ingredients in an effective advertising campaign. However, they must be tempered with the most important ingredient of all—strategy.

As long as the advertising industry has been in existence there has been debate about whether advertising is art or commerce. Quite frankly, this kind of divisive argument is a waste of time and has only helped to diminish what little respect the industry has earned through the years. Besides, the answer is simple. Advertising is the art of commerce.

It can't be pure art because pure art won't engage the consumer on behalf of the brand. Art can certainly get people's attention, but it rarely causes them to take action. If the consumer is not actively engaged, the brand won't grow. If the brand doesn't grow, the company won't profit. And if the company ceases to make a profit, it dies and takes its brand with it.

On the other hand, advertising can't be mere commerce because capitalism, in and of itself, is not pretty. It doesn't make people sit up and take notice. Pure commerce deals with the exchange of money for goods and services. How boring is that. Besides, you don't want to encourage simple commerce. You want to promote branded commerce. That is what makes strategy so important.

Let's be clear. We're talking advertising strategy. Advertising is not

marketing. Marketing involves several disciplines including product, pricing, packaging, distribution, customers and promotions (which encompasses public relations, advertising, point-of-sale, direct marketing, e-marketing, etc.).

If your ad agency can't tell the difference between marketing and advertising strategy, run like hell. You're liable to waste a lot of money. Now some agencies do understand the balance between the broader marketing picture and the narrow, targeted advertising scope. If they are capable and comfortable operating in both realms, they will be a very valuable partner to you.

The importance of a strong ad strategy can't be stressed enough. Creating ads without strategy is like throwing a ping pong ball at a speeding car in a wind storm. There is little chance you will hit your target.

With a sound advertising strategy, however, even a company with a limited budget can compete against deep-pocketed competitors. Such is the power of the single idea that remains constant over time. This, my friend, is the essence of long-term branding.

You must start by knowing to whom you are speaking and to whom you should be speaking. What are their hot buttons? What kinds of things are they paying attention to (art)? What would make them want your product or service (commerce)? What kind of life do they lead? What are some of their daily hassles? Can your product or service help with any?

The key, of course, is to begin thinking about your customers and potential customers. Focus on their needs instead of your own. By offering solutions to their needs, you will fulfill your own profit needs. It doesn't work the other way around. Trust me.

Only after you know your audience, should you start thinking about how to communicate with them. Because only then will you know how and where to reach them. •

This article introduced the fourth of twelve steps. Challenge yourself, your staff and your advertising agency to revolutionize your ad program. If you missed a previous step, contact the author for a complimentary copy. And, remember, every revolution begins with just one step.

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