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Balancing Risks...The Key to Innovative Advertising

In every walk of life there are rules that help us understand how to act or how to do things better. And that's certainly true in communications. We have rules for good design. Rules for effective headlines and copy.



Rules for producing attention-getting radio and television. But interestingly enough, some of the best advertisements break all the rules. In fact, innovation often comes from those writers, designers and producers that are willing to take a chance...do things a little bit differently than the rest of the pack.

As Charles Lindbergh put it, "I don't believe in foolish chances, but nothing can be accomplished without taking any chances at all." In advertising, we need to balance experience with the drive to be unique, interesting and creative.

Attract attention

The primary goal of any creative is to attract attention and invite prospects to find out more about the advertised product or service. In a cluttered media environment, you have no chance of communicating successfully if you can't attract initial interest. Looking at solutions from different angles and perspectives, developing fresh ways of visualizing things or novel ways of telling about them

are at the heart of producing memorable advertising. When designers or writers break the rules, they usually do so for a desired impact. Take one of the highest-scoring ads of all time, an ad for the Volkswagen beetle. The visual was a simple line illustration that followed the shape of the VW beetle. The headline/subhead read, "How long can we keep feeding you the same old line? Forever, we hope."

The ad broke several rules. It used a line drawing instead of a photograph. Its headline did not promise a benefit or offer a positive selling proposition. However, the body copy reported on the beetle's "much higher resale value" and turned a negative (... "the same old line") into an advantage consumers reacted to very strongly.

Be interesting

When we follow the rules to the letter, we miss opportunities to create outstanding advertising. On the other hand, if we ignore or don't understand the rules, we increase our chances of never hitting the mark.

In his book *Ogilvy On Advertising*, David Ogilvy writes, "I do not regard advertising as entertainment or an art form, but as a medium of information. When I write an advertisement, I don't want you to tell me that you find it 'creative.' I want you to find it so interesting you buy the product."

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