

# DISPATCHES™

Insights On Brand Development From The Marketing Front

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April 29, 2007

## A WORK OF ART

*“In every block of marble I see a statue as plain as though it stood before me, shaped and perfect in attitude and action. I have only to hew away the rough walls that imprison the lovely apparition to reveal it to the other eyes as mine see it.”*

**Michelangelo Buonarroti**

Michelangelo was an Italian renaissance painter, sculptor, poet and architect. He took a large block of Carrara marble and saw a Biblical King David in it. By his own account he hewed away at the marble to free his “David,” a masterpiece of renaissance sculpture, to do battle with Goliath. This statue, commemorating an independent Firenze (Florence), was displayed in front of the Palazzo Vecchio in the Piazza della Signoria, the seat of the civic government in 1504. “Il Gigante” (the giant) as the Florentines of the time called it stood in the Piazza enduring the elements and such altercations brought on by the mercurial emotions of the populace. (A chair flung from a window by an outraged woman struck and broke the arm of David holding the sling.)

Today the David that stands within the Piazza is a copy. The genuine article is prominently showcased in the Galleria Dell’Accademia in Firenze. (Thank goodness they removed it from abuse by potential crazies. Well almost. Some years ago someone took a hammer to manicure the feet of David in its current home.) We could give you the physical dimensions of the statue, its height, weight, etc. They’re impressive particularly when you consider they were birthed from the labors of a diminutive 26-year old. But we are not going to do so.

The real genius is in the work and the emotions it evokes. As you enter a hall you are met by unfinished sculptures by Michelangelo. Why they were unfinished is a matter of speculation. Was he working out geometric or artistic problems? Did he abandon them in order to secure a commission on another project? Despite being unfinished they are nonetheless impressive. A nascent life is growing within each of them. But at the end of the hall is David. The sight of him literally takes your breath away. It causes one to grasp, sigh or utter a sound of admiration. The reaction is visceral.

There is no doubt that you can identify the real David from the copy in the Piazza that also houses the Uffizi Museum. The authentic David, while similar in dimensions, is larger than life. It is alive. It pulsates with energy. A large right hand draws the eyes to the stone that will slay Goliath. Veins run along the arm. Its pose reveals a connection between thought and action. It is no wonder that art historians consider this along with the Pieta as Michelangelo’s greatest works of sculpture.

Thomas Struth, a German photographer of renown, made a series of photographs on the occasion of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Michelangelo's David. (I viewed the David with my family on the occasion of celebrating my 60<sup>th</sup> birthday.) However, the photographs are not of David. Imagine, with a masterpiece before him Herr Struth chose another subject – the reaction of audiences viewing David. The photographs were made from behind and slightly to the side of David. In each Mr. Thomas Struth captures the physical reaction of crowds of David's visitors. (David receives more than 1-million visitors each year.) Focusing entirely on the audience we witness varied reactions from active physical search to passive acceptance to involvement in other activities (such as observing the reaction of others). People stand with heads tilted up and to the side. Some view it with their mouths agape. Yet others mimic the pose. There are as many reactions as there are people.

Thomas Struth captures what art is intended to engender – reactions. This is the same intension we marketers must seek with our marketing communications – reactions. The reactions we seek are behaviors from the target audience for our brand. We call these reactions Marketing Objectives. The purpose of our marketing communications is not merely to garner awareness or to inform. These are passive intentions on the part of misinformed and ineffective marketers. Instead we must stimulate a behavior such as getting prospective customers to switch to our brand from a competitor, or motivate current customers to purchase more or persist with their purchasing behaviors.

Ours is a commercial reaction. But if you think about it Michelangelo himself was influenced by the jingle of coins of gold. It is said that he died a very, very rich man thanks to a long and highly productive life punctuated by lucrative commissions. David was a commercial success for Michelangelo and continues to be so for the Galleria Dell'Accademia. (You have to pay to get into the museum to see David. And, no, seeing the copy in the Piazza della Signoria is not seeing David! Spurge and see the real thing. It is worth the cost of admission and more.)

Ours is also art. No it is not the art of a Michelangelo. It is the art of building an enduring brand that rings the cash register day in and out. It is a commercial art. Those two words “commercial” and “art” may cause some people to look down their noses. But it is not crass to seek and earn profits. If you think it is then, perhaps, you are in the wrong line of work. Ours is the commercial art of compelling our target audience to react in a predetermined manner that benefits our brand – the achievement of the Marketing Objective. It is accomplished through the creative product – a 30-second TV spot, a journal ad, interactive website, a new sampling venue, a novel form of CME, etc. The mediums to create our commercial masterpiece are wide and varied particularly in this age of fractured media. It is open to one's imagination, vision, conviction, persistence and execution.

Marketing communications are a commercial art form. It demands creativity. But coming full circle let's consider the words of Bill Bernbach, a creative genius in his own right. “It's not creative (commercial art) unless it sells.”

### **BOATS & HELICOPTERS:**

1. Know what behavior you want to achieve with your target audience. This Marketing Objective must be SMART (i.e., specific, measurable, achievable, relevant to achieving

the brand's Business Objectives and time-bound). See what is possible. How do you need or want your target audience to react?

2. Determine what your target audience must believe in order to stimulate the behavior. This is a critical part of the Communication Strategy. The belief or benefit must be relevant to the target and meaningfully differentiated versus competition. It is the marble for our creation. Select an appropriate marble!
3. Apply the art of creative communications. The creative people at your agencies or within your creative resource groups are the artists. We brand marketers are patrons (as the Medici family was to Michelangelo). Encourage the creatives, give them room to connect with the target audience and create something profoundly meaningful. Don't use them to make copies. There are enough of those around. They merely litter the media landscape failing to connect on an emotional level.
4. Be disciplined too. As Bill Bernbach stated, "It's not creative unless it sells." And, it is not going to sell unless it has a Campaign Idea. As David Ogilvy stated, "Unless your advertising (marketing communications in whatever form it takes) does not contain a big idea it will pass like a ship in the night (with its lights out!)." And it will not be a masterpiece unless it is a BIG Campaign Idea. A masterpiece stands the test of time. Perhaps, your campaign won't last 500-years but we'd settle for at least 10-years. (If this sounds absurd consider the MasterCard campaign or, better yet, the campaign for Absolut Vodka, which has endured for more than 25-years).
5. Respond with your gut. The brain will take you only so far. Okay so the brain registers a Campaign Idea. We are making progress. Now let's react with our gut. Does it strike an emotional chord? Does it make you gasp? Will it stimulate the intended behavior?
6. Open your mind to creativity. Get up on the other side of bed. Get out and visit a museum. Read a book outside your normal interests. Take a different route to work. Go to a movie instead of staying at home with a video. Try something different to eat. Experiment with something – anything. Fly to Firenze to visit David in the Galleria Dell'Accademia.

Make your marketing communications a work of "commercial art."

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