

# **DISPATCHES**<sup>TM</sup>

*Insights On Brand Development From The Marketing Front*

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Sunday, June 7, 2009

## **DON'T TEXT US BRO**

New media is on the tongue of many of our clients. It is as if they have fallen out of favor with the traditional and in love with anything non-traditional. This isn't new. It's been going on for a few years now.

There is little wonder that enthusiasm for the traditional would fade. Traditional media has lost some muscle. When there were only three networks it was a safe bet that you could reach about one-third of viewers with one prime time show alone. Today those numbers are a fraction of what they once were given the plethora of choices now available to viewers. Not just other networks either. Television is competing with a lot of other mediums, computer and smart phone access to the Internet being a big one.

Additionally, much of the messaging aired on television and published in print is not generating desired sales results. Part of the answer is undoubtedly related to the aforementioned reduction in viewership, but another part most certainly is due to the ineffectiveness of the advertising. Few advertisers are promising relevant, meaningful differentiation versus their competition. Few advertisements contain a campaign or even ad idea that dramatizes the strategic benefit in a way to capture the attention of customers, engage them and compel them to take action. It's GIGO – garbage in, garbage out. Start with poor messaging and you exit with poor sales results. It's that simple.

The current economic environment isn't helping much either. Markets are shrinking for many categories in many parts of the world. Even those countries that continue to enjoy growth are experiencing a slow down in the rate of growth. So, many companies are cutting marketing support budgets to protect the bottom line and one of the first things to go is, you guessed it (because you have probably already experienced it), is advertising. Afterall, who knows what advertising is generating? (Sadly, we have learned from a survey we conducted last year that the vast majority of marketers do not know the ROI from any of their marketing mix elements and tactics.)

In a landscape of diminishing returns, compounded by reduced budgets and disillusionment with traditional media due to less than stellar results, the search for the "silver bullet" is intensified. The silver bullet for many is "new media." However, the likelihood of success with new media is no greater than success with old (read: "traditional") media. If we don't know "how things work" (i.e., how to make our messaging effective) then it doesn't matter what media we choose the results we seek just won't be there for us.

“How things work” is not all that complicated. It starts by having something relevant to offer your target group (assuming the marketer has strategically segmented the market and selected the most appropriate target for her/his brand). The promise must not only be relevant but it must be differentiated versus competition. If it is not differentiated then there is no real reason for customers to select your offering versus the competition. Just this week we saw three brands in the same category vying for prescriptions for health care professionals. Two of the brands offer the same promise. The third while having meaningful differentiation produced messaging that was virtually obscure for fear of cannibalizing other products in their portfolio. This is not the way to influence and win customers.

Once you have a relevant, meaningfully differentiated message it needs to be communicated in a compelling manner. This is where the Campaign Idea enters the stage. Unfortunately, most advertising lacks an idea. It’s all about telling. And, customers don’t like to be talked to, or told about your product offering. As you have heard from us, “telling isn’t selling and selling isn’t compelling.” Ideas work to compel customers to take the action (i.e., behavioral objective) we seek. What we are talking about here is to get off the soapbox and create and deliver messaging in a way that customers would enjoy receiving them.

Yes, that’s another thing – getting messaging to customers. We hear a lot about surround sound, 360-degree campaign and integrated communications. It’s as if this is being discovered as a result of the emergence of new media. If this is a recent discovery it is only recent for those who are currently discovering it. Integrated communications have been around ever since there was more than one customer touch-point (e.g., television, print, radio, outdoor, in-store merchandising, etc.). It has been practiced for decades. The notion is anything but new. Perhaps, the fragmentation of marketing teams into multiple silos, without clear and steady leadership, has allowed this practice to fade into the past and be forgotten only to rise again because it makes sense and marketers are desperate for something to make sense in this topsy-turvy world.

Marketers talk about reaching customers where they are and providing messaging in a way they would like to receive it. It all makes sense to us. But that’s not what is being practiced. This past week President Obama visited the Middle East. He delivered important messages designed to bring people together of all nationalities, races and faiths. To ensure his message is heard by those who were not present for his speeches it is being translated into scores of languages and being made available via Pod casts, television, over the internet, on the Whitehouse website, etc. He is using the vast array of media, traditional and new, to get his message out to a broader audience than those participants who fill an auditorium.

His message is an important one. He has license to make it available to those who are interested in what he represents and hungering for his message. Those that are interested have a number of alternative ways that they can receive his message. It’s like Burger King, “have it your way.” But because he can do it does not mean we can do it. The question is how important is your message that potential customers will search for it or open up to it if received without soliciting it? Does your brand have that same license?

As it relates to President Obama’s message, yes we are eager to receive it. If sent an invitation to download it we will do so. But then on the other hand if we receive an invitation to download info about toothpaste, baby powder, a proton pump inhibitor, canned soup, sutures or anything else we feel we are familiar with and don’t promise us something relevant and meaningfully differentiated from what we know in a way that is engaging then we are unlikely to do so. In

fact, if you come at customers in a way that they do not appreciate (using a medium that they do not give you permission to use) then you will depreciate the value of your offering. It's like those annoying pop-ups that appear on aol.com when one is handling email. While you're word processing a pop-up advertisement appears that interrupts what you are doing. Marketers refer to these as "interrupters." It is supposed to be a clever way of breaking through the clutter and capturing the attention of potential customers. The only thing it breaks, besides the customer's attention, is the potential for a relationship. It makes customers mad.

## **BOATS & HELICOPTERS:**

- 1. Don't throw traditional media out in search of the silver bullet.** If traditional media is not working for you then check your messaging. It may not be the fault of the media. It could be the fault of your messaging. If you don't know how to make traditional media work then it is unlikely that you will be able to make new media work.
- 2. Learn how things work when it comes to traditional and new media.** Learn the quality processes, best practices and proven principles that improve the likelihood for successful messaging. Offer a relevant, meaningfully differentiated benefit from the competition and deliver it via a BIG campaign idea. Execute the idea for the medium. For more on this subject take a walk through our website, [www.bdn-intl.com](http://www.bdn-intl.com)
- 3. Reach customers with messaging where they go in a way they would like to receive it.** Yes, we are encouraging marketers to develop integrated communication campaigns. It may make sense for your plan to incorporate traditional and new media in reaching customers. But pay attention to the words "they would like to receive it." We need to determine if our brand has the permission to, say, text customers or interrupt their word processing when emailing. This is something you need to determine. Just because some brands can do it doesn't mean customers will give you permission
- 4. Be realistic.** Let's face it we need to ensure we have the funding to do it all. If you don't it is probably smart to stick with a given medium (even programming or vehicle) to effectively reach a base of potential customers from which your brand can grow.

For the vast majority of brands in the marketplace we have this to say, "Don't text us bro. You're only going to alienate us."

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