

# DISPATCHES™

Insights On Brand Development From The Marketing Front

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Sunday, March 7, 2010

## GENERATIONAL TRANSFORMATIONAL MESSAGING

Greg Shearson, a neighbor of mine, and former President of Tropicana Foods, and I were sipping Starbucks and discussing marketing when the discussion turned to messaging. Greg spoke about his desire to achieve “generational transformational messaging.” The phrase struck a chord with me since it suggested a new way to think about messaging.

What does it mean? Let’s examine each word:

- **Generational** - Endures over the span of a generation (which is like “20-years” or, in other words, a long, long time);
- **Transformational** – Generates a significant change such as a change in customer behavior that favors our brand and, hopefully, leads to a change in leadership; and
- **Messaging** – What the brand promises and how it delivers the promise to capture customers.

While the goal is to aspire to *generational transformational messaging* the act starts with the development of a message capable of transforming how customers think and act regarding your brand and is productive for the span of a generation. That’s truly what leadership messaging is all about. It’s not about developing messaging that people claim to “like” but, instead, achieving messaging that drives customer preference motivating behavior and building brand loyalty.

There are a number of examples that spring to mind when we think of generational transformational messaging. While the number may on the surface seem to be large if we were to go deeper we’d all soon find that achievement of this kind of messaging is rare. But we remember those few because they make a huge impact in the marketplace over many years.

Here are some notable examples:

- **Mac versus PC** - There have been more than 60-television spots personalizing Mac as cool, contemporary, superior but not arrogant versus PC, which is depicted as clumsy, stuffy and dumb. The campaign, dubbed as “Get a Mac,” has gone beyond the shores of the U.S. to be broadcast in Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and Japan. The campaign, which began in 2006 and is still going strong today, has contributed to Apple tripling their share of the market for personal computers in the U.S. Importantly, Mac has achieved a 90% share of the premium computer segment (i.e., computers costing more than \$1,000). It’s been a revolution in the making. In the words of Steve Job we’d have to say this campaign is insanely great. So great is the campaign that it has also caused the PC world to react to it.

- **Nike “Just Do It”** – These folks created a revolution with their rallying cry urging people to “Just Do It.” This campaign dates back to 1988 and helped transform a small running shoe company into a giant in the athletic equipment and sportswear market. It helped transform a few generations from coach potatoes to alpha athlete wannabes. The slogan “Just Do It” was selected by Advertising Age as one of the Top 5 ad slogans of the 20<sup>th</sup>-Century.
- **MasterCard “Priceless” Campaign** – Launched in 1997 despite very low copy testing scores the MasterCard “priceless” campaign has traveled more than 125 countries via over 500-television spots and thousands of print ad executions to-date. Moreover, it rescued MasterCard from the jaws of defeat and propelled the brand past Visa to secure the leadership position in the category. The numbers, as in “business” results, for MasterCard are nothing short of astounding.
- **Miller Lite “Tastes Great. Less Filling.”** – There were a number of attempts to crack the market with a low cal beer that failed before Miller Lite demonstrated it could be done. Low cal beers were not perceived by heavy beer drinkers to be “manly” brews. These guys didn’t give a twit about calories. What they wanted was “smutz” (a strange word for “beeriness”). The Miller folks discovered a legitimate and productive customer insight and paid it off with a promise that heavy drinkers could pack away a lot more beers at a sitting with Miller Lite. (These C & D guzzlers put away six-packs, not drinks, at a sitting.) The campaign idea pitted two athletes advocating the benefit that made them Miller Lite loyalists – “Tastes great. Less Filling.” Certainly it was a manly take on a manly brew. The rest is history. Miller Lite drove category growth. The Miller Lite brand grew nearly 5-fold following the launch of the campaign and became the undisputed leader for many years. In more modern times (early 1980’s to the present) Diet Coke exhorted consumers to choose the brand not because it was only one-calorie but “Just for the Taste of It.”
- **Clairol “Blondes”** – Some 75% of adult American women claim to have colored their hair at some time in their life. But back, way back in the 1950’s only about 1 in 15 or so women claimed to use hair coloring. If a woman colored her hair she was perceived as the type of woman you did not take home to meet mom. She was regarded as somewhat, shall we say, less virtuous. Today that’s a laugh thanks to a legendary copywriter, Shirley Polykoff, and her two category growing campaigns both for Clairol. The first was “Does She Or Doesn’t She? Only Her Hairdresser Knows for Sure” that promised women coloring so natural that no one will know if it was colored. This campaign gave women permission to be who they wanted to be. As a result 70% of woman were coloring their hair some six-years following the campaign. Shirley struck twice when she crafted another classic campaign “Is It True Blondes Have More Fun?” Again, both campaigns were built on consumer insights that Clairol was able to capitalize upon with their hair coloring technology. The messaging captured the imagination of women, empowered them to take on a new persona and built the category (as in rapid growth). If you are not familiar with these generational transformational campaigns perhaps you will be familiar with a third category building campaign from L’Oreal “Because I’m Worth It.” The key copy words were changed thirty years later to “Because You’re Worth It.”
- **Marlboro Man** – Talk about a “classic” generational transformational campaign and you have to consider the Marlboro Man and “Come to Where the Flavor Is.” Created by Leo Burnett Advertising Agency this campaign repositioned Marlboro from a brand for women (yes, you read that correctly) to transform quite a few generations to aspire to be rugged individualists, like in an genuine American cowboy. It took the brand from less than 2-market share points to the

undisputed leader in the category in just a few short years and kept it there for many, many more. The cowboy, rest his soul, is one of the most recognized figures in advertising.

Wouldn't you want to create generational transformational messaging for your brand? Shouldn't your brand have it? Does your brand deserve anything less? Let's get to work to develop it!

## **BOATS & HELICOPTERS:**

1. **Think Big** – Don't think "ad," as in solitary spot or print execution. Instead start by thinking "campaign" as in more than one in a row that can last for a long, long time and span many mediums. How long? Let's start with a 10-year campaign, minimum. That will get us at least one-half of a generation.
2. **Think Different** – Don't follow the herd. Cut your own path. If your advertising says the same thing in the same way as everyone else then it will not cut through the clutter to register with your target customer and to transform their behavior and your market position. First make sure what you have to say is relevant to your target and meaningfully different. What's meaningfully different? Well there are differences in degree and kind. Of the two, differences in degree typically make the biggest impact (again if it's relevant!). And for generational transformational sake put it to your customers in a different way. (See point #4.)
3. **Think Customer Insights** – Insights are the cornerstone of great advertising. They're born of really knowing the target customer and being able to see and experience life from their perspective (again relative to the category and situation). They, in turn, enable us to connect with our customers (via the Key Thought and/or advertising) in a compelling manner. Be relentless in digging for legitimate and productive customer insights.
4. **Think Campaign Ideas** – As the late, great adman David Ogilvy stated "If your advertising doesn't contain an idea it will pass like a ship in the night." Good luck because nobody is going to see it. If they can't see it then they cannot respond to it either. It takes a campaign idea, and a big one at that, to capture and engage the attention of customer and compel them to act. If you don't have a campaign idea then your advertising is likely to be nothing more than "telling." Unfortunately, few people will be listening. Campaign ideas are what make for strong strategic communication messaging. What's BIG? David Ogilvy asks whether it made you gasp when you first saw it. That's a good check. Another one is to ask yourself whether you wish you had created it.
5. **Think Collaboratively** – Find ways to engage others to work with you in this quest. Importantly, find ways to add-value to their work to help make it more productive. Find ways to getting them to add-value to your work too. This is a team sport. We need to get everyone on the team to step-up and do their part in creating the environment and opportunity for the development of generational transformational messaging.
6. **Enough with the Thinking; Just Do It** – Thomas Edison said, "Genius is 99% perspiration and 1% inspiration." It's time to get to work. *Don't settle* until you've achieved generational transformational messaging. *Don't settle*.

*If you are interested in taking your capabilities to develop leadership brands and transformational generational messaging to the next level consider participating in our **Open***

*Brand Positioning & Communication College program. It will be conducted on 27 – 29 April in Kansas City, Mo. It is the only “Open” program we will conduct in 2010. If you would like more information please don’t hesitate to call Lori Vandervoort at 800 255-9831. We hope to see you there.*

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