

DISPATCHES™

Insights On Brand Development From The Marketing Front

Sunday, July 19, 2009

SOME QUOTABLE QUOTES

In the course of our extended business careers, each of us comes into contact with an impressive array of leaders, bosses, associates and colleagues. And it's usually the case that the ones we remember most are the ones we feel we've learned the most from (or, perhaps better said, we feel have done the most for our own personal and professional growth). Sometimes, though, we remember just as readily something one of these people *said* at a crucial moment; or maybe something they said that was simply a good principle to keep...often served up in a clever or hard-to-forget way.

Over the course of our combined 70+ years in business, brand-building, and marketing we have naturally stored up a collection of such memorable or quotable quotes. And we often repeat them at appropriate moments during our training programs or consulting assignments. So we got to thinking that it might be worthwhile to share some of them with you in our weekly *Dispatches* as well—along with the principle each calls to mind for us, or at the very least, why we find these words worth quoting from time to time.

1. ***“I’ll tell you what your plan is: Dominate and do now; dominate and do now.”*** The context for this statement is worth noting: it was at the conclusion of an annual operating plan presentation for the leading volume and profit brand in the company (and in the category). The speaker was none other than the Company President and he was addressing one of us, the Marketing Director, who had just presented the plan. There's a certain rhythmic ring to the last eight words, wouldn't you agree? Perhaps that's what makes them so memorable. But, actually, what makes them even more memorable is the spirit behind the words. For sure the President was a passionate man and he was pointedly passing on some of his passion for the brand's direction; but what he was really saying was this: “Be Competitive. Take No Prisoners. Win Big!” You might compare his words with those of an athletic coach just as the team is about to take the field. Regardless of the setting, though, the real questions for all of us today are these: How often do we impart our passion, our drive to win in the constructing and sharing of our brand plans? How competitive, really, is our plan?

2. ***“If you're not comfortable undressing in Macy's window, you shouldn't be in Marketing.”*** This quote comes from one of our favorite bosses—a senior staff member responsible for the company's Sales & Marketing functions at the time, and later a long-term President of a major packaged goods company. Perhaps his point is obvious, but in case it is not what he was really exhorting his Marketing troops to do was to step out, take a stand, have a point-of-view (in other words **Lead**) and not worry about how popular that stand or point-of-view might be. It was a call for *personal leadership*, plain and simple. In some companies and cultures, not only is Marketing not urged to lead, they are not expected to. That's a shame—and a huge wasted

opportunity for the company. Good, committed marketers are inherently idea-drivers. And, as we all know only too well, most new ideas (especially those that call for a change in the way things have always been done) require a good bit of championing...and that sometimes requires an unpopular stand in full view.

3. “I see what your plan is to grow the business 15%. Now, what is your plan to grow your people 15%?” This quote was actually heard by our partner-colleague, Brenda Bence, a few years back. And, when she first relayed it to us, our initial reaction was perhaps a lot like yours: Why haven’t we heard this same thing from one of our bosses before? It’s such a natural question to ask, isn’t it? But most of us know why we don’t typically get this same question from our bosses—because they expect growth to come from everywhere but their people, from somewhere “out there” in the marketplace rather than from inside the improving talents (both strategic and executional) of their people. Again, isn’t it a shame that so many miss this opportunistic—even more competitive-- way of thinking about the company’s total resources? No brand-growth plan should ever be considered complete (or approved!) without a people-growth plan to go with it.

4. “Even creative people need time to throw out their bad ideas.” When we first heard these few words from the lips of an ad agency chairman, they were a revelation. Not in the sense that sometimes creative people have bad ideas; anyone will have his or her share of good and not-so-good ideas. No, the revelation came in the notion of the *time required for any client to reasonably expect* a range of some pretty good ideas. For some crazy reason, most advertising clients set a fixed creative development timeline and then when the up-front strategic or research work takes longer than what was set, they simply shorten the “back-half” or creative time by that amount...without ever considering what effect that reduction of creative time might have on the quality of the ideas they will get. Actually, this was an amazingly honest admission by the agency chairman—to acknowledge that their creative output usually suffers when their creative time shortens. Hmmmmm. This is probably equally true for any of the resources we employ in developing ideas (product, packaging, promotion, merchandising, and so on). The truth is, everyone needs some time to throw out the bad ideas.

5. “The single biggest reason most Creative Briefs fail is that they aren’t.” Okay, we’re cheating on this one because it isn’t a quote we heard from someone else; it’s one we originated ourselves. And we often use it when sharing with our clients what we consider to be the best-practices, “essential” Creative Brief format. What’s a little funny is that, when you ask clients what the quote means, they usually say something like, “Creative Briefs fail because they aren’t *creative*.” But that’s not the real intent of the quote: briefs most often fail to work because they aren’t *brief*. Rather than comprising only those essential elements creative teams need to develop good ideas, too many creative briefs are overstuffed with too much useless information (like share history) or, even worse, with conflicting priorities (like the Benefit to be communicated followed by something you would expect to be the same thing but often isn’t, called “The Single-Minded Take-Away.”) There was a time in our days at Procter & Gamble when the senior management required all brand teams to submit only 1-page memos and recommendations. It was quite chore at times to get all the essentials boiled down to such a tight format; but it was also a wonderful discipline for tighter, better thinking. It forced a natural kind of certainty. Which leads to a related question: Do you know why most Creative Briefs aren’t very brief? They lack a natural kind of certainty; if we’re not exactly sure what behavior we

seek, what insight works best, or what benefit we want to communicate, well, let's not decide anything for certain...and hope the creative teams will choose the right things for us.

Maybe some of these quotes will ring true for you and re-surface in your subconscious from time-to-time. We hope so. We have more quotes to share, but let's save some for another issue of our weekly *Dispatches*. And, by the way, if you have any to share with us, please do so!

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