

# Warne's Marketing

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## The One Minute Advertising Expert

Using five simple, logical and time-tested criteria, you can easily judge advertising as well, or better, than most advertising professionals.

SOME 90% OF ADVERTISEMENTS are underachievers, according to the United States Institute of Marketing. In fact, "less than 10% of all the advertisements appearing in the media are producing close to 40% of the accountable responses" according to Robert C. Steckel, President of the Institute.

The reason according to Whit Hobbes,<sup>(1)</sup> is that "Too often, there isn't a point. There isn't a direction. Too often advertising... is a habit. Too often the advertisements are there merely to take up space"... or time.

"No advertisement should run," Whit said, "unless it has something to say... which means that half the... advertising that runs, shouldn't run."

### What is Advertising?

As you well know from watching television and reading magazines, there is a lot of ineffective advertising. You might remark "that was a great beer commercial." By the next commercial break you can't remember the sponsor.

Actually, the basics of evaluating effective advertising are so simple that anyone can become an expert just by applying five criteria.

Now, it did take Albert D. Lasker, one of the legendary figures of the business, seven years to find out "what is advertising."<sup>(2)</sup> And, he didn't even discover it himself.

Lasker related receiving a note from

a former R.C.M.P. constable saying: "I can tell you the secret of advertising." Intrigued, Lasker left his office and went down to the lobby to meet John Kennedy, a Canadian.

When Kennedy asked Lasker if he knew what advertising was, Lasker replied "it is news." Kennedy allowed that sometimes news could be part of advertising. But the full secret was that "advertising is salesmanship in print."

That was some 90 years ago. The only thing that has changed is the available media have broadened into radio, film, television, CD ROM and the Internet. But almost a century later there are still people who apparently don't know what advertising is. Who think that it's communications or

because a manufacturer told a joke on television last night. They buy the new detergent because it promises a benefit."

"I'm not afraid to tell the creative phonies that their commercials are utter nonsense," he added.

Not amusing were the Benetton advertisements of newborn babies with umbilical cords attached, burning cars, and a dying AIDS patient with grieving family. Called controversial, The Wall Street Journal reported that these "creatively phony" advertisements were such a bust that Benetton had been losing stores and customers in the U.S.A., which had been its largest market outside Europe.

Indeed, to placate store owners, Benetton began providing them with

**"A properly prepared advertisement will always be convincing and it will make people act."**

entertainment. People who don't realize that advertising is salesmanship in print, pictures and sound.

### Creative Phonies

"If you spend your advertising budget entertaining the consumer, you're a bloody fool," David Ogilvy told the Association of National Advertisers.<sup>(3)</sup> "Housewives don't buy a new detergent

advertisements featuring clothes rather than causes, plus a \$5,000-a-year stipend for a co-operative local advertising.

### Cone's Criteria

Good advertising is simply an effective sales presentation. Both depend on the same basic principles.

The person who said it best was Fairfax M. Cone in a commentary that

ran in Printer's Ink way back in 1966.

Headed "Advertising: What is it?" the commentary stated:

"Advertising is the business, or the art, if you please, of telling someone something that should be important to him. It is a substitute for talking to someone.

"It is the primary requirement of advertising to be clear, *clear as to exactly what the proposition is*. If it isn't clear, and clear at a glance or a whisper, very few people will take the time or the effort to try to figure it out.

"The second essential of advertising

of your prospect. You judge whether the proposition is direct, clear and important to you, as the prospect.

Copy research can help if you're doubtful how the prospect will respond. It doesn't have to be extensive. As Lasker said: "You don't need a sample of 1,000 to prove that donkeys have two ears. A sample of six will do."

### Graphic Support

None of the Cone commentary addresses technique. Obviously, good technique, or graphics, supports the presentation

## Effective Advertising Is:

- Clear as to exactly what the selling proposition is
- Important to its prospects
- Personal in its appeal to its logical prospects
- Commanding of attention
- Demanding of action by its prospects

is that what must be clear *must also be important*. The proposition must have value.

"Third, the proposition (the promise) that is both clear and important *must also have a personal appeal*. It should be beamed at its logical prospects, no one else matters.

"Fourth, the distinction in good advertising is that it *expresses the personality of advertiser*; for a promise is only as good as its maker.

"Finally, a good advertisement *demand action*. It asks for an order, or it exacts a mental pledge.

"Altogether these things define a desirable advertisement as one that will command attention but never be offensive.

"It will be reasonable, but never dull.

"It will be original, but never self-conscious.

"It will be imaginative, but never misleading. "And because of what it is and what it is not, a properly prepared advertisement will always be convincing and it will make people act."

So now you know the criteria.

### How Do You Apply Them?

For each individual advertisement, you first put yourself in the position

of a clear and direct message of importance. If the graphics interfere with the message, reject the advertising.

Following Cone's basic points is no barrier to original, imaginative and effective advertising.

As Whit Hobbes said, there was never an excuse for being dull. Properly targeted "advertising has every reason in the world not to be dull, because it is selective. It doesn't try to please everybody... it can be specific; it can be something special to someone special."

"Helpful, informative advertising wins friends," Mr. Hobbes noted. To do so, of course, "it has to loosen up a little... and be friendly. In order to win friends, you have to be friendly," Hobbes concluded. That's something every person knows. Just as they know when a sales presentation is clear and effective. There's nothing different in preparing advertising that sells.

Sources:

- (1) Whit Hobbes. From a luncheon speech to the Business Marketing Association, when he was Senior Vice-President of Creative Services at Benton and Bowes, New York.
- (2) From the Lasker Story published by Crain Communications.
- (3) From a speech reported by The New York Times.



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