



The SMMarT Guy

The Three Cs of Successful Marketing

By Kim Robinson

"I saw the funniest ad on TV the other night," my friend announced, as we enjoyed a beer together after work. "It really cracked me up."

He told me about the ad and we both chuckled. I then asked him, "What was the product?"

He thought for a minute. "I can't remember. But, the ad really cracked me up."

As a professional marketer I immediately thought, "Swoosh...there goes a pile of some advertiser's money right down the toilet."

Humor is a popular tool in the marketer's toolbox because we tend to favorably remember things that make us laugh. The rub is that humor in advertising should always make the viewer, reader, or listener remember the product and not just the joke. Otherwise, as in the case of the ad my friend mentioned, the money spent to produce and distribute the ad is wasted. And, wasted marketing money does nothing but test the plumbing as it goes swoosh down the... you get the picture.

Too often, ad agencies focus on winning industry awards for humor and cleverness, instead of using humor and cleverness as tools to drive business to their clients.

The primary goal of all advertisements and marketing campaigns should be to drive more business to the client: To make the phones ring, to guide people to a website, or bring them into the store. Be funny, sure. Make it sad, okay. But, focus like laser beams on making the viewer, reader, or listener favorably remember the product being sold. Otherwise...swoosh.

The following are what I call the Three Cs of Successful Marketing and they are the bedrock fundamentals to creating effective advertisements, marketing pieces and campaigns. Hit on all three and your marketing money will prove to be an investment in more business, and not just a test of modern plumbing.

Clarity: The message of the piece must be clear and easy to understand. What is the product? What does it do? Where and how can I buy it, and most important of all, why should I buy it, meaning, what benefit is there to me, the purchaser, of ownership? Will I be more comfortable, better looking or richer as a result? In short, what is it and what's in it for me?

Cleverness: Here is where the humor tool comes into play, although ads don't have to be funny to hit this point, they only need to stir emotion. A clever piece can even be a tear-jerker, like the spots to raise money to help the starving children of the world. It can even be insultingly stupid (see inset for an example of what I consider to be

such an ad). Cleverness simply means to stir some emotion in the viewer, listener, or reader and to link that emotion to favorable thoughts of the product, so that the product will be remembered in a favorable light. Sound simple? It's not.

Common sense: Right at the top, is to always persuade people to favorably remember the product or service being sold. Period. Along with that, is the warning to not fall victim to the "if its clever, then it's got to be good" syndrome. Such an attitude hastened the San Francisco Bay Area dot.com crash of the late nineties when agency after agency created clever ads that won awards for their high-tech cleverness, but did nothing to make their clients' phones ring. In short, agencies won awards and start-ups heard their marketing budgets go swoosh. It was usually a darn clever 'swoosh,' but a swoosh nonetheless. Last, but by no means least, show some common sense in story copy, and always include a call to action. It is an unwritten, yet commonly held belief in marketing, that people like to be told what to do, so tell them. Every time. "Call now. Click here. Come to..."

The long-running TV ad that featured "Mr. Whipple" yelling at women in his store for boldly squeezing a certain brand of toilet paper before they bought it (I guess it was okay to squeeze it in the privacy of their home) is an excellent example of an ad that hit the bull's-eye with the Three Cs. It is also an example of one of the most stupid ads to run on television (I find a man yelling at women for squeezing toilet paper in a store to be just plain...weird, and I'm originally from San Francisco where a certain level of weirdness is accepted as commonplace).

Although it was insultingly simple (or stupid, your choice), it was an enormously successful advertisement because it was clear: toilet paper /store / buy /soft. It was clever: Whipple was a truly bizarre and unforgettable character who made us laugh or scream. And, it showed common sense: who wants something rough touching that part of their body?

I hated Whipple and his

bizarre antics, but as a professional marketer, I appreciated how good the spot truly was. It has not run for almost a decade and I can still hear his little screech, "Ladies, please don't squeeze the Charmin!"

Now ask yourself, are your ads and marketing material hitting the Three Cs? Or, is your marketing budget testing the plumbing? ■

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