Chapter 14 Briefing the Team to Get a Great Campaign

You've done your research. You have worked to position the product properly. You have a big idea that will help set the brand apart from the competition. All that hard work is for naught unless you can properly tell the story. It is the creative expression of the big idea that separates a strategically sound yet mundane campaign from an award-winning campaign.

To make the big idea come to life, you need to properly brief the agency. That is one of the most important aspects of account planning. You are the focal point for briefing the entire agency team on what direction the campaign must take. Account planners take a great amount of pride in the way that they brief the team. The brief they develop is the one tangible product that they produce, and it is a very visible product to the agency employees and the client. The brief becomes their roadmap to success.

In today's highly fragmented media world, the briefing process takes on even greater importance than it did twenty or thirty years ago, when there was a much more limited number of media outlets. The creative strategy is "what to say." The creative execution is "how to say it." Both are crucial to the success of the campaign. However, the contact portion of the campaign has taken on increasing importance. So "where to say it" or "how to connect with the consumer" now has equal billing to "how to say it" in the campaign strategy.

Much of creative strategy development uses what psychologists refer to as "convergent thinking." This is the process of drawing deductive and logical conclusions from the information at hand. It progresses from general to specific and is an informational part of the process. Convergent thinking is used to distill the essence of the problem and to decide which particular piece of information or imagery will change the consumer's perception and behavior. Thus, it is a crucial part of developing the agency brief. It is this process of distillation that leads to the big idea, a focused single thought.

After a brief is fully developed, we enter into another phase of thinking called "divergent thinking." This style of thinking goes from specific to general or from the specific instances and situations to generalizations. This style of thinking is used by advertising creative departments to devise advertising campaigns that will present the idea or imagery in a fresh new way.

While it is a popular myth that creative directors are rebels who are undisciplined creative artists who don't pay attention to strategy, this couldn't be further from the truth. The truth is that creative directors not only embrace great strategy derived from a briefing document but demand it.

There is nothing more frustrating to a creative director than a loose or undeveloped strategy. "Give me the freedom of a tight strategy" is a mantra heard at many advertising agencies. The tighter the strategy, the more specific the big idea, the more the members of the creative team can stretch their minds to find an unusual way to communicate it. Again, because the stakes are high and the media landscape is so fragmented, the creative strategy must be crystal clear, and it must inspire the creative team.

The issue of fragmentation has led to formation of multidisciplinary teams that include account management, media, digital, public relations, social media, and the creative team. In the past, an advertising agency's brief was just a creative brief delivered to the writer and art director team who worked on the account. This process worked fairly well when everyone knew that television was the lead medium, with print and radio as support vehicles. However, in today's world there are a multitude of choices for paid media advertising and an equally daunting array of choices in the social and digital media arena that are not paid media.

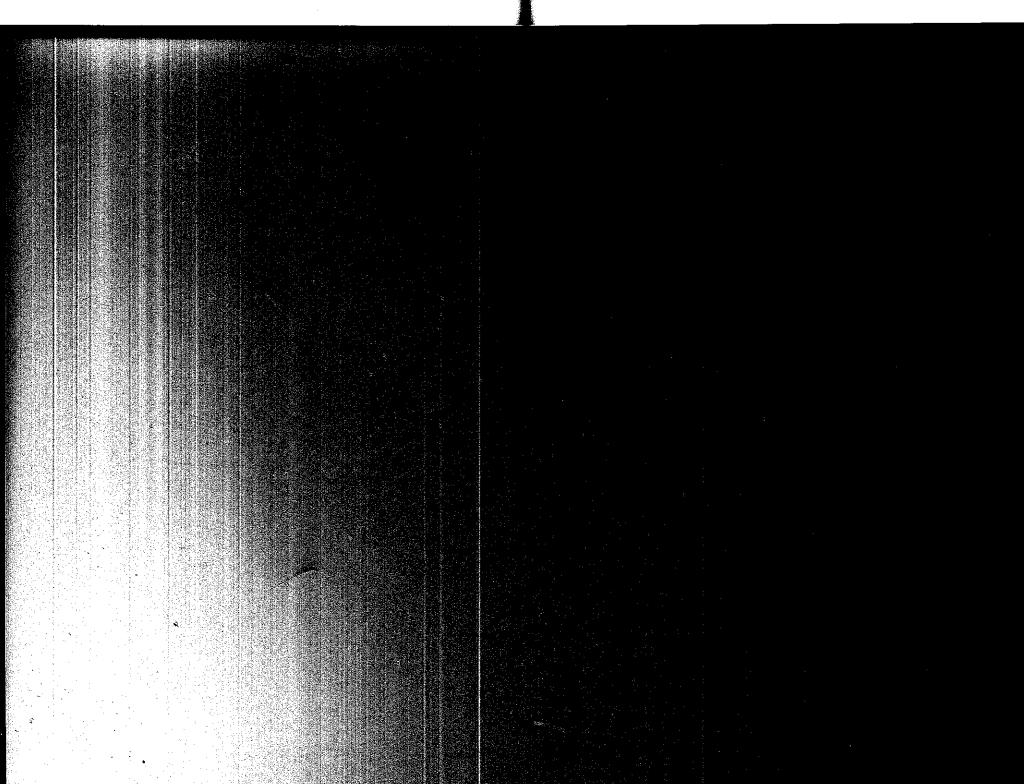
Although the media landscape has changed, the basic components of delivering a communication strategy with a big idea have remained constant. They boil down to having a compelling message, an equally compelling way to say it, and a convincing way to connect it with consumers.

Early Creative Briefs: Young and Rubicam

Until the past decade, the creative brief was just that: a statement pertaining only to the creative message. It was used to develop advertising. It was typically developed in the United States by an account executive and delivered to the writer and art director. Today, we know that account planners are largely the authors of agency briefs and that the subject of a brief involves a wide range of departments within the advertising agency.

It is important to understand the early history of the creative brief to see how advertising has evolved. In its simplest form, a creative brief delivers three pieces of information:





- To whom are you directing the message (target market)?
- Of what are you trying to convince them?
- Why they should believe it?

Much of the early creative briefing documents came directly from brand positioning statements (see Chapter 10).

In fact, some of the early creative briefs used in the 1960s and 1970s did not contain any more questions than those that were just listed. These early creative briefs were linear in terms of the thinking involved. Most of the documents were designed to emphasize functional product benefits. The 1960s and 1970s were the heyday of new products with unique product attributes that could be turned into benefits.

The majority of early creative briefs were greatly influenced by the advertising agency Young & Rubicam (Y&R). The Y&R style of creative brief had five elements that worked in a sequential fashion. Figure 14.1 is an example of this style of creative brief.

This brief begins with a key fact. The key fact is the distillation of the research available on the brand and the market. It should be the one fact that is most relevant to the advertising of the given brand at the given time. There could be facts that are more compelling from a marketing perspective, such as a loss of distribution or a weakness in the commodity market, but those aren't key facts for a creative brief.

Another way to look at the key fact is that it sums up the situation. For example, in the case of Pace Picante sauce, the key fact was that 70 percent of consumers thought of Pace only as a dip for chips. Based on that key fact, you begin to see that the marketing problem is to broaden the brand's usage appeal.

The second part of the brief is defining the problem that advertising must solve. The statement of the problem should be related to the key fact, but it must be stated in terms of the consumer. There is a real temptation to state the problem based on what the brand needs. But what the brand needs belongs in the marketing plan, and what the consumer needs belongs in the creative brief.

In this case, the consumer problem was that women associated Pace with just serving chips and dips at party time but not for regular cooking. Yet women were always seeking ways to make their day-to-day meals more interesting.

The third part of the creative brief is the advertising objective. The objective is what you are trying to accomplish. In this case, the objective is to convince women that Pace can be used in a variety of ways to make their everyday meals more interesting.

Figure 14.1 Y&R Style Creative Brief (Pace Picante Sauce Example)

Key Fact

70 percent of consumers think of Pace Picante sauce for chips and dips while only 10 percent think of it as an ingredient for everyday cooking.

Problem That Advertising Must Solve

Women are always seeking ways to make their meals more interesting yet they are not aware that Pace could be an ingredient to help them do this.

Advertising Objective

Convince consumers that Pace can be used in a variety of ways to make everyday meals more interesting.

Target Market

Suburban housewives with children who are constantly on the go.

Creative Strategy

Demonstrate that Pace can add zest to everyday recipes such as meatloaf, soup, or casseroles.

The fourth part is the target consumer—that is whom we are addressing and what they are really like. This definition can include demographics as well as psychographics or lifestyle characteristics. In the case of Pace Picante sauce, the target is defined as suburban housewives who are constantly on the go.

The fifth and most important part of the creative brief is the creative strategy itself. What do we want to say? This connects the problem with the solution. The creative strategy in our example is to demonstrate other ways that housewives can use Pace sauce.

Finally, the creative brief contains the tone or personality of the brand. For advertising, it is the feeling or mood that you want to encompass. For Pace, the personality was lively, a bit irreverent, and fun.

This iterative process was driven largely by the clients that dominated the scene at Y&R, which was known as an agency for consumer packaged-goods accounts. As a result, the process was very linear and was correlated with the brand-positioning document that the brand presented to the agency team.

The fundamental building blocks of great communication certainly rest in these early documents. The key breakthrough in these documents was the stating of a consumer problem. Prior to the creation of these documents, advertising professionals were given marketing plans and asked to help the brand solve its problem. By turning the problem on its head, the documents began to force marketers to see the world from a different perspective. This helped lead the charge of much better and more compelling creative.

Leo Burnett Brief

Another early brief that has survived the test of time came from Leo Burnett. Burnett was also known as a very strong consumer packaged-goods agency based in Chicago. This agency was also known as the "critter" agency for developing brand icons such as Jolly Green Giant, Tony the Tiger, and the Marlboro Man, just to mention a few.

The Burnett brief boiled the process down to three steps. Figure 14.2 shows an example of a Burnett brief. The first part is to define the target. In this case, Burnett states as an objective: "to convince." In the example of Tide, it is to convince cost-conscious moms of active families. The initial part of the brief serves as the beginning of the objective.

The second part of the brief is "that," which is what we want the consumer to believe. This forms the basis for the creative strategy. In this case, Tide wants to convince cost-conscious moms that Tide will get clothes clean and keep them looking new.

The final part is "because." This is the reason or support behind what you are trying to convince the consumer of. In the case of Tide, the reason is that its special formula not only cleans clothes but keeps them from fading or fraying, and that is what keeps them looking new longer.

The Burnett brief is a distillation of the brand positioning statement. It forces a very strong point of view. As a result, it provides very clear direction to the creative team.

Project Brief

Creative briefs were designed to be campaign briefs. They provided overall direction for a campaign but not the specifics. Early creative briefs largely assumed that television would be the dominant medium. That was the case in the mid- to late-twentieth century.

The project brief was developed to provide direction for individual ads or specific projects within a campaign. Figure 14.3 provides an example of a typical creative project brief that agencies use today.

The project brief contains a pragmatic view of the advertising process. The first point is a description of the product or service being advertised, including any pertinent facts about it. Then it moves to a brief discussion of the target market, the second point. The third point is the advertising objective, discussing what the advertising is designed to achieve. The fourth point is when the discussion of media types and sizes that should be used in the campaign is added to the equation. This is something that earlier creative briefs did not address. The fifth point is the creative

Figure 14.2 Leo Burnett Brief: Tide Example

- Convince (Who): Cost-conscious moms of large blue-collar families with active children who wash clothes so frequently that they wear them out.
- That (What belief or benefit): Tide gets clothes their cleanest and keeps them looking new.
- Because (Why-reasons-support): Tide's formulation powers out stains while keeping clothes from fading or fraying and it is trusted and endorsed by the Cotton Association.

Figure 14.3 Typical Project Creative Brief

Question	Answer
What are we advertising?	Description of the product including all pertinent facts
Whom are we talking to?	Description of target audience
What is the objective?	Description of what the advertising is attempting to achieve
Where is the advertising running?	Schedule of media including types and sizes
What is the creative strategy?	A description of the selling proposition with rationale and copy points on product features and benefits
What else do we need to include in the advertising?	List of mandatories to be included, and list of items not to be included
When is the deadline?	Dates to review concepts and executions

strategy. This is a description of the selling proposition, including the details on rationale and specific features/benefits that would be included as copy points. The sixth and seventh points are the most pragmatic. They include a list of mandatory items or "must haves," which may include legal copy or any other items that are essential in the ad. Finally, there is a discussion of due dates for the initial concept work and for the final execution of the ads.

Contemporary Brief

Creative briefing has changed over time, and the creative brief itself has changed with it. One of the big changes is that the creative brief needs to direct the creative team, a digital team, a media team, a public relations team, and perhaps a marketing services team. As a result, the brief needs to

include broad thoughts on how to reach the target market as well as what

message will best motivate the target market.

Another thing that has changed in the United States is the state of most consumer categories. The United States is a very mature market for many consumer goods. As a result, many brands and categories have little product differentiation. This has led to much more focus on developing an emotional benefit difference rather than a functional benefit difference. Most initial creative briefs were developed when functional benefits were the mainstay of advertising and brands tended to have unique points of difference. But in today's parity landscape, marketers rely on emotional differences to separate one brand from another.

The other aspect of the contemporary brief is that it includes a discussion on accountability. It is important to know not only what success looks like but how to measure it. This becomes increasingly important as success is measured by behavior as well as changes in attitudes toward a brand. As more agencies and clients develop compensation programs with part of the compensation based on brand performance, it is in everyone's best interest to agree on how to measure success.

Now let's take a look at an example of a contemporary brief and walk through each aspect of it (see Table 14.1).

What Is the Problem?

The first part of the brief states the problem. This is similar to the earlier creative briefs, which stated the problem that advertising must solve. In the contemporary brief, advertising is one of many solutions to the consumer problem, so we don't want to be constrained by traditional thinking. With the changing nature of communications, it is a good idea to keep an open mind regarding the solution.

However, as in the other briefs, the problem should be stated in consumer language. While a marketing problem may be that "sales are soft," this is not a consumer problem. We need to know why sales are soft. For example, consumers may not be buying as much Dove soap as in the past because they believe that all soaps are the same.

As a part of stating the problem, it is also good to ask the question "Why are we advertising?" Or it may be a direct question to a client, "Why are you coming to us to solve your problem?"

These are questions that makes advertising agency management quiver. And as simple as it may seem, often the advertiser and the advertising agency aren't on the same page about it. More than half the problems that develop between a client and an agency can be traced back to the issue of creative strategy. Put another way, there is often a lack of understanding about just what the advertising is intended to accomplish. So, properly stating the problem

Tabe 14.1

Contemporary Brief

- 1. What is the problem?
- Whom are we marketing to?
- 3. What do they currently think and do?
- What do we want them to think and do?
- 5. What is the idea that will get them to think that way?
- What are the best ways to connect the idea to the consumer?
- What tone do we want to take?
- How will we measure success?
- What are the mandatories and key milestones?

and agreeing on it up front is a crucial step in developing the final advertising

To Whom Are We Marketing?

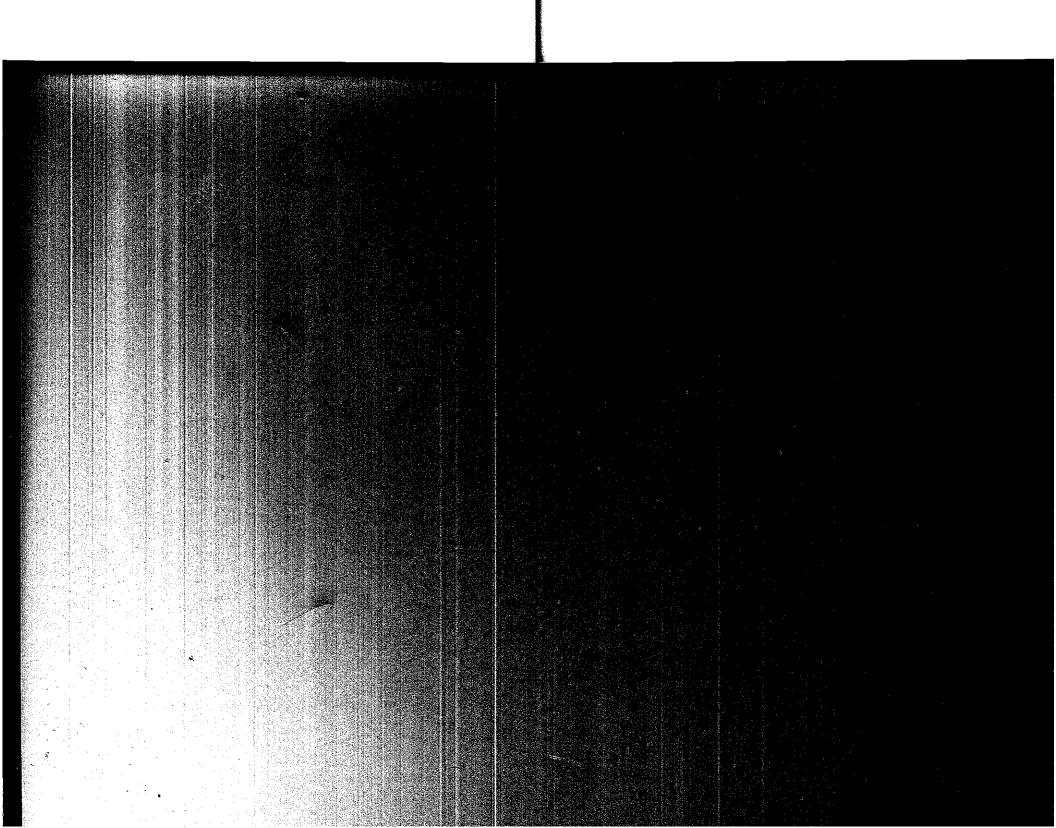
As we have discussed, when you describe to whom you are marketing, the description should be more robust than just a list of demographic characteristics. The goal is to paint a succinct picture of the consumer so that whoever is trying to solve the problem can understand the potential consumer.

For example, it is inadequate to say merely that your target is women who buy disposable diapers or engineers who specify silicon chips. This tells you who they are but not what they think or feel. This is where you need to draw a broader picture of motivations.

For example, a description of the target consumer as a finicky mom who always wants the best for her child or a senior engineer who strives to be at the leading edge of technology tells you something about how each of them thinks. This can be thought of as developing a character in a play or on a television show. You need to understand their motivations and the context in which they make decisions.

What Do They Currently Think and Do?

This is where you get inside the consumer's mind and determine what they currently think or believe about the brand and, as a result of that thinking,



how they behave. For example, consumers may think that all auto insurance companies are basically the same. As a result of that thinking, they will select the one that they believe is the cheapest or the one that they have heard of.

You should cover some diagnostic ground in this statement. You need to understand the awareness of the brand, preference for the brand, and attitudes toward it. In essence, you are looking to break down barriers to further adoption of the brand.

What Do We Want Them to Think and Do?

This is the major question, and it defines your vision of the brand. This is where you craft what you want the outcome of your effort to be. If consumers think of your brand as old and stodgy, then you may have a vision that the brand is now relevant. If consumers aren't considering your brand, then you want to persuade them to consider it first.

Crafting a brand vision is not just choosing the opposite of what consumers currently think and do. It is developing a brand destination. The vision has to be realistic yet aspirational. You are looking to change behavior with your campaign and to do that you are likely going to change the consumer's view of the brand.

This part of the briefing process is crucial for you, the account planner, and the client to agree upon. Unless you have a clear direction or destination, it is impossible to develop an idea and execution that will get you there.

What Is the Idea That Will Get Them to Think That Way?

Now is the time to discuss the big idea. This is something that will motivate the consumer to take the course of action that leads to the destination. This is the communication strategy. It could be a key benefit or a new way of looking at the brand. It could be some new information or some new emotional insight. Whatever the nugget, this is where you want to deliver it. This is also the point where you outline the reason that it is a compelling idea.

What Are the Best Ways to Connect the Idea to the Consumer?

This is where you can introduce a discussion about communication channels. Because this brief goes to media, public relations, digital, and other professional communicators, it is important to consider all forms of communication: traditional media vehicles, such as television or magazines, and nontraditional media, such as videogames, cell phones, or guerrilla activity.

There should be a discussion of digital channels and social media as well. The goal of this section of the brief is to stretch the boundaries of how to connect the idea to the consumer.

What Tone Do We Want to Take?

Here you want to reprise what the brand personality is all about. Your communication should reflect what tone you want to use in communicating about the brand. Again, this should be done on an aspirational basis. If the brand is perceived to be old and stodgy, the tone should avoid sounding that way. It should be in keeping with the brand personality while always moving it ahead.

How Will We Measure Success?

In this section of the brief, you should discuss how you will measure changes to consumers' perception or thinking about the brand as well as how to measure their behavior.

For a communications campaign, it is crucial to measure both the perception and the behavior of consumers. It is possible to change one and not the other. For example, you could offer an incentive to buy a car, which might change short-term behavior but might not really change the long-term perception of the brand. At the same time, you might be equally successful by driving people to a dealership to buy a car, but it may not be priced appropriately, so there will be no sale because you have changed the perception but not the final buying behavior.

Regardless of your brand's purchase dynamics and attitudes, this section is crucial to defining how you will proceed with a campaign. Each side of the consumer equation should be taken into account in the measurement of campaign success.

What Are the Mandatories and Key Milestones?

These two things are necessary in the campaign process. Mandatories are items that are required in the campaign, for example, the use of a slogan or an icon, a media sponsorship, or certain advertising media buys. The most common mandatories are legal mandatories, statements that you must make in any form of advertisement for that brand. Every company has something that falls into this category. If you are working on a pharmaceutical product, you may have a full page of legal disclaimers and mandatory copy. Other categories may have just a few, such as trademarks or copyrights. Regardless of what the mandatories are, they must be included in the campaign.

Milestones or a timeline must also be indicated in the brief. Every plan must have due dates. Typically, each step of the process is listed along with a target date of completion.

As you can see, the contemporary brief is much broader than earlier briefs. It is more expansive in the area of strategies, as both creative and media are included in the same brief.

In summary, while briefs have changed over time in response to a more complex marketplace, the fundamentals of good communication remain the same. The remedy for complexity lies in being simple and focused. The communications-briefing document is a way of gaining focus and having the entire agency marching to the beat of the same drummer.

Super Brief

The joke among many creative directors in advertising agencies is that a creative brief is truly a contradiction. It may not be creative, and it certainly isn't always brief. The tendency for many account managers, brand managers, and even account planners is to provide a wealth of information to stimulate the creative process. The idea is that more stimulus leads to more creativity.

In solving a problem, less is more. In his book Creative Advertising: Ideas and Techniques from the World's Best Campaigns, Mario Pricken offers an interesting method for stimulating creative thought: focus the creative team on a single question. In essence, he turns the big idea into a question. This allows the creative team to home in on what is truly the communication mission for the assignment.

We call this a super brief. It strips away all the nonessentials and focuses on a single goal. You hope that the creative team understands some of the background about the brand, the target, and the big idea. The role of the super brief is to free the team to execute ideas that solve a single problem.

The following are some examples of a super brief in action and the resulting creative. Figure 14.4 is an advertisement for Heinz Ketchup. The super brief question that helped foster this execution is "How do we demonstrate the benefit of slowness?" As you can see, making a snail from ketchup is a classic metaphor for indicating slowness. Based on this simple question, you could think of hundreds of ways to show slowness. Two simple ideas would be to build a Slow traffic sign using Heinz Ketchup or to show a classroom of anxious students watching a clock made of Heinz Ketchup. You can think of many more. The point is that using a single question frees the mind to think of many possibilities.

Figure 14.5 is an advertisement for the VW Golf in German. Regardless of the language, you can get the idea that this car is really fast. The dog

Figure 14.4 Example of a Heinz Ad



getting sucked into the seat is a universal message. The super brief question that fostered this execution was "How can we show that this new sports car accelerates faster than any other car?" The creative team developed an engaging yet simple way to solve this problem. As in the Heinz Ketchup execution, there are likely to be hundreds of other ideas that could demonstrate speed and acceleration. Showing the car with world-class sprinter Usain Bolt is one way to do it.

Figure 14.6 is an advertisement for Café del Mondo, a coffee product from Brazil. The execution shows the country of origin in the cup. The super brief question behind the execution was "How do we show the brand's origin in a unique way?" This clearly is a unique way to do it. The expected way to show the country of origin is to show people picking coffee beans on a hillside or romancing the product with a celebrity from that country. The question helped direct the creative team to step out of the norm and stretch for a unique solution.

The super brief is a strong method for providing clear creative direction. There should be no misunderstanding of the assignment. Turning the idea into a question presents the creative team with a challenge. There is one thing that highly creative people enjoy: a direct challenge.

Advertising Strategy

How do you sum up your strategy? If the CEO of a company asked for a clear, concise statement of objectives and strategies, how would you respond? As the creative team is developing a campaign to meet the objective, it is

Figure 14.5 Example of a Volkswagen Ad

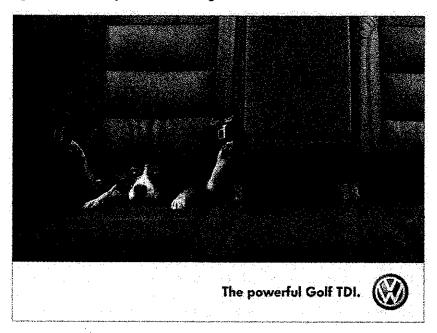
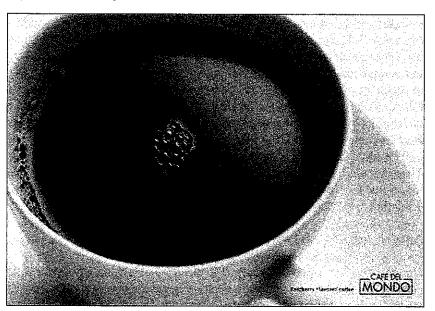


Figure 14.6 Example of a Café del Mondo Ad



up to the account planner to ensure that the campaign is on strategy. The best way to do this is to see whether what you are proposing to do matches what you want to accomplish.

This does sound pretty fundamental. However, the creative team often comes up with a campaign that everyone loves but is off strategy. If we return to the essence of the objective, which is to achieve a goal and a strategy by taking a specific action, we can draft an advertising strategy statement.

Here is an example for WD-40. Figure 14.7 shows a WD-40 advertisement. The advertising objective and strategy for WD-40 is as follows:

To demonstrate the versatility of WD-40 by providing examples of in-home and out-of-home usage where the product is the hero of the advertising. The mood and tone will be upbeat yet a bit irreverent.

That statement captures the essence of what WD-40 advertising is all about. It is simple, clear, and concise. It fits together.

Here is another example, for Energizer Battery (see Figure 14.8 for an Energizer advertisement).

To convince parents that Energizer batteries last an inordinate amount of time by creating a bunny that marches on and on through the years, powered by an Energizer Battery. The mood and tone of the advertising will be humorous.

The advertising strategy completes the campaign. It is the summary of the goal and how the creative execution matches that objective. This simple exercise is a great way to determine whether the creative execution really does match the objective. If you can't write a simple statement like the two prior examples, then you are likely to have a disconnect between the campaign and the overall strategic idea.

As the creative team develops campaign ideas from the creative brief, you should take the time to see whether the campaign idea would fit neatly into an advertising strategy statement. That will ensure not only that you have an award-winning creative execution but that it will produce an award-winning campaign.

Make the Briefing Come Alive

We have discussed how briefs have changed over time. These changes affect the execution of the brief. In the early days of advertising, a brief was addressed only to the creative department or the creative team. In many

Figure 14.7 Example of a WD-40 Ad

Did you hear a squeak when you turned that page?



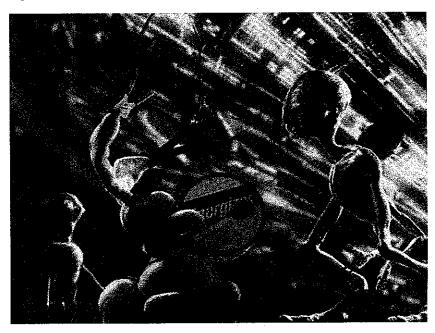
With WD-40 and the new Smart Straw you can take care of all those pesky squeaks and creaks from your home and everything inside of it. Remember, WD-40's special formula isn't just for lubrication. Check out all of the 2,000+ uses for WD-40 and other household repair tips from the pros by logging on to www.wd-40.com.



ways, initial briefs were glorified work orders. Although briefs were done in a thoughtful manner, they were written and delivered to the creative team as a part of the process. There was not a lot of fanfare in how they were delivered. They were matter of fact.

In today's advertising world, an account planner is required not only to write a strategically sound brief but also to use that brief to help inspire great creative work. The same amount of thought that goes into selling the creative brief is applied to actually writing the brief. The "briefing" itself can be as theatrical as the actual advertising that it is intended to generate.

Figure 14.8 Example of an Energizer Ad



The account planner uses this "briefing platform" to tell the story of the product within the context of the consumer target market. The passion that the account planner has for the strategy will be felt and reflected in the advertising. It is not unlike a coach selling his game plan to his team. If he isn't excited about it, his team will not be too likely to get behind it. The same is true here. The account planner must provide information as well as inspiration.

During the briefing process, it is critical that the account planner achieve three things. The first is to paint a vivid picture of whom the advertising will target. He can do this by developing personas, as we have previously discussed. But he can also do this by making a short video that dramatizes what the target is doing and feeling. These target videos are often used both within an advertising agency and with the client to gain a feel for the market beyond a simple written description.

The second is to inspire the team to seek a novel solution to the problem, which involves presenting the big idea in a new way. As in dramatizing the target market, the account planner may elect to use a short video to capture the idea. To do this, the video puts the big idea in context with the competitive set. The big idea is designed to move you outside the mainstream of the

category. By dramatizing the idea, the account planner can help inspire his team to reach for an unusual solution. The other aspect of inspiration may be to offer some ways to get team members thinking about how to break out of the pack. The role of the account planner is to champion creativity. The more you inspire the team, the better the end product will be.

The third is to use the briefing as a basis for quality control of ideas. You and the members of your team will be the arbiters of the final creative product. For creative to be effective, it must be not only distinctive but on strategy.

The brief and the briefing process are central to creating an award-winning campaign. The tighter the brief, the better the end result. And the more dramatically you can bring the brief to life, the greater the level of enthusiasm will be for the campaign.

Review Questions

- 1. How have briefs changed over time? Why have they changed?
- 2. Why does a brief need to match the overall brand positioning?
- 3. What does a brief have to do with the advertising message and media strategy?
- 4. What does the big idea have to do with media?
- 5. How does a creative brief differ from a project brief?
- 6. What is the purpose of the super brief?
- 7. How does advertising strategy differ from the big idea?

Discussion Questions

- 1. If a marketer has done a good job in crafting a marketing plan, why do you need an advertising brief?
- 2. In preparing advertising messages, why not just begin by writing or designing the advertisement?
- 3. Is the brief expressed only in words? Can it involve both words and images?
- 4. How do convergent and divergent thinking relate to the logical processes of inductive and deductive reasoning?

Additional Resources

Glazer, B., and D. Kennedy. Outrageous Advertising That's Outrageously Successful: Created for the 99% of Small Business Owners Who Are Dissatisfied with the Results They Get. Garden City, NY: Glazer-Kennedy, 2009.

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