



THINKTHINK!

When marketing directors need shooting dead Or the true value of awareness advertising, in our opinion.

*The fish, she never cackles 'bout
Her million eggs or so.
The hen is quite a different bird,
One egg and hear her crow!*

*The fish we spurn, yet crown the hen,
Which leads me to surmise:
"Don't hide your light, but blow your horn!
It pays to advertise!"
—Trad.*



Keeping your knowledge, expertise, products and services a secret probably isn't the best idea – unless, of course, you're the Ministry of Defence. If you want to sell, you do have to make some noise in the marketplace. So go ahead: blow your horn for all you're worth.

But wait. A few decades ago, this stuff called 'direct marketing' started to become popular. John Caples, Herschell Gordon Lewis, Drayton Bird and David Ogilvy – not in any particular order, and to mention only a few of the more famous names – were instrumental in changing the face of the whole way we thought about advertising. David Ogilvy wrote in one of his earlier 'my life in the business' books after he put a telephone number and a coupon on a leaflet and started receiving direct enquiries as a result: "I had tasted blood."

Who'd have thought it: you give your target audience a way of communicating with you and they, well, do just that. Amazing. Today, we wouldn't dream of running a campaign without appropriate ways for prospects to start the buying process. Would we? OK, it still happens. And it seems to ThinkThink that the more money that's unleashed on a campaign, the more direct marketing crimes are committed.

For example, last night's prime-time television featured no fewer than 14 thirty-second commercials with no call to action at all. Even if viewers were concentrating hard on what was being advertised (which they almost certainly were not), they were left with no way of enquiring about or purchasing the product. Two or three of the commercials had production values to rival a Hollywood blockbuster. The space on the TV channel itself would have run to tens of thousands of pounds per slot. And there was no way of buying or enquiring about the product. At all.

This is turpitude. The marketing directors who sanction such activity need shooting in the head. Put them out of their miserable, vain, insecure and nonsensical excuses for an existence. If I were the managing director or See, Eee, Oh! of the corporation that spent that amount of money on awareness advertising (what kind of justification is that? People do lie on surveys and wrestling, I'm sorry to have to tell you, is fixed.) I would ask, before pulling the trigger, some pretty serious questions. And then I'd turn the gun on myself in utter desperation.

ThinkThink is about to try to summarise the last fifty years of what we know about advertising in a few bullet points. There's a bombshell at the end, so stick with it.

We know that data is everything.

If we know who we're talking to, we can communicate with them better. The more time and money we invest in our data, the more successful our campaigns will be. And take a good look at the Data Protection Act's requirements – as well as preventing you from falling foul of the law, what the DPA says will save and make you money. Simple as that. ThinkThink will be doing a piece on this later.

Put a call to action on everything.

Please don't ever forget. TV commercials, leaflets, brochures, press ads. ThinkThink promises it won't hurt.

Unless you're selling stuff for babies, don't use babies.

Your children are beautiful to you and your 'life partner' alone. Harsh but true. Using babies in advertising is a mistake. Similar story with dogs. ThinkThink knows people who don't buy Andrex out of principle.

Put the proposition in the headline.

Think about what you're selling and what you want the reader (or viewer) to do and ask them to do it. In the headline. If your copywriter comes up with something really clever or funny that doesn't sell, ask them to have another bash. (ThinkThink admits he is asked to have another bash every so often. Especially when the only person that found the headline clever or funny was, um, him.) Really basic stuff this, but worth saying.

Get another opinion. One other opinion.

When you've briefed your agency and they come back a week or ten days later with the concepts, let them do the presentation, make your own judgement and then, the next day, pick what you think will work best (not your favourite, the one you think will sell hardest) and then show them all to a colleague who isn't familiar with the brief. Listen to what they say and give your own and their feedback to the agency. If your agency listens and understands, you'll get a successful campaign. You'll make money.

Alternatively, show the concepts to everyone in the office, your mum, the au pair and the landlady of the local pub before you make a decision. Because creating great advertising is best done with a mish-mash of ideas from a committee of various unqualified and disparate people. However, the agency for which ThinkThink writes, would really rather you didn't.

The bombshell. What advertising is now for.

ThinkThink took a while to get round to this – about two years, believe it or not. There is now only one purpose for advertising and one purpose is all. The singular raison d’etre of advertising is to point people in the direction of your website. Every weapon in the direct marketer’s armoury is there for the firing.

- Testing – you can put different URLs on the advertising and gather the results by measuring the hits.
- Knowledge – you can track where people go, what they look at and how long they stay. You can gather further information about their buying habits, what makes them tick – and what makes them click. You can get valuable information from your prospects directly by asking them to complete a questionnaire – and offering them an incentive to do so.
- Unlimited selling space – there’s only so much copy you can cram into an ad, only so many messages you can put in a commercial. Your website – or a tailored landing page on it – can fill your potential customers with reason after reason to buy.
- Dynamic content – you can adjust messages based on the knowledge you have acquired about your prospects. Sainsbury’s, for example, knows that ThinkThink is slightly partial to Rioja. Sainsbury’s also knows (because of ThinkThink’s Nectar card) that ThinkThink buys a particular brand of Rioja. So when Sainsbury’s started stocking another brand of Rioja, they emailed him to let him know – and offered a discount if he bought half a case of the stuff. It was on offer for £4.49 a bottle (which had to be a loss-leader). When it returned to its normal price of £7.49 a bottle, ThinkThink was already in the habit of buying the brand and merrily went on buying it. It was good, but a tad overpriced.

Here’s the message writ large: the only purpose of any advertising campaign you carry out is to direct people to a tailored landing page on your website. This is the new “don’t forget to put a call to action on your ads”. It’s sensible, elementary and vital.

Closing music

Clear Focus Design can help you build great, integrated campaigns. Come to us with a marketing problem and we’ll work with you to solve it. We have skills in direct-response advertising, direct mail, brochures, radio, websites and emarketing. We can also help you align your marketing strategy with your business or project plan to help ensure you get the maximum return on investment.

With Clear Focus, your marketing is measurable, profitable and provocative. **Call us now on 0845 225 0325.**



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