

HUBBARD COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE  
Saint Hill Manor, East Grinstead, Sussex

HCO POLICY LETTER OF 27 SEPTEMBER 1979

Remimeo  
Marketing Pers  
Copywriters  
Dir's Promo  
PRs  
Div 2  
Div 6

Marketing Series 13

PR Series 43

ADS AND COPYWRITING

References:

Marketing Series PLs  
PR Series PLs

Ad copy has got to carry a message. It is a communication.

Some photographers never find out that a photograph is a communication. Some artists never find out that art is a communication. And that is also true of some copywriters.

SPLIT SECOND TIMING

An ad is not textual information. It is a communication. But it has to be a very fast communication because people won't look at it very long. It has to be able to deliver its message in about a quarter of a second. That's how long it takes somebody to go through the reflex of throwing the piece away.

You could actually go around with a stopwatch and time how long it takes for a person to see if he is going to throw something away or not. It is that span of time that you have in order to absorb the message.

The actual test of a piece of ad copy is: WILL IT REGISTER IN THE INSTANT IT TAKES THE INDIVIDUAL TO PICK IT UP AND DECIDE HE IS GOING TO THROW IT AWAY?

If it communicates in that split instant of time he won't throw it away. That is the test of an ad or flier.

At each point a person would throw a promo piece away, he must be stopped. You have to figure out the cycle by which he would throw something away and then you can write the ad copy. You have to figure out the points of stop when a person is going to discard this thing and catch him on each one of them.

ADS AND THE COMM CYCLE:

DIRECTING THE PUBLIC

You must recognize that the public has to be able to send for something or be able to communicate easily or they don't buy the item. You have to direct the public. An ad or flier

must have something for them to do. It must give them somewhere to go, or someone to write to, or someone to call or contact. You first direct them. Then make it easy for them to respond. That's part of the comm cycle.

### LOOKING AT MADISON AVENUE

The beautiful artwork and gorgeous stuff you see in magazines is Madison Avenue's effort to keep people from throwing the piece away because it is aesthetic. But it doesn't communicate.

I've looked through a few magazines trying in vain to find out what to order and where to order it from. I had the wildest time and finally found in one magazine they had enclosed a card. But it wasn't actually a card, it was a piece of a card that had to be cut off another card. It wasn't recognizable as a card so I didn't recognize it as something you could use to send away for something. It just didn't register as a card, so there was no simple way to send away for the item.

Here's an example of an ad that doesn't communicate. It's an isolated object, beautifully photographed, sitting out in the middle of space. Then underneath it all they say they've just won an award for something or other. But what's the ad about? It doesn't say. The message isn't there. It doesn't communicate.

Here's another: It's actually supposed to be a cigarette ad but it shows somebody getting dragged on a sled through the snow. It's obvious what they're selling -- they're selling snow!

Most of the ads in the better magazines aren't ads at all, they're just assertions about a product. You will find that hardly any of them are ads that bring about exchange.

If this is the best of Madison Avenue, they don't know the basics of advertising.

If our promo people are looking at or studying that kind of ad all the time they won't be able to write good ads themselves. Because these aren't good ads. They don't communicate.

### SURVEYS AND COMMUNICATION

In magazines you have something on the order of half a million dollars worth of advertising or more. It has pretty poor impact.

It is very outpointy for grown men to be spending this much trying to trickily capture somebody's attention. They get so involved in the trickery of it that they don't communicate what they want, which is: "We want you to buy this product."

Advertising must represent something that people want which they are willing to exchange something for. The ad has to tell them what it is.

If you have a surveyed message, it has got to offer something. Advertising people, with all their flossiness, all of the color and everything else, aren't communicating.

Some ads use mainly only a symbol or a hallmark and attempt to make that into a communication. But you can't take a symbol or a hallmark and make it into a communication. They are just decorations. That doesn't make an ad.

You have got to get the communication that matches the survey. But promo people have found a new way of avoiding a survey. They just put it all down in the text, so the communication doesn't match the survey.

I realize that in school they teach you that you must be original. But communication is duplication. You do a survey, the public feeds you a button, so you just feed it back to the public. That's duplication. And it works. Don't make the mistake, in writing ads or copy or promotion, of thinking that you have to do something else besides feed the surveyed button back to the public.

### CONCLUSION

Actually, in advertising you haven't got any competition at all.

So why is it that some promo people don't write good ads? Because the ads they see all the time aren't good ads. That's the why!

The handling is to write good ads!

With the survey and promotion tech we have, and the tech we have on communication, there's absolutely no excuse whatsoever not to produce a good ad -- one that communicates!

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