



UNDERSTANDING ADVERTISING : 10 TIPS FOR CREATING A GREAT AD

What makes an ad great?

For WAN-IFRA from Prof. Bonnie Drewniany, University of South Carolina, USA

A great ad...

1. Grabs the attention of the target audience. You need a hook to make your audience want to stop what they're doing and pay attention to your ad. It may be something funny, a shocking statistic, or an emotional appeal.

2. Makes the audience interested in what you have to say. Now that you have their attention, you need to keep your audience engaged through the entire ad. Try reading your copy out loud. If you find yourself drifting off, go back and edit it.

3. Is relevant to the target audience. If you've done your homework, you know what matters to your audience. Appeal to their hopes, dreams and fears.

4. Is relevant to the product, service or cause being advertised. You could show a man standing on his head to attract attention, but unless you were selling pants with pockets that stay closed, what would be the point?

5. Is persuasive. What do you hope your audience will do after seeing your ad? Buy a product? Test-drive a new car? Go to a website for more information? Tell a friend about an issue? Donate money? Sign a petition? Write to a politician? Then tell your audience how they may do these things.

6. Speaks to one person at a time.

When people read or hear your copy, they should feel as if you're talking directly to them. Use the word "you" liberally and stick to singular nouns and verbs whenever possible.

7. Communicates a benefit. Tell your audience why your product, service or cause will make their lives better.

8. Has one main point. If one point is good, two must be better, and a dozen or more are even better, right? Wrong. You should develop one theme and follow it through. To illustrate this point, an art director once slammed a piece of cardboard against a small block of wood with 100 sharp nails sticking through. The cardboard remained intact because the nails formed a solid mass. He then slammed the cardboard against a single nail and bam! It broke through, proving that one single point is more powerful than many.

9. Translates jargon into human speak. Your fact sheet may say, "The biota exhibited a one hundred percent mortality response." That may sound great to a scientist, but what does it mean to an average person? "All the fish died" is a much better way to say it.

10. Follows the basic rules of grammar. Uses the present tense and active voice. Avoids clichés. Varies the length and structure of sentences.