How to create advertising that sells

by David Ogilvy

Ogilvy & Mather has created over $1,460,000,000 worth of advertising, and spent $4,900,000 tracking the results.

Here, with all the dogmatism of brevity, are 58 of the things we have learned.

1. The most important decision we have ever made is that the effect of your advertising depends more on this decision than on any other: How should you position your product?

2. In large cities, the size of an ad is the soul of an advertisement

3. Big idea. Every advertisement should contribute to the complex symbol which is the brand image. Ninety-five percent of all advertising is created ad hoc. Most products lack any consistent image from one year to another.

4. Big ideas. Unless your advertising is built on big ideas, it will be like a ship on the open ocean.

5. A first-class sticker. It pays to give your products an image of quality—a first-class sticker.

6. Don't be a hero. Nobody was ever killed by buying a product. Most advertising is impersonal, desolate, cold—and dull.

7. Innovate. Start trends—instead of following them. Advertising which follows a fashionable idea, or is in vogue, is seldom successful.

8. Be suspicious of awards. The pursuit of creative awards seduces creative people from the pursuit of sales.

9. Psychological segmentation. Every new product must be positioned in the consumer's mind to be successful. Ogilvy & Mather has learned to position products for psychological segments of the market. Our approach to positioning is to fit a new product into a position that is most likely to be successful.

10. What works best in television. Testimonials. Avoid irrelevant celebrities. Testimonials are always successful, if you make them credible. Avoid irrelevant celebrities whose fame has no connection with your product or your customers. Every new product must be positioned to be successful.

11. How to create advertising that sells. The secret is to create advertising that is strong enough to stand up to competition. Our approach is to create advertising that is strong enough to stand up to competition. We do this by creating advertising that is strong enough to stand up to competition.

12. What works best in print. Headlines. On the average, five times as many people read the headline as read the body copy. It follows that if you don't sell the product in the headline, you have wasted 90 percent of your money. That's why most Ogilvy & Mather headlines include the brand name and the promise.

13. What works best in print. Headlines. Headlines that promise a benefit sell more than those that don't.

14. News in headlines. The consumer is always on the lookout for new products, or new improvements in an old product, or new ways to use an old product.

15. Economists—every economist is a pessimist. Economists—every economist is a pessimist. They sell advertising as an investment. They say that advertising is a waste of money.

16. Simple headlines. Your headline should be the first thing that you see when you read the ad.


18. Musical backgrounds. Most commercialists use musical backgrounds. However, on the average, musical backgrounds reduce recall of your commercial. Very few creative people accept this.


20. Breaks. The stand-up pitch can be effective, if it is delivered with straightforward honesty.

21. Boring by design. The average consumer will see over 200 commercials a year, probably 70-80 percent of which are boring. This is why you advertise.

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At 60 miles an hour, the loudest noise in this new Rolls-Royce comes from the electric clock.

20. Line advertising. In local advertising, its says to include the name of the city in your headline.

21. Select your prospects. When you advertise a product which is consumed only by a special group, it pays to "flag" that group in your headline—"mothers, homemakers. going to Europe?"

22. Yes, people read long copy. Readership falls off slightly after 50 words, but drops very little between 50 and 150 words. (This page contains 600 words, and you are reading it.) Ogilvy & Mather has used long copy—with notable success—for Mercedes-Benz, Germain Grand, Merrill Lynch and Shell gasoline.

23. More you sell, the more you sell.

24. Story appeals in picture. Ogilvy & Mather has gotten notable results with photographs which suggest a story. The reader looks at the photographs and asks himself: "What goes on here?" Then he reads the copy to find out.

25. Photographs vs. artwork. Ogilvy & Mather has found that photographs work better than drawings—almost invariably.