

How Advertising Is Changing

Do you suspect that Digital Video Recorders (DVRs) are keeping most people from seeing your ads on TV? Are you convinced that radio is losing its listeners to satellite radio and the iPod? Do wonder if the newspaper readers of yesterday aren't getting their news from the internet today?

It's no secret that advertising isn't working as well as it once did. But media fragmentation isn't the problem.

In truth, only 11.7% of American households are equipped with a DVR, but response to TV ads is off by far more than 11.7 percent. Broadcast radio has lost only about 4 percent of its audience over the past 3 years and even the most aggressive doomsayers are predicting that radio will have lost no more than 11 percent of its audience by the year 2010. But response to radio ads is off by far more than that. Newspaper readership peaked in 1984 and today's number is only about 16% below that banner year. But the response to newspaper ads isn't nearly what it was back then.

What's going on?

We've entered the age of stimuli bombardment, visual saturation, sound bites, the micro attention span. The number of images and voices shouting for our attention has accelerated beyond critical mass and the resulting explosion has fragmented the public mind. In a nutshell, we've developed mental filters to guard against hyper-communication.

I'm paid according to how much my clients grow. So I don't really care what the problem is. My job is to find it and fix it. Here's what I discovered, tested and proved. Hopefully it will help you:

1: Internet surfing has trained the public to more quickly disregard empty words.

2: Message relevance has become more important than repetition. (I did *not* say repetition no longer matters.)

Bottom line: Meaningful messages are working better than ever, especially when the fundamental premise of your ad is clearly stated in the opening line. Ads full of unsupported claims and overworked "image-building" phrases are rejected today quicker than ever before.

You and I spend about a minute a day sorting the mail, right? Up until a few years ago, these 6 minutes each week were our only exercise in the high-speed evaluation of content. But now we're spending at least **6 hours** a week scanning search engine results and web pages for relevant, meaningful information. These hours of practice are teaching us – and our customers – to more quickly recognize and disregard empty words.

The buying public is still out there. What's gone is their willingness to pay attention to drivel.

Ads are failing today that would have once produced good results just a few years ago. Other ads are working far better than expected. Fortunately, there is a pattern.

To see the kind of results that advertising can still deliver, you're going to have to:

1. Talk about things your customer actually finds interesting.
2. Write your ads in a style that rings true.
3. Avoid heroic chest thumping, such as "*We are the number one...*"
4. Close the loopholes in your ads. Ambiguous claims make you seem dishonest.
5. Use specifics. They're more believable than generalities.
6. Remember that substance is more important than style.
7. Relate to your customers on their own terms.

If your ad delivers a meaningful message that rings true from the moment of contact, you'll find that it works regardless of which media you choose to deliver it.

The new rule is to say what you've got to say. And say it clean.

The opening line is the most important, so open big. I'm not talking about hype; "Save up to 75 percent off this week only at blah, blah blah." I'm talking about making a statement that is fundamentally more interesting than what had been in your customer's mind.

Here are a couple of copyrighted examples:

I believe there's only **ONE** reason why Diamonds exist...

Diamonds exist, rare and beautiful, to symbolize something even **more** rare and **more** beautiful... Love. Pure and simple, sparkling and bright, *love*.

To be given a diamond is a magical thing. Wear it... and **know** you are loved.

And know **this**, too: No matter how *perfect* the diamond... no matter how *pure* the gold... it can never be as beautiful as the *love* it represents. A diamond means you are **connected** to someone who loves you, even when you're apart.

Diamonds exist to carry **that sparkle of love** from someone's heart. (*You gotta love that sparkle-of-love.*)

Are you someone who's **getting** a diamond this Christmas?

I hope so. And I hope you'll always remember what it means.

Are you someone who's **giving** a diamond this Christmas? *Wow. You're REALLY lucky. Few moments in life are as special as the moment you say, "That's it. That's the one. That's the diamond I'm giving to the girl I love."*

The stars are sparkling for **you** tonight; *a million diamonds in the sky.*

Merry Christmas. From your friends at _____ Jewelers.

See? That message could be delivered as a 60-second TV or radio ad, or as the text in a greeting card, or as an email in your inbox. Didn't really sound like an ad, did it? That's the point. It didn't use the language of advertisers. It spoke to you in the language of a friend.

Here's an example of **closing the loopholes** in another copyrighted ad that would otherwise have been perceived as hype:

Green Fees + Condo = \$20

It's a Myrtle Beach Miracle. No strings attached.

We want you to get to know us at Condotels and we're willing to lose a few bucks to make it happen.

Put yourself in our shoes. Nothing is more frustrating *or more expensive* than advertising that doesn't work. So we did the math. Financially, it makes a lot more sense for us to help pay for your next golf outing than it does to pump out ads that don't work.

So here's the deal:

4 days of golf at 3.5 and 4-star courses: Tradition Golf Club, International Club, Wachesaw Plantation East and Indigo Creek.

Golf from Dec 8 to Jan. 25

You and 3 friends stay 3 nights in a 2-bedroom (4 beds) 2-bath condo at Golf Colony.

Green fees + Condo = \$20 per golfer/per day

**The total 4-day/3 night package price
is \$80 per golfer x 4 golfers: \$320 total.**

Want to golf between now and December 7?

This same package is only \$39.50 per golfer/per day.

Here's what we get out of it: *Four people telling all their friends back home how much better it is to stay in a condo than in a hotel.*

This whole thing sounds too good to be true, right?

Let us tell you what we're up against: Four short years ago, Myrtle Beach had 73,000 rooms for rent. Today it's 92,000 rooms. *Our job at Condotels is to rent out our clients' condos when they're not using them.* And we've got a lot of condos to rent.

The Condotels check-in desk is open 24/7, just like a hotel, and we're not hard to find. Just pick up your keys and go to your condo. Do it once and you'll never stay in a hotel again.

Not interested in golf? Want to take the family to a luxury, oceanfront condo with a balcony overlooking the beach? Talk to us. We're knee-deep in condos like that.

Condotels has decided to spend its ad budget serving you instead of annoying you.

Book a golf outing or beach vacation with us. Let us know it's working.

Sincerely,

Chipper Chip Olin

Please keep in mind that both of the ads used as examples are copyrighted. So don't use the ads. Use the technique. It's really all you need to begin seeing the kinds of results that advertising can still deliver.

Roy H. Williams