



The Wizard of Ads

By Roy H. Williams

» **QUICKREAD** » Forty years is the length of time a true "generation" stays in power. » But in the waning years of each generation, "alpha voices" ring out as prophets in the wilderness, giving us a glimpse of the generation that will soon emerge. » AOL and Google.com are the Kerouac and Salinger of the brave new generation. Chuck Berry and Elvis Presley have become Tupac Shakur and Eminem. » Today, 72 million teenagers will once again re-colorize the world. Will AM/FM radio be their vehicle? » Radio needs a hero and, frankly, I don't see one on the horizon. Instead, I see wheezing geezers encouraging you to run yesterday's promotions, play yesterday's jingles and hire yesterday's announcers. » Yesterday's styles of selling aren't working as well as they did yesterday. » Geezers should step aside and begin listening to younger women and men.

1963 All Over Again

We just finished 1963 for the second time.

Forty years is the length of time a true "generation" stays in power. Social change is usually evolutionary during those four decades, rather than revolutionary. But in the waning years of each generation, "alpha voices" ring out as prophets in the wilderness, giving us a glimpse of the generation that will soon emerge, like a baby chick struggling to break out of its shell.

Ten years before 1963, the literary alpha voices that called to the emerging baby boomers were Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* and J.D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*. The musical alphas that rang out five years later (1958) were Chuck Berry and Elvis Presley. In '63, we encountered the Beatles, followed by the Rolling Stones, and the world began rapidly changing its stripe and color. The passing of the torch from the duty-bound WWII generation into the hands of the "do your own thing" baby boomers was officially under way.

AOL and Google.com are the Kerouac and Salinger of the brave new generation that will soon pry the torch from the hands of baby boomers reluctant to let it go. Chuck Berry and Elvis Presley have become Tupac Shakur and Eminem, and the Boomers' reaction to these two is much like their own parents' reaction to Chuck and Elvis. Instead of saying, "Take a bath, cut your hair, and get a job," we're saying, "Pull those pants up, spin that cap around, and wash your mouth out with soap."

At the peak of the baby boom, there were 74 million teenagers in America; and

Top 40 radio carried that whole generation on its shoulders. Today, there are 72 million teenagers who will once again re-colorize the world. Will AM/FM radio be the vehicle that carries them home?

Radio needs a hero and, frankly, I don't see one on the horizon. Instead, I see wheezing geezers encouraging you to run yesterday's promotions, play yesterday's jingles and hire yesterday's announcers.

Baby-boomer heroes were perfect icons, larger than life, brash and beautiful: Muhammad Ali... Elvis... James Bond. Boomers rejected conformity; and their attitude swept the land, changing even the mores of their fuddy-duddy parents. Today's emerging generation is rejecting pretense. Remember; they created Austin Powers as a flagrant mockery of all that James Bond stood for. Born into a world of hype, their internal BS meters are highly sensitive and amazingly accurate. This is why — in the media and on the sales floor — tried and true selling methods that worked as recently as a year ago are no longer working. Trust me, I know.

The world is again changing stripe and color.


No one on earth could read Egyptian hieroglyphics until Napoleon Bonaparte discovered the Rosetta stone in 1799. That stone — more than 5 feet tall — told the same story in three languages. Two of those languages we could read. The third language was hieroglyphics. Armed with the insights gained from studying the Rosetta stone, the wealth of a whole society, ancient Egypt, became available

to those who took the time to learn the new language.

Those of you who manage Hip-hop and Rap stations are probably in touch with everything I'm saying, and I'll wager that you agree with me. But if you manage a baby-boomer format and are confused and disturbed by the changes that you see happening all around you, there are three things that you can do:

1. Pretend it isn't happening and that it won't affect your future business. (Let me know how this works out for you.)
2. Rage against it. (Amen, brother, I agree. But who can stand against a shifting tide?)
3. Search for a Rosetta stone that will give you a window into the minds of these barbarians at the gate so that, if their attitude continues to sweep the land, at least you'll know how to do business with them.

If you choose option 3, I believe you'll find the movie *8 Mile* — starring Eminem, playing himself — to be a good place to start.

Please understand that I'm not talking about radio formats. I'm talking about the forces that are shifting our culture and reshaping the attitudes of the American people. I'm talking about why yesterday's styles of selling aren't working as well as they did yesterday. I'm talking about why geezers should step aside and begin listening to younger women and men. 

Roy H. Williams is president of Wizard of Ads Inc. and may be reached at Roy@WizardofAds.com.



» **QUICKREAD** » There are four kinds of reps selling radio. Each can be successful, but only one of them gains a media buyer's respect. » "Wally" is eager to please. He expects you to buy from him because you *like* him. » "Prim" is all business, and she wants you to know it. She controls the conversation, making prospects feel as though they're on the witness stand. » "Pugsley" is openly adversarial and considers "selling" to be a battle of wits, with the prospects as his mortal enemy. He listens only to contradict and point out flaws. » "Sarah" is flexible, relaxed and open, and she enters the conversation without preconceptions. Her questions are only for clarification, not for setting you up. You get the feeling that she will do her best to deal with you on your own terms. » Media buyers come in as many stripes and colors as do account executives. The job of a sales manager is to match the right AE to the right buyer.

A Buyer's Perspective

For the first time in three years, I recently spent a week on the telephone, interacting with major-market account executives. My media buyer was in Europe for the holidays, so I hunkered down and hoped for the best.

(Sigh) I was hoping things had changed.

There are basically four kinds of reps selling radio today. Each of these can be successful, but only one of them gains my respect. See if you can figure out who it is:

WALLY is a terrier, eager to please, a real tail-wagger: "Can I get you some concert tickets, can I, huh, can I?" "Did the client tell you about all the extra things we did for them this year? Did she, huh, did she?" "You should come out so we can play golf together. Do you like golf? Do you play, huh, do you?" Wally wants to be your friend, your brother, your ally, your pal. He expects you to buy from him because you like him. Wally is the favorite rep of every media buyer who uses their client's money to go shopping for freebies.

PRIM is a lawyer, a cold accountant with a briefcase, an IRS auditor — all business — and she wants you to know it. Prim seizes control of the conversation by asking you a rapid-fire series of carefully prepared questions, making you feel as though you're on the witness stand, being cross-examined in a murder trial: "Be careful. Everything you say can and will be used against you." Prim reminds me of the iron-clad doctor's assistant that takes your pulse, tells you to strip and then gives you that pathetic paper robe to wear just before the doctor comes in to shove something cold

Media buyers come in as many stripes and colors as do account executives. The job of a sales manager is to match the right AE to the right buyer. It's called "Selling Customers Their Way."

where it doesn't belong. Prim is the favorite rep of her twin sister, the media buyer without a pulse.

PUGSLEY is a pugilist, a boxer — openly adversarial. He not only keeps a chip on his shoulder, but he also juts his chin proudly toward it to make sure you know it's there. Pugsley considers "selling" to be a battle of wits and you to be his mortal enemy. He never believes a word you say. Pugs listens only so that he may contradict you and point out flaws in your plan. He is able to railroad weak and indecisive buyers. Strangely, he also gets the money of egotistical buyers who feel that they "won" because they "beat him down."


SARAH is flexible. Relaxed and open, she enters the conversation without any preconceptions. When she asks a question, it's only for clarification, not because she's trying to "set you up" like a bowling pin, hoping to knock you down later. Sarah's questions differ from those of Prim, in that they are usually related to something you just said. Prim's questions come out of nowhere; she has her own agenda and isn't much interested in yours. When the conversation is winding down

and you have said all that you wanted to say, Sarah asks, "Can I ask you few questions?" Again, you get the feeling that she is going to do her best to deal with you on your own terms. If that can't happen, then it can't, but Sarah is going to do the best she can. Entrepreneurs — direct clients — and honest media buyers wish that all media sales reps were like Sarah.

As I mentioned in my opening comments, each of these four sellers can be successful, because media buyers come in as many stripes and colors as do account executives. The job of a sales manager is to match the right AE to the right buyer. It's called "Selling Customers Their Way."

Personally, I will endure Wally's slobbering, though he disgusts me. Likewise, I can buy from Prim, though I always feel mildly insulted by her. Sarah, of course, is a pleasure and a treasure.

And I do everything I can to figure out how to leave Pugsley's station off the buy.

But that's just me. I'm sure none of the other media buyers are like that. 

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» **QUICKREAD** » Written words have no meaning until they've been translated into the spoken words they represent. » Wernicke's area of your brain attaches the sounds we call nouns to the persons, places and things they represent. » Meanwhile, Broca's area in your brain attaches the verb sounds to provide the action. » Wernicke and Broca allow you and me to speak worlds into existence. » Speak a new world into your own consciousness, and you will have mastered motivation and goal-setting. » Speak a world into the mind of another, and you'll have learned the art of persuasion.

Speaking Worlds Into Existence

Come with me, and I'll take you to where an invisible ballerina shoves icy clouds through the night. She pauses to spin on hilltops and watch the leaves fall sighing, to lie among the bones of other white leaves from other cold years. Down in the village, little dogs bark like freight trains. Or was that only the ballerina's song? Come. It is time for us to go.

Interestingly, written words have no meaning until they've been translated into the spoken words they represent. In the paragraph above, Wernicke's area of your brain attached the sounds we call nouns — "ballerina," "clouds," "hilltops," "leaves" and "bones" — to the persons, places and things they represent. Meanwhile, Broca's area in your brain attached the verb sounds — "shoves," "pauses," "spin," "fall" and "lie" — to provide the action. According to M.I.T.'s Professor Stephen Pinker, the ability to attach complex meanings to sound is the singular gift that allows mankind to reign supreme. Animals have the ability to attach meanings to a few simple sounds, but it is Wernicke and Broca that allow you and me to speak worlds into existence.

Speak a new world into your own consciousness, and you will have mastered motivation and goal-setting. Speak a world into the mind of another, and you'll have learned the art of persuasion. People can do only what they have first imagined. Your ability to cause others to imagine doing what you want is the measure of your ability to motivate and persuade.

Do you have the courage to speak possible worlds into existence? Will you say what others are afraid to say? The creative use of language is the very essence of selling. It is also the strength of radio. Think about it. If commercial radio remains what it is today — little more than a music

delivery vehicle — it is doomed. Emerging technologies will continue to erode commercial radio until it becomes only a pale shadow of its former self. Learn to harness the power of words, however, and all your dreams become possible.

Give me an open mind, and I'll give you something else to think about:

In the first 25 verses of Genesis, chapter one, God *speaks* a universe into existence, then creates a miniature of himself and calls it man:

"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule ... over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

"As the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it." — Isaiah 55

So we clearly see that, according to the Bible, God's word goes out from him to reveal his will and bring new things into existence. And just as God is the father of his words, you and I are the fathers (and mothers) of our own.

In the opening chapter of John, we read: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made."


Another intriguing incident is recorded

in Genesis, chapter 11:

"Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words. It came about as they journeyed east... they said, 'Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.' The Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. The Lord said, 'Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another's speech.' So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of the whole earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth."

Isn't it interesting that when God saw man attempting to become his own god that he thwarted man's effort by confusing his speech? Evidently, language is a very powerful thing... "And now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them."

What new worlds will you speak into existence — in your own heart — and in the hearts and minds of others?

Are you committed to learning to harness the power of words? 

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» **QUICKREAD** » When the results of a newspaper ad are disappointing, the advertiser never blames the newspaper or the quality of its readers. » Newspaper reps are not smarter than radio reps, but they have a better selling system. » Newspaper reps are happy to sell mass media — they don't specialize in "targeting." » Newspapers never sell their readership by section; they sell their weekly cume. » A radio rep, selling like a newspaper rep, would say, "The secret is to buy enough repetition to ensure that you've reached most of [your] total audience with enough repetition to make sure they think of you immediately when they have need of what you sell."

The Genius Of Newspaper Reps

When the results of a newspaper ad are disappointing, the advertiser never blames the newspaper or the quality of its readers. Newspaper advertisers instinctively know that their offer — the message of their ad — was somehow off target. But let that same advertiser experience disappointing results from a radio schedule, and they will always blame the station for "not having the right audience" or radio in general for "not being able to generate sales."

Why is this? Is it because newspaper reps are smarter than radio reps? No, it's because they have a better selling system.

Unlike radio reps, newspaper reps are happy to sell mass media. In other words, they don't specialize in "targeting." Newspaper reps never say, "The secret is to reach the right people."

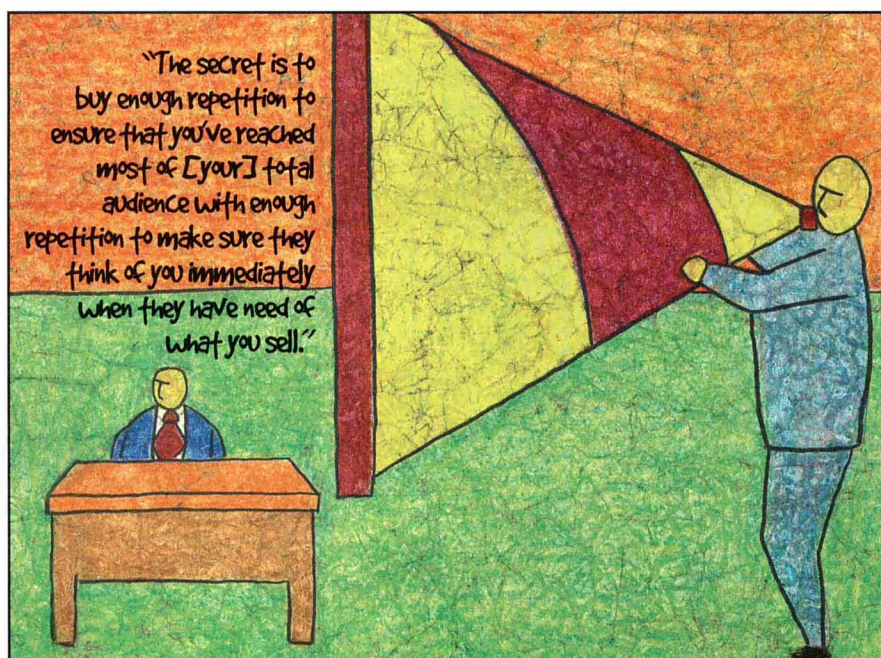
The second thing that newspapers do differently from radio folks is that they never sell their readership by section. They don't make a big deal out of how many people read the Lifestyle section vs. the Sports section vs. the Business section. In other words, they sell their weekly cume. Here's how a presentation would sound if radio were sold the way newspaper is sold:

"My station has a total audience of 325,000 people. Is that enough to make a difference in your business?"

"What kinds of people are they?"

"All kinds: young people, older people, men, women, white-collar, blue collar. Our audience includes people you would never imagine." (Sales rep walks to the window and points outside.) "Our audience is pretty much those people, the ones you see out there. And with 325,000 listeners, you can bet that number includes a lot of people who would love to shop here if they only knew more about you."

"So you're saying that, if I ran an ad on



your station, it would reach 325,000 people?"

"No, no, no. I'm sorry if I led you to believe that. The whole 325,000 is never listening all at one time. It's sort of like how a newspaper reader never reads all the ads in the paper. The secret is to buy enough repetition to ensure that you've reached most of the total audience of 325,000 with enough repetition to make sure they think of you immediately when they have need of what you sell. The secret of using radio successfully is to be sure that yours is the company they think of first and feel the best about when they need what you sell. The first step is to drill past working memory and semantic memory to create episodic, declarative memory in the mind of the public. Then, with sufficient repetition, you can create procedural memory. Involuntary and automatic, procedural memory is the neurological

essence of true branding. Hasn't your newspaper rep ever explained this to you?"

The conversation you've just read is not a fairy tale. It's happening hundreds of times a day. It's the hallmark of the top radio billers in North America.

Damn! Who would've ever thought that the secret to selling more advertising would be to sell the cume rather than the average quarter hour, and long-term rather than short-term? The newspaper and the Yellow Pages, that's who.

To learn the details of how to do this every day and double your billing, come to the next sales conference sponsored by Radio Ink.

I'll see you there.

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» **QUICKREAD** » Why do so few radio people dive deep into their craft? » Is it because they're frightened that the truth behind the magic is simpler than they'd ever dared dream? » Listen to the words of the great ones for the simple truths. » The world is waiting for an unreasonable helper to help make their dreams come true. Will it be you? » You will succeed to the degree that your client succeeds.

The Truth Behind The Magic

In his 1881 essay on the *Technical Elements of Style in Literature*, Robert Louis Stevenson, the author of *Treasure Island*, wrote: "There is nothing more disenchanting to man than to be shown the springs and mechanism of any art. All our arts and occupations lie wholly on the surface; it is on the surface that we perceive their beauty, fitness, and significance; and to pry below is to be appalled by their emptiness and shocked by the coarseness of the strings and pulleys."

Might this be the reason that so few radio people dive deep into their craft? Is it because they're frightened they'll be "appalled and shocked" when they find the truth behind the magic is simpler than they'd ever dared dream?

You say you're not scared? Then hang on tight, because today, Toto is pulling back the curtain to reveal the truth. Hear it straight from the mouths of the great ones:

"Do what you can, with what you have, where you are."

— Theodore Roosevelt

In other words, quit whining.

"When people talk, listen completely. Most people never listen."

— Ernest Hemingway

Take Hemingway's advice and you'll find friends on every corner.

"I've got a great gimmick. Let's tell the truth."

— Bill Bernbach

Don't just repeat what you were told to say, like some kind of mindless parrot. Tell the brazen truth without blinking. Clients intuitively know when they're talking to a chattering windup toy.

"If you have an important point to make, don't try to be subtle or clever. Use a pile driver. Hit the point once. Then come back and hit it again. Then hit it a third time — a tremendous whack."

— Winston Churchill

If you really want to succeed, read Churchill's advice two more times before continuing on with the rest of this column. And then read it one last time. Out loud.

"When you can, always advise people to do what you see they really want to do, so long as what they want to do isn't dangerously unlawful, stupidly unsocial, or obviously impossible. Doing what they want to do, they may succeed; doing what they don't want to do, they won't."

— James Gould Cozzens

Don't try to change your client's pattern of lifelong habits. Get in step with them instead.

"There's no secret formula for advertising success, other than to learn everything you can about the product. Most products have some unique characteristic, and the really great advertising comes right out of the product and says something about the product that no one else can say. Or at least no one else is saying."

— Morris Hite

"You must make the product interesting, not just make the ad different. And that's what too many of the copywriters in the U.S. today don't yet understand."

— Rosser Reeves

"We want consumers to say, 'That's a hell of a product,' instead of 'That's a hell of an ad.'"

— Leo Burnett

You will succeed to the degree that

your client succeeds. Never forget it.

"Can advertising foist an inferior product on the consumer? Bitter experience has taught me that it cannot. On those rare occasions when I have advertised products which consumer tests have found inferior to other products in the same field, the results have been disastrous."

— David Ogilvy

Don't promise losers that your station will make them successful. It won't.

"We must keep in mind the story of the statistician who drowned while trying to wade across a river with an average depth of four feet. That is to say, in a culture that reveres statistics, we can never be sure what sort of nonsense will lodge in people's heads."

— Neil Postman

Don't get hung up on statistics. They obscure the truth as often as they reveal it.


"The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends upon the unreasonable man."

— George Bernard Shaw

Don't cave to the system. Be the unreasonable man or woman.

"The big question is whether you are going to be able to say a hearty 'yes' to your adventure."

— Joseph Campbell

So what's your answer? Are you up for this adventure? The world is waiting for an unreasonable helper to help make their dreams come true. Will it be you? 

Roy H. Williams is president of Wizard of Ads Inc. and may be reached at Roy@WizardofAds.com.



» QUICKREAD » What if a potential client asks, "I don't have any money, and I'm desperate for business. What are some really inexpensive ways I can advertise?"
» Time and money are interchangeable: Remember the BMW repairman who leaves a card and personal note on BMWs in a parking lot. **»** High rent is another form of advertising: Be where the people are, and let them see you at work. **»** Free samples are often cheaper than advertising. **»** When you have little to no ad budget, it's especially important that you make a compelling offer.

Think Bigger Than Radio

You've heard me say it before: "The most credible radio reps are those who can intelligently discuss marketing strategies without having to twist every other statement into a left-handed sales pitch for radio." Sadly, in my experience this is only about one of every seven AEs.

Radio trade organizations and radio group heads tend to think only in terms of teaching their people how to "sell," never quite realizing that the least-effective salesperson is the one whose obvious motive, objective and focus is to "close the sale and get the money." That way of thinking is what keeps radio stuck in the 1950s.

Anyone employed in an advertising-related business will occasionally get a request from a friend, relative or neighbor in a one-man business: "I don't have any money, and I'm desperate for business. What are some really inexpensive ways I can advertise?"

I always tell these people that the things to remember when developing a shoestring marketing plan are these:

1. Time And Money Are Interchangeable — I have a young mechanic friend who specializes in older-model BMW automobiles. In his glove box are several dozen 5X7 flyers that say, "I specialize in fixing BMWs just like this one. Is it running like it should?" Whenever work is slow, he drives through big parking lots where there are hundreds of cars and looks for older BMWs. When he finds one, he slips the flyer under the windshield wiper after scribbling to the owner a little personalized note such as "Arctic Blue has always been my favorite color on this model. You should be proud of it." He usually begins getting calls on his

cell phone while he's still out distributing flyers. Another friend specializes in replacing old picture windows with fancy bay windows. Guess where he puts his flyers? You guessed it — on the front doors of old houses with big picture windows. Works like a charm.

2. High Rent Is Another Form Of Advertising — Be where the people are, and let them see you at work. Have you ever noticed the shoeshine guys at the airports? They usually make a small fortune, even though they have to pay the airport unbelievably high rent to be there. But it's still a lot less money than they would have to spend to generate the same amount of business through advertising. Is there a place where people could see you at work? Imagine the volume of business a shoe-repair person could do at one of those little kiosks in the mall. After having seen him at work, hundreds of people would begin tossing their old shoes into the car whenever they were headed to the mall. Why isn't anyone doing this?


3. Free Samples Are Often Cheaper Than Advertising — A few years ago, I began working with a client in the frozen-custard business. He said he would be happy to invest \$10,000 in advertising if he was guaranteed to get 500 new customers. When I pointed out that this was \$20 per new customer, he reminded me that anytime someone tried his product, the person was usually hooked for life, and he would quickly make back his investment. It was the middle of winter, though, and his two custard stands had no inside dining. I told him to prepare all the custard mix possible if he kept his machines running non-stop from 9 a.m. till midnight and

then get a good night's sleep. The next day, I began airing a 60-second radio ad twice every hour on a medium-sized station in his town. The ad offered a free, full-sized cone to everyone in town; all they had to do was get to the store before midnight. We gave away more than 11,000 cones that day at a total cost of less than \$3,000 — including the advertising. His business literally exploded, and now he's franchising nationally. The cost of free sampling is incremental. If no one responds to your offer, it costs you nothing. If it costs you a lot, it's only because it worked well. So what are you waiting on?

4. It's What You Say That Matters Most — When you have little to no ad budget, it's especially important that you make a compelling offer. There are no "right people to reach" when you're saying something that no one cares about. I've never seen a business fail because they were reaching the wrong people — but I've seen hundreds fail because they were saying the wrong thing.

If you want people to call you and ask if they can please buy advertising from you, here are the steps toward making that happen:

- Help everyone who asks you for help, even if all you can give them are a few pointers and a bit of encouragement.
- Know how to use more than just radio in the sales plan.
- Always check back later to see how things are going. In other words, prove that you actually care.

You do care, don't you? 

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» **QUICKREAD** » Logic and reason reside in your brain's left hemisphere — your intellect, or mind. » Intuition or gut feelings make their home in your right brain — your heart, or soul. » Not only does your right brain not distinguish fact from fiction, it doesn't care. » Humans attach complex meanings to sounds. Some sounds are words. » Words encoded in music are words no longer. Sidestepping the analytical left hemisphere of the brain, song lyrics are processed in the unguarded right. » Learn to speak to both halves of your clients' brains. » Learn to harness the competing languages of sound, and work the true magic of radio.

Radio's Other Half

Voltaire said more than he knew when he said, "Anything too stupid to be said is sung." Two hundred and fifty years later, Dr. Roger Sperry won the Nobel Prize for proving it.

Words encoded in music are words no longer. Sidestepping the analytical left hemisphere of the brain, song lyrics are processed in the unguarded right. And the right brain is up all night, open to anything, ready to swallow a fiction like a glass of wine and hand back the empty for more. Not only does your right brain not distinguish fact from fiction, it doesn't care.

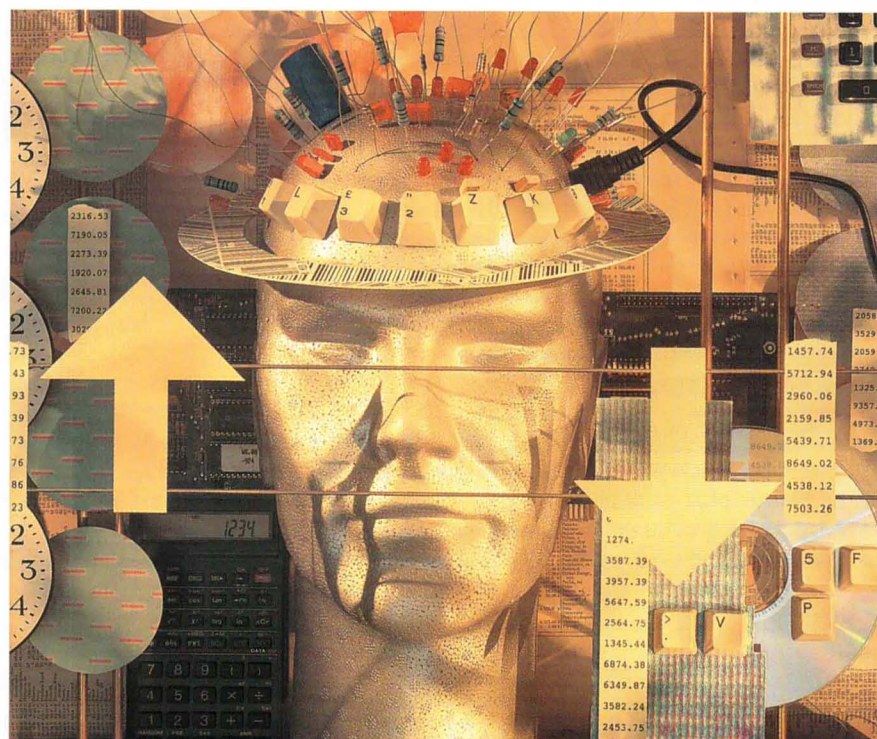
Logic and reason reside in your brain's left hemisphere. Let's call this your intellect, or mind. Intuition or gut feelings make their home in your right brain. Think of this as your heart, or soul. Left brain and right brain — mind and heart — intellect and soul. Justice is a matter for the left hemisphere. Mercy is a matter for the right. And these often come into conflict. Are you beginning to understand why we are so often at odds with ourselves, torn and undecided? The two halves of our brains view reality from entirely different perspectives.

So do the brains of your customers. Learn to speak to both halves of their brains, and magical things will begin to happen. The keys to the door of the left brain are:

- 1) Objective data: ratings and numbers and costs per point.
- 2) Logical, sequential, deductive reasoning: a step-by-step process, leaving nothing out, bullet points 1 through 10.

Radio people know this world well — maybe a little too well.

The many keys to the door of the right brain include the languages of the eye: shape, color, position and proportion. This is why the visual arts can affect our mood. Far greater than our ability to interpret



these languages of the eye, though, is the human gift of attaching complex meanings to sounds. Some of these sounds are words. When they are not encoded in another language of sound — i.e. music — words are interpreted by the analytical left brain, where they are reviewed and compared, doubted and mistrusted.

Far more subtle and seductive than left-brain words are the right-brain languages of the ear:

Pitch: the vibrational frequencies of the notes.

Key: the set of pitches to which the notes belong; in our western world, a repeating series of 12 for each "octave" in the key.

Musical Intervals: the differences in pitch between one note, or syllable, and the next. How tall are the gaps?

Contour: the shape of the melody as it rises and falls.

Tempo: the speed at which the melody is played.

Rhythm: the relative lengths and spacings of the syllables, or notes, in the melody. Even in the absence of music, rhythms created by sequences of syllables arranged so their natural pronunciation establishes an established "drumbeat" make it easy to

fall under their spell. "Oh the moon never beams without bringing me dreams of the beautiful Annabelle Lee." This pattern, two light stresses followed by a heavy third stress, is called anapestic meter. Poetic meter has nothing to do with rhyming, but everything to do with turning words into music that sidestep the analytical left brain. This is what Johnny Cochran used to get O.J. off that murder rap: "My client could not, would not, did not commit these crimes" and "If it doesn't fit, you must acquit."

Ever find yourself singing in your head a song that you never intended to learn? And then realized that the message of that song's lyrics was entirely different from the message of its music? Read the lyrics and you'll find that Springsteen's triumphant Born in the USA is actually a bitter, anti-war protest song, and Bone Thugs-N-Harmony's happy and lighthearted 1st of tha Month is actually a sad carol to the welfare check.

Ah, the competing languages of sound. Learn to harness them and you, too, will be able to work the true magic of radio.

And you just can't imagine the money you'll make. ☞

Roy H. Williams is president of Wizard of Ads Inc. and may be reached at Roy@WizardofAds.com.



» **QUICKREAD** » Advertising and marketing are just two different names for persuasion, which involves people. » Unpredictable, inexplicable people are the reason there can be no simple answers in advertising. » Keep your ad money in your pocket until you have an actual plan, answering critical questions first. » What matters to your customer? How convincingly can you appeal to that need in your ad message? » Do you want to build relationship and reputation (which take more time and money) or settle for traffic-building ads (short-term, immediate results)? » If your competition has a powerful, big-gun message, avoid the media used by that competitor. » A customer must be exposed to your ad often enough to remember it, then you have to wait for that customer to need what you sell. How soon is he/she likely to need it?

No Simple Answers

People who expect simple answers to questions about advertising make me want to hit myself in the head with a hammer. In reality, advertising and marketing are just two different names for persuasion.

And persuasion involves people.

Unpredictable, inexplicable people are the reason there can be no simple answers. Here's what I'm talking about:

Q. What do you think is a better advertising plan: \$2,000 dollars to reach 80,000 people 10 times or \$2,000 to reach 30,000 people 25 times or \$2,000 dollars in a *Boston Globe* ad reaching 750,000 readers? — Mark Bickett, Andover, MA

A. Mark, your question would suggest that you assume the correct answer will be mathematically based. But what business are you in? How much money will you spend on advertising this year? What will be your message? Based on the fact that you didn't tell me the answers to these questions, my guess is that none of the media you suggested would be a profitable investment for you. My strong advice is that you keep your \$2,000 in your pocket until you have an actual plan. Here are the questions you'll need to answer:

1. WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO SAY THAT MATTERS TO YOUR CUSTOMER?

I'm your prospective customer. I know you want my business, but why should I care? What's in it for me? Most ads are written under the assumption that the reader/listener/viewer has a basic level of interest and is paying close attention to the ad. But customers tend to ignore all ads that do not speak directly to them. Your first task is NOT media selection; it's message selection.

2. HOW CONVINCINGLY CAN YOU SAY IT?

Most ads are ineffective because the writer tried to say too much, include too

much, and be too much. Fearful of leaving out something or someone, these writers write vague, all-encompassing ads that speak specifically to no one. "We Fix Cars" is a terrible message for an ad.

3. ARE YOU SPEAKING TO A FELT NEED?

Let's say the "We Fix Cars" auto mechanic has a great deal of affection for older BMW 2002s. He knows that 2002 owners love their cars as do few other drivers on the road and that the only weakness of the 2002 is its evil Solex carburetor. Every 2002 owner knows this, too. So the mechanic writes: "BMW 2002 Owners: Aren't You Tired Of Fooling With That Solex Carburetor By Now?" Then he talks about the fabulous new Weber two-barrel carburetor available for BMW 2002s, raves about its dramatically increased performance and reliability, explains that he keeps these new Weber carburetors in stock at his shop, then names the price at which he will install and adjust that carburetor for you. He closes the ad with: "You'll rocket out of here in a completely different BMW from the one you drove in." I don't care how the message was delivered; it would own the attention of every lover of BMW 2002s.

4. HOW LONG IS YOUR TIME HORIZON?

Some ads build traffic, some build relationship, and some build reputation. If you don't have the financial resources to launch a true branding campaign focused on building relationships and reputation among potential customers, you'll have to settle for traffic-building ads until such time as you can afford to begin developing your brand. To what degree do you have financial staying power?

5. WHAT IS THE URGENCY OF YOUR MESSAGE?

If you need an ad to produce immediate results, your offer must have a time limit. This technique will work both for and against you. On one hand, we tend to


delay what can be delayed, so limited-time offers usually generate traffic more quickly because the threat of "losing the opportunity" is real. On the other hand, we have no memory of messages that have expired; short-term messages are erased from our brains immediately. You can't create long-term relationship with a series of limited-time-offer, short-term ads.

6. WHAT IS THE IMPACT QUOTIENT OF YOUR AD?

How good your ad must be depends on the quality of your competitors' ads. A .22-caliber pistol is a powerful weapon against an opponent with a peashooter. But aim that pathetic pistol at anyone holding a machinegun, and you can kiss your silly butt goodbye. How powerful is the message of your opposition? If your competitor carries a machinegun, don't go where he goes. (In other words, don't use the media he uses.)

7. HOW LONG IS THE PURCHASE CYCLE?

How long it will take your advertising to pay off is tied to the product-purchase cycle of your product. Ads for restaurants work more quickly than ads for sewing machines, because a larger percentage of people are looking for a good meal today than are looking for a machine that will let them make their own clothes. Likewise, an ad for a product we buy twice a year will usually produce results faster than an ad for a product we buy only once a year. Remember, a customer first has to be exposed to your ad often enough to remember it, then you have to wait for that customer to need what you sell. How soon is he/she likely to need it?

A final point: Not hiring a professional ad writer is often far more expensive than hiring one. If you'd like to read more, libraries and bookstores are full of books on advertising, including three of my own. 

Roy H. Williams is president of Wizard of Ads Inc. and may be reached at Roy@WizardofAds.com.



The Wizard of Ads

By Roy H. Williams

» **QUICKREAD** » Successful advertising has never been easy, but it's about to become a game for masters. » Thanks to advances in technology, the number of people in your town that you can reach with an advertising message is shrinking at a record pace. » Although the number of people reached by your advertising will decline, the cost of that advertising will rise. » Your customer has become immune to the traditional language of advertising. Hype and unsubstantiated claims are falling on increasingly deaf ears. » Carl Rogers said it best: "What I am is good enough, if only I would be it openly." » What you are is good enough, too. Be it openly.

The Future Of Advertising An Open Letter To Advertisers From The Wizard Of Ads

Google tells me it was that often-quoted Greek orator, Anonymous, who first said, "The only thing constant is change."

Though I agree that change is ever with us, it cannot be said that it's truly "constant," for such a word would imply that change happens at an unchanging speed. Yet a quick glance at history tells us that societal change accelerates and decelerates much like a rollercoaster: slugging and clanging up a tedious hill of evolutionary progress to reach the critical tipping point, the eye of the storm, where it begins its wild careening into the wounded-duck plummet that is the messy signature of every paradigm shift. Late 2003 was just such an eye-of-the-storm tipping-point signaling a messy paradigm shift, the first in 40 years.

The game of successful advertising has never been easy, but it's about to become a game for masters. Here's why:

1. THANKS TO ADVANCES IN TECHNOLOGY, THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN YOUR TOWN THAT YOU CAN REACH WITH AN ADVERTISING MESSAGE IS SHRINKING AT A RECORD PACE. The benefit of successful branding

is that your "branded" product or service becomes the one people think of immediately and feel best about when they finally need what you sell. Neurologically, branding occurs in long-term, involuntary "procedural" memory, the product of salience (relevance, impact) times repetition. (In other words, the weaker the message, the more repetition is required.) Yesterday's luxuriously low cost of mass media allowed advertisers to be lazy and haphazard in the creation of their messages because they could easily compensate for it with greater repetition. Those days are rapidly drawing to a close.

2. ALTHOUGH THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE REACHED BY YOUR ADVERTISING WILL DECLINE, THE COST OF THAT ADVERTISING WILL RISE. Is this fair? No, but it's what you can count on. Consequently, thoughtfully constructed marketing strategies and well-written ads will become more important than ever. From coast to coast, I'm sensing widespread anxiety among local retailers regarding the efficiency of the media — and rightfully so. They're looking for "the next big thing," but all the "big things" out

there are national and international only; none is locally targeted. It took 44 years, but it seems that Marshall McLuhan's "global village" has finally arrived.

3. YOUR CUSTOMER HAS BECOME IMMUNE TO THE TRADITIONAL LANGUAGE OF ADVERTISING. Face it: We've heard it all before. Hype and unsubstantiated claims are falling on increasingly deaf ears. The time to develop a relationship with a truly gifted advertising professional is now, and the best possible advice I can give to both of you is a quote from the immortal Bill Bernbach: "I've got a great gimmick. Let's tell the truth." Carl Rogers said it best when he said, "What I am is good enough, if only I would be it openly."

And what you are is good enough, too. Be it openly.

Yours,

Roy H. Williams 

Roy H. Williams is president of Wizard of Ads Inc. and may be reached at Roy@WizardofAds.com.



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» **QUICKREAD** » Most branding campaigns are costumes worn by advertisers to the Media Masquerade Ball. » We're moving into an era of transparency. The only thing offensive these days is phoniness. » In the past, decisions to purchase revolved primarily around features and benefits. All you had to do was explain — intellectually — why your product was better than your competitor's. » Now we're seeing decisions to purchase based on sympathetic vibrations, shared values, an alignment of perspectives. » Today's customers are no longer just buying what you sell; they're buying who you are. » Be it openly.

The New Branding

Most branding campaigns are costumes worn by advertisers to the Media Masquerade Ball. They were the hot ticket during the pretentious baby-boomer years, when blue ribbons went to those wearing best costumes. However, look around, and you'll see that we're moving into an era of transparency. The only thing offensive these days is phoniness.

Advertisers: To succeed in tomorrow's marketplace, your brand must revolve around who and what you really are. You will have to let your customers see you "real." This means communicating in a language other than "ad speak." You know what I'm talking about, right? "Low, low prices." "Satisfaction guaranteed." "Exceeding your expectations." "Fast, fair and friendly service." Blah, blah, blah...

In the past, decisions to purchase revolved primarily around features and benefits. All you had to do was explain — intellectually — why your product was better than your competitor's. But as the overall quality of products got better, we became less concerned about buying a bad one, and a new criterion was added to the list. Now we're seeing decisions to purchase based on sympathetic vibrations, shared values, an alignment of perspectives. Today's customers are no longer just buying what you sell; they're buying who you are.

Near the end of her 1991 book, trend forecaster Faith Popcorn reminisces: "It seemed to me, in the sixties, advertising was the most creative business around.

The consumer world was new, wide open; ads were all creativity, no research. I loved the business when I started in it... You could feel that consumer world narrowing in the seventies and eighties. Heavy earnest research weighed down ads with somber and often meaningless promises. The consumer world was quantified... In the nineties, consumers don't believe the promises anymore. If the ad says, "ninety-out-of-a-hundred people prefer fill-in-the-blank," we cynically assume that those 90 are the advertiser's 90 best friends and relatives. We know that numbers can be interpreted to mean almost anything. So, the situation now is that numbers have lost their credibility, and yet creativity isn't strong enough to stand on its own."

So if data has lost its credibility, and creativity alone is no longer enough, through what channel can you best persuade today's customer? Through the customer's own experience:

1. Refer in your ads to things that you know your customer has experienced.

I call this technique "using a reality hook." A hair stylist might say in his ads, for example: "Have you ever told a hair stylist how you wanted your hair to look, and then they cut it the way they thought it should look? I promise I'm NOT that guy."

2. When available, include raw, unscripted testimonials. Customers have a lifetime of experience sifting golden nuggets of truth from the river of hype and empty promises. Put this highly refined

ability to work for you. In the example above, I wrote the way that most people talk. This is extremely unusual in advertising — and extremely effective. Don't rewrite your customers' comments; use them verbatim, bad grammar and all.

3. Deliver to your customers exactly the experience you promised. (For those of you familiar with the Advertising Performance Equation, this is known as the PEF: "Personal Experience Factor.") Mass media is one voice speaking to many ears, and it's easy to purchase; you pay your money and you take your chances. But "interconnectivity" is one-to-one to one-to-one to one-to-one to one; word-of-mouth gone exponential. And it can't be purchased with money. The only way to trigger interconnectivity is to create a message worth repeating. And the easiest way to create a message worth repeating is to disappoint a customer. We tend to warn our friends not to make the same mistake we made.

As the final reverberations of the baby BOOM fade over the horizon, we're beginning to hear the sound of the new branding, and it's the sound of "real." Today's hunger is for reality and truth. What I said in the last column bears repeating: Carl Rogers said, "What I am is good enough, if only I would be it openly."

What you are is good enough, too. Be it openly. ☒

Roy H. Williams is president of Wizard of Ads Inc. and may be reached at Roy@WizardofAds.com.

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The Wizard of Ads

By Roy H. Williams

» **QUICKREAD** » • The Wizard of Ads predicts changes in Radio's direction during the next 10 years. » The growing polarity between national and local business will put broadcasters into two camps. » Major broadcast groups will dominate national dollars. » As a result, radio airtime will be reduced to a commodity that is purchased entirely online. » Training of salespeople will go beyond "access to inventory," and stations will form their own ad agencies. » Satellite radio will sharply reduce broadcast radio's cume and TSL. » New technologies will allow satellite radio ads to be targeted locally.

The Coming Great Divide

Along the bottom of the cover of *The Popcorn Report* — Faith Popcorn's 1991 book about the future — is a quote from Jerry Della Femina: "If you're planning to be alive in the year 2000, you've got to read this book." Because I was, indeed, planning to be alive in the year 2000, I read *The Popcorn Report* when it first came out. By the time that year arrived, however, I had forgotten some of the more startling things Ms. Popcorn had predicted.

Do you remember 1991? "Internet" wasn't even a word back then. It would be another year or two before we'd even begin hearing rumors about the soon-to-come "Information Super-Highway." Yet on page 166 of her book, a prescient Ms. Popcorn accurately described what would later become known as e-mail and search engines, calling them "ScreenMail" and "InfoBuying."

Re-reading Faith Popcorn's 1991 book has given me the courage to write this column. I'm asking you to please save it and re-read it 10 years from now, because what I'm about to tell you is going to make me sound like a raving lunatic.

But really, who am I kidding? Most of you believe I'm a lunatic, anyway. Here's where Radio is headed during the next 10 years:

1. THE GROWING POLARITY BETWEEN NATIONAL AND LOCAL BUSINESS WILL SIFT BROADCASTERS INTO TWO, DECIDEDLY DIFFERENT CAMPS.

2. MAJOR BROADCAST GROUPS WILL DOMINATE THE NATIONAL DOLLARS. As a result, radio airtime will be reduced to a commodity that is purchased entirely online. Steve Hicks — a true visionary — foresaw this back in the days of Capstar, during the earliest stages of consolidation. In the January 5, 1998, issue of *Radio Ink* — before the merger that created AMFM and long before Clear Channel ruled the world — Hicks was asked, "Do you want radio to be sold as a commodity?" Hicks, a breathtakingly straightforward man, answered, "It is a commodity. I foresee where a local car dealer could have our software on his/her own computer terminal. If the car dealer needed to move five cars tomorrow, by clicking a few buttons, he could see if there were avails on some

of the radio stations." I believe Steve Hicks will live to see this glimpse of the future become common and concrete reality.

3. IN RESPONSE, SMALL LOCAL AND REGIONAL BROADCAST GROUPS WILL TRAIN THEIR PEOPLE HOW TO DELIVER BENEFITS TO LOCAL ADVERTISERS FAR BEYOND MERE "ACCESS TO INVENTORY." I'm not talking about NTR promotions; I'm talking about delivering expert advice that goes beyond knowledge of radio and how to use it.

4. AS A RESULT OF THIS TRAINING, LOCAL ADVERTISERS WILL BEGIN ASKING THE BETTER RADIO REPS FOR ASSISTANCE WITH THEIR NON-RADIO ADVERTISING, TRIGGERING THE MORE PROGRESSIVE STATIONS TO LAUNCH THEIR OWN ADVERTISING AGENCIES AS NEW PROFIT CENTERS. It is this move that will help these stations survive and thrive in the coming turmoil. (Encouraged by their clients, the best and brightest reps have been

leaving radio to launch their own agencies for years. I believe Radio finally is going to acknowledge this need and fill it. And I plan to help.)

5. SATELLITE RADIO WILL SHARPLY REDUCE BROADCAST RADIO'S CUME AND TSL. Although we're still very early in the adoption curve — with relatively few people equipped to experience the joys of satellite radio — it will ultimately change the face of broadcast radio as surely as FM changed the face of AM.

6. THE LARGEST BROADCAST GROUPS, BECAUSE THEY WERE FOCUSED ON NATIONAL ACCOUNTS, WILL BE THE FIRST TO FEEL THE PAIN OF SATELLITE RADIO.

7. NEW TECHNOLOGIES WILL ALLOW SATELLITE RADIO ADS TO BE TARGETED LOCALLY, WITH DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES HEARING DIFFERENT ADS SIMULTANEOUSLY ON THE SAME SATELLITE CHANNEL. When this happens, one of the cornerstone assets of local broadcasters will be the in-house advertising agencies that they launched a decade earlier.

IN SUMMARY: In the short term, "access to inventory" will give the large broadcast groups a decided advantage over the smaller ones, but the increased adoption of satellite radio by the general public will soon take away that advantage. In the long term, the only broadcasters making any money will be those whose knowledge of advertising and marketing goes far beyond the mere trickle of product knowledge possessed by today's account executive.

That's the future as I see it. ☛

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» **QUICKREAD** » In the radio-ownership ocean, the big fish keep eating the little fish and saying to the public, "Isn't that grand? Now we can serve you better!" » Good Ol' Boy-ism in radio is getting worse, not better. » The rebels, creative geniuses and assorted other troublemakers have mostly been weeded out. » Radio in America is now controlled by the stock market: "Play it safe. Be conservative." » God bless America, the land of the free and the home of brave — unless, of course, you happen to be in radio.

Things Eric Won't Write

There are certain things that [Radio Ink publisher] Eric Rhoads won't write about, because he's too good a friend to radio. So those are the things I write about. Even though Eric doesn't always agree with me, he still encourages me to write what I believe is true, because this is America and that's what we do here. At least that's what we do in print; the airwaves seem to be quite a different matter these days.

NOTE: If you're easily angered, this might be a good place to quit reading. I hear the Giff has a great column just a few pages away. Perhaps you should flip on over to it. Still here? Don't say I didn't warn you.

You can go on pretending otherwise, but Good Ol' Boy-ism in radio is getting worse, not better. The rebels, radicals, misfits, experimenters, boat rockers, liberals, creative geniuses and assorted other troublemakers have mostly been weeded out. Corporate policy has muzzled and handcuffed the ones who haven't quit or been fired, so radio is finally safe from their reckless and crazy ideas.

Governmentally, radio is now safely in the hands of an FCC chairman who is doing all he can to ensure that the public airwaves are successfully privatized into the hands of as few people as possible. No doubt he'll be successful if Congress doesn't get in his way.

In the radio-ownership ocean, the big fish keep eating the little fish and saying to the public, "Isn't that grand? Now we can serve you better!"

How long until our once-teeming ocean is served by only a single, bloated old fish with a surly look on his face?

But I exaggerate. That scenario could never happen, really, because the World's Greatest Newspaper will never turn loose of its flagship in Chicago, and there will always be a few other owner-operators who will stay in the game to serve a happy handful of extremely lucky markets.

God bless the Tribune Company and that handful of determined owner-operators! These people, at least, still have a mind of

their own, the freedom to do as they please, and the courage of their convictions. For how many people working for the major groups can you honestly say that?

Let's face it. Radio in America is now controlled by the stock market: "Play it safe. Be conservative. No funny business. Eat your vegetables." Somehow I don't think that was the original plan.

I've been hanging out with Canadian broadcasters lately, because they seem to be the only ones aware that the 1950s are over. Surround yourself with Canadian radio folk, and you'll feel an energy that you haven't felt in a long time. There's not a three-piece suit or a bad toupee in the bunch.

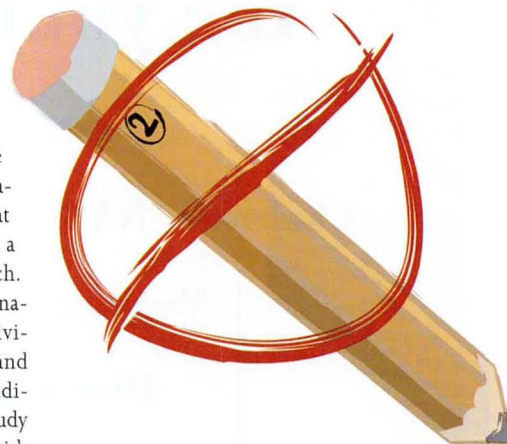
Unlike their stateside counterparts, Canadians aren't living in a state of denial, oblivious to the erosion of the younger demos and the growing threat of satellite radio. Canadians are anxious to discuss these issues and study how they might deepen their relationships with local audiences by becoming more relevant, vital and indispensable — no platitudes, no doubletalk, no political shilly-shallying.

You think I'm exaggerating about the 1950s mentality of this all-powerful clique of Good Ol' Boys in American radio? A few weeks ago, Eric was foolish enough to suggest in his Publisher's Note that it might be a good thing if the FCC actually stripped a license from someone just to prove it is serious about requiring broadcasters to conscientiously serve


the public. He was roasted like an accused Communist under prosecution by Sen. Joseph McCarthy: "By God, he can print what he wants, but we damn sure don't have to support it!" Advertising support was yanked from his magazine in much the same way that parents used to send their children to bed without supper. I had not seen anything like it since the boycott of the Dixie Chicks.

So that's what's on my mind this week. But after the economic spanking he took, does Eric have the brass to print this column? I'm betting he does, even though he'll most certainly face economic consequences. If this turns out to be the last column of mine you see printed on these pages after an eight-year run, you'll know what happened.

God bless America, the land of the free and the home of brave — unless, of course, you happen to be in radio.



If you support Eric's decision to print this column, whether or not you agree with what I've written, please let him hear from you. He'll definitely get an earful from the people who suspect I was talking about them.

If you appreciate the advertisers who support a magazine they don't always agree with, why not let them hear from you, too? 

Roy H. Williams, president of Wizard of Ads Inc., may be reached at Roy@WizardofAds.com.

» QUICKREAD » • A vivid mental image can easily override the actual story (or your client's ad). » A mental image is a complex composite of associative memories, sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, opinion and mood. » A mental image is much bigger than a mere visual image. » The most effective ads with vivid mental images should be linked to the advertisers' products or services. » Every day in radio, an ad's principal mental image overshadows the client's product or service. » Selecting a mental image to build your campaign upon is the most important — and most difficult — part of creating an effective ad campaign.

Magnetic Power Of The Mental Image

I recently wrote a story about how Chuck Wepner's fight against Mohammed Ali provided the inspiration for a struggling young screenwriter named Sylvester Stallone to peck out the screenplay of *Rocky*, a low-budget film that, against all odds, won the Academy Award for Best Motion Picture in 1976. Following my story's publication, I was flooded with e-mails from readers, sharing stories of friends and family who "like Wepner" valiantly did their best in the face of insurmountable odds.

Funny thing is, **that wasn't the point of the story.** In it, I portrayed Wepner as a faithless and short-sighted goober who chose a \$70,000 flat fee, instead of an offered percentage of *Rocky's* gross receipts that would have netted him a sizzling \$8 million. My story closed with the stinging accusation: "Stallone believed in Wepner. Wepner didn't believe in Stallone."

The response to that story is a perfect example of how a vivid mental image can easily override the narrative arc (story). A mental image — much bigger than a mere visual image — is a complex composite of associative memories, sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, opinion and mood.

Our mental image of *Rocky* as a regular guy who did his best in the boxing ring is so deeply rooted that readers instinctively translated it to Chuck Wepner, the progenitor of the *Rocky* archetype, when it was actually the successful screenwriter Stallone that I was trying to profile.

This happens every day in radio when an ad's principal mental image overshadows the client's product or service. The problem isn't limited to radio. Movie reviewer Ellen Goodman of *The Boston Globe* writes:

"Does anyone remember that the original version of *'The Stepford Wives'* was a horror movie? Women weren't bribed or brainwashed or seduced into becoming the perfect domestic and sex goddesses of suburbia. They were mur-



dered by their husbands and replaced by robots. Well, somewhere along the last decades, the Stepford wife became an archetype, Mrs. Perfect, the cookie-cutter cookie maker. Adoring political spouses were labeled Stepford wives, children with all A's were Stepford kids, obedient White House press corps members were called Stepford reporters. The Stepford wife wasn't a victim but a conformist."

An entire generation forgot that the Stepford wives were murder victims because the movie's most powerful mental image was of the plastic-perfect poses of the polished Stepford wives with their vapid, empty smiles. That mental image remained with us long after the movie's plot was forgotten.

The average ad is built upon a weak mental image. That's what makes it ineffective. The best ads — and the worst — are built upon vivid mental images buried deep in the heart of the customer.

In the best ads, these mental images are inextricably linked to the advertisers' products or services, such as in Devito/Verdi's fabulous radio series for the horseracing track. The humor of these ads is based on the delivery style of the classic track announcer, so the mental image is inextricably linked to the advertiser, the National Thoroughbred Racing Association.

My wager is that dozens of radio stations will soon be saying, "What a clever idea," and begin copying the memorable style of these ads for local advertisers. To use this "track announcer" style for any other advertiser, however,

would be ill advised, because the mental image at best would be only tenuously related to the advertiser. In other words, listeners will remember the ads but not the advertiser.

A weak mental image is always a mistake. But a powerful mental image can be an even bigger mistake when it isn't inextricably linked to the advertiser. Selecting a mental image to build your campaign upon is the single most important — and most difficult — part of creating an effective ad campaign. My hat is off to the gang at Devito/Verdi. 📻

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The Wizard of Ads

By Roy H. Williams

» **QUICKREAD** » A radio ad should be exactly as long as it takes to say what needs to be said. » Use 60-second ads when your message is complex, when you must include persuasive details or explanations of an unfamiliar offering, or when you have a generic commodity and you want people to like you. » Use a 30-second ad when your product or service is clearly understood and you're making an easy-to-understand offer. » Use 15-second ads when you have a powerful, simple message or you're in a business category where no one else advertises. » Use mentions for top-of-mind awareness in a crowded marketplace, or you want to add frequency to your 30- or 60-second message.

:60s, :30s, :15s or Mentions?

Shakespeare would argue for 15-second radio ads: "Brevity is the soul of wit." W.C. Fields would suggest :60s: "If you can't dazzle them with brilliance, baffle them with bull." I agree with both.

When people ask the best length for a radio ad, I always think of Abe Lincoln's answer when asked how long a man's legs should be: "Long enough to reach the ground." In other words, a radio ad should be exactly as long as it takes to say what needs to be said.

Use 60-second ads when:

1. ...your message is complex. Better to write a :60 that makes your message clear than a :30 that leaves doubts and questions.
2. ...you need to include specific details for persuasion. Specifics are always more believable than generalities. Close the loophole. Answer the question lurking in the listener's mind, but don't bore your audience by answering questions no one is asking.
3. ...you're in a business category that's new and not easily understood. If you first must create the realization of need before you can sell your solution, it can easily take 60 seconds.
4. ...you need to "baffle them with bull." If you sell a generic commodity and your strategy is for people to buy from you simply because they like you better, you're going to need a world-class creative team. These ads are, without question, the hardest of all ads to write. But they can also be the most entertaining. These are the times when your production people can shine like the sun. Inspire them, but don't instruct them. Buy them food, give them praise, remind them that they're geniuses and, yes, everyone misunderstands them but you. Production people live to create ads like these, but you have to give them time, encouragement and freedom — and maybe beer.



Use 30-second ads when:

1. ...your product or service category is clearly understood and you're making an easy-to-understand offer. Say it plain. Say it straight. Eliminate all but the most essential adjectives and adverbs. Replace clichés and predictable phrases with unanticipated wording. Focus on verbs, and use as many as possible. Make one point per ad, but make it powerfully in the script. Don't write a weak message and then try to compensate for it with powerful delivery (vocal inflection, dramatic music, sound effects). The '70s are over.

Use 15-second ads when:

1. ...you have a powerful, simple message. Don't screw it up by blah, blah, blahing for 30 seconds when you can say it more powerfully in 15. Sadly, many ad writers fall into the trap described so eloquently by Blaise Pascal: "I have made this letter longer than usual because I lack the time to make it shorter." At least 25 percent of the :30s on most stations would really work better as

:15s. But most stations aren't willing to sell 15-second ads at a price that makes them attractive. Even more difficult is training ad writers how to uncover the vital message that can be powerfully communicated in 15 short seconds. Tight, powerful ads are hard to write, but definitely worth the effort.

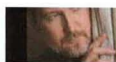
2. ...you're in a business category where no one advertises but you. When simple name recognition will likely be enough to make customers think of your name when they need what you sell, don't be an idiot: Buy :15s and mentions.

Use mentions when:

1. ...you sell a commodity in a crowded marketplace and your strategy is to go for Top-Of-Mind-Awareness. (Radio stations should fund a TOMA study every two years. You'll be amazed at the impact a "marketplace snapshot" will have on advertisers.)
2. ...you merely want to add additional frequency to a schedule that is delivering barely-sufficient frequency of your 30- or 60-second message. But don't fool yourself by calculating a reach-and-frequency analysis that lumps the mentions into the same schedule as the :30s and/or :60s. The schedule of the full-length ad must deliver sufficient frequency on its own. Mentions are merely gravy. Like gravy, they're really not worth much when there is insufficient meat on the plate.

The most common mistake is allowing the budget to dictate the length of the ad. Never try to squeak by with :15s and mentions when you really need :30s and :60s. Sacrifice reach, not ad length. Buy a less expensive daypart or a smaller station. Make your message exactly as long as it needs to be. ☐

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» **QUICKREAD** » We all knew that Infinity and Arbitron had to kiss and make up, because no other option made sense, but each side had its points. » Without paying Arbitron, Infinity couldn't discuss the size of its audience or calculate Gross Ratings Points, Costs Per Point, or Effective Reach and Frequency. » On Arbitron's side: When a single customer accounts for nearly 10 percent of gross revenues, that customer often begins to think like an employer. » Agencies don't like talking "around the numbers." If media buyers don't want to discuss "mathematical possibilities" with radio reps, then why give them appointments? » If Infinity and Arbitron hadn't reconciled, other stations probably would have followed suit, but agencies then might have switched to another medium for their ads.

Infinity vs. Arbitron: Been There, Done That

When their lover's quarrel was first announced, we all knew that Infinity and Arbitron had to kiss and make up, because no other option made any sense. A divorce between them would have been a magnificent, absurd train wreck. Strangely, I was on Infinity's side during the debate because they were right. Even more strangely, I was on Arbitron's side because they were right, too.

On Infinity's side: Radio stations have always felt like hostages to Arbitron, and rightfully so. Unless you pay The Emperor's Tribute to Arbitron, you can't discuss the size of your audience or calculate Gross Ratings Points, Costs Per Point, or Effective Reach and Frequency. You have to pay the Emperor even when he trashes you in his survey. But no other ratings company has ever gained sufficient credibility to be a serious contender to Arbitron, so the monopoly has continued, and radio continues to chafe under the rule of a tyrant master.

On Arbitron's side: When a single customer accounts for nearly 10 percent of your gross revenues, that customer often stops thinking like a customer and begins to think like an employer. Infinity's 185 stations account for about \$25 million of Arbitron's \$275 million in sales. That's \$25 million that Infinity theoretically could have dropped to its bottom line, assuming that no sales were lost due to the fact that its stations could no longer discuss the size of their audiences. However, if the inability to discuss Arbitron numbers cost each of the stations just \$150,000 in lost sales per year, Infinity would have made a bad financial decision (185 stations x \$150,000 = \$27,750,000). And that's before you consider the frustration factor among Infinity sales reps.

Believe me, I know. In the late '70s and early '80s, I was a sales rep, then sales manager, and finally GM of a 100,000-watt FM in Tulsa. We were usually No. 2 or 3, 18-34, but we could never actually say that, because our owner didn't subscribe to Arbitron. So we glibly told agency buyers, "You have the book, just look up our numbers" (grin, grin, grin), and we shared perky little success stories and quoted reams of qualitative blah, blah, blah.



On the agencies' side: Tulsa's agencies really didn't like being inconvenienced by having to talk "around the numbers," so my staff and I found it harder and harder to get appointments with agency buyers. Think about it. If media buyers didn't want to discuss "mathematical possibilities" with radio reps, then why would they give them appointments in the first place? Unless advertising agencies have changed in the past 20 years, Infinity sales reps would have learned what it felt like to be a minority in the Deep South in 1954. Or maybe not — maybe there's a secret technique I never discovered that makes

agency buyers sympathetic toward station owners who are unwilling to pay for Arbitron numbers.

On radio's side: If Infinity spanked Arbitron and they didn't reconcile, other radio groups surely would have followed, and the whole house of cards would have come tumbling down. I can hear it, can't you? A station would have a bad book and say, "Well, I'm not going to pay for a survey that tells the agencies to buy from my competitor. If the agencies want to buy according to almighty god Arbitron, let the agencies pay for it."

Yeah, right. It would never occur to America's advertising agencies that they could just spend their clients' budgets on a different media. They're at radio's mercy, aren't they? Take away radio, and there's no other way for them to reach the public, right? Say "Hi" to the Tooth Fairy for me, because you're dreaming.

Another old radio myth is that Arbitron rewards its subscribers with better ratings. Consequently, comments were rampant: "Watch Infinity's numbers tumble" and "When you no longer buy the book, questionable — or less than perfectly legible — diary numbers go to those that do buy the book." But I think far more highly of Arbitron than that, and so do most advertising agencies.

If the Arbitron/Infinity lover's quarrel hadn't been quickly resolved, I fear it would have cost both companies and ultimately radio far more than anyone planned. Sometimes the people in charge do exactly the right thing. This was definitely one of those times.

I'll tell you about another of those times in the next issue.

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» **QUICKREAD** » Clear Channel is big, but they're not big enough to implement its Less is More initiative alone. » Commercial radio is living in denial, a slave to the demands of Wall Street, while satellite radio and Internet radio are trying to get in step with a new generation. » For Less is More to succeed, commercial radio would have to voluntarily begin the arduous task of reinventing itself for the new generation, but investors are a twitchy bunch, addicted to instant profits, and the way to jack up profit is to cut costs. » Broadcast groups should not be short-sighted.

When Less Is More Or Less

Recently, I went on record as strongly endorsing Less is More as the right thing for radio to do, regardless of Clear Channel's motives. What I did not say is whether I thought this beautiful idea would survive. Sadly, I fear Clear Channel will be forced to abandon the initiative by summer 2005.

Does this mean I won't support Less is More? On the contrary: I'm working diligently to convince all my advertising clients nationwide that they should allow my staff to begin writing 30-second spots, instead of :60s. Will these independent business owners follow my advice this January and allow my buyers to place 52-week schedules of :30s for them, instead of the hundreds of thousands of :60s we've bought in the past? Time will tell, but I think our chances are pretty good.

Not so good are the chances that other radio groups will follow Clear Channel's lead. They'll use Clear Channel's commitment to air only seven :60s per hour as a competitive weapon against them "because Clear Channel deserves it." They'll tell advertisers: "You say the Clear Channel stations are sold out of :60s and are trying to sell you :30s? To hell with that! You want :60s, we have 14 an hour!"

Clear Channel is big, but they're not big enough to implement Less is More alone.

Advertising agencies won't begin writing :30s until they have to. As long as a majority of stations offers an unlimited supply of :60s for the same price as :30s, no one needs to learn to write :30s. Radio's listeners will lose, the stations that are doing the right thing will lose, and ultimately, all commercial broadcasting will lose. When Clear Channel managers begin falling short of their monthly sales goals, they'll be forced to abandon their plan.

For Less is More to succeed, commercial radio would have to voluntarily begin the

arduous task of reinventing itself for a new generation, but Wall Street will never let them do that. Investors are a twitchy bunch, addicted to instant profits, and the way to jack up profit is to cut costs. **Cut The Fat:** Buy five stations in a market, and fire four general managers and all the programmers: "We'll program all the stations from headquarters." **Cut The Muscle:** Fire the live overnight announcers, and replace them with a satellite feed: "It's not our job to give new announcers a timeslot in which to hone their craft. When we need new announcers, we'll bring them in from other markets." **Drain The Blood:** Forget new transmitters, studio equipment, exciting local promotions or meaningful training for ad writers. "Make do with what you have. We need more profit! Make do. Make do."

Commercial radio was shot in the gut on January 3, 1996, when Congress voted to let a handful of people gather up our public airwaves for the purpose of creating a series of Wall Street plays. Radio has been dying a slow death ever since. I fear it may be too late to save her.

I pray to God that I'm wrong. My passion is for growing local businesses, and the business owners I serve need an efficient way to reach their local publics. I believe they'll never again have as efficient an advertising vehicle as today's local radio. But radio's legendary efficiency undoubtedly will decline as audiences abandon the AM and FM bands.

We Must Get In Step

Commercial radio is living in denial, a slave to the demands of Wall Street. Meanwhile, satellite radio and Internet radio (using cell-phone technology) are enthusiastically working to get in step with the preferences of a new generation. It may take only four or five years,

though it could possibly be as long as seven or eight. Do you remember how quickly America abandoned the AM dial when FM's bud began to blossom? Although the monster audiences of that day were fragmented by the addition of these new signals into the market, Radio continued to offer an amazingly efficient return-on-investment. But can this medium endure radically greater fragmentation without affecting the return-on-investment it offers its advertisers? Audience sizes are headed down while rates are headed up — a train wreck in slow motion.

The music industry is already in the throes of reinvention, a painful and awkward experience. It will come to radio, too, but in the meantime, we're destined to hear a lot of baby-boomer chest-thumping from RAB types: "They said 8-tracks would be the end of radio. They said cassettes would be the end of radio. They said CDs would be the end of radio, but they were wrong, wrong, wrong. Radio, glorious radio is here to stay. And the public will continue to happily listen to 15 or 20 minutes of drab announcer patter and badly-written ads each hour because... well, because they always have and they always will."

There's an old story about an optimist who was shoved off the roof of a 70-story building. As he fell past the 30th floor, he was heard to say, "Well, everything's going great so far." Commercial radio is that optimist. As we someday gather 'round its broken body, let us remember that, back in 2005, Clear Channel Communications tried to do the right thing and build a safety net, but the other broadcast groups were too short-sighted to go along with it. ☹

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