



» **QUICKREAD** » Most ads don't work because ad writers don't know how to sell. » If informing the prospect were all it took, the average ad would work. » If entertaining the prospect were enough, radio would rule the world. » But ad writing is about selling. » Can you imagine how radio's ads might change if writers were paid according to how the ads worked? » Hold ad writers accountable to how well the ads work, and they'll learn to write ads that sell.

Why Most Ads Don't Work

An ad writer may be creative, entertaining and clever with words, but that doesn't mean he or she can sell. America's airwaves are stuffed with clever ads that don't sell and informative ads that don't convince. What are clients left to say but "I tried radio and it didn't work?"

Most ads don't work because ad writers don't know how to sell. Morris Hite said it well: "Advertising is salesmanship mass-produced. No one would bother to use advertising if he could talk to all his prospects face-to-face. But he can't."

If informing the prospect were all it took, the average ad would work. If entertaining the prospect were enough, radio would rule the world. But ad writing is about selling. So why does radio manage its ad writers differently from its salespeople? Writing ads that sell is harder than face-to-face selling because ad writers must sell from behind a veil, blind to the prospect's reactions, unable to make adjustments accordingly. Other than that, the skills required are the same.

If we judged salespeople the way we judge ads, we would listen as they made one-way presentations to prospects over the phone and then evaluate whether we felt the presentation was good. We would no longer hold them accountable for whether or not their clients bought any airtime, and we certainly wouldn't pay them commission.

Can you imagine how radio's ads might change if writers were paid according to how the ads worked? I can tell you exactly how ads would change, because that's how I've chosen to be paid for the past 17 years — according to how well the ads worked.

What I'm about to tell you isn't pie-in-the-sky theory. It's real-world experience.

After quitting my job as a radio GM in 1986, I began writing ads for clients across America, though not in the town where I had managed a station. I charged a small, monthly salary to be adjusted once a year by the same percentage each client's business had grown. "Grow my salary equal to



your top-line growth, or fire me," I said. "Those are your choices."

The average client now pays me more than 12 times my original salary, and most of them have been with me for more than 10 years, many for longer than 15. My CPA tells me I'm in the top 1 percent of wage earners, and all I am, really, is an ad writer.


Are you sitting down? For the past

seven years, I've charged an application fee of \$5,000 just to listen to hopeful advertisers tell me their stories. How many of your prospects pay you to listen to them explain why you should take their account? I'm telling you these things not to boast, but to make you understand what can happen when ad writers are rewarded according to how well the ads work.

This year, my scheduling assistant took it upon herself to raise the chit-chat fee to \$7,500, because she had more takers at \$5,000 than she had available days to sell. These advertisers are told up front, by the way, that we probably won't take their account, but we will try to give them whatever helpful advice we can within the eight hours they're in my office. That's right, \$7,500 is the price if the advertiser comes to me. If I travel to the advertiser, it's \$25,000 a day plus expenses, and I'm traveling far more often than I'd like.

Last month, I received \$7,500 and a visit from the owner of a furniture store with an annual ad budget of nearly \$10 million in a single major market. He said he'd read all my books but believed I could tell him things I hadn't put in them. After our day together, he said he had learned "way more" than he had expected and that he was "blown away."

Manage your ad writers the same way you manage your other salespeople. Hold them accountable to how well the ads work, and they'll learn to write ads that sell.

At least that's what I think — but what do I know? 

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



The Wizard of Ads

By Roy H. Williams

» **QUICKREAD** » Want to hire a great ad writer? Find someone who reads great literature, a person who reads poetry and novels and who spends spare time writing short stories and screenplays. » You're not likely to be impressed with a writer during a face-to-face interview. Writing is their preferred method of communication, remember? Great writers are a different breed. » Ad writers don't need a literary style in their ad writing; they must create the same word-juxtapositions, elegant incongruities and vivid descriptions that distinguish legendary authors. » Your ad writers can't hear these kinds of phrases echoing in their ears during the day unless they're filling their minds with them at night. » Hire voracious readers and you'll get astounding writers.

As You Read, So Shall You Write

Putting the right words in the right order to express the right idea in the right way is not a skill unique to advertising. Show me a voracious reader of something besides newspapers, business books and magazines, and I'll show you someone who can bang words together so that the sound of them will ring for miles.

Most radio ads suck like a Hoover because we hire functionary little weasels to write our ads, and we expect uninvolved sales reps to present them to the client. Want to hire a great ad writer? Find someone who reads great literature.

To know you're speaking with a writer, ask how many books he or she typically reads each year and what the person has been reading lately. You're looking for a person who reads poetry and novels and who spends spare time writing short stories and screenplays. Fewer than 15 books per year is not acceptable. Extra points for the person who reads 25 or more — and non-fiction books don't count.

What am I calling great literature, and what makes it great?

Stephen Dunn, from *Different Hours*: "I was burned by books early and kept sidling up to the flame."

Tom Robbins, describing a UFO in *Still Life With Woodpecker*: "It went 'whoosh' as it shot by, a sleek panatela of frozen light, pulsating with polka dots of every color, traveling a mere thousand feet or so above the water at incredible speed and mopping up the last of the sunset as if it were a bar rag from outer space."

John Gardner, from *Grendel*: "Men swore. They pushed at the wheels with long oak poles and slashed at the oxen till their backs were crosshatched with bleeding welts and their noses ran pink foam."

Thomas Wolfe, from *Look Homeward, Angel*: "Below his perpetual scowl, his face

was small, converging to a point: his extraordinarily sensitive mouth smiled briefly, flickering, inwardly — like a flash of light along a blade."

Leonard Pitts, 10 years before winning his 2004 Pulitzer Prize: "What do I think of Woodstock '94? Damn, this thing is BIG. Takes a coupla hours to walk the field. Woodstock '94 is computerized, commercialized, digitized and revitalized. And me, I'm just another media weasel trying to make sense of it all."

Neal Stephenson, from *Cryptonomicon*: "World-class cereal-eating is a dance of fine compromises. The giant heaping bowl of sodden cereal, awash in milk, is the mark of the novice. Ideally one wants the bone-dry cereal nuggets and the cryogenic milk to enter the mouth with minimal contact and for the entire reaction between them to take place in the mouth. The best thing is to work in small increments, putting only a small amount of Cap'n Crunch in your bowl at a time and eating it all up before it becomes a pit of loathsome slime, which, in the case of Cap'n Crunch, takes about thirty seconds... He pours the milk with one hand while jamming the spoon in with the other, not wanting to waste a single moment of the magical, golden time when cold milk and Cap'n Crunch are together but have not yet begun to pollute each other's essential natures."

Tom Robbins, again from *Still Life With Woodpecker*: "It was autumn, the springtime of death. Rain spattered the rotting leaves, and a wild wind wailed. Death was singing in the shower. Death was happy to be alive."


You're not likely to be impressed with a writer during a face-to-face interview. Writing is their preferred method of communication, remember? Great writers are a different breed. As John Steinbeck wrote in his diary (published by *The New York*

Times, June 2, 1969), "In utter loneliness a writer tries to explain the inexplicable. He must believe that what he is doing is the most important thing in the world. And he must hold to this illusion even when he knows it is not true." Wow! What a perfect description of an ad writer.

The best lines I ever wrote didn't appear in an ad at all, but in my first fiction novel, *Destinae*: "The soft blanket of summer wrapped them all in her warm embrace. Around the swimming beagles, bright stars danced on rippling waters like a thousand little fishes of light scurrying in a sea of darkness. Night is a time of reflection. Not of stars in water only, but of times past and times to come. And such a night was this."

Please understand that I'm not suggesting that ad writers use a literary style in their ad writing, only that they create the same kinds of word-juxtapositions, elegant incongruities and joltingly vivid descriptions that distinguish legendary authors. Your ad writers can't hear these kinds of phrases echoing in their ears during the day unless they're filling their minds with them at night.

Hire voracious readers and you'll get astounding writers. But be prepared: Good writers were rarely the quarterback or the head cheerleader or the student voted most likely to succeed. They were usually misfit kids, like legendary screenwriter David Freeman, who recently said, "The goal of life is to take everything that made you weird as a kid and get people to pay you money for it when you're older."

Hire a David Freeman and you'll get more effective ads, happier clients and monster billing. You'll probably find him working at Barnes & Noble. 

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



The Wizard of Ads

By Roy H. Williams

» **QUICKREAD** » Afraid of losing the account, advertising professionals pretend that good writing, scientifically selected colors, powerful pictures and reaching the right audience are all that's needed. » At the heart of every money-making ad campaign is a story that needed to be told, but not every business has such a story. » No writer can dress up a bad idea and sell it to intelligent people. » Force me to write ads for a business that does an average job and I'll have to work like a madman to keep that business from sliding backwards — unless they have no competitors. » A bad restaurant can succeed in spite of bad food and no advertising *when they're the only restaurant in the hotel.*

Before You Begin Writing Those Ads...

Which do you think would work better: the brilliant execution of a flawed strategy or the flawed execution of a brilliant one? In business, it's the flawed execution of a brilliant strategy that usually wins the day.

Most advertising professionals are unwilling to question a client's strategy because they're afraid of losing the account. So they happily pretend that good writing, scientifically selected colors, powerful pictures and reaching the right audience are all that's needed to make money in America.

Piffle and pooh. Give me average writing, bland colors, no pictures, the wrong people and a strong strategy; and I'll have to rent a trailer to haul my money to the bank.

It's hard to tell a powerful story badly, but it's easy to tell a weak story well. I've never seen a business fail because it reached the wrong people, but I've seen thousands fail because they were saying the wrong thing. Please hear me correctly: These catastrophic failures weren't saying the right thing badly, they were saying the wrong thing well. It's amazing how many people become the right people when you're saying the right thing: strategy first, customer happiness second, advertising third.

At the heart of every money-making ad campaign is a powerful strategy — a story that needed to be told. Not every business has such a story. When your ads aren't working, return to the core, look at first causes, and heal the central wound. No writer, no matter how brilliant, can dress up a bad



idea and sell it to intelligent people. It often takes more than good writing to pull you back from the brink of disaster.

How did you get to the brink in the first place? Business owners wander near the brink when they:

- fail to have an attractive core strategy,
- pretend their competitors don't matter,
- believe that reaching the right people is the only secret to success,
- worry about increasing traffic more than delivering a wonderful customer experience.

Give me a business that delights its customers, and I can write ads that will take them to the moon.

Force me to write ads for a business that does an average job with their customers, and I'll have to work like a madman to keep that business from sliding backwards — unless they have no competitors.

I'm amazed by business owners who assume that every successful business deserves to be successful. The simple truth is that a business with weak competitors will succeed no matter how bad the advertising or how consistently they disappoint the customer. Could good advertising save a bad restaurant? No, but those restaurants succeed in spite of bad food and no advertising when they're the only restaurant in the hotel.

Strategy wins again. Learn to harness it and watch the response to your ads soar.

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QUICKREAD >> What most companies say in their mission statements is quite different from what they actually *do*. >> To be successful, your brand must be built on what you consistently deliver. >> The keys to successful brand writing include explaining *why* customers come back to you and substantiating your claims. >> People buy with their hearts; show them the benefit by using "you" and verbs that appeal to their sense of self. >> Link the First Mental Image and the Last Mental Image to stimulate recall. >> Be consistent, and be prepared to wait for results.

A Glimpse Into Ad Writing

101

Having read hundreds of mission statements, I remain convinced they're worthless as a source of brand essence. Peel back the idealism and happy talk, and you'll find that what most companies say in their mission statements is quite different from what they actually *do*.

To be successful, your brand must be built on what you consistently deliver. Look to your policies and procedures and daily management practices; what behaviors are you measuring and rewarding? Examine your purchasing and

pricing practices; they impact your brand far more than anything you might say in your ads. Finally, look at your décor and lighting through the eyes of the customer, listen to the sound of your store through your customer's ears, and you'll begin to glimpse the truth of your brand. Examine the soul of your company through your daily actions, not your beliefs, and you'll write branding ads that will ring like a bell.

The keys to successful brand writing are these:

1 Find out what your customers are saying about you. Bad ads are filled with phrases you like to say about yourself. Good ads are filled with what your customers say about you when you are not around. Your branding ads must sharply echo "the word on the street" about you. Jeff Bezos, CEO of Amazon.com, got it right: "It has always seemed to me that your brand is formed primarily, not by what your company says about itself, but what the company does." Stare into the eyes of the truth while you explain why customers come back to you.

2 Substantiate your claims. Today's customer is equipped with a sensitive hype-meter whose needle jumps at the slightest sign of big talk. Be sure to offer proof of what you say, even if that proof lies only in the customers' past experience or in one of their long-held assumptions.

3 Bridge to the benefit. Branding is not just about the facts; people buy brands with their hearts as well as their heads. Brand loyalty is built on the fact that our purchases remind us and tell the world around us who we are.

4 Double the verbs, whack the adjectives. Search for evocative words. Sniff out overused phrases. Stimulate the customers' minds with thoughts more interesting than the ones they were previously thinking. Count the verbs in this famous branding ad I wrote a few years ago: "You are standing in the snow, 5 1/2 miles above sea level, gazing at a horizon hundreds of miles away. It occurs to you that life here is very simple: you live, or you die. No compromises, no whining, no second chances. This is a place constantly ravaged by wind and storm, where every ragged breath is an accomplishment. You stand on the uppermost pinnacle of the earth. This is the mountain they call Everest. Yesterday it was considered unbeatable. But that was yesterday. Rolex believed Sir Edmund Hillary would conquer Mount Everest, so for him they created the Rolex Explorer. In every life there is a Mount Everest to be conquered. When you have conquered yours, you'll find your Rolex waiting patiently for you to come and pick it up at Justice Jewelers. I'm Woody Justice, and I've got a Rolex for you."

5 Link your FMI and LMI. The psychological principles of primacy and recency mean that in any list, the first few words and the last few words will be the easiest to remember. Great ads focus on a single point and contain that point in both the opening and closing statements of the ad. When possible, link your Last Mental

Image to your First Mental Image, and you'll significantly elevate the customer's ability to recall your ad. The Rolex ad was focused on you and your accomplishments. The watch was merely a symbol of those accomplishments. FMI: "You are standing in the snow. LMI: "I've got a Rolex for you."

6 Be consistent. Patience and follow-through are the keys. Most people think of "branding" as merely the consistent use of the same colors and fonts, but true branding extends far beyond a visual style signature. That same brand essence must now be translated into an auditory style signature in your radio and TV ads, as well as the sound throughout your store. Additionally, the auditory style signature of what your customer hears in his handset while waiting on "telephone hold" should agree with the balance of your carefully constructed brand essence.

7 Hunker down. It will take a lot longer to build your brand than you feel it should. If you think you'll be able to measure brand progress at the end of 12 short months, you're dreaming. Brand development isn't measured in months, but in years. Twenty-four months is probably the absolute soonest you can hope to taste even the youngest fruit from any brand orchard you might plant today.

Roy H. Williams is president of Wizard of Ads, Inc., and may be reached at Roy@WizardofAds.com. Ad Writing 101 is a new 12-session course available online at www.WizardAcademy.com. Each session is written to the perspective of business owners, teaching them how to create and/or evaluate their own ads. This is a section of Session One.



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» **QUICKREAD** » When your business category is dominated by a single brand, it's time to create a counter-brand. » Counter-branding — business judo — is rare and dangerous, but when you're overwhelmingly dominated, what do you have to lose? » First, determine the dominator's brand elements, the features by which consumers know it. » Then become the equal-but-opposite 'other' to occupy the empty spot that had been in the customer's mind. » Hitch your client's brand to the master brand by creating a polar, counter-brand opposite.

COUNTER-BRANDING

When your business category is dominated by a single brand, and all other brands don't equal that one, it's time to create a counter-brand. Counter-branding — business judo — is rare and dangerous. But when you're overwhelmingly dominated, what do you have to lose?

Before the 1967 creation of its "Uncola" counter-brand, 7 UP had survived for 38 years as a lemon-lime soft drink with the slogan "You Like It. It Likes You." Yippee Skippy, call the press — a soft drink likes me.

As in judo, the secret of counter-branding is to use the weight and momentum of your opponent to your own advantage. Hook your trailer to its truck, and let it pull you along in its wake.

The steps in counter-branding are these:

1. **List the attributes of the master brand.** In the case of 7 UP, the master brand was "Cola: sweet, rich, brown." Everything else was fruit-flavored or root beer, and all of them together were relatively insignificant. "Cola" overwhelmingly dominated the mental category "soft drinks."
2. **Create a brand with precisely the opposite attributes.** To accomplish this, 7 UP dumped its lemon-lime description and became "The Uncola: tart, crisp, clear."
3. **Without using the brand name of your competitor, refer to yourself as the direct opposite of the master brand.** 7 UP didn't

become UnCoke or UnPepsi; that would have been illegal, a violation of the Lanham Act. When you're up against overwhelming competitors, you don't need to name them. Everyone knows who they are.

Look at a current example: Starbucks. Notice that I didn't have to name the category? All I had to say was "Starbucks," and you knew we were talking about coffee. That's category dominance.

In the February 2005 issue of QSR magazine, Marilyn Odesser-Torpey writes about "Coffee Wars." She opens with the question "Starbucks will certainly remain top dog among coffee purveyors, but who is next in line?" A little later we read: "Many of the competitors in the coffee segment are Starbucks look-alikes; if you take the store's signage down, it would be hard to tell the difference."

Traditional wisdom tells us to (1) study the leader, (2) figure out what it's doing right, (3) try to beat the leader at its own game. This strategy can work when the leader hasn't yet progressed beyond the formative stages, but when overwhelming dominance has been achieved — as in the case with Starbucks — such mimicry is the recipe for disaster. So, are coffee houses forever doomed to occupy the sad "me-too" position in the shadow of mighty Starbucks? Yes, unless they launch a counter-brand.

To determine what a Starbucks counter-brand would look like, we must first break Starbucks into its basic brand elements:



1. **Atmosphere:** quiet and serene, a retreat, a vacation, library-like. Bring your laptop and stay awhile; they have Wi-Fi.
2. **Color Scheme:** muted, romantic colors; every tone has black added to it.
3. **Auditory Signature:** music of the rainforest, soft and melodious
4. **Lighting:** subdued and shadowy, perfect for candles or a fireplace
5. **Pace:** slow and relaxed: This will take a while, but that's part of why you're here.
6. **Names:** distinctly foreign and sophisticated. Sizes include "Grande" and "Venti." (No matter how you pronounce these, the "barista" will correct you. It's part of the Starbucks wine-bar-without-the-alcohol experience.)

Counter-brands succeed by becoming the Yin to the master brand's Yang, the North to its South, the equal-but-opposite "other" that neatly occupies that empty spot that had been in the customer's mind. Here's what a Starbucks counter-brand would look like:



1. **Atmosphere:** energetic and enthusiastic. Running shoes, instead of bedroom slippers. Leave the car running because we won't be here long.
2. **Color Scheme:** bright, primary colors — such as those found in athletic uniforms — against a background of white or off-white
3. **Auditory Signature:** anything with a driving beat, faster than a resting heart rate; dance music
4. **Lighting:** dazzling, like in a sports arena
5. **Pace:** driven by the music, on the move. Caffeine!
6. **Names:** straightforward and plain — descriptive, rather than pretentious

HOW IT WOULD SOUND ON THE RADIO:

"Most people think, to get a **fast** cup of coffee, you have to settle for *fast-food* coffee ...or worse...*convenience-store* coffee. And to get a **good** cup of coffee, you have to stand in line for 20 minutes at some snooty coffeehouse, where things can't just be medium and large, but have to be 'Grande' and 'Venti.' At JoToGo, we serve really **good** coffee, really **fast**. We're the **original** drive-thru espresso bar serving all your favorite premium coffee drinks at **lightning** speed. So when you're on the go, get a JoToGo. No sophisticated attitude here, just fabulous coffee **fast**."

Don't let your client convince you to challenge a category king on his own turf. Hitch your client's brand to the master brand by creating a polar, counter-brand opposite. Assuming, of course, that your client has the guts for it. ☞

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The Wizard of Ads

By Roy H. Williams

QUICKREAD >> Consolidation of disparate groups brought pain, confusion and a whole new outlook. >> A belief at the time: "Quality of growth and profits aren't things we can worry about right now. We don't have time to fix the faucet; we're too busy mopping the floor." >> Time's passage, new people and new ideas helped radio heal. >> People from the outside are seeing a new breed of radio leader: the People Person. >> This healing, rebuilding, people-bonding process seems to be occurring to various degrees in all the larger groups. >> From the outside, looking in, radio now looks pretty darn good.

THE VIEW

From A Distance

Some of what I'm about to say may be completely wrong, but I thought you might enjoy knowing what radio looks like these days from the outside, looking in.

Short answer: Pretty darn good. Surprisingly good. Optimistically good, in fact.

Long answer: The financial ecstasy of rolling a bunch of unrelated radio stations into a Wall Street public offering seems to be ebbing like the changing tide. Likewise, the fear of drowning in the dark seems to be fading with the first rays of operational dawn. Exhausted radio swimmers can finally stop treading water and gasping for air. You've found solid ground again.

Consolidation meant shotgun marriages. Stations with radically different corporate cultures were thrown together like convicts in a jail cell and told to "be family." Jobs were lost, pay was cut, expenses were slashed until it seemed there couldn't possibly be any more blood in this once-happy little animal named Radio. When the pain and confusion couldn't get any worse, new faces appeared on the scene with a whole new outlook, and a kind of numbness set in. It was radio's darkest hour.

But life goes on. New rules become old rules, and new faces become warmly familiar. The healing had begun, and the prognosis was good, but everyone was still a little shell-shocked.

I'll use Clear Channel to illustrate my point, but only because it's the biggest and the most obvious. During the roll-up years, Steve Hicks assembled a dazzling operational team and began building what appeared to be the small- and medium-market juggernaut of the future: Capstar. Meanwhile, big brother Chancellor was busy aggregating stations in larger markets, but with a significantly different style and spin. When the two were tumbled together like clothes in a dryer, things began going downhill fast. The resulting AMFM never quite figured out who or what it was. At least that's what it looked like to people on the outside.

Clear Channel was gobbling up equally strong organizations, such as Jacor, and having the same problems as AMFM in digesting them. There was no time to think about digestion, nutrition or rest, because when you're acquiring radio stations in the Wall Street arena, it's all about growth on paper and stock price. "Quality of growth and profits aren't things we can worry about right now. We don't have time to fix the faucet; we're too busy mopping the floor."

Then Clear Channel swallowed the AMFM elephant and developed debilitating heartburn.

As time passed, Randy Michaels stepped aside, and a quieter face appeared. New CEO John Hogan remained largely an unknown commodity, but more time passed, and fewer people referred to Clear Channel as "The Evil Empire." Just as everyone in radio began to realize, "Hey, we have to recreate an industry here. Our stations must have meaningful systems, procedures and a corporate culture," Hogan announced a new core value — Less is More — which was something for everyone to believe in. The initiative was visionary, but softly so, unlike the flamboyant leadership of predecessor Michaels.

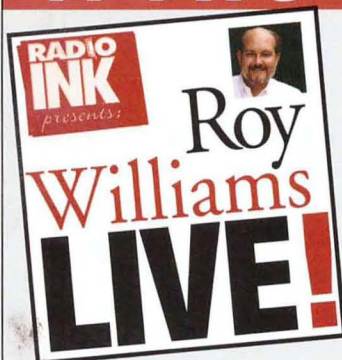
Now we're seeing a new breed of leader: the People Person. At Clear Channel, Senior VP Charlie Rahilly is showing up in more places more often, and everyone feels better for it. Again, radio is about people. The nationwide family thing is working! Investments are being made in more than just properties.

And it's not happening only at Clear Channel. This healing, rebuilding, people-bonding process seems to be occurring to various degrees in all the larger groups.

Thank God for it. The future has a future again. ☺

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

A TWO-DAY TRANSFORMATION



Kalita Humphreys Theater
May 17 & 18, Dallas, TX



Author-speaker Roy Williams has agreed to a two-day *Radio Ink* event, to be held May 17 and 18 in Dallas. Author of the best-selling *Wizard of Ads* series, Williams is one of the world's most renowned marketing experts, and is in high demand worldwide. Stations and businesses that have adopted his techniques and practices have seen double- and triple-digit growth.

This conference will be different from anything Williams has previously presented, and he guarantees no repeat of existing material. Williams has been waiting for the right opportunity to reveal his latest discoveries, which are so fresh they are not even available at the *Wizard of Ads* academy.

Call 800-610-5771 or visit
www.radioink.com/roywilliams/



The Wizard of Ads

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» **QUICKREAD** » Ads that attempt to create a false sense of urgency are quickly becoming passé. » Hype has become unproductive — but be sure you talk about the dangers of hype when you're face-to-face with the client. » The crafting of believable, persuasive language is fast becoming a fine art. » The most effective ads today are vivid, short and tight. And they include a sharp reality hook. » Like everything else concentrated and condensed, :30s are stronger than :60s. The secret is knowing what to leave out.

What To Leave Out

"PRICES SO LOW WE CAN'T SAY THEM ON THE AIR!"

"WE WON'T BE UNDERSOLD!"

"THE SELECTION WILL NEVER BE BETTER."

Today's generation says, "Cut the crap and get real."

Ads that attempt to create a false sense of urgency are quickly becoming passé. We're developing an immunity to ad-speak. These days, the believability of your urgency is linked to the credibility of your desperation. In other words, don't try to make a big deal out of something that's **not** a big deal.

Babies born in the '70s and '80s were submerged in a plastic world of flashing lights and hype. Cartoons like the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* were interrupted by ads for the Popeil Pocket Fisherman and the amazing Veg-O-Matic. "It makes mounds and mounds of julienne fries! But wait! There's more!" Disco music and line dancing and riding the mechanical bull. Pop like a flashcube, baby. Then in 1983, Michael Jackson swept the Grammys and Madonna leapt onto the charts with Material Girl. "We are liv-ing in a material world. And I am a material girl."

Fast forward a quarter century: Never has a generation had so much to do and so little time. We're drowning in a sea of voices, all shouting for our attention. The Saturday morning cartoons of childhood have blossomed into their own 24-hour cartoon network and the nightly news has become a series of 24-hour news channels. Comedy has its own 24-hour comedy channels, movies their own 24-hour movie channels and department stores have morphed into a theme park of superstores known as Power Centers, where we can watch the retail giants slug it out for our discretionary dollar: Circuit City vs. Best Buy, Linens'n'Things vs. Bed, Bath, and Beyond, Lowe's vs. Home Depot, OfficeMax vs. Office Depot, PetsMart vs. Petco.

Hype has become unproductive — but be sure you talk about the dangers of hype when you're face-to-face with the client. It's a really bad idea to deliver an ad that's dripping with sincerity and believability when your client is expecting one that pops and sizzles with overstatement and excitement.

Never have ad writers been faced with as many challenges. The crafting of believable, persuasive language is fast becoming a fine art. The most effective ads today are vivid, short and tight. And they include a sharp reality hook.

Let's look at how to use these techniques to turn the Average :30 into a Powerful :60

1. **Look for multiple ads.** The Average :60 is an infomercial.
2. **Find the FMI.** Usually a third of the way down. Open Big.
3. **Choose an LMI.** Sting the imagination with it.
4. **Eliminate redundant words or ideas.** Repetition is boring.
5. **Whack the modifiers.** Make your point.
6. **Amplify the verbs.** Kick it.
7. **Delete conjunctions when possible.** Broken sentences rock.

Here's an Average :60. It wasn't created to be used as an example. It was written to be aired:

Most people think that if you want a **really fast** cup of coffee (sfx: race car swoosh), you have to settle for fast food coffee (sfx: 'ugh') ... or worse ... *conveeeeenience* store coffee (male voice: was this made ... today?). Most people think that if you want a **really good** cup of coffee (sfx: 'ahh'), you have to stand in line for 20 minutes (sfx: sitar music up and under) at some snooty coffeehouse. Why can't you have a **really good** cup of coffee ... that's also a really fast cup of coffee. At JoToGo, you can! JoToGo, the **original** drive-thru espresso bar serving up lattes, cappuccino, espresso and premium gourmet coffee, all at lightning speed. JoToGo doesn't think it should take 20 minutes to make a great coffee drink (sfx: tick-tock-tick-tock), and JoToGo would never serve up what the corner store and fast food joints pass off as coffee (sfx: oooh!). At JoToGo, the coffee comes **first**. So when you're on the go ... make it a JoToGo, where a really good (mmmm) really fast (swoosh) cup of coffee is never more than a few minutes away. JoToGo, the original drive-thru espresso bar. Green Bay, Milwaukee, Appleton, Oshkosh, Neenah, Menasha and Fondulac. JoToGo: where the coffee comes first.

That's a pretty Average :60, wouldn't you say? Now here's the :30 it became:

Most people think to get a fast cup of coffee you have to settle for fast-food coffee — or worse, convenience store coffee. And to get a good cup of coffee, you have to stand in line for 20 minutes at some snooty coffeehouse, where things can't just be medium and large, but have to be "grande" and "venti." At JoToGo, we don't have inside dining, but we do serve phenomenal coffee fast. We're the original drive-thru espresso bar, serving all your favorite premium coffee drinks at lightning speed. So when you're on the go, get a JoToGo. No snooty attitude here — just fabulous coffee, fast.

Like everything else concentrated and condensed, :30s are stronger than :60s. The secret is knowing what to leave out.

Today's column is a fragment of Session 7 in the Wizard's 12-session series, **Ad Writing 101**, from WizardAcademy.com. The rest of this session — along with an additional 15 hours of insights — will be part of the Wizard's Radio Ink presentation in Dallas, May 17-18. ☎

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The Wizard of Ads

By Roy H. Williams

» **QUICKREAD** » I recently took a big idea — ad writing — and reduced it to a series of very insightful steps. » Just four of these steps will help thousands of people progress from below-average to above-average ad writers — but then they will have to unlearn the formula if they are to progress beyond its limitations. » The four steps are a small part of one session in the new, online streaming video course taught at WizardAcademy.com — **Ad Writing 101**. » In your next advertising experiment, try targeting through the content of your message rather than through demographic profiles. » Choose whom to lose. » Gain their attention. » Surprise them with your candor. » Make sense.

That **EVIL** Box You're In

People talk about thinking outside the box — but how did they get into that box in the first place?

The criticism most often aimed at me by my detractors is that my writings are “vague and abstract — not actionable.” These people want steps, a formula, a method that can be taught in a systematic way. No problem. I can do that.

Voila. We just created a box.

Making a big idea small is easy: all you have to do is cut off all its branching options. I recently took a big idea — ad writing — and reduced it to a series of very insightful steps. Just four of these steps will help thousands of people progress from below-average to above-average ad writers — but then they will have to unlearn the formula if they are to progress beyond its limitations. Even as I was writing this step-by-step methodology, I was forecasting exactly how long it would take its most enthusiastic adopters to realize I had put them on a dead-end road.

The choice I face each day is simple: Will I be known as lofty and vague? Will I be known as the person whose “system” doesn’t always work? It’s not an easy choice to make. The four steps I mentioned are a small part of one session in the new, online streaming video course taught at WizardAcademy.com — **Ad Writing 101**. Here they are:

In your next advertising experiment, try targeting **through the content of your message** rather than through demographic profiles.

There are four simple steps in creating a sharply targeted message:



1 Choose whom to lose. Inclusion is tied to exclusion. The Law of Magnetism states that attraction can be no stronger than repulsion. In the following example, I choose to lose bargain-hunters and posers (not that there’s anything wrong with bargain hunters or posers. In another campaign, I might target them with great success). When you’re saying the right thing, you’ll be surprised at how many people suddenly become “the customer you needed to reach.”



2 Gain their attention. If the reader/listener/viewer isn’t with you, you’re toast. We live in an over-communicated society in which our attention has been fractured by too much media. Never

assume that people will pay attention to your ad. Assume, instead, that you must wrestle their thoughts away from powerful images and distractions tugging at their mind. “If the lowest price is all you’re after, this isn’t the camera for you.” That headline/opening statement attracts the quality-conscious consumer to the same degree that it repels the bargain-hunter. The only task remaining is to explain precisely why our camera is worth the premium price we ask.




3 Surprise them with your candor. Traditional hype and ad-speak make today’s customer deaf and blind. They can smell hype and phony promises, and they’re turning away from them in greater numbers every day. Bluntly tell the truth. Confess the negative, or customers won’t believe the positive. “Another downside of this camera is that it’s not the sleekest, prettiest one in its price class. No one is going to tell you how cool your camera looks. The upside is that it takes far superior pictures.”



4 Make sense. Believability is the key. Tell how and why your product can deliver what it promises. “The prettiest camera in this price class has a shutter speed of 1/15th of a second. But the shutter speed of the ugly Canon PowerShot S500 is a super-fast 1/60th of a second, allowing you to take fabulous photos in low-light situations. Your indoor photos will look rich and vibrant when all the others look dark and grainy. And your nighttime photos will make people’s eyes bug out. Beautiful contrast and luminance, even without the flash. This camera can see in the dark. Take a picture of your lover in the moonlight. It will become your favorite photo ever. And that super-fast shutter speed is also very forgiving of movement. That’s why no one ever replaces their PowerShot S500. Go to your local pawnshop and see if you can find one. We’re betting you can’t. But you will see several of that “prettier” camera available cheaper than dirt. So, if you’re looking for a great price on a sleek-looking camera, that’s probably where you should go.”

See what I mean about choose whom to lose? Are you beginning to understand the power of candor?

I promise that targeting-through-copy works. Do you have the guts to do it? 

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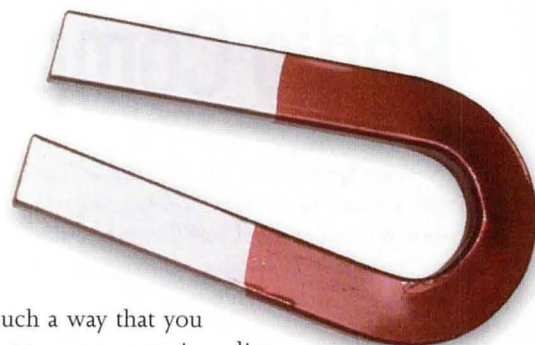


The Wizard of Ads

By Roy H. Williams

» **QUICKREAD** » Rampant over-communication is putting greater-than-ever pressure on ad writers to produce ads that seduce the customer. » The key to seduction is the opening line — *so open big*. » Figure out how to bridge from the opening line into your subject matter. » Insert your subject matter from the angle created by your opening line and bridge. » Close in such a way that you loop back to your opening line. » The times are changing, and so must ad writers, if we will live to see another day.

I Did Not Die Today



I am, for the moment, alive and well as an ad writer. But I fear I'm being stalked by iPods, cell phones, instant messaging and increasingly fragmented media choices — and they're all gunning for my life.

Over-communication rides rampant across the mind-scape of America, putting greater-than-ever pressure on ad writers to produce ads that seduce and jealously hug the attention of the customer.

Today I will teach you how to write such ads.

The key to seduction is the opening line — *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 a statement that is fundamentally more interesting than anything else that might occupy the mind of your listener. Your attention was drawn by the headline of this column, "I Did Not Die Today." Magnetism is the reason I chose it. I had no idea how I was going to bridge from that opening line into the subject matter at hand, but that's irrelevant. The key is that it can be done. Be bold and have confidence; a bridge can be built from *any* concept to *any other* concept.

1. Don't think of your subject matter and then decide how to introduce it.

2. Don't open with a question directed at your listener, such as, "Are you interested in saving money?" That technique has been overused to the point that it now borders on becoming cliché. (Rhetorical questions are okay, however, such as, "What ever happened to Gerald Ford?")

3. Think instead of a magnetic opening statement.

4. Figure out how to bridge from the opening line into your subject matter.

5. Such openers surprise Broca's Area of the brain and gain you entrance to the central executive of working memory: conscious awareness, focused attention. The central executive will then decide whether your thought has salience, or relevance to the listener. This is what your bridge must supply.

6. Write a bridge that justifies your magnetic opening line. If you fall short here, your opening line will be perceived as hype. Game over.

7. Insert your subject matter from the angle created by your opening line and bridge.

8. Close in such a way that you

loop back to your opening line.

(Having secured the involvement of the reader/listener, you are now free to use direct questions.)

It's really not that hard.

Hey, there's another good opening line: "It's really not that hard." Now select a client at random and write a bridge to follow that opening line.

Here are some other opening lines to try: "I've heard your heart stops when you sneeze." "The TV commercials with the Keebler elves have always been my favorites." "Don Quixote just won't go away." "Plutonium is the rarest of all substances."

Here's what I've done so far:

1. I opened this column with "I Did Not Die Today," having no idea how I would bridge from that line to the subject matter of the column.

2. I then created a bridge to justify my opening line and create salience for the central executive: "I am, for the moment, alive and well as an ad writer. But I fear I'm being stalked by iPods, cell phones, instant messaging and increasingly fragmented media choices — and they're all gunning for my life."

3. I provided enough details to satisfy the central executive's demand for salience.

4. Now it's time to loop back to the opening line. Let's see if I can do it:

The times are changing, and so must ad writers, if we will live to see another day.

Will you change with the times? Or will you continue to wear the blindfold of yesterday's ad-writing style, and walk voluntarily before the firing squad? ☒

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» **QUICKREAD** » Salespeople have polished their sales presentations to such a degree that they have diminished their ability to persuade. » Today's customer is only half listening, because the inner self is asking, "What are they not telling me?" » The customer is already trying to figure out the downside. Why not just tell them? » Trust must be earned - but please don't ask that tragically trite little question: "What do I need to do to earn your trust today?" » Another benefit of freely admitting the downside is that it reduces the stress in your life.

The POWER of Weakness

Features and benefits, features and benefits, features and benefits. Salespeople have polished their sales presentations to such a degree that they have diminished their ability to persuade. Today's customer is only half listening, because the inner self is asking, "What are they not telling me?"

Those who have heard my 90-minute presentation about the ongoing evolution of western communication style are familiar with the problem:

The fine art of hype has been perfected and refined.

Americans have been submerged in it, held under until every last pore of our souls has been saturated.

Consequently, we've developed an immunity to "ad-speak," the language of hype.

But we don't rage against it. We see the half-truth of hype as a fact of life.

That's why we're ignoring it.

And we're ignoring it in greater numbers every day.

Do you want to surprise Broca, gain the attention of your customer, and win back your credibility? Learn to name features, benefits and downside. Trust me, the customer is already trying to figure out the downside. Why not just tell them? It's the best possible way to insulate yourself from the backlash when they finally figure it out for themselves.

This powerful "tell the truth" technique is easily perverted into just another oily sales trick when the downside you name isn't the real one. As Francois Duc de La Rochefoucauld observed 350 years ago, "We only confess our little faults to persuade people that we have no big ones."

Confess the big ones. Knock your customers flat with your candor. Yes, it will definitely cost you a few sales you might otherwise have made. But it will earn far more sales than it costs you.

In your customer's mind, the difference between a salesperson and a consultant is that a consultant tells the whole truth and a salesperson tells only half of it. The price of being trusted is that you must share information the typical salesperson would never reveal.

Yes, trust must be earned but please don't ask that tragically trite little question: "What do I need to do to earn your trust today?" Prospects want to slap you when you ask that. Has

it never occurred to you that there's no real answer to the question? Speaking on behalf of every prospect on earth, here's how to earn it: "Tell me the truth, the whole truth, so that I can make an informed decision. I'm tired of being half-informed and

'handled' by salespeople, who seem to think I'm stupid."

Another benefit of freely admitting the downside is that it reduces the stress in your life. That, in itself, would be reward enough. But this elimination of fear will accelerate your sales career even further!

Many who read today's column will say, "He's not living in the real world. That would never work because ..." Allow me to respond with this excerpt from an e-mail I received in response to a recent Monday Morning Memo about the Power of Purpose: "I just wanted to thank you for today's MMM. Lately, I've been suffering total burnout in my radio sales job. I haven't felt stress like this since I went through a divorce several years ago. (Section deleted) Yeah, I'm still pushing radio spots like a door-to-door hairbrush salesman, but now I have something bigger and better to look toward. (Signature) PS: I know radio should really be sold in a consultation manner. My boss is freaking out about low numbers, and is forcing us to push meaningless packages. Somebody once told me at a seminar, 'You can't sell radio and have a conscience.'"

You want to talk real world? The feelings of that radio AE are real world. What I said about prospects feeling 'handled' by radio AEs is real-world stuff as well.

I am greatly encouraged that radio has begun to lift itself from the slime of yesterday's old-school sales techniques, but this lifting must be accelerated if radio is to join the 21st century.

People aren't as stupid as you think. 📠



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The Wizard of Ads

By Roy H. Williams

» **QUICKREAD** » Jack is teaching radio about people — real people. » Jack is a forerunner, a voice crying in the wilderness: “Quit your posing and pretenses, and get in touch with the people you serve.” » Williams discusses a trend, not a format, and believes Jack will eventually touch all of radio. » Brilliant programmers have always added songs that didn’t belong, but somehow fit. It kept the format fresh and unpredictable. Jack is ramping that up to a new level. » Focus groups and research will tell you only part of the truth. “What else listeners might like” is something that listeners themselves don’t know — until they hear it. » Do you have the courage to play it for them?

The Jacking Of Radio

You can call him Dave, Bob, Doug or Hank, but his real name is Jack. And he’s teaching radio about people — real people, not those 2-dimensional cardboard cutouts that live only in data and the photo sections of new wallets.

Jack is a forerunner, a prophet, a voice crying in the wilderness: “Quit your posing and pretenses, and get in touch with the people you serve; you’ll find they’re not wearing costumes anymore.” I believe Jack will eventually touch all of radio.

Please understand that I’m talking about a trend, not a format.

Jack is inclusive, rather than exclusive. He believes in broadcasting, rather than narrowcasting. The most common complaint against him is that “he tries to be all things to all people,” but this isn’t really the case. Jack just understands that people are tired of living within the confines of a limited lifestyle. “Why can’t I like Sinatra and Sting and Willie and Eminem and the musical score from *Man of La Mancha*? Is there a law that says I can’t be a cowboy who likes show tunes?”

Brilliant programmers have always been willing to add songs that didn’t belong, but somehow fit. It kept the format fresh and unpredictable. Jack is ramping that up to a new level.

Based on the current position and direction of society’s unrelenting pendulum, I believe the public is ready for radio to begin programming formats the way the magical Tom Robbins writes his bestselling novels:

“I always start with three or four completely unrelated big ideas, and maybe a character or two who have ostensible connections neither to each other nor to any of the big ideas. The challenge, then, is to bring these disparate themes and characters together so smoothly and seamlessly that it would appear that from the very beginning they were cohesive elements in a preconceived whole. I never force them into revealing their innate hidden connections as they collide within the labyrinth of my gradually developing plot.

“Everything in the universe is connected, of course. It’s a matter of using imagination to discover the links, and language to expand and enliven them... I never begin with more than the vaguest idea of the plot. To pull that off with an acceptable degree of artistry, one must write very, very slowly ... and be able to hold a great many things in one’s mind. I don’t want to wax ‘woo-woo,’ but the fact is, it’s a pretty mysterious process. I really can’t explain it, but I can tell you

that it requires intense focus and concentration, and that at the end of the day you feel like you’ve been wrestling in radioactive quicksand with Xena the Warrior Princess and her five fat uncles.

“Generally, though, what we’re talking about is an intuitive rather than intellectual approach to writing. It’s a scary way to work, and I wouldn’t recommend it to the dull of wit or faint of heart.”

What? Intuitive radio? Artistic gut feelings? Taking real chances — to hell with surveys and research? Gosh, that sounds like the old days... *back when radio ruled the world.*


What’s missing in analytical research is an understanding of the illogic that we humans call logic.

Here’s what Pulitzer-nominated neurologist Richard Cytowic had to say in his book **The Man Who Tasted Shapes**. I believe his comments apply to broadcasting as well:

“My innate analytic personality had been reinforced by twenty years of training in science and medicine. I reflexively analyzed whatever passed my way and firmly believed that the intellect could conquer everything through reason. ‘You need an antidote to your incessant intellectualizing,’ Clark had once suggested, ‘something to put you in touch with the irrational side of your mind.’... I had never considered that there might be more to the human mind than the rational part that I was familiar with. It had never once occurred to me that a force to balance rationality existed, let alone that it might be a normal part of the human psyche.”

When the brilliant Cytowic began to study this “force to balance rationality,” he learned: “...some of our personal knowledge is off limits even to our own inner thoughts! Perhaps this is why humans are so often at odds with themselves, because there is more going on in our minds than we can ever consciously know.”

In other words, focus groups and research will tell you only part of the truth. “What else listeners might like” is something that listeners themselves don’t know — until they hear it.

Do you have the courage to play it for them? 

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» **QUICKREAD** » There are only four prospects in the world. » Draw an intersection graph that includes every radio advertiser you'll ever meet: On the axes, write the words "Short time horizon," "Long time horizon" and "Has a method." » Just as a leopard cannot change his spots, an advertiser cannot change his time horizon. » If your buyer has a method, accommodate that method. Sell them their way.

Radio's Four Advertisers

There are only four prospects in the world. Today I'm going to introduce you to them and help you understand better how to sell each of them their way. Grab a pen. You're about to draw an intersection graph that includes every radio advertiser you'll ever meet:

At the western edge of the horizontal X-axis, write the words "Short time horizon." This refers to all the advertisers whose ads this week are intended to sell product this weekend.

At the eastern edge of the X-axis, write "Long time horizon." This refers to the advertisers whose eyes look into the future. These are your only prospects for ongoing branding campaigns — the thing radio does best.

Now, let me tell you the truth of the matter: Just as a leopard cannot change his spots, an advertiser cannot change his time horizon. In more than a quarter century of consulting, I've never yet worked with an advertiser who had a history of short-term promotions that actually stayed committed to a long-term branding campaign. Those advertisers who finally convinced me they wanted to change their gimmicky ways and build a meaningful brand always returned to their worn-out gimmicks. Most bailed after only two or three months. Others hung on for nearly a year. But bail they did, one and all.

The moral to the story of the X-axis is that you should quit listening to what your prospects are saying through their lips, and begin watching what they're saying through their actions. Pitch only short-term promotions to the advertisers who are short-term thinkers. Pitch only 52-week schedules to the advertisers whose actions indicate they're in it for the long haul. How long have they been at this location? Do they own or rent? Do they talk about "last year" and "five years ago," or do they talk about "last quarter" and "last month"? Are you dealing with the owner or an employee? Does the owner have partners? You'll find that it's easy to sell long-term schedules when you're calling on long-term thinkers.

Most radio presentations are made to highly promotional, short-term thinkers, as these are the only advertisers who call the stations and ask for rates. Believe it or not, your best prospect for a 52-week schedule is the advertiser who doesn't currently use radio at all. To make more money, hear more praise and listen to less whining each Monday, you must begin prospecting accounts other than the ones you hear on a competitor's station.

Now, let's look at the vertical Y-axis, running north to south: At the top, write "Has a method." This refers to every advertiser who has a method for buying media, no matter how ridiculous that method might be. Some buyers lean heavily toward qualitative data.

Serve these advertisers according to their preference. Others evaluate media by cost-per-point or cost-per-thousand. Serve these advertisers according to their preference as well. A third method for evaluating media is according to dominance in a demographic cell. These are the buyers who want to see rankers. So show them rankers in whatever cell they believe is meaningful.

The lesson of this "Has a method" pole of the Y-axis is that you're not going to change a buyer's method by arguing or trying to "educate" them into seeing things your way. If you're looking for a fight, just tell these buyers they're not doing their job right. Imply they're incompetent. Hint that you're better qualified to do their job than they are. Try to "overcome their objections."

Bottom line: If your buyer has a method, accommodate that method. Sell them their way.

The advertisers at the bottom of the Y-axis have no method for buying media. That's why they're looking for an expert they can trust. The wrong thing to say to a buyer who has a method is often the right thing to say to a buyer who has none.

If you're going to be ready to sell everyone, you must learn to recognize these four buyers, and prepare for each one the different presentation they require.


Will you continue looking for customers who like to buy the way you like to sell? Or will you learn to sell the way your customer likes to buy?

There are only four customers. It's really not that hard.

Right now, the whiners are saying, "But most advertisers have a method for buying and a short time horizon."

It's true that most agencies have a method for buying, and some direct accounts do as well. These are the people who are easiest to find. They are professionals, just like you — which is why they don't really need you; they only need access to the commodity you sell.

Now the good news: The United States of America currently has 5.8 million businesses with fewer than 100 employees. Most of these are committed to the long haul, have no method for buying media, are not represented by an agency and go to bed each night praying for an advertising expert they can trust.

Can you be trusted? 

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The Wizard of Ads

By Roy H. Williams

» **QUICKREAD** » Within the next nine years, the top name on *Radio Ink's* Top 40 list will be one that is not in the radio business today. » What will newfangled technology do to time spent listening? » Maybe the old guard, RAB-types are right. They said 8-tracks would bring us down, they said cassettes would bring us down, they said CDs would bring us down. But they were wrong. » Media in America is undergoing an avalanche of change. Will radio quicken its pace to stay in step, or will it fall further and further behind? » I don't have the answer. I only have the question.

TOMORROW'S MOST IMPORTANT BROADCASTER

Radio Ink's list of The 40 Most Powerful People in Radio usually names the men and women who touch the largest amounts of money. At least that's my impression of it.

Assuming this criterion to be true, I believe that within the next nine years, the top name on the list will be one that is not in the radio business today.

Years ago, Earl Nightingale shared a story about a company that once led the nation in making hand pumps and buckets for extracting water from wells. The company was the undisputed champion in the field. When a newfangled fad called indoor plumbing was introduced, this company continued making America's finest hand pumps and well buckets because that's what it did best. It took only a few years for that company to go out of business.

The fatal mistake, according to Nightingale, was that they believed themselves to be in the pump and bucket business. Consequently, they didn't believe those strange people making pipes and faucets to be competition. In truth, both companies were in the business of water delivery. I wonder how their story might have turned out if the pump and bucket company had taken the indoor plumbing fad more seriously.

To what degree are your towers and transmitters the hand pumps and buckets of tomorrow? Please understand — I don't have the answer, I only have the question.

Sirius Satellite Radio has agreed to provide music channels to users of Sprint's cell phone service. The agreement is not exclusive, which means that Sprint is free to sign a similar deal with XM Satellite Radio, and the other cell phone companies are free to sign similar pacts as well. What will this newfangled technology do to time spent listening? I don't have the answer. I only have the question.

Maybe the old guard, RAB-types are right. They said 8-tracks would bring us down, but they were wrong. They said cassettes would bring us down, but they were wrong. They said CDs would bring us down, but wah, wah, wah... We are invincible. The public has always gotten water from wells and they always

will. Drawing water from under ground is a time-tested American tradition, wah, wah, wah.

Have you heard about Boomerang Mobile Media? They can deliver immediate-response streaming video to every one of America's 181 million cell phones, 24/7. Their service is actionable, measurable — and rates are based strictly on performance. In other words, an advertiser is charged only for results. I believe Boomerang or another company like it will become a powerful strategic ally to at least one traditional mass media, locally and nationally. Will that media be radio?

"To see the product in action, dial * 697 on your cell phone now."

"View the movie trailer now at * 791."

"Meet the candidate face to face at * 1,000."

These messages can be tagged to traditional ads on radio, television and billboards, in newspapers, magazine and flyers. The good news for radio is that Boomerang would help to facilitate the move to Less Is More. Yes, I believe shorter ads are good for radio. And hard-to-measure :60s could become easily measurable :15s with the help of Boomerang.

(For an actual demonstration of Boomerang technology: 703-286-2693 for a BMW ad; 703-286-2180 for Busch; 703-286-2180 for the Sarasota Film Festival. By the way, I have no financial relationship with Boomerang whatsoever. In fact, they don't even know I exist.)

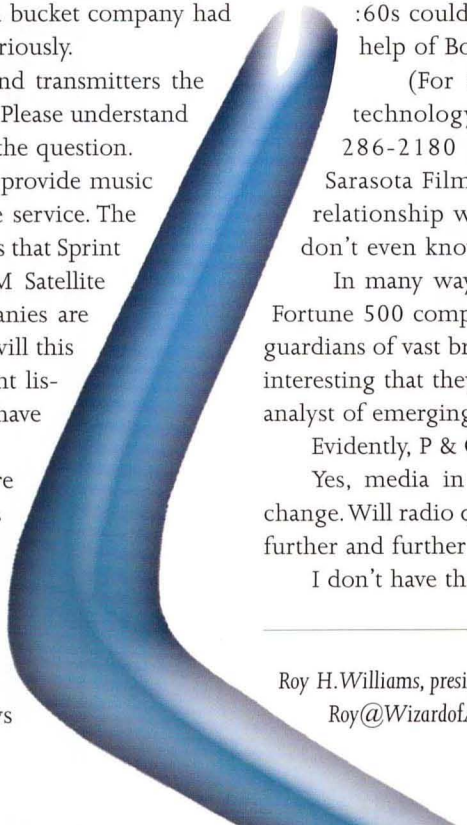
In many ways, Procter & Gamble is the quintessential Fortune 500 company: slow to change, steeped in tradition, guardians of vast brand equity — which makes it all the more interesting that they've created a new position for a full-time analyst of emerging media.

Evidently, P & G is convinced the RAB-types are wrong.

Yes, media in America is undergoing an avalanche of change. Will radio quicken its pace to stay in step, or will it fall further and further behind?

I don't have the answer. I only have the question. ☎

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» **QUICKREAD** » The hot new sales pitch is that Arbitron's new PPM data proves radio is no longer a frequency medium, but a reach medium like TV. » I predict this new selling angle will help national and major-market sellers convince big agencies to use radio as the pitch's proponents say radio should be used: "Buy tons of reach; to hell with frequency. People already know your product." » Although this new way of using radio is diametrically opposed to the long-term frequency method I prefer, I partly agree with this new sales pitch. » Don't forget: *Reach delivers results in the absence of frequency ONLY when the message has sufficient salience.* » Does your advertiser own a brand in your listeners' mind, or are they trying to build a brand there? Answer that question honestly, and you'll know what schedule to pitch.

Walking A Dangerous Path

The hot new sales pitch is that Arbitron's new PPM data proves radio is no longer a frequency medium, but a reach medium like TV. The paper that introduces this new sales pitch opens by saying, "Whenever I hear 'Radio is a frequency medium,' I shudder."

Proponents of the new pitch claim, "Most advertising usually works by reminding people about brands they know, when they happen to need the product."

So, the secret is to run just one ad exactly when all the currently-in-the-market buyers are listening? Got it.

My mind flashes back to a radio campaign for Campbell's Soup that ran when America was full of stay-at-home moms. Just one ad a day, three days a week, always in the final break before noon: "Wouldn't a hot bowl of Campbell's Soup taste really good right now?"

The idea was that most housewives already had a cupboard full of Campbell's Soup, and they weren't going to buy any more until they ate what they already had. Those ads were written and strategically timed to convince these moms to walk to the cupboard, open a can of Campbell's Soup, and serve it to the kids. Genius.

My prediction is that this new selling angle will help a lot of national and major-market sellers convince big agencies to use radio exactly as the pitch's proponents say radio should be used: "Buy tons of reach; to hell with frequency. People already know your product."

Although this new way of using radio is diametrically opposed to the long-term frequency method I prefer, I partly agree with this new sales pitch. When an advertiser is making a truly compelling offer or is selling a product that needs no explanation, far less frequency is required. Occasionally, like with the ad for Campbell's Soup, a single repetition will do. In the language of cognitive neuroscience, we've merely substituted salience (impact or relevance)



for repetition. Not a problem.

But don't forget: *Reach delivers results in the absence of frequency ONLY when the message has sufficient salience.*

Now, let's look at your local-direct advertisers. How many of them have a message of such salience that it requires no repetition? Ouch. Are you beginning to see why I only partly agree with this new sales pitch?

Here's my fear: Schedules that reach a lot of people for a

little money are extremely easy to sell — especially when you tell the advertiser that repetition is no longer required. I can imagine thousands of well-meaning, but untrained AEs using this new sales pitch to create a whole generation of advertisers who will say for 20 years, "I tried radio, but it didn't work."

Does your advertiser own a brand in your listeners' mind, or are they trying to build a brand there? Answer that question honestly, and you'll know what schedule to pitch.

My silly little firm with its 41 branch offices doesn't keep the 15 percent agency commission when we buy radio for our clients. We return the commission to them, 100 percent of it, so they can afford more frequency. And we don't charge our clients by the hour. We're paid strictly according to how much they grow.

Please keep in mind that my partners and I don't sell media. We build brands that did not previously exist. And we do it by gathering as much salience as we can find and delivering it with relentless repetition 52 weeks a year.

Are we stupid? ☹

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

» **QUICKREAD** » To sell more radio, you must be able to speak intelligently about more than just radio. » *Advertising is more effective when you have something to say.* » To become a household word, an advertiser must schedule for frequency, reaching the same listener with the same message approximately three times each week, 52 weeks a year. » Do you know your prospective client's market potential in your trade area? Can you name the degree of their current market penetration? » Business can be fun when you tell the truth and work with clients who have courage. Do you?

SELLING LOCAL DIRECT

To sell more radio, you must be able to speak intelligently about more than just radio.

Can you?

Last week, one of my clients achieved an annual sales volume of 42 percent of his market potential. Never before had I seen a business break the 40 percent barrier. It was kind of like seeing someone run a four-minute mile. I knew it was possible in theory, but I never thought I'd actually see it.

Ben was in my office for his annual marketing retreat. After the usual pleasantries, he said, "Traffic is flat, sales are flat, and I'm not happy."

"Ben, you've done everything that can be done. You've trained your staff, created a tantalizing compensation structure for them, advertised relentlessly, added every conceivable product line that might increase your attractiveness to your customer, refined your purchasing methods so that your prices are visibly better, built a fabulous new store for the comfort of your customers, and through it all, not one of your competitors has awakened."

He bristled. "Are you saying that 3 and a half million is all that can be done in my town?"

Looking him calmly in the eyes, I carefully spoke a single word: "Evidently."

I tell you Ben's story to give you a glimpse of the realities of the marketplace. These are the issues that must be discussed with every local-direct advertiser:

1. Impact Quotient. How powerful is your message compared to your competitors? This is the Impact Quotient of your message, whether it's delivered via mass media, face-to-face by your salespeople, or through word-of-mouth by your customers to their friends. How well an ad works is determined largely by what it says. *Advertising is more effective when you have something to say.*

2. Market Size/Ad Budget Ratio. How big is the marketplace relative to your ad budget? The larger the trade area, the more expensive it is to advertise. In a direct-response campaign whose results will be measured on a short time horizon, it is essential that we substitute impact for repetition. In other words, the more urgent and irresistible the offer, the less repetition is required. In these cases, an advertiser should schedule for reach, to hell with frequency. But if you see the wisdom in building a brand, if you're not anxious to play the game of hype and limited-time offers, we must determine what percentage of the trade area you can afford to reach with enough repetition to compensate for the lack of urgency in your offer. To become a household word, an advertiser must schedule for frequency, reaching the same listener with the same message approximately three times each week, 52 weeks a year. (The ad should be changed when the average listener has heard it at least 12 times, but never more than 20.) Will you reach 100 percent of the people and convince them 10 percent of the way? Or will you reach 10 percent of the people and convince them 100 percent of the way?

3. Competitive Environment. Business owner, how good are you at what you do? More important, how good are your competitors

and how many are there? Each of them will retain some customers regardless of what you do. Whether you like it or not, your offer is being compared to the offers made by your competitors.

4. Market Potential. What is the potential of your trade area? The total dollars spent in your product category is not a number you're likely to change. The question is, what percentage of that total will be yours?

Account Execs: Do you know your prospective client's market potential in your trade area? Can you name the degree of their current market penetration? Is your source of information more credible than RAB Instant Backgrounds?

Until a branding client achieves 4 to 6 percent of their market potential, they usually lack the financial steam to sustain a serious move on the marketplace. But when they've accumulated sufficient cash and courage, the ride to 25 percent is woolly and wonderful. Growing from 25 to 33 percent is much harder than the jump from 5 to 25. And creeping from 33 to 40 happens only when you're blessed with very weak competitors.

Ben's total trade area contains 125,000 people. Statistically, they'll spend 67 dollars per person/per year in his product category. This gives Ben a market potential of 8,375,000 dollars. Growing from 0.5 million to 2.1 million was fun and easy. Growing from 2.1 to 3.5 required Ben to stretch his comfort zone far beyond what most business owners would have been willing to consider. No stone has been left unturned in the 7 years we've been working together. Here's how the conversation ended:

"Ben, the way I see it, you've got four choices:

1. **Fire us** and hire an ad firm that will tell you what you want to hear.
2. **Start a new business** in an unrelated category in your town.
3. **Launch your existing category** in another town.
4. **Shut up and be happy** with what you've accomplished."

I knew that Ben would never do number 4. I figured he'd go for number 2, or possibly even number 1. To my surprise, he immediately picked number 3. "Roy," he said, "You may not remember it, but you told me three years ago when I built the new store that I needed to think about what I was going to do next. You said building that store was the final thing I might do to improve volume in my town. It looks like you were right."

We spent the rest of that day evaluating towns for an excited Ben to visit in four different states. He's on the road picking one now, and then we'll start climbing again.

Business can be fun when you tell the truth and work with clients who have courage.

Do you?

If not, why don't you go find some? It's called prospecting, and very few radio folk are willing to do it. ☐

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

Countdown To Crisis

In 1967, the Beatles ruled the airwaves, every scientist carried a slide rule, and watchmaking was the highest of tech. Then came the invention of the quartz watch movement. The Swiss watch companies saw quartz as a fad that would pass. They couldn't imagine that an industry as big and powerful as theirs could simply evaporate. Within a decade, 60 percent of all Swiss watchmakers were out of work.

Do you remember the *Seinfeld* episode where Jerry, George, and Elaine are waiting for a table in a Chinese restaurant? The plot revolves around George, who is desperate to make a phone call, but some guy is using the pay phone and won't get off. That was 1991. The idea that somebody might have a cell phone in his pocket was unthinkable.

How about the Bubble Boy episode, in which Jerry and Elaine's car gets separated from George and Susan's on the highway? Again, the plot revolves around the fact that there's no way for them to reach each other. That was 1993.

I once bought a new Mercedes with a factory-installed cell phone mounted in the center console. The handset was corded like a standard desk phone. No one thought it looked ridiculous. That car was a 1999 model.

When radio people start getting nervous about satellite radio, someone always says with finality, "But cable TV didn't kill broadcast TV," as though that statement settles the matter. It's like watching a turtle pull its head back into its shell.

The growth of cable was slowed because the broadcast networks owned the TV studios. But the radio groups don't own the record companies.

were honest and open-minded men and women, so they just looked sheepish and shook their heads. When they heard me voice what they already knew in their hearts, they looked deeply relieved and quickly wrote it down.

This is what I told them:

"There are only two things that make satellite radio attractive — and both could be offered by terrestrial radio if only you had the courage."

Greater diversity. Satellite radio is less predictable. When the creative crazies of radio programming were replaced with "scientific research" during the consolidation years, the result was that playlists became tighter, narrower, and more redundant. But today's listener no longer wants to bounce between a wide number of narrow formats. If the magnetic attraction of listeners to personal iPods and the success of the Jack format have taught us anything, it's that the move back to broadcasting — as opposed to narrowcasting — must be accelerated if terrestrial radio is to be saved. Open up your playlists again. Get eclectic. Experiment.

Reduced interruptions. Satellite radio gives you more of what you're listening for. What are the odds of getting into a random car, flipping on the radio, and not hearing interruptive material? I'm not just talking about your spot load, I'm talking about station promos and that Energizer Bunny jock patter as well (they just keep going and going and going ...). If you'd listen to radio the way your listeners do, you'd realize the odds are only slightly better than 50 percent that you'll find music when you flip on the average music-formatted station in America. (*Less Is More* is definitely the right idea. Canadian radio never fell into the trap of selling :60s for the same price as :30s. That's why they're now more immune to the threat of satellite radio.)

By the way, the argument that listeners will stay tuned to local radio "because it offers local weather, traffic, news, and sports" is like a Swiss watch company saying "the public will remain loyal to mechanical watches because they want to hear that familiar 'tick, tick, tick.'"

Keep telling yourself that the "tick, tick, tick" sound will save you, and I promise, you'll soon hear a whole new sound. "Boom." ☒

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QUICKREAD

- » The Swiss watch companies saw quartz as a fad that would pass — but within a decade, 60 percent of all Swiss watchmakers were out of work.
- » There are only two things that make satellite radio attractive — and both could be offered by terrestrial radio if only you had the courage.
- » The move back to broadcasting — as opposed to narrowcasting — must be accelerated if terrestrial radio is to be saved.
- » Satellite radio gives you more of what you're listening for.

I recently asked a classroom full of open-minded radio managers if satellite radio is truly a threat to terrestrial radio. They answered that it is definitely a threat, and I agreed. So I asked them what, in their opinion, makes satellite radio attractive to the general public. "Better signal" was the unanimous answer. I was stunned.

"Do you really believe that if you asked your listeners what they'd most like to change about radio, they'd say they need a clearer signal?" These



Corporate Cultures In Radio — 2005

Can radio successfully advertise a decidedly “visual” product? And if so, wouldn’t it be nice to have third-party documentation to prove it, especially if the data were statistically accurate? The creation of just such a report was our goal, and we chose retail jewelry as the “visual” category to prove radio’s untapped ability.

To accomplish this, we decided to cross-reference a list of the most successful retail jewelers in each of the top 200 markets with a list of the three top radio advertisers in those markets. We already had the list of the highest-volume jewelers in each city. What we needed were the names of the top three radio advertisers in the jewelry category. Easy, right? Just call the radio stations and ask.

Sometimes you learn more on a research project than you intended.

Joe Hamilton is the new research guy in my office. He knows nothing about radio or its history of consolidation. His task was merely to make the 1,000 phone calls needed to ascertain the largest, second-largest and third-largest radio users in the jewelry category in each of America’s top 200 markets. We didn’t need to know the dollars spent, just which jewelers spent the most, second-most, and third-most money.

Four weeks later, Joe finished the task. Looking at the spreadsheet, I was immediately impressed. I had known exactly what to expect in several of those cities, and there it was, staring back at me. Joe Hamilton had done his job well.

But what really got my attention is what Joe told me, and that wasn’t on the spreadsheet.

“You know, Mr. Williams, it’s interesting how each of the radio groups has a distinct personality. It got to be where I

could usually tell who owned a station before I even asked.”

“How so?”

“You know, by the way the people treated me. The kinds of things they’d say. Their attitude.”

“You’re saying that some of the groups tended to be more friendly than others?”

Joe furrowed his brow and cocked his head, searching for just the right words. “No, it was bigger than that. It wasn’t just friendliness and rudeness,” he said. “It was how suspi-

cious they were of me. Whether they treated me like an equal or looked down on me. How much they seemed to like their job. Whether they seemed angry, hassled, and tired — or happy, connected, and eager. Each group seems to have sort of a general outlook that runs throughout the company.”

I asked Joe if there was a group in which salespeople seemed to be most helpful. His answer was instant — first place and second. Then he volunteered the name of the group whose people consistently treated him as though he were a cockroach they had found in a salad.

“And you’re telling me this was consistent from coast to coast?”

As Joe nodded his head, it suddenly made sense to me.

“Joe, give me your impression of the personality of each radio group, as though it were a single person.”

What this man without a radio background told me during the next five minutes was beyond insightful — it was mind-bending. Joe’s impressions sounded exactly as though he’d met the heads of each group. Wow! The ripple runs all the way from the boardroom to the street.

Don’t ask how your organization fared in the mind of media researcher — and buyer — Joe Hamilton. Releasing that information would only diminish my point, which is this: How you treat your people affects how they treat your customers.

How are you treating your people? What are the daily ingredients you’re tossing into your corporate personality?

It’s never too late to change.



QUICKREAD

- » The researcher had to make 1,000 survey calls to radio stations across the country.
- » “It’s interesting how each of the radio groups has a distinct personality,” he said.
- » He could usually tell who owned a station before he even asked.
- » Each group seems to have sort of a general outlook that runs throughout the company, from the boardroom to the street.
- » Remember that how you treat your people affects how they treat your customers.

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Demand A Message That Kicks

Besides money, what do your clients bring to the table? Are they giving you a powerful message to communicate to your audience? Or are they expecting you to apply a thick layer of creativity to hide the fact that they have nothing to say?

Truthfully, how many of the ads on your station really say anything worth hearing?

The impact of an ad is determined 75 percent by strategy (the core message of the ad) and only 25 percent by copy and production (your ability to deliver that message). You're fighting an uphill ratio of 3 to 1 in the mind of the listener. Are you beginning to see why it's foolish to expect good copy to compensate for weak strategy?

You'll find Sholem Asch was dead-on when he said, "Writing comes more easily if you have something to say." But

When Leo Burnett quipped, "One of the greatest dangers of advertising is not that of misleading people, but that of boring them to death," he wasn't talking about flaccid production. He was talking about ads that deliver limp and impotent messages.

Morris Hite put it even more brazenly, "If you have a good selling idea, your secretary can write your ad for you."


If you want to become known for making miracles happen, always return to your station with a good selling idea. This is the single most important part of your negotiation with your client. The production staff can't create one for you. Convincing the client to give you a powerful message is solely the job of the account executive.

When Leo Burnett quipped, "One of the greatest dangers of advertising is not that of misleading people, but that of boring them to death," he wasn't talking about flaccid production. He was talking about ads that deliver limp and impotent messages.

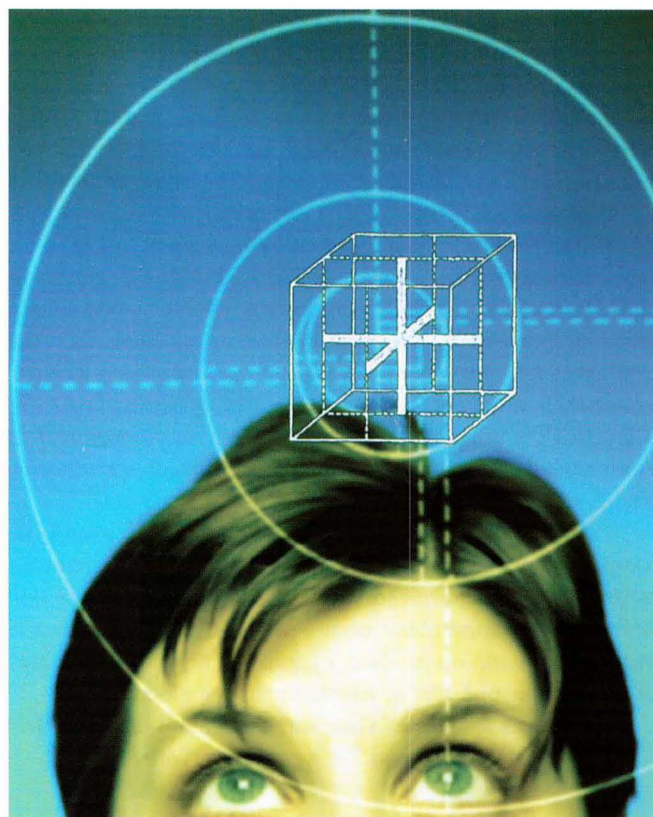
Have you been naively promising advertisers that "reaching the right audience with the right frequency" would be the solution to all their problems? Might this be why so many of them are now saying, "I tried radio and it didn't work"?

We create failure when we pretend radio can magically overcome the fact that an advertiser has nothing to say.

Make your client give you a message that matters. Your copy writers will thank you. Your production staff will thank you. Your listeners will thank you. And your advertisers will kiss you on the mouth and tell you that you're a genius.

Be a genius. Demand a message that kicks. You'll find it's much easier than explaining what went wrong. 

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QUICKREAD

- How many of the ads on your station really say anything worth hearing?
- The impact of an ad is determined 75 percent by strategy and only 25 percent by copy and production.
- If you want to become known for making miracles happen, always return to your station with a good selling idea.
- We create failure when we pretend radio can magically overcome the fact that an advertiser has nothing to say.
- Make your client give you a message that matters.



Go Ahead, Steal All You Want

Good ads can be either product-specific or client-specific. Bad ads are generally category-specific.

Category-specific ads are written broadly enough to fit every advertiser in the category. A transparent fabric of smoothly woven clichés, cat-specific ads are what every lazy account exec is eager to present as a spec spot and every shortcutting ad writer is just too happy to deliver. "All you have to do is fill in the blanks." Category-specific ads are portable; you can take them from prospect to prospect. And they are worthless, the product of mouth-breathing morons. Sell first-time radio users a schedule of category-specific ads and you will effectively vaccinate them against ever becoming long-term users of radio.

Product-specific ads work equally well for every retailer that sells the product. These ads aren't about the advertiser — they're about the product. This is why I ask my clients to seriously reconsider whether they want to take the vendor's half-dollar to air their co-op ads: "Read the copy closely," I tell them. "Are they paying for half of your advertising, or are you paying for half of theirs?" Only when the co-op requirements are extremely flexible do my clients take this so-called "free money."

Client-specific ads are the foundation of branding. Writing them requires intimate and detailed research and they can rarely be used for another client.

The story I'm about to tell you is true. I've changed only the name of the store, the town, and the vegetable:

Heisenberg's Jewelers had been in the same building on Main Street in Cabbage Valley for 105 years. A major facelift 7 years earlier had given the store white carpet, walnut paneling, and a huge chandelier in a domed ceiling. Heisenberg's was the Sistine Chapel of jewelry stores. Not a problem, except Cabbage Valley is the turnip capital of the world, a little farming community of about 45,000 people. Even the wealthiest of farmers felt they were never dressed well enough to enter. Heisenberg's was an intimidating place.

"You need to understand who our customer is," they told me. "Our customer is a 40-year-old woman with money. Very upscale. Well dressed. Always buys the best. That's who you need to target." This was in mid-October. I had been hired by Heisenberg's to help save Christmas because if they had one more Christmas as bad as the previous six, they would have to close their doors in January.

"Let's get something straight," I responded. "There's no handle I can crank that will spit out 40-year-old rich women. I have to write ads that appeal to men or you'll have to find another way to make a living." Statements like those separate consultants from salesmen.

This is the ad that saved Heisenberg's: "Ladies, many of you will be fortunate enough this Christmas to find a small, but elegantly wrapped package under your tree bearing a simple gold seal that says 'Heisenberg's.' Now you and I both know there's jewelry in the box. But the thing you need to know is this: The man who put it there for you is trying desperately to tell you that you are

more precious than diamonds, more valuable than gold, and very, very special. You see, he could have gone to a department store and bought department store jewelry, or picked up something at the mall like all the other husbands. But the men who come to Heisenberg's aren't trying to get off cheap or easy. Men who come to Heisenberg's believe their wives deserve the best. And whether they spend 99 dollars or 99 hundred, the message is the same: Men who come to Heisenberg's are still very much in love. We just thought you should know."

That ad was delivered slowly and thoughtfully, with style and grace. No hurry. No street address. No store hours. We told listeners only what they already knew about Heisenberg's. But we made them feel differently about it.

Throughout the month of December, men wedged themselves into Heisenberg's, waved stacks of cash at the register, and shouted, "I don't care what you put in the box, but make sure it's got that damn gold sticker." Heisenberg's made a blistering fortune that year and recovered from their downward slide.

Thirteen months later I got a phone call from a jeweler in Connecticut. "You the man they call the Wizard? I ran one of them 'Wizard' radio ads that's supposed to work. Had the worst Christmas I ever had. Didn't work at all. Terrible."


A few probing questions revealed that my client in Cabbage Valley had given this idiot a copy of my "simple gold seal" ad as though it were some kind of miracle cure.

"That ad didn't fail," I told the man. "I'm betting it worked extremely well for the scary, expensive jeweler in your town. He had a helluva Christmas. And he has you to thank for it. Your town just knew that jeweler wasn't you."

The man stole an ad and he got what he deserved.

The Heisenberg's gold seal ad was client-specific. It would never have worked if Heisenberg's hadn't already had the reputation of being expensive and intimidating.

Product-specific ads are for short flights. Client-specific ads are for long ones. Category-specific ads are for idiots.

Do you have the intelligence, courage, and patience to sell 52-week schedules to long-term advertisers, then write client-specific ads for them? These ads require hours of research and exceptional word skills. You cannot imitate your way to excellence. 



QUICKREAD

- Category-specific ads are portable; you can take them from prospect to prospect. And they are worthless.
- Product-specific ads work equally well for every retailer who sells the product. These ads aren't really about the advertiser at all. They're about the product.
- Client-specific ads are the foundation of branding.