

SEVEN WAYS TO MAKE A BAD COMMERCIAL

How to make a bad advertisement – and what you can do about it

How many times have you been watching television with friends or family and, after a commercial appears, someone turns to you and asks “What was the point of that commercial?”, “Are they serious?” or even “Why is advertising so bad?”

The truth is that, despite the fact that many advertisements we see today are brilliantly creative and effective in shaping our perceptions and attitudes toward the brands they represent, it is much easier to make a bad piece of advertising than a good one.

There are probably hundreds of ways to make a bad commercial, but here are seven simple ones and what you can do about them.

1 ■ Don't take ownership of your brand: Brands are assets that you own, not your agency, not your marketing consultants or other partners. These team members are your consultants, advisors and creative geniuses, essential to the process, but the brand is on your balance sheet, not theirs.

You must take the leadership position in the development of your brand messaging. Your agency, consultant and other partners and managers can provide sound advice and unique insights to help steer your brand's strategic direction.

However, setting that course is your responsibility. Neglecting to do so leaves the stewardship of your brand in the hands of people less familiar with it and who have less at stake in the vitality of your business.

2 ■ Don't provide clear direction: The Association of National Advertisers estimates that poorly written briefs cost companies 30% of the efficiency of their advertising budgets. You must articulate the brand's communication strategy in clear, unambiguous language. By providing a brief document to the partners on your team, you provide clear specifications for what the communication objectives for your brand should be and the direction to help guide the creative product.

Once your communication strategy is in place, it should become a living document. Each creative review should begin with a review of your communication objectives. This reinforces the importance of these objectives with everyone involved. And it establishes a touchstone against which the concepts can be evaluated.

3 ■ Don't involve your consumers: Effective messaging resonates with consumers when they identify with it. Knowledge of your

consumer is essential to this process and, while it may seem an obvious statement to make, it becomes easy to lose sight of the consumer when faced with daily issues that constantly demand immediate attention. Entrusting customer insights managers and their outside research partners to regularly provide in-depth perspectives on your brand ensures that your brand messaging strategy will remain vital and relevant to the target groups with whom you want to connect.

4 ■ Don't verify: Setting the strategy is only half the battle. How consumers perceive advertising and the nature of the impressions it leaves behind should not be taken for granted or left to instincts. Advertising is like any other form of communication: we may have a very clear idea of what we intend to convey, but how that communication is received may not be exactly what we intended. Nor can it be assumed, in an increasingly complex advertising environment, that the message is even breaking through or leaving a lasting impression.

Furthermore, experienced practitioners of advertising testing can be valuable additional partners of your team. Often their experience and independence

