

INFORMER



**Community
Papers of
Michigan**

November 2020

The Marketeer Celebrates 46th Anniversary!

Congratulations George and Melanie Moses and the entire Marketeer Staff!

This November 2020 Issue, Marks The Marketeer's 46th Year Anniversary!



George and Melanie Moses began uniting Buyers with Sellers in Livingston County in 1974! The Moses are deeply-rooted in their beloved city of Brighton as proud members of the Brighton Rotary Club, several area chambers of commerce and donate time and resources to dozens of civic and fund-raising events each year.

The Marketeer is a monthly advertising magazine that features 12-16 glossy cover pages and dozens of newsprint pages in each monthly edition. Over 72,600 magazines are direct mailed to homes and businesses each month. The Marketeer is known for their creative and award-winning ad designs that keep local retail and service businesses advertising each month. George provides realtors with free aerial drone photos of properties if the photos are used in Marketeer ads!

The accompanying story of how the children's book, "A Wish to be a Christmas Tree", came to be, is too good not to share. See facing page. (The book's front cover illustration serves as the cover art for the Marketeer's November issue.)



Brighton couple's story still warming the hearts of millions after 20 years.



EDITOR'S NOTE: About 30 years ago, Mike Monroe began his career as a wildlife artist. He contributed many exquisite illustrations to *The Marketeer's* front covers during that time. One day, as he delivered his artwork to our office, he met his future wife and business partner, Colleen, who was a *Marketeer* advertising sales representative and the rest is history.

Together, they have collaborated on 6 children's books with one more in the works, but "A Wish to Be a Christmas Tree" was their first. And it still sells out everywhere after 20 years.

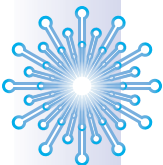
It all started with an overheard comment, "It would be nice if we had a Christmas Book", Twenty years ago Michael Glenn Monroe was at his publisher's office when he overheard someone say that they wished they had a Christmas book to publish. He took that comment home to his wife and suggested that she maybe try to write something. That overheard comment, and the resulting book, *A Wish to be a Christmas Tree*, has captivated the hearts of readers every Christmas ever since.

Since neither Monroe had set out to have a career in the Children's book industry the popularity of the book took them by surprise. To date it has sold 250,000 copies, was read on the Today Show by Katie Couric and was made into an animated special that was narrated

by Mitch Albom. That special is now available to the public on YouTube. It was even in the personal library of Laura Bush when she was trying to decide the Christmas decorations at the White House one of the last years that President George W. Bush was in office. She used the idea of *Tree*, along with another book Michael had illustrated, *L is for the Last Frontier*, as the theme of the decorations. The Monroes and their families were some of the first people to see those decorations when they were invited to the White House that year.

Colleen has always said that writing *A Wish to be a Christmas Tree* was like being given a gift. She says that she has never had a writing experience like that before, one where the book literally flowed out as quickly as the words could form in her head. The final product is exactly as it was written that afternoon when she put her then 2 year old twins down for a nap and 2 hours later held the manuscript in her hands. Twenty years later she is still humbled to have been given the inspiration and the words that have touched so many people.

Michael has gone on to illustrate 29 books in total but *A Wish to be a Christmas Tree* still stands as his favorite. While painting it he hid little personal messages and memories in it of places that he loved as a kid and places that his family had gone when growing up. He even included his kids and himself on one of the pages. He loves to tell the story of why the dad on the page has a mustache while he himself does not. On a personal and professional level he is proud of the success of the book as it was the first book that he and Colleen worked on together. They have gone on to collaborate on 6 other books with another in the works, proud of each but with a lasting fondness in their hearts for their first.





By Peter Wagner
Founder and Publisher,
The N'West Iowa REVIEW

GET REAL
THE PRINTED PAPER IS STILL A PUBLISHERS BEST ASSET!

The Man who Sold Hot Dogs on the Side of the Road

The current thinking at many community papers reminds me of the tale of the man who sold hot dogs at the side of the road. The author is unknown, and you can find it on the internet. But I am reprinting it here because it calls all of us to a moment of reflection.

“There was once a man who lived by the side of the road and sold hot dogs. He was hard of hearing, so he had no radio; he had trouble with his eyes, so he read no newspapers; and of course, he didn’t watch television. But he sold very good hot dogs. He put up signs on the highway telling everyone how good they were and stood at the side of the road and cried out to all that drove past “Buy a hot dog, they are the best you’ll ever eat.”

And people bought his hot dogs and he increased his meat and bun orders. He bought a bigger cooker to take care of all the extra business. He finally got his son to come and help him with his business.

But then something happened, his son who had been well educated said, “Father, haven’t you been listening to the radio or reading the newspapers or watching television? There’s a big recession happening right now. The current business situation is terrible in this country and we have problems with unemployment, high living costs, strikes, pollution, the influence of minorities and majorities, the rich, the poor, drugs, alcohol, capitalism and

communism.”

Where upon his father thought, “Well, my son has been well-educated, he reads the papers, listens to the radio and watches television, so he ought to know.” So, the father cut down on his meat and bun orders, took down all his advertising signs and no longer bothered to stand by the side of the road to promote and sell his hot dogs and his hot dog sales fell almost overnight.

“You’re right, son,” the father said, “we certainly are in the middle of a recession.”

For years the newspaper and free publication industry has stood by and listened as all of the competitive media scream and shout that “Print is dead.” Potential subscribers and traditional advertising buyers have come to believe it is true because we’ve failed to make a strong response. Some of us have come to believe it ourselves and like Chicken Little. We have hidden under our desks with our heads covered.

I subscribe to Netflix, Hulu, Disney+ and ESPN and watch far less over-the-air television programs than a few years ago.

I also have SiriusXM in my vehicle as well as a receiver in my office. Between that and Pandora I hardly ever listen to any commercial radio stations.

But strangely, I never see a CBS “60 Minutes” program pronouncing

“Traditional television is dead.” Nor am I aware of any announcement from my local radio station admitting that its audience numbers are down.

Too many community papers are going out of business attempting to save themselves by cutting costs rather than by expanding their service and reach.

The truth is survival can only happen if we, as an industry, forge ahead and reinvent ourselves wherever necessary to continue to win the support of our subscribers and advertisers.

A recent study by the University of Northern Iowa suggested there are several reasons why some papers are thriving, or at least surviving, while others are facing difficult times.

The most important, perhaps, is local ownership and hands-on management. Local owners, the study reported, are more responsive to the community. The paper’s needs and have a stake in the overall economy.

Second might be whether newspaper publishing is a core business interest or only one of many investments purchased simply for its revenue capacity.

Other factors listed were the health of the local economy, little or no reduction of the news staff and the level of local competition.

I would add that successful editors and publishers must make every effort to keep their papers local, logical and lively. (Continued on page 5.)



The Man Who Sold Hot Dogs... *by Peter Wagner Continued from page 4*

Local, complete and balanced continues to be the printed publication's most powerful weapon. Newspapers can figuratively be at a dozen places at one time, physically or through follow-up interviews. Unlike electronic media operating on limited time schedules and where breaking news becomes "old news" minutes after it happens, community newspapers can regularly report all the details as part of their weekly, easy-to-navigate, well-edited, permanent printed package.

It's sometimes good to remember that pioneer newspapers flourished with nothing to print but local news because they included the names of as many local residents as possible.

But management also must be logical. Newsprint, ink, a credible staff and distribution don't come cheap. There is little value in printing news releases that can be found in every other paper. Nor is it wise to publish a paper that even remotely duplicates the information already provided by another publication.

That's why it is important for editors and publishers to converse with current and potential subscribers and advertisers. I once had an editor that insisted in taking part in the morning coffee break at the local cafe even though he didn't drink coffee. "It is where I learn all the local gossip and still breaking news," he told me, "and often learn what the community liked and disliked in last week's paper."

Today's paper has to be lively. Nobody buys a black and white television anymore and few go to a website that looks exactly the same every day.

The future of newspapers and shoppers depends on tight editing, creative headlines, multiple points of entry to every story longer than three

inches, lots of photos, brilliant color and exciting, artistic layout.

Times are uncertain, and none of us know exactly how long COVID will last or how it will be resolved. Rather than hunker down, wise editors and publishers will be on the attack. The future of print is much better than competitive media suggest. But remaining on top requires determination, hard work, a love of the printed word and a bold response to all those naysayers who need to look first at their own media's future first.

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Peter W. Wagner is founder and publisher of the award winning Sheldon, IA, N'West Iowa REVIEW and 13 additional publications. This free monthly GET REAL newsletter is produced especially for publishers, editors and sales managers who still believe in the value and importance of the PRINTED paper. CLICK HERE, to also receive Wagner's free PAPER DOLLARS email newsletter featuring a unique sales ideas and promotions. The two monthly email newsletters contain information completely different from each other. You can contact Wagner can be contacted at pww@iowainformation.com or (CELL) 712-348-355 for information regarding his convention programs and webinars on publishing better papers and enjoying greater profit.

WHY SOME PAPERS ARE GROWING

Responses from publishers at growing papers provide insights



by Kevin Slimp
kevin@kevinslimp.com

Over the past few weeks, I've spoken (virtually) at five state and regional press association conventions. In all but one, my leadoff topic was "What's Going on in Newspapers Right Now?" based on my most recent research among newspaper publishers throughout the U.S. and Canada. At all five conferences, I spoke on the topic, "Getting People to Pick Up Your Paper," using information from my research and other sources to help publishers and others understand what we can do to get more readers which, in turn, gets more advertisers to read and advertise in our papers.

In my past few columns, I've discussed results of my 2020 Publishers survey, completed by publishers and managers representing more than 600 newspapers and groups. Today, I'd like to look at the last section of the survey, which gives participants the opportunity to share advice about what has worked for them over the past year. There were thousands of responses from folks eager to share their thoughts, so I'm going to stick with responses from the 16 percent of newspapers that have grown over the past five years.

Respondents in this group universally

commented that "keeping everything local" was important to sustaining growth, and I've written enough about that, so we'll move on from there.

One respondent, from a small weekly in the Northeast region of the U.S. wrote, "We began a *Support Local Business Subscription Campaign*. When someone subscribes in the name of a business and we'll give them \$5 in advertising credit."

A midsize weekly (4,000-7,000) on the West Coast wrote that some of their growth correlated with a stronger opinion section in the paper.

A large weekly (12,000-20,000) in the Southwest U.S. confirmed what a lot of growing newspapers noted. A redesign of the newspaper was credited as one reason for their growth. Another publisher from the Southwest U.S. indicated one key to growth at his/her newspaper was "Getting copies in people's hands with subscription forms."

A small weekly in the U.S. Great Plains region noted some of their growth was due to a focus on children and family activities, while a midsize weekly in the Southwest noted, "daily calls for subscriptions that are one month from expiring" was very successful for them. The respondent went on to add, "We are renewing 75 percent of them over the phone."

The publisher at a growing midsize weekly in the U.S. Great Plains region wrote, "We did a



In early summer, Kevin keynoted the Kansas Press Association Convention online.

county-wide saturation mailing for two weeks."

A free weekly publisher in the Midwest responded that a key to their paper's growth was "aggressive sales and marketing."

One of the last questions on the survey was, "If you were asked to share one lesson you have learned in your newspaper career, what would it be?" Here are just a few nuggets of wisdom from publishers of growing papers:

- A publisher at a free weekly in the Southeast U.S. wrote, "Network with other publishers to learn new methods of generating revenue and survival."
- Another publisher from the Southeast U.S. wrote, "Always make sure your employees are happy. When they are, they will do a good job."
- "Listen to your readers and develop a product people want to read."
- Quality local stories, written by local people who live in the community, plus great

photos and good layout make for something that will interest most members of a community."

- "Give readers and advertisers more than they expect."
- "Always under-promise and over-deliver."
- "Believe in your product. Those who work for a newspaper, really work for their communities. It's a privilege and it's a service.

I couldn't have said it better.

In my next column, we will look at a software product that just might change the way we design newspapers.

A personal plug: If you haven't already, check out my fictional books, *The Good Folks of Lennox Valley* and *Who Killed A.J. Fryerson?* Both are now available wherever books are sold and follow the exploits of a small-town weekly newspaper publisher as she searches for truth in a community with shady politicians who will do anything to discredit her.

I began writing for the Independent Publisher (IFPA) in 1993. Technology has changed (made my life easier), but design hasn't. However, I did develop a great fondness for...

Dingbats



The way we created our advertising has really changed over the years! We have so many more options now—and that's not always a good thing. One thing that has become so much easier is the creation of "swash" characters. Nowadays, many fonts come with their own set of built in swash characters (check the "Dingbats" heading above done with **Candy Script**). But back in the day, here's how we used to "work around" our limited character sets.

Swash Characters

So in '93, I let my readers know that I really liked, and used, dingbats—a lot! They were convenient, flexible and not too expensive. To show a variety of ways to use simple art elements in the ads produced, I used **Adobe Wood Type Ornaments 2** as a way to add a little more pizzazz to the text. For example:

You're Invited

Using Zapf Chancery at 30 points, I added the Ornament (also 30 points and in black to see the connection) to various parts of the text; then made text and ornament the same color:

You're Invited

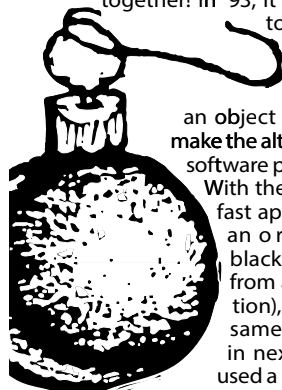
This was a simple way to make swash characters without having a separate swash character font for each typeface (yea, that's how we rolled!). Other characters I've used were:



Nowadays, we just find a font that has a lot of swash glyphs attached... and trust me, they are out there by the hundreds!

Special Borders with Dingbats

There were also opportunities to make special borders or banners for you headlines with dingbats—depending on how you put the pieces together! In '93, it was more difficult



to create screens as well. Now I simply change the transparency of an object without having to make the alterations in another software program.

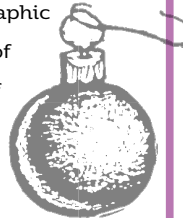
With the Christmas season fast approaching, I chose an ornament (a single black, line art element from an Art Parts collection), to show how the same graphic (as seen in next column) can be used a number of ways.

This ornament in column one was used quite large to show that a single graphic can be used in the corner of an ad to call attention to that area. I mean, you did notice that ornament before you even started to read the information, didn't you?

Small Ad Elements

Working text around a graphic element can add impact, especially if the amount of copy is minimal. You can extend the artwork out of the border to create extra white space.

This effect may work best for Holiday greetings that are starting to appear!



Wallpaper Motif

Using the art as a screened background element and repeating the graphic gives a wallpaper effect. Most effective if there isn't a great deal of copy!

Make sure that the typeface you choose is strong enough to stand out from the background.

Artwork Formats

The ornament artwork was an EPS file from 1993, and had to be taken into a drawing program, in this instance it was **Adobe Illustrator**, to make the 15% screened art.

Artwork that was saved as a tiff file could be changed in your page layout program. That's why it was very important to know if your art was Encapsulated Postscript (EPS) or Tagged Image Format (TIFF). You could not alter an EPS file in a page layout program—which was true in 1993.

All you could do was change the color of the background (see above example). All I did was to screen the background 10%. So if you can't change the color of your artwork, you know that you had an EPS file... but times change.

Now with the ability of new software programs you can place an **Illustrator** file into the **Adobe InDesign** program. I save my **Illustrator** files as **.ai** and have changed transparency, so I can "screen" imported files.

Software programs today have taken those tedious steps out of our work process—and there are even more amazing elements in the future!

I was an art teacher and changed to a graphic design career in the '80s. I write for IFPA TIP, and the CPM INFORMER. For info, PDFs of articles, or have ideas or comments, you can e-mail: hanrahan.ln@att.net Ellen Hanrahan ©2020

This was my message twenty-seven years ago and my message today—there are still a lot of different ways to use single element graphics. These were just a few ways to get you started. Perhaps you don't have a lot of time to experiment, most of us don't. It's usually by someone else's example that we find out what and how something can be done.

Don't overlook simple, single pieces of electronic artwork, or scan simple art or even use an ornament or dingbat font.



And Now? I Still Like Dingbats!

I am still a strong proponent of using small bits of art for greater impact. However, I am fascinated now by "watercolor" effects and fortunately I do have some examples:



The above watercolor block is from **Water Color Bundle** which includes shapes, lines, backgrounds, Photoshop Brushes and plants.

The typeface **Goldeye**, above, already has the swash characters. Both of the above were purchased from **Mighty Deals**, of course.

A few more watercolor samples:

Twenty-seven years has made a big difference in the way I work, for sure; yet I still write about the same things. If you can't get people to read the message, then it really doesn't matter what kind of tools you may have. No wonder it seems as if I keep repeating myself... because I do.



Final thoughts...

The **Adobe Max Creativity Conference** was amazing and I believe you can still access the labs and videos. <https://max.adobe.com>

Photoshop Virtual Summit II is also coming November 9–13... also Free! <https://www.pssummit.com/>

This pandemic has certainly allowed me to access information that I would not normally have gotten, but never expected to come under these conditions.

In the meantime, I wish you all a most safe and Blessed Thanksgiving... in most cases, mine included, we will not be getting together with family. However, I am very thankful that all are still healthy...



Stay Safe until next time...



Michael Angelo Caruso

Life Lessons from Dead Philosophers:

Thinking, Judgement, Planning, Owing Problems

This is inspired by Eric Weiner, author of *The Socrates Express: In Search of Life Lessons From Dead Philosophers*.

We live in interesting times. So many of us have become amateur doctors, economists, scientists and political operatives in the last nine months! I'm kidding, of course. Most people aren't nearly as smart as they think they are. *Socrates* discovered this a while back. The general he talked to couldn't explain courage. The poet couldn't define poetry. Everywhere he turned, Socrates encountered people who "don't know what they don't know."

Want to be a better person? Stop playing doctor and become a philosopher.

Tapping into your inner philosopher

Thinking - During the Q&A segment of my recent online [keynote](#), a young lady said "the (American) *Pledge of Allegiance* is now controversial." Um, no it's not. The Pledge has been the same for 128 years. True, some now consider it controversial, but mostly because others have said so. It's okay to change your mind, but don't surrender your power of perception

and good judgement to alarmists with agendas. And never sign up with "excitables" who don't have any plan at all. *Descartes* would tell you, "You think, therefore you are."

Judging - *Epictetus* was a slave turned teacher who said, "What upsets people is not things themselves, but their judgements about things." Watch this [fun video](#) about judgement, recorded at a leadership event in Biloxi, Mississippi a while back.

Anticipating - Yeah, bad things happen. Stoic philosophers like *Marcus Aurelius* preached *premeditatio malorum* or the premeditation of adversity. In other words, adversity anticipated is adversity diminished. Who's in?

Observing - *Henry David Thoreau* leveraged his troubled times--a country marching toward Civil War--to find beauty in the imperfect. Thoreau advised, "If you can't change the world, change how you see it."

Stop being easy prey for the agitators. Watch The *Social Dilemma* (Netflix) to see how we're being played, then dial back on the Facebook drama. And check out my [Talk to Me](#) podcast [interview with](#)

[data expert Mary Aviles](#). We talk about how bad guys find you online--and how you're helping them.

Owning - *The Myth of Sisyphus* by *Albert Camus* is about a sad figure from Greek mythology who is condemned to push a boulder up a hill only to watch it roll back down again and again.

Camus said our task is not to understand the meaning of catastrophes like Covid-19 (there is none), but to own the problem. Invest in the effort, not the result and you'll sleep better.

Are you working on a seemingly fruitless presentation, assembling a series of always-tentative marketing strategies or rescheduling a vacation for the third time? "Good," Camus would say. You've begun to grasp the delicious absurdity of life.

Hang in there and don't freak out. Just like a good philosopher. So, in the words of my favorite philosopher, *Eddie Money*: "Don't be thinkin' 'bout what's not enough, baby. Just be thinkin' bout what we got."

Better days ahead!

Best, Michael



Michael Angelo Caruso is one of America's premier keynote speakers. He is known as "the speakers' speaker." Mr. Caruso teaches presentation skills and is in demand for conventions, conferences, and annual events of all kinds. Michael specializes in working with leaders, salespeople, and the customer service industry. Mr. Caruso has spoken in South America, Africa, Australia, Asia, the Middle East, and 49 of the 50 states. He spends lots of time working and playing in California, Texas, Florida, and New York. Contact Michael, Edison House, 333 E. Parent Ave, #4, Royal Oak, MI 48067, Phone: (248) 224-9667



By Bob Berting
Berting Communications

Building The Image Of Your Customer



Goal setting is a personal thing that is aimed at harnessing power and directing it toward the things in life we want to achieve. Advertising salespeople need to have a consistent goal that incorporates the development of a creative attitude toward their customers and very specifically how to develop the customer's image in the marketplace during this time of CoronaVirus.

Let's start with ad design

Although there is much to be said for instant recognition of ad design incorporating a unique border, boxes, reverses, spot color, etc, eventually the content of the ad wins out. By that, we mean the headline of the ad will convey benefits and reinforce the image of the customer. Many advertising experts have felt the headline is 80% of the ad's effectiveness. Then well written copy will continue to hold the attention of the reader throughout the rest of the ad and also continue to build the image of the customer.

Photographs, Cartoons, and Caricatures Consider the use of photographs (which represent reality), cartoons, and caricatures. A sophisticated piano and organ dealer once achieved a tremendous increase in sales due to an animal cartoon series. Each ad in the campaign had a large dominant, provocative heading and a large cartoon animal illustration. After a few ads, the image of the business changed dramatically, and readers no longer thought of his showroom as a cold, stuffy, indifferent place. Customers commented on how clever his ads were and felt more at home shopping for high priced pianos and organs. Of course, the salespeople had to be aware of the advertising image they were projecting and conduct themselves accordingly.

Make the advertising geared to contemporary lifestyles

In every campaign, there must be an effort to make the advertising as contemporary as possible, tuning in to the lifestyles of young married couples who are establishing early buying habits. Many times, a store interior image does not tie in with the advertising image. This is where counseling with the advertiser can be effective, whereby suggestions can be made to introduce colorful murals and creative point of sale pieces to give the store a more contemporary look. Maybe the walls need a new color also. This type

of counseling is only possible if the customer perceives the salesperson as a trusted consultant who has his or her best interest at heart.

Why should a customer be concerned about their image?

They should, because the flow of customer traffic depends on it. People form opinions about a business from observing their advertising, displays, merchandising practices, and location. They also consider pricing, quality, convenience, service, dependability, and selection. All of these factors add up to the image of the business.

Media competition--advertising is war

Don't assume anything in regard to media competition. Your customer many times could be one of their hot prospects. You must know the advantages and disadvantages of your media competition backwards and forwards. You must develop strategy and execution that will enhance your relationship and build stronger bridges with your customers. Advertising is war. Victory in media warfare belongs to the creative advertising salesperson who can write good campaigns, develop more meaningful relationships, worry about customer image, and consistently study and be aware of competing media.

Bob's newest e-book is "Smart Customer Connections For Advertising Salespeople". You can order all 4 of Bob's books on his website: www.bobberting.com. Read Bob's books and discover how his vast experience and know-how can help you achieve much more business for you and your publication. You'll greatly benefit from the wisdom of one of America's top advertising sales experts. Bob is a professional speaker, advertising sales trainer, publisher marketing consultant, and leading columnist in many national and regional newspaper trade association publications. He is the President of Berting Communications and can be reached at bob@bobberting.com or 317-849-5408.



By John Foust
Raleigh, NC

Ad-Libs

Get Prospects Involved in Your Presentations

Back in my ad agency days, I remember hearing and reading about the importance of getting prospects involved in sales presentations. At that point in my young career, I had experienced the difficulty of getting – and holding – the other person’s attention in a sales conversation. So I decided to try that strategy in an upcoming sales meeting.

The prospective client was a residential real estate development company which was considering a new logo and print brand identity. They were testing the waters to see if there were any logo ideas that were better than the design they had been using for years. I had worked with them on a few other projects, so they agreed for me to develop something.

My proposed logo featured an angled line over one of the upper-case letters in their name, with the line and the letter tailored to look like the outline of a house. Sure, it seems trite and unmemorable now, but at the time I thought it was a unique concept.

On the day of the presentation, I arrived with the finished logo, a drawing pad, and black and red markers. The finished version stayed in my briefcase, while I handed the pad and the red marker to

the prospect. I provided detailed instructions on how to draw the simple letter and roof outline. Then I gave him the black marker and asked him to fill in the other letters of the company’s name. We talked for a minute or two about the simplicity of the design and how it would communicate the nature of their business at a glance.

That experience was a real wake-up call for me. From the moment I handed over the pad and the markers, he was completely involved in the process. I could tell that he had never before seen a presentation like that. By the time I pulled the completed version of the logo out of my briefcase, he understood the reasoning behind the design. After all, he had drawn it himself.

I wish I could report that my presentation convinced them to buy that new logo. But as it turned out, they kept using their old brand identity and later changed it to something which was designed by a family member. Those things happen.

Even though I lost the sale, I’ve never forgotten that day’s lesson. Those things I had heard about getting prospects involved in presentations were right. The key is to get the other person involved physically and mentally. There are a lot of possibilities. You can ask him to find his spec ad on a mocked-up newspaper page. You can ask her to look up something on her computer. Or you can ask the group at the conference table to vote on which testimonial quote to feature first.



Selling and teaching have a lot in common. It’s the old Chinese proverb in action: “I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.”

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John Foust has conducted training programs for thousands of newspaper advertising professionals. Many ad departments are using his training videos to save time and get quick results from in-house training. E-mail for information: john@johnfoust.com



Do Consumers Want To See COVID-19 Mentioned In Holiday Ads?

By Laurie Sullivan Staff Writer October 15, 2020

From AAF SmartBrief October 16, 2020

Despite the impact of COVID-19 on consumers' lifestyles in the U.S. during the past several months, they are still looking forward to the holiday season, with 64% reporting they are just as -- or more -- excited about the holidays this year.

The data, released Thursday from video advertising platforms Unruly and Tremor Video, explores consumers' attitudes, expectations and plans for the 2020 holiday season. The companies surveyed more than 800 U.S. consumers in September 2020 for this study.

Balancing optimism with the reality of the changes, 42% of consumers think holiday ads should reference COVID-19, while 57% want ads to make them feel happy. Some 36% want ads to make them feel inspired, 30% want ads to make them feel nostalgic, 21% want to be amused, 22% want to be informed, 17% want to be surprised, and 20% want ads to amaze them.

While planning holiday advertising campaigns, brands should take special care to celebrate the season while balancing an acknowledgement of the hardships that consumers have faced this year.

The study takes a closer look at consumer interest and demand for the first holiday season since the COVID-19 pandemic began in the U.S. Some consumers are still anxious about going into stores. The study

found 41% of consumers report decreased comfort with shopping in person, which has been increasing online shopping patterns. Three-quarters plan to do at least half of their holiday shopping online, and 53% will increase the frequency of their online shopping.

Price and cost savings will play a major role when shopping.

- 44% - Free and discounted shipping
- 40% - Wide variety of products
- 44% - Competitive prices and offerings
- 40% - Ease of shopping

When asked when they plan to do the bulk of their shopping, 15% said they will do so in October, while 27% cited November, 23% said they will shop on Black Friday and Cyber Monday, and 17% cited the first half of December. Despite the possibility of shipment delays, 8% plan to wait for the second half of December.

Where do consumers get their inspiration for gifts? Some 53% said they will watch TV more frequently and 58% will browse the internet more often. About 41% believe that TV ads are among the most influential media channels in terms of inspiring their holiday purchase decisions.

Brands can find success by reaching consumers at their comfort levels and employing nuanced media plans for

the holidays.

Digital makes a difference. Searching online at 57% is most or somewhat influential when it comes to making decisions for holiday shopping, and browsing online retailers at 53%. TV ads came in at 41%, followed by social media ads at 37%, email at 36%, and online video ads at 35%. More traditional ways to make decisions include browsing shops in person at 53%, word of mouth from friends at 53%, browsing catalogs at 42%, and magazine or newspaper articles at 29%.

Additional key findings include:

- 89% of consumers from households that make over \$100,000 per year plan to do at least half of their holiday shopping online, followed by 79% of those from households that make between \$40,000 and \$100,000 per year, and 67% of those from households that make less than \$40,000 per year
- Overall, nearly 56% do not plan to travel this holiday season
- 77% of consumers aged 55 or above do not plan to travel, but more than 25% intend to travel within their state of residence and nearly 15% are planning out of state travel
- 50% of consumers under 55 believe that COVID-19 should be referenced in ads



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