



**nasuti + hinkle**

*creative thinking*

## Some Thoughts on Creativity in Advertising

### **“We’re for dogs.”**

It’s a great commercial for Pedigree dog food. Whoever thought it up is my hero. I love dogs, I love watching that spot, and I’m going to remember the message. And dog owners – the people who buy dog food – will too. It might have been easier to produce some sort of less creative “dogs really love it!” kind of thing, but who needs another forgettable one of those?

I put “less creative” and “forgettable” in the same sentence on purpose. Because whether it’s a television or radio spot, print or Internet ad, I really have to wonder about what sometimes passes for creativity in advertising.

***“People who do anything for a living usually do it better than those who don’t”***

There is no media space or time I know of that is free. You pay for it one way or another. And yet, across the country, people gather ‘round the television every year to ooh and ahh Super Bowl commercials, then go out and blow the budget on advertising that’s little more than a waste of time or newsprint. It’s not like creativity doesn’t have a business purpose. It does. Big time. Creativity is what’s going to get someone to read

your ad or pay attention to your spot, to remember your message – and ultimately buy your product or service. In the right hands, creativity is a stunningly practical business tool.

“It’s not creative unless it sells”, I’ve heard People Who Don’t Do Creative Work say. That may be true, but it’s going to sell a whole lot harder and better if it is creative. Thing is, if you’re going to spend good money on any sort of advertising, why not make your media dollars work as hard as possible for you?

Doesn’t it make sense to put a little more money or effort into your creative, so you can get better results and a better return on your media investment? Pretend it’s your sales force we’re talking about. Which would you rather have, a half-dozen so-so performers you can get cheap – or three or four top producers? With enough money and enough coverage, the worst, most insulting advertising on the planet could move the sales needle up. But who has that kind of cash to throw at advertising?

Is there a villain here? I don’t know. Probably not. Depends on how you define villain. But although my current “I hate that spot” television commercial was produced by an ad agency, I have to say that I think radio and television stations and publications who throw in production or copywriting for nothing or next to it bear some of the blame. As a general rule, people who write, design and produce advertising for a living can do a better job than people who don’t.



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Actually, people who do anything for a living usually do it better than those who don't.

My guess is that the best, most creative agency in town won't do a very good job fixing your car, doing your taxes or putting a new roof on your house. But your mechanic, accountant and roofer will. There is some truth to "Trust me. I do this all the time."

(And in reality, it's in a media outlet's best interests to make sure the creative is as strong as possible. Often a publication or station's effectiveness takes a hit for what is really the failing of an ad or spot.)

Having said that, I have to admit that ad agencies have to accept a large part of the blame for advertising that isn't creative. After all, we're supposed to be in the creativity business. Probably more often than I'd like to think, we don't demand it of ourselves, or we're OK with it when our clients don't demand it of us. We're paid to know the difference between good and great. Ad agencies can do better. All of us. Me too.

Creativity works. It's just a matter of ad agencies and their clients raising the bar for themselves.

We're for dogs.

- Woody Hinkle

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