

Advertising Industry Manifesto

The advertising industry exists in the exchange of ideas between people. Today, more people are able to communicate with each other than any time in human history. That means the first media is people. It also means that creating ideas from human understanding has more consequence — perhaps, more value, too. The present socio-economic challenges we face underscore the interdependency of a globalized economy. There is little doubt that we are witnessing economic, environmental and social changes like never before. There can also be little doubt that some of the ideas we have been using are no longer helpful. New ideas are needed.

FEAR

Fear is more prevalent today. Fear is a killer, particularly when the economy experiences a recession or jolts like we are seeing. Fear suffocates the creativity that brings people together and that fuels economic optimism. Fear can be particularly hurtful to a business that depends on having an ideas-oriented culture, such as the advertising industry. It is detrimental to the quality and inventiveness of our talent for innovation.

Advertising is more Art than Science. Science costs money. Art costs passion. The tension that can occur when fear is present due to social upheaval or economic uncertainty can greatly affect the courage and passion in anyone's business. The advertising industry is naturally optimistic, even fearless. We invent ideas that make it possible to change behaviors and beliefs. This is why clients seek our help.

Being fearless becomes even more important when times are tough, when there is heightened uncertainty. This is when marketers need creativity and innovation more than ever from their advertising and marketing communications partnerships.

INNOVATION

There is a difference between creativity and innovation. Creativity is when ideas are new and potentially valuable. Innovation occurs when you connect ideas that don't seem to be connected. It's the process in which creative ideas are realized. Research at Harvard indicates creativity occurs when people act in concert with their environment, when ideas are measured against some broader social context. Innovation, therefore, is about thinking different, together.

During the depths of the depression, Charles Kettering knew, first hand, the tremendous power for economic growth from new ideas. During a speech he gave to business leaders in 1938, he commented on the prevailing attitude that most business leaders had been expressing, e.g. that 'we just need to wait until the economy starts to come back again.' Kettering emphasized that the economy does not stimulate itself into a change of momentum, all by itself, what is

needed to jump-start the economy is innovation and new ideas.

Those who have been in the advertising business for a while know that after all the cuts in spending and resources, clients will soon need fresh ideas to fuel growth. You cannot cut your way to prosperity. A study by the Association of American Advertising Agencies on marketing and advertising during recessions shows that the brands and companies that held or increased their investments during recessionary times, gained significant growth in share and sales long-term. (*Advertising In A Recession: The Best Defense is a Good Offense* by Bernard Ryan Jr.) When everyone else is afraid to act, the fearless few who do, have everything to gain.

As with all businesses, the advertising industry has never been more challenged than it is right now. Ironically, it has never been more necessary. With the ramifications of global communications technologies, continued social concerns and the need for economic stimulus, our inherent inventiveness and ability to convert creativity into innovation are sorely required.

This is a world of business where borders and nations are less relevant, rendered less dominant by open trade, consolidation of industries, and the ubiquity of media increasingly connecting us. Importantly, of the world's 100 largest economic entities, today, 51 are now corporations and 49 are countries. This means more people are being touched by corporations and brands, than any single nation's government.

Context matters. Diverse connections are adding content that reshapes the landscape for ideas. Sorry Tom, it unflattens it. The world is round, interconnected and always in real time. This is creating a blogosphere that is streaming, full of information and misinformation. Finding the truth requires greater dependence on word-of-mouth and perspective. While we consider wisdom of the crowds, we need to be attuned to the wisdom of individuals. We must listen to each other's own unique perceptual filter for the diversity of information available.

It is a race for ideas. The rapidly increasing connections of the global economy depend on

one's means of information processing — our ability to listen, learn and then make choices.

THE POWER OF CHOICE

Social Exchange Theory focuses on relationships. It suggests that in any relationship, he or she, who has more choices, has more power.

Advertising exists as an influence on the world's economy. It is about having choices. We are increasingly free to make choices, but the thought of how much depends on our decisions, can make our freedom of choice difficult. Nonetheless, we can see from history, there is a fine line between freedom of choice and not having any choice at all.

Winning the race for ideas will depend on collaboration. It means harnessing multinational capabilities locally with global best practices to generate wealth at each tier of the economic pyramid. Collaboration among marketing disciplines, talents and locations to bring objectivity, diversity of understanding and insight about consumers and creators of information. These are the individuals who are more and more connected, and who have more choices.

THE FUTURE OUTLOOK

We are a multiple choice kind of country. Multiple choice is a more useful learning instrument than a true/false question. True/False assumes one way or the other, right or wrong. True/False does not sufficiently engage the possibility of connecting things that don't seem to be connected.

In the river of communications technology which is ever flowing, all information streams into and out from individuals. A current of misunderstanding cuts through it, with an undertow of misinformation that has never been stronger. Let us not forget, only dead fish float with the stream.

I am optimistic. All we need is some good advertising.

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PS. If you think this is a political argument, you have just experienced a demonstration of how your perceptive filter works.