



Managing Work

Or how to create a compelling newspaper ad without burning your computer, losing friends or seeking therapy.

Sadly, contingencies happen. Before we begin to develop a system for creating a workable newspaper ad, let's be realistic: you'll have to start soon, and allow for problems to crop up. A graphic designer is a typesetter and artist, but also a critical thinker and problem solver. I once watched a \$3,000 computer system summarily reject any input, stall, and finally crash. The machine prompted a string of obscenity from one of the designers, but alas, foul language had little effect on the obstinate Mac.

The solution came from another designer, who calmly rebooted the machine, extracted the files and transferred them to a workable machine. The culprit was a conflicting extension: an easy repair, yet the technological problem was serious enough to potentially demolish a carefully thought out production schedule. More serious problems will also inevitably appear to sang your progress. We may be complacent when it comes to computers, but remember that we're working with a nascent technology. In other words, *don't procrastinate!*

The Early Stages: Considering the Product and Viewer

The challenges facing you are quite similar to those of the stationary project, with a few obvious differences. The most notable of these differences lies in the nature of the viewer. A viewer's reaction to an image, text or combination of both are determined by a number of factors: age, income, and education. Often lost in the demographic equation is another important factor: location. In other words, the context and manner of dissemination is crucial. While a piece of letterhead certainly conveys an important message, it generally carries that message to a relatively specialized and limited audience. A newspaper ad reaches a far broader audience, and that realization should, in and of itself, dramatically alter your perception of the assignment and its parameters.

In several important respects, this project will provide you with the same challenges as the stationary package. As a graphic communicator, you have to negotiate the intricacies of developing a product that considers the needs of the sender and the viewers. You have to consider the nature of the media itself: while you may not have to choose a fine linen paper over a decent sheet of bond, you now have to tackle the task of mating a graphic with text to produce something that will look good in a local—or national—newspaper.

So you're faced with yet another design problem, fraught with promise and peril. On the one hand, you don't have to battle capricious printers, business cards or envelopes. Nor will you find yourself lingering for hours in the paper aisle at the local Staples. However, the new task comes with its own set of challenges: which product will you advertise? How will the product's inherent nature alter your choices? What does the sender wish to accomplish with the ad? Do you target a general audience, or aim for a specialized viewer?

Your strategy should answer these questions, and oas well as the following:

Who is the sender (client)? Your project brief should include a profile of the sender. Who are they? What do they produce? What kind of image do they want to project?

What is the purpose? Normally, this is defined by the client and the nature of the product itself. Define the goals as clearly as possible. Ads can inspire, entertain and inform, as well as motivate consumption.

Who is the target audience (viewer)? How narrowly do you wish to focus? What are their demographics? Where do they live? Be empathetic and put yourself into the position of the viewer.

What is the message? This again is determined by the

sender and the product, but you'll have some input in the matter.

What is the mode of transmission? This is the one constant: a newspaper. This should influence you on a technical level—how much ad space do we have, what kind of printing technology is available, what graphical and typographical decision should we make—and a rhetorical level: who reads the paper?

An Ad's Basic Purposes

We're inundated with Ads, yet it's safe to say that we pay remarkably little attention to the design, rhetoric and influence contained within the contemporary sales pitch. Part of this is simply due to the onslaught on our senses. Advertisers themselves are acutely aware of this problem, which prompts them to try ever harder to reach a mass audience. Did anyone notice the massive Cingular slogan prominently displayed in Times Square as Spiderman saved the city? Who was Tom Hank's employer in *Survivor*? Who sponsored the automotive mayhem in *Too Fast Too Furious*?

You don't have the resources or the technology to do such things, unless you have connections at Pixar or ILM. your means of reaching viewers is rather more modest. You do however have the advantage of working with an inexpensive and widely distributed media.

Although the sales pitch varies widely, a successful ad must do the following:

Take the customers point of view. The ad should meet the viewer's needs, not those of the client/sender and the art-ist.

Deliver a message. Not all ads sell consumer goods, but ads persuade, inform or remind. Remember—and this

is crucial—that advertising is never art for art's sake, although a well constructed ad is truly a thing of beauty. *Communicate's the benefit of the product or service.* The ad should emphasize the product's benefits, rather than just listing the product's attributes.

Effective advertising involves your ability to recognize and target an audience. As we've seen, you need to be aware of demographic behavior. However, you should also know that consumer behavior often reflects a series of stages. Marketing professionals often recognize four stages of consumer behavior:

1. Pre-contemplation—a consumer becomes aware of the product.
2. Contemplation—the stage when recognition fosters purchasing.
3. Action—the consumer purchases the product.
4. Maintenance—the consumer repeatedly purchases the product.

Ideally, your ad should attract the audience, capture and hold their interest, promote some sense of need and/or desire, and motivate the viewer to action.

The Ethics of Advertising

What I won't encourage or accept are ads that push the boundaries of ethics. I firmly believe that as communicators, we have an ethical duty to avoid what Professor Caine rightly identifies as the "hired gun" mentality. Recently, I had the opportunity to watch Lucy Hughes discuss the marketing technique her firm created in an effort to snag consumers at an ever younger age. Hughes helped to invent and perfect the "nag factor," a series of controversial techniques designed to

consumption among children by encouraging them to pester and harass their parents, who would then submit to the children's demands in a desperate bid to stem the constant whining.

When the interviewer asked Hughes if this was ethical, she replied without hesitation that she wasn't sure, but her clients' sales were up substantially as a result. This may be a prevalent ethos among advertisers, but it is unacceptable in this class. Your ads must be tasteful, honest and factually correct. There are enough unethical arbiters of taste, fashion and appliances, let's be different and keep our heads out of the mud.

How to Develop a Message Strategy

By now, you should have a sense of audience by pondering the 5 questions posed earlier (sender, purpose, target audience, message, media). Always consider these factors when you approach a project of any sort.

In this case, you have a predetermined assignment, which involves creating a newspaper ad for the *Wheeling News Register*. This should provide you with detailed information concerning the ad's form and content and some general information about the target audience. But there's still far more to do. As a problem-solver, you will have to reflect on and consider the full ramifications of this task.

Perhaps the best way to consider the problem is by asking and answering a series of questions that deal with the nature of the problem at hand.

Question 1: How do I make my ad attract and hold the viewer's attention? Newspapers are full of bad ads. This is partially due to a general lack of awareness of the typographical principles we discussed in the first section, and it also stems partially from the desire to maximize the investment in a relatively pricey newspaper ad. As we've seen, more often equals less when it comes to visual terms.

Your ad has to catch the reader's attention, and compel him or her to action by promising that your product will help them meet a need or solve a problem (at its core, this is what advertising does).

2. How do I maximize readability to encourage my message's longevity? Repetition is essential in advertising, much as it is in learning a foreign language or skill. A flashy, expensive ad might prompt an immediate response, but all but the most brilliant of campaigns are quickly forgotten.

You'll have to take this into account: are you launching a campaign (a series of ads) or placing a single ad? Remember that you have to factor in budgetary considerations as well.

3. How can I extend the ad's design into a campaign?

The Parameters

This assignment requires you to develop an ad for the *Wheeling News Register*, *The Cardinal Connection*, or another existing newspaper. Your ad could be something developed yourself, or for another client. There are some very specific restrictions which are naturally imposed by the medium:

Your ad must adhere to the specific format of the paper.

This means that you must learn the specifications for a retail ad for your publication of choice. Newspapers have strict limitations regarding the width of an ad, but they are more open regarding the ad's height.

You can use any color you want. As long as it's black.

Your budget is \$1,000. This means that you'll have to get a quote from your publication of choice to prove that you're within the budget.

You can design a single ad, or a campaign (a series of ads). Either way, you have to stay under \$1,000.

You can use an illustration or photograph, but you should

bear in mind that line art looks good in a newspaper. You should also recognize your own limitations.

A Sample Visual Strategy.

Professor Cain designed the following newspaper ad visual strategy:

PROBLEM DEFINITION:

Client: Wheeling Jesuit University (Distance Education Program)

Purpose: to motivate potential students to contact the university for more information and sign up for an online course.

Target Audience: Appalachian female head-of-households between the ages of 25-45 who want/need a degree or continuing education to hold or improve their job but are busy with many conflicting demands, on a tight budget, and not able to pursue a traditional on-campus course.

Message: A WJU online course is convenient, affordable, and flexible.

Channel/format: newspaper ad in the *Wheeling News-Register*

GIVENS:

client
purpose
target audience
channel and basic format

VARIABLES:

message
format details

Key issue A: How can my ad best stand out on the page to gain

and hold the reader's attention?

Component variables:

space format
border
focal point

Key issue B: How can I maximize the readers' takeaway by making the ad readable?

Component variables:

typeface
visual hierarchy

Key issue C: How can I make the ad's design extendable into a campaign?

Component variables:

message concept
compositional formula

II. OPTIONS/SOLUTIONS

Basic space format options (for the News-Register) include:
standard horizontal—three columns wide (38 picas wide)
pronounced horizontal—four columns wide (51 picas wide)*
extreme horizontal—five or six columns wide (65 or 78 picas wide)

Criterion: suitability to message concept

Justification: The *News-Register* has a six-column format.

A pronounced horizontal will need to be at least 3 columns wide, so let's go with a four-column width. This means our space format will be 51 picas wide. Let's select 3 inches as the height (18 picas). This gives our format an aspect of 1:2.8 which is a pronounced horizontal aspect. I chose the

pronounced horizontal because it lends itself to my message concept of a long made-up word. It is the best compromise because it stands out more than the standard horizontal but is easier to work with than the extreme horizontal.

Basic border options include:

- a 4-point rule,
- a decorative border of computer mice, or
- simple whitespace*

Criterion: what will best distinguish the ad from others on the page

Justification: I chose the simple whitespace because although this means the ad has to be larger and will cost more, it will make the ad stand out well against all the other cramped, cluttered ads around it since most other ads have borders. The whitespace option also best fits with the message because I want to convey to the reader a sense that a WJU online course will simplify not cramp your life.

Basic focal point options include:

- a black and white photo
 - a half-tone graphic
 - a line-art graphic
 - a simple headline*
 - a complex headline
- Criterion: simplicity

Justification: In keeping with the simplicity theme, I have chosen a simple headline as the focal point of my ad. The heart of my message--affordability, convenience, flexibility--is abstract which makes it harder to photograph or illustrate. I could have a photo of a student in front of a computer. But

a clever headline conveys the idea simply and effectively.

Basic typeface options:

1-typeface solution—Times)*

1-typeface solution—Arial)

2-typeface solution Optima for the head and Palatino for the body copy

Criteria: Simplicity and readability

Justification: Since my design stresses simplicity, I have chosen to use only one typeface. I have chosen Times over Arial because serif typefaces are more readable than sans-serif faces at the same size.

BASIC TYPE HIERARCHY OPTIONS:

Option 1:

Main Head: 24/29
Times Roman Bold
Subhead: 18/21 Times Roman Italic
Body: 12/14 Times Roman

Option 2:

Main Head: 28/33
Times Roman Bold
Subhead: 14/17 Times Roman Italic
Body: 12/14 Times Roman

Option 3:

Main Head: 36/42 Times Ro- man Bold

Subhead: 18/21 Times Roman Italic

Body: 12/14 Times Roman

Criteria: simplicity with a modern look

Justification: I have chosen to make the headline large to make it stand out but avoid all caps in the head to keep the ad looking more modern. Capital letters give a more traditional look and lower-case letters a more modern look.

BASIC MESSAGE CONCEPT OPTIONS:

Message Concept #1:

A headline stressing in one word the promise of the ad and some body copy amplifying the promise and providing contact information (This message concept can be extended by using different words for the headline and suitably complementary body copy: “Convenient” “Affordable” “Flexible”).

Message Concept #2:

A headline stressing in three words the promise of the ad and some body copy amplifying the promise and providing contact information (This message concept can be extended by using different sets of three words for the headline and suitably

complementary body copy: “Convenient. Affordable. Flexible.” “Focused. Efficient. Effective.” “Excellent. Enhancing. Enjoyable.”).

Message Concept #3:*

A headline stressing in one humorous, made-up word the promise of the ad and some body copy amplifying the promise by playing on the impossibility of summing up all the benefits of a WJU online course in only one word and providing contact information (This message concept can be extended by using different impossible words for the headline and suitably complementary body copy: “Convenaffordaflexibility” “Excel-lenjoyenhancability” “Focusefficieffective”).

Criteria: Creativity and harmony with pronounced horizontal format

Justification: Although #2 is attractive it is less creative than #3.

This last option offers an advantage over the other options because the unusual and long word will catch the readers’ eye more and also will fit in well with my pronounced horizontal format.