



Advertising

The psychiatrists say that everybody should have a hobby. The hobby I recommend is advertising.

Never write an advertisement which you wouldn't want your own family to read. You wouldn't tell lies to your own wife. Don't tell them to mine.

Advertising is a business of words, but advertising agencies are infested with men and women who cannot write. They are as helpless as deaf mutes on the stage of the Metropolitan Opera.

(Confessions Of An Advertising Man)

I don't believe in this specialization. Who said that there's one breed of cat, which is an account executive, and then there are creative people - and they are quite different? This has been perpetuated by both sides for years. It's nonsense.

(Viewpoint)

I once found myself conspiring with a British Cabinet Minister as to how we might persuade Her Majesty's Treasury to cough up more money for the British Travel advertising in America. Said he, "Why does any American in his senses spend his vacation in the cold damp of an English summer when he could equally well bask under the Italian skies? I can only suppose that your advertising is the answer." Damn right.

(Confessions Of An Advertising Man)

Ogilvy

Advertising People

In most agencies, account executives outnumber the copywriters two to one. If you were a dairy farmer, would you employ twice as many milkers as you had cows?

(Viewpoint)

Few of the great creators have bland personalities. They are cantankerous egotists, the kind of men who are unwelcome in the modern corporation.

(Confessions Of An Advertising Man)

Madison Avenue is full of masochists who unconsciously provoke rejection by their clients. I know brilliant men who have lost every account they have ever handled.

(Confessions Of An Advertising Man)

One of the most brilliant colleagues I ever had was blackballed by three clients in one year; the experience hurt him so badly that he left the agency business forever. If you are too thin-skinned to survive this hazard, you should not become an account executive in the advertising agency.

(Confessions Of An Advertising Man)



Art/Layout

Once upon a time I was riding on the top of a First Avenue bus, when I heard a mythical housewife say to another, "Molly, my dear, I would have bought that new brand of toilet soap if only they hadn't set the body copy in ten point Garamond." Don't you believe it. What really influences consumers to buy or not to buy is the content of your advertising, not its form.

(Confessions Of An Advertising Man)

Most of the art schools which train unsuspecting students for careers in advertising still subscribe to the mystique of the Bauhaus. They hold that the success of an advertisement depends on such things as "balance," "movement" and "design," but can they prove it? My research suggest that these aesthetic intangibles do not increase sales, and I cannot conceal my hostility to the old school of art directors who take such preachments seriously.

(Confessions Of An Advertising Man)

"Making the logo twice the size" is often a good thing to do, because most advertisements are deficient in brand identification. "Showing the clients' faces" is also a better stratagem than it may sound, because the public is more interested in personalities than in corporations. Some clients can be projected as human symbols of their own products.

(Confessions Of An Advertising Man)

H.L. Mencken once said that nobody ever went broke underestimating the taste of the American public. That is not true. I have come to believe that it pays to make all your layouts project a feeling of good taste, provided that you do it unobtrusively. An ugly layout suggests an ugly product. There are very few products which do not benefit from being given a first-class ticket through life.

(Confessions Of An Advertising Man)

Most headlines are set too big to be legible in the magazines or newspaper. Never approve a layout until you have seen it pasted into the magazine or newspaper for which it was destined. If you pin up the layouts on a bulletin board and appraise them from fifteen feet, you will produce posters.

(Creative Council Reports)

Today, almost all our layouts look "addy." Too bad. How do you sell editorial layouts to clients? Try saying, "Would you like the editors of half a dozen magazines to devote a whole page to your product?" The client will reply, "Yes, of course. But it is impossible." You say, "It is possible. You buy the space and I will put an editorial in it. Look, here is your editorial. Better than any advertisement, isn't it?"

(Creative Council Reports)



It has been found that the less an advertisement looks like an advertisement, and the more it looks like an editorial, the more readers stop, look and read. Therefore, study the graphics used by editors and imitate them. Study the graphics used in advertisements, and avoid them.

(Creative Council Reports)

Most readers look at the photograph first. If you put it in the middle of the page, the reader will start by looking in the middle. Then her eye must go up to read the headline; this doesn't work, because people have a habit of scanning downwards. However, suppose a few readers do read the headline after seeing the photograph below it. After that, you require them to jump down past the photograph which they have already seen. Not bloody likely.

(Creative Council Reports)

We continue to see baselines on almost all the print ads, in spite of our usage. They are invariably fatuous generalities which contribute nothing. More often than not, they compete visually with the headlines. Nobody reads them. (We know this from research.) Ads with baselines get lower readership than ads without baselines. So, for Pete's sake, get the goddamn baselines out of your ads.

(Creative Council Reports)

All too often the bottoms of advertisements are littered with miscellaneous crap, gadgets, etc. Get rid of them; they contribute to an appearance of untidiness which reduces "impact" and readership.



Awards

It is the professional duty of the advertising agent to conceal his artifice. When Aeschines spoke, they said, "How well he speaks." But when Demosthenes spoke, they said, "Let us march against Philip." I'm for Demosthenes.

Resist the temptation to write the kind of copy which wins awards. I am always gratified when I win an award, but most of the campaigns which produce results never win awards because they don't draw attention to themselves.



Brands

Every advertisement is part of the long-term investment in the personality of the brand.

The image of any brand has been created over a long period of years. It is the result of many different factors - advertising and pricing, and the name itself, and the packaging, and the kind of TV shows the brand has sponsored and the length of time the brand has been on the market, and so on.

Every advertisement must contribute to the complex symbol, which is the brand image.

(How to Create Advertising that Sells)

Most manufacturers are reluctant to accept any limitation on the image of their brand. They want it to be all things to all people. They want their brand to be a male brand and a female brand. An upper-class brand and a plebeian brand. They generally end up with a brand that has no personality of any kind, a wishywashy neuter. No capon ever rules the roost.

(Confessions of an Advertising Man)

It takes uncommon guts to stick to one style in the face of all pressures to "come up with something new" every six months. It is tragically easy to be stampeded into change. But golden rewards await the advertiser who has the brains to create a coherent image, and the stability to stick with it over a long period of time.

(Confessions of an Advertising Man)



Clients

I always use my clients' products. This is not toadyism but elementary good manners.

(Confessions of an Advertising Man)

Don't expect your agency to pay for all the dry holes they drill on your behalf.

(Confessions of an Advertising Man)

The best way to get new accounts is to create for our present clients the kind of advertising that will attract prospective clients. We do not have new business departments in our offices. No first-class man will take the job; no second-class man can do it effectively.

(Principals of Management)

If you resign accounts every time you feel like doing so, you will empty your portfolio every year.

(Principals of Management)



Commercials/Jingles

I have found that it is easier to double the selling power of a commercial than to double the audience of a programme. This may come as news to the Hollywood hidalgos who produce programmes and look down their noses at us obscure copywriters who write the commercials.

The purpose of a commercial is not to entertain the viewer but to sell him. Horace Schwerin reports that there is no correlation between people liking commercials and being sold by them. But this does not mean that your commercials should be deliberately bad mannered. On the contrary, there is reason to believe that it pays to make them human and friendly, if you can do so without being unctuous.

Dr. Gallup reports that if you say something which you don't also illustrate, the viewer immediately forgets it. I conclude that if you don't show it, there is no point in saying it. Try running your commercial with the sound turned off; if it doesn't sell without sound, it is useless.

Research has shown that commercials which open with a dramatic visual hold their audience better than commercials which don't. If you are advertising a fire extinguisher, open with fire.

Candor compels me to admit that I have no conclusive research to support my view that jingles are less persuasive than the spoken word. It is based on the difficulty I always experience in hearing the words in jingles, and on my experience as a door-to-door salesman; I never sang to my prospects. The advertisers who believe in the selling power of jingles have never had to sell anything.

Next time you decide to have the sales pitch sung in a television or radio commercial, play the song to half a dozen people who know nothing about the product. Then ask them what it said.



Committees

A lot of advertisements and television commercials look like minutes of a committee meeting, and that is what they are. Advertising seems to sell most when it is written by a solitary individual. He must study the product, the research and the precedents. Then he must shut the door of his office and write the advertisements.

(Confessions of an Advertising Man)

Nowadays it is the fashion to pretend that no single individual is ever responsible for a successful advertising campaign. This emphasis on "teamwork" is bunkum - a conspiracy of the mediocre majority.

(Confessions of an Advertising Man)



Consumers

You aren't advertising to a standing army; you are advertising to a moving parade. Three million consumers get married every year. The advertisement which sold a refrigerator to those who got married last year will probably be just as successful with those who'll get married next year. An advertisement is just like a radar sweep, constantly hunting new prospects as they come into the market. Get good radar and keep it sweeping.

(Confessions of an Advertising Man)

The consumer isn't a moron; she is your wife. You insult her intelligence if you assume that a mere slogan and a few vapid adjectives will persuade her to buy anything. She wants all the information you can give her.

(Confessions of an Advertising Man)

While you are responsible to your clients for sales results, you are responsible to consumers for the kind of advertising you bring into their homes. I abhor advertising that is blatant, dull or dishonest. Agencies which transgress this principle are not widely respected.



Copywriting/Jargon

It is a mistake to use highfalutin language when you advertise to uneducated people. I once used the word OBSOLETE in a headline, only to discover that 33% of housewives had no idea of what it meant. In another headline, I used the word INEFFABLE, only to discover that I didn't know what it meant myself.

(Confessions of an Advertising Man)

Our business is infested with idiots who try to impress by using pretentious jargon. They say that commercials for food products must include "an affirmative eating experience." The latest horror is SUBOPTIMIZE.

I have never liked posters. The passing motorist does not have time to read more than six words on a poster, and my early experience as a door-to-door salesman convinced me that it is impossible to sell anything with only six words. In a newspaper or magazine advertisement, I can use hundreds of words. Posters are for sloganeers.

The word "Agility" is written in a cursive, handwritten style in black ink. The letters are connected, with a prominent loop at the end of the 'y'. The background is a light gray rectangular area.

Ideas

Big ideas are usually simple ideas.

Unless your advertising is built on a BIG IDEA it will pass like a ship in the night.

Senior men have no monopoly on great ideas. Nor do creative people. Some of the best ideas come from account executives, researchers and others. Encourage this; you need all the ideas you can get.

Encourage innovation. Change is our lifeblood, stagnation our death knell.



Knowledge

We pursue knowledge the way a pig pursues truffles.

We prefer the discipline of knowledge to the anarchy of ignorance.

Tolerate genius.

It is important to admit your mistakes, and to do so before you are charged with them.

What you show is more important than what you say.



People

I admire people with gentle manners who treat other people as human beings. I abhor quarrelsome people. I abhor people who wage paper-warfare.

(Confessions of an Advertising Man)

Our offices must always be headed by the kind of men who command respect. Not phonies, zeros or bastards.

(Principals of Management)

If you always hire people who are smaller than you are, we shall become a company of dwarfs. If, on the other hand, you always hire people who are bigger than you are, we shall become a company of giants.

(Viewpoint)

If you ever find a man who is better than you are - hire him. If necessary, pay him more than you pay yourself.

(Principals of Management)

I despise toadies who suck up to their bosses; they are generally the same people who bully their subordinates.

(Confessions of an Advertising Man)



Positioning/Promotions

The most important decision is how to position your product.

(How to Create Advertising that Sells)

A lot of successful advertising was created before POSITIONING was invented. And a lot of today's campaigns are based on optimum positioning but are totally ineffective - because they are dull, or badly constructed, or ineptly written. If nobody reads your advertisement or looks at your commercial, it doesn't do you much good to have the right positioning.

(Creative Council Reports)

The mail-order advertiser has no retailers to shrink and expand his inventories, to push his product or to hide it under the counter. He must rely on his advertisements to do the entire selling job. Either the reader clips the coupon or he doesn't. A few days after his advertisement appears, the mail-order writer knows whether it is profitable or not. For twenty-seven years I have kept my eyes riveted on what mail-order advertisers do in their advertisements.

(Confessions of an Advertising Man)

A steady diet of price-off promotions lowers the esteem in which the consumer holds the product; can anything which is always sold at a discount be desirable?



Professional Discipline

The pursuit of excellence is less profitable than the pursuit of bigness, but it can be more satisfying.

I frequently hear the Magic Lanterns described as rules. They are not rules. They are reports. Reports on how consumers react to different stimuli. If it were possible to create great advertising merely by studying the lanterns, any damn fool could do it. More is required: innovative genius. The lanterns only light the way for genius, indicating the most fruitful path to explore.

(Creative Council Reports)

Shakespeare wrote his sonnets within a strict discipline, fourteen lines of iambic pentameter rhyming in the three quatrains and a couplet. Were his sonnets dull?

Mozart wrote sonatas within an equally rigid discipline - exposition, development, and recapitulation. Were they dull?

Supposing you've got an acute appendicitis. You've got to be operated on tonight. Would you like to have a surgeon who's read some books of anatomy and knows how to do that operation - or would you prefer to have a surgeon who refused to read all books about anatomy and relied on his own instinct? Why should a manufacturer bet his own money - perhaps the future of his company - on your instinct?

I had a friend who was the King's surgeon in England. One day I asked him what makes a great surgeon. He replied "What distinguishes a great surgeon is his knowledge. He knows more than other surgeons. During an operation he finds something which he wasn't expecting, recognizes it and knows what to do about it."

It's the same thing with advertising people. The good ones know more. How do you get to know more? By reading books about advertising. By picking the brains of people who know more than you do. From the Magic Lanterns. And from experience.

I can't stand callow amateurs who aren't sufficiently interested in the craft of advertising to assume the posture of students.

(Creative Council Reports)

The word "Agility" is written in a fluid, cursive script. The letters are connected, with a prominent loop at the end of the 'y'. The ink is black and the background is a light gray.

Testing

The most important word in the vocabulary of advertising is TEST.

Test your promise. Test your media. Test your headlines and your illustrations. Test the size of your advertisements. Test your frequency. Test your level of expenditure. Test your commercials. Never stop testing, and your advertising will never stop improving.



Training

Ogilvy & Mather does two things: We look after clients and we teach young advertising people.

Training should not be confined to trainees. It should be a continuous process, and should include the entire professional staff of the agency. The more our people learn, the more useful they can be to our clients.



Work

Get rid of sad dogs who spread gloom.

Hire the kind of people clients don't have and wouldn't dream of having.

A tight ship is a happy ship, provided it is an informal ship.

Do not summon people to your office. It frightens them. Instead go to see them in their offices.

(Principals of Management)

In the best establishments, promises are always kept, whatever it may cost in agony and overtime.

I figure that my staff will be less reluctant to work overtime if I work longer hours than they do.

I believe in the Scottish proverb: "Hard work never killed a man." Men die of boredom, psychological conflict and disease. They do not die of hard work.

Agencies which frequently work nights & weekends are more stimulating, more successful - and more profitable. A tight ship is a happy ship - provided it is an informal ship.

To keep your ship moving through the water at maximum efficiency, you have to keep scraping the barnacles off its bottom. It is rare for a department head to recommend the abolition of a job, or even the elimination of a man; the pressure from below is always for adding. If the initiative for barnacle scraping does not come from management, barnacles will never be scraped.

It is the inescapable duty of management to fire incompetent people.

Many of the greatest creations of man have been inspired by the desire to make money. When George Fredrick Handel was on his beam ends, he shut himself up for twenty-one days and emerged with the complete score of "Messiah" - and hit the jackpot. Few of the themes of Messiah were original; Handel dredged them up from his unconscious, where they have been stored since he heard them in other composers' work, or since he had composed them for his forgotten operas.