

29q!

The Fast Track to More Powerful Advertising!

or

The 29 questions everyone knows (or should know) but never answers

By

Ullrich Appelbaum

www.first-the-trousers.de

This unique checklist will assist Marketing and Advertising Managers in improving the effectiveness of their advertising messages, thereby helping them to expand the return on the investment of their advertising budgets.

This checklist is taken from the Best Practice Study, *"The principles of effective advertising for dotcoms"* (see www.first-the-trousers.de to download this study for free). By using those questions, one will apply the secrets and principles of 10 of the most successful advertising campaigns in the new economy.

The checklist will help Marketing and Advertising Managers to:

1. Evaluate the effectiveness of their current ad and marketing campaigns.
2. Identify potential areas of improvement in their current campaigns.
3. Better assess and judge strategic and creative advertising and marketing ideas that ad agencies are presenting to them.
4. Develop more efficient communication strategies.

However, this checklist is only a guide, a framework for strategic thinking. It should not replace common sense, experience, the appropriate validation tools, a formal strategic process, or strategy templates.

STRUCTURE

This checklist is divided into four main ideas, with each concept representing a cornerstone in the added value chain leading to effective communication. First is the strategic context (which also provides the basis for brand strategy). Second is the advertising message (or communication concept). Third is the advertising idea (the perceptual context), and the fourth part of this chain is the creative execution of this idea.

As they represent a constantly flowing chain, these four concepts are closely interrelated and should not be considered separately. In fact, each concept is a springboard to the next level. Weaknesses in any of

these four areas indicate a missed opportunity in increasing the persuasiveness of the message. This will ultimately lead to an ineffective use of available resources.

HOW TO ANSWER THE QUESTIONS

The way to answer these questions is almost more important than the actual questions themselves. Keep in mind the following criteria when going through the checklist:

- ? Be honest: This checklist is a personal working tool that is intended to help you to develop more effective advertising campaigns. As a result, the quality of its outcome will depend on the honesty of your answers. We can easily fool our colleagues or ourselves, but we cannot fool the consumers.
- ? Remember your audience: The final judge for effective advertising is not a favorable test result or satisfied management -- it is the consumer who will be receiving your message. The questions should therefore be answered with your target audience in mind.
- ? Base your answers on the facts: Facts help you to ensure the validity and correctness of your answers. A fact-based approach will help you to identify those areas on which you must concentrate more.
- ? Be precise: The more precise your answers to those questions, the better the final outcome of the checklist.

The ability –or inability- to answer these questions with factual precision will highlight potential areas of improvement. It will also help to identify whether those areas needing improvement are of a strategic or creative nature.

The Questions

1. The strategic context

1. What actual consumer needs or wants does my product or service satisfy?
2. What are my potential customers currently using or doing to satisfy these needs? (This could be an online or offline competitor, another category of products or ideas, or nothing at all if you have a truly innovative product.)
3. Does my product or service give consumers a real advantage to the way they currently satisfy these needs? If so, what is this advantage?
4. What specific traits (not just demographic) characterize my potential target audience of customers?
5. How do my potential customers think and feel about the category, my competitors, and myself?
6. Can my product or service make my potential customers think and feel better? If so, how? If not, why not, and what can I do to change this?
7. How do my potential customers experience the category, my competitors, and my own product or service?
8. Will my product or service improve the actual consumer experience? If so, how?
9. Could my product or service satisfy an unmet need in its category?
10. Is there a customer segment within the category, or outside of it, that has not been targeted by my competitors so far, for which my product or service represents a true benefit?
11. If my product or service is very similar to my competitor's products or ideas, what does my brand offer to generate consumer interest and confidence and create brand preference (brand values, a brand personality, etc.)?

2. The advertising message (communication concept)

12. What actual information about my product or service do consumers receive from my advertising message?
13. Does my message clearly explain the benefit(s) of my product or service?
14. From a consumer perspective, is this benefit(s) unique to my product or service or can it be easily matched by competitors?

15. Are there additional benefits (beyond the one(s) my message already communicates) of the unique features of my product or service that would increase its appeal and distinctiveness from a consumer's perspective?

16. Does the benefit(s) my product or service offers coincide with the consumers' motivations to use the Internet? (To receive information, for communication purposes, etc.?)

17. Does the consumer clearly understand why my product or service can deliver these benefit(s)?

18. Do the different benefits communicated in my advertising feed into and confirm my overall brand proposition?

3. Advertising ideas (the perceptual context)

19. How would I accurately describe the advertising idea of my message in one sentence?
20. Is this advertising idea relevant and meaningful to potential customers? If so, how? If not, what can I do to make it so?
21. Does this advertising idea increase the relevance and appeal of my product or service beyond just describing its benefits? If so, how?
22. Is the advertising idea based on a prevailing –and pertinent- trait or characteristic of the desired potential target audience of customers?
23. Would my product or service be perceived as being more appealing or relevant if it were associated with a different emotion, belief, attitude or experience that characterizes my potential customers?

4. Creative execution (the formal execution)

24. Does the creative execution of my message reflect and fit the strategic platform? If so, how?
25. Does the creative execution of my message convey a tone that fits into and builds upon the pre-defined brand character?
26. Does the creative execution of my message establish the brand and product or service as being different from its competitors? If so, how?
27. Does the creative execution of my message challenge the conventions of the category in a meaningful and relevant way? If so, how?
28. Is my advertising interesting and engrossing to watch? Is there drama and tension? Is it comedic? Is it memorable to potential customers?
29. Does my advertising include key images or situations that make it interesting, unusual or likeable to watch? If so, what are they?

About MarketingProfs

Founded in June 2000, MarketingProfs.com is an online publishing company based in Los Angeles, California. We specialize in providing both strategic and tactical marketing know-how to Internet and offline marketing professionals through a combination of provocative articles and commentary. Drawing on both the cutting edge marketing know-how produced by academic researchers (on e-marketing and otherwise) and the practical know-how of analysts and marketing professionals, we cut through the marketing hype and puffery that has become so prevalent in the Internet age. Instead, we bring you the know-how you need to successfully compete in your business. Think of us as the PBS of online marketing sites.

About Ullrich Appelbaum

Ullrich Appelbaum, a European brand consultant, is the founder of First The Trousers Then The Shoes. Prior to founding this brand consulting practice, he was the Director of Strategic Planning & Research of BBDO Germany, the largest communication group in Germany.

First The Trousers Then The Shoes is a European brand strategy practice that helps brand owners launch new brands and expand existing brands through innovative ideas, concepts and strategies that combine strategic insight with creative problem-solving.

For more information or feedback contact Ullrich at ua@first-the-trousers.de