

COMMON MISTAKES IN PRINT ADVERTISING

VOL.2 NO.6 – FINAL IN THE SERIES OF SIX -

COMMON MISTAKE #6 - MISUSE OF AD RESEARCH FINDINGS OR "IF IT AIN'T BROKE, DON'T FIX IT."

When the results of your tip-in test indicate you have a "winner," how should you handle the impulse to "tweak" the ad - to make it even better? The answer is very carefully!

No ad perfectly achieves its communication objectives. There's always a point that could be stronger or one that you wish hadn't showed up. So, the urge to "fix" these slight shortcomings is understandable. But as you consider "tweaking" the ad, keep the following in mind.

A core truth of professional print advertising is that ads are "looked at" - not carefully studied and usually not read in entirety. [You may want to check our archive for the second newsletter in this series and the discussion of the importance of the "first look."]

So, what kind of changes can be made that will help the communication? With respect to the visual appearance of the ad, the answer is changes that do not materially alter the global "look" of the ad. Slight variations in color, size, or placement of a major graphic probably won't affect the "look."

With respect to copy, consider only changes that add clarity to the message, strengthen the linkage between the brand and/or the therapeutic category to the content, or increase the prominence of a copy point that the research findings identified as highly important and believable.

If you add any copy, try to balance it by eliminating other copy that evoked few, if any reactions. If there are copy points that simply didn't evoke any reactions, consider eliminating them because the lack of comment may simply mean that the copy point isn't interesting to the audience. Always remember, "Less is more."

In general, resist the temptation to transform every neutral or negative finding about the ad to something positive. There are two reasons why: (1) it usually can't be done - there is almost nothing you can say about a brand that someone in your target audience won't like; and (2) the "fix" inevitably adds copy and thereby, diminishes communication.

So, if your ad achieved high Proved Day-After recall together with lots of retained learning of your main idea (in the proved recaller comments), you have very good print advertising. In short, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

To respond to these ideas, view previous Newsletters, or learn more about how Barnes/Hollander may help meet your advertising research needs, please call or email us:

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