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PERSUASIVE & CREATIVE BRAND COMMUNICATIONS

FROM MAGIC TO LOGIC

SHOULDERS
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FROM MAGIC TO LOGIC



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This is a free eArticle based on the [eBook](#) and [video](#) of *Creative Brand Communications*. It offers key points from the full title – giving you the ability to learn something new about this business topic in just a few minutes while discovering how to get even more from the full length versions.

Great Brand Comms – the holy grail of marketing

The advertising budget can be one of the biggest investments a business makes to create shareholder value. Yet many businesses regard Brand Comms as more of an art than a science - approaching it as almost a haphazard, chance process; one they accept sometimes produces a winner ... but more often an also-ran.

There is no formula that will guarantee success, but top experts agree there are logical steps in the process, or journey, which can maximise the chance of magic.

Persuasive and Creative Brand Comms – From Magic to Logic provides both an insight into what works at the highest level of Brand Comms along with advice and a number of insights, tips and tools that will help you find that elusive edge in getting *more people to buy more, more often*. It imparts the experience and knowledge of 24 of the world's top practitioners in advertising and branding. The product of extensive research and interviews, the title relates over 400 years collective experience in delivering the brand messages that have changed the fortunes of companies around the world. It also includes examples of work that has built some of greatest brands in modern history by persuaded consumers of every type to change their behaviour – brands and brand businesses like *Nike, Starbucks, Honda, HSBC, Guinness, BMW, Unilever, SABMiller, PepsiCo, Vodafone* and many, many others.

The two sides of magic and logic

“ You have to allow for magic to be able to happen and then you can rationalise it. You can always rationalise magic; but one thing I do know is that logic does not lead to magic. There's a leap that needs to happen. In whatever process you put in place, make sure that there's enough air in the process to allow the unexpected to fall out the sky. Encourage that to happen. ”

ROBYN PUTTER, WPP



The most switched on businesses and agencies see Brand Comms as a journey. One that employs a blend of inspired creative magic, which leads to business logic through two distinct approaches.

- 1. A series of carefully planned clear steps.** This is about developing an understanding of where you are and what your brand is – the simple authentic truth that it embodies - and deciding how best to communicate it to the world. Understanding the rules will not guarantee success, but by respecting the well-defined steps along the way, you can maximize your chances of developing powerful and persuasive Brand Comms that support your business objectives and help drive your business forward long into the future.
- 2. Insights into applied creativity.** The steps in the journey are intended to produce a great communications idea, one that is driven by the overall brand idea (or positioning) and that translates into great brand activation (the actual communications material and media/channels in which they are used). It is not creativity for creativity's sake; rather it is applied creativity – a powerful and persuasive idea based on some authentic truth about the brand. To increase the chance of this happening it really helps to have a true appreciation of creativity - how to judge, develop and nurture ideas and an appreciation of what can kill ideas.

These two approaches can each be broken down into six further areas: 6 Essential Steps to delivering Brand Comms and 6 Essential Insights in generating and nurturing great ideas.

6 Essential Steps to delivering Great Brand Comms

“ I don't think anyone who knows me would say I was a process person. I'm not terribly good at flowcharts and form filling and what have you. But I have come to value what process can provide, which is guidelines and a level of robust framework. But as ever, I think it's critically important to recognise and value both - what process can provide, and what it can't, and what imagination and magic can provide on top. ”

CHARLIE HISCOCKS, SABMILLER PLC

Brands are complex, like living organisms that evolve and mutate over time. However, they are also intangible and emotional, hovering above the actual product like a spirit or ghost at any one moment in time. Remember that the most important part of the brand, the hidden part, is what endures in the long run, yet is the hardest part to capture.



“ It is that thing. It needs to be a very concise thing, like “Coke is it”; it’s a sense of authenticity. If it’s Millers, it’s “the champagne of bottled beers” or if it’s Nike, it’s “just do it.” It’s an athletic authenticity. Those are very simple things, but eventually it has to be embodied in a personality. It has to have an emotional quality to it. ”

DAN WIEDEN, WIEDEN & KENNEDY

Everyone has their own particular view on precisely how to define the key steps and some of the subtle nuances. However, the experts agree that you can increase your chances if, at the very least, you understand and respect these important areas.

- 1. Understand the brand and set objectives.** You have to start the process with a clearly articulated and expressed idea of what the brand is, what you want it to be and what the milestones that connect the two are. The journey towards great Brand Comms must start with a clearly understood role for the communications.
- 2. Get the team right.** This is a team exercise. The rules as to what makes a great team (tight as possible, clear leadership, mutual trust and respect, highly motivated etc.) are of enormous importance because the task - to produce persuasive Brand Comms that build an enduring and differentiated brand - is notoriously difficult. Give this the time, honesty and attention it deserves.
- 3. Keep the brief and briefing tight.** The quality of the brief (short, focused, inspiring) and the briefing session (personal, enthusiastic) is crucial. It may take some discussion and challenge to get from the first initial brief to the final brief - one that is agreed and bought into by the whole team. MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL, he or she who briefs (the client leader) must decide. Senior people coming in at the end of the process and undermining it with uninformed criticism can be highly destructive.
- 4. Getting the most from production** of the actual materials requires a leap where good ideas can become great and great ones can become amazing. Be clear about what you want from production, hire the best, let them get on with the job and don't try to micro-manage the process.
- 5. Brilliant brand activation** comprises all the ways you will use the idea in the various media and channels available to you - in other words, the consumer touch-points. There should be several of these touch-points that reinforce and support each other to deliver maximum impact. By all means start with an early hypothesis about brand activation, even in the original

brief, but be prepared to develop your views. Get the opinions of experts, be as creative as you can and rule things out, not in, at the beginning (to force a consideration of all media options and not just the old favourites, TV and Press).

- 6. Developing the campaign** is essential if you are to get the most from your investment and hard work. All campaigns develop so you need to be hyper-alert to changes in the market place and in society. But your first reflex should be to refresh the way the message comes across and not change the fundamental idea - either the brand idea (positioning) or the communications idea that came from it. Make changes for sound, consumer-based reasons, not personal agendas.

“ I think the best and the biggest campaign ideas can evolve over time and look as fresh today as they did the day when the first ad appeared. Big long-running integrated campaign ideas are what all clients and all agencies strive for. ”

CILLA SNOWBALL, AMV BBDO

These are the key steps and the advice of experts. If your Brand Comms fail to deliver or under perform, the reason (assuming you have the right idea) will lie in something having gone wrong in one or more of these areas. Ensure you align the team in advance and give yourself the best chance to succeed.

6 Essential Insights For Great Ideas

“ Ideas are the most exciting thing we as human beings do and have, because we make things happen through ideas. Ideas are what drive the world. Ideas are what change people’s thinking. Ideas are how we progress ... They’re the most brilliant thing that we do and that’s why they should be respected. ”

JOHN HEGGARTY, BBH

Ideas can change the world and creative brand ideas can change the fortunes of companies. At the heart of persuasive Brand Comms is an idea, often a very simple idea but one that is fresh, powerful and inspiring; an idea based on some truth that is an authentic and original insight about the product, the user, the market, or life that can often be expressed very simply. For example:

Guinness: *'Good things come to those who wait'*
(it takes 113 seconds to pour a pint of Guinness)

Nike: *'Just do it!'*
(from their brand mantra, 'Authentic Athletic Performance')

Dove: *'Real beauty products for real women'*

BMW: *'The ultimate driving machine'*

In Brand Comms, ideas must go beyond just benefits and connect with people on an emotional level. Ideas will often reveal a lot about the personality of a brand, what it cares about, stands for, what its vision is on the world.

It's important to note that delivery and execution of your Brand Comms, while vital, will not work unless you first have the right idea. The stronger the idea, the more persuasive the output will be.

“ I have relationships with many of my clients where I can just call them up and say, “this idea is not quite there yet; there are two others that are, but I think the one that’s not quite developed is going to be extraordinary. Could you just give us another week or two and just see where it goes?” Usually, if you’ve had success together before and you trust each other, most clients will say, “okay, let’s go with it for a while and see where we get to.” ”

SHELLEY LAZERUS, OGILVY

Realistically, there are no 'steps to having a great idea' per se because it is a creative process and creativity doesn't come with any guarantees (by comparison, not every play Shakespeare wrote was great). But there are insights the experts can give you that increase your chances of encouraging, identifying and nurturing great ideas.

- 1. Ideas are precious,** rare and should be respected. They don't arrive to order and there needs to be 'air in the process' to allow for the unexpected to happen.
- 2. Learn to trust and take risks.** There needs to be an appetite for risk and a high degree of mutual trust and honesty that supports this. You are trying to change the rules – that takes you out of your comfort zone.
- 3. Ideas must be nurtured,** so they grow and improve. But ideas are fragile and can be easily killed off. They, and the people tasked with coming up with them, need to be treated with optimism and encouragement. That doesn't mean being soft - an evaluation has to be made at some point - but experience teaches you how and when. This is an applied creative process and just any idea will not do.

4. **Handle research with care;** it can be very dangerous, especially in the middle of the process (as opposed to research at the outset to get insights or at the end to evaluate actual performance). Research is an opinion, but it is just one opinion that should have a place only alongside sound judgment and acceptance of risk.
5. **Keep it fresh.** If you have a great idea, it will develop its own character and inspire many different ways to use it. The idea can and should develop and evolve like episodes in a great TV show. (The basic idea for the series, *The X-Files* that first captured our imagination remained the same. However, every episode came up with new, fresh storylines, new characters and new twists. It started out as a TV show but evolved into two full-length films.) Strong brands and strong ideas have the capacity to surprise while remaining consistent. They can achieve a kind of inconsistent consistency, which keeps them relevant and interesting.
6. **Ideas for a changing world.** Today's world is more complex and fragmented than ever; but that makes the power of a great brand and a great creative communications idea even more valuable. The response to an ever more connected, consumer-empowered, new media world should be to make Brand Comms even more engaging, rich and varied in the delivery of the idea. It should NOT be to keep changing the idea. Shakespeare's plays are still popular and meaningful but their production has developed a lot since the days of the Globe theatre! Why? Because Shakespeare wrote great stories and was a great storyteller - the strength in his work supports all manner of variation. You should strive for the same in your Brand Comms.

Standing on the shoulders of Giants

These are the steps on the journey towards persuasive Brand Comms along with some insights about creativity that can, if applied, improve the return on investment behind brands. They can help make you a better client or better agency and can forge strong teams. They can help balance the magic and logic a great brand and great Brand Comms need to stand out in a highly competitive marketplace.

This article presents just a summary, the essence of the ideas from 24 gurus of modern advertising – Giants that have helped bring commercial success to some of the world's greatest brands.

To understand the ideas set out above in more detail and get first hand advice and examples from the Giants, you can consider investing in the other products under this SOGiants.com title. There

are two downloadable videos, one covering [Persuasive Brand Communications – 6 Essential Steps](#) and one covering [Creative Brand communications – 6 Essential Insights](#). In these videos, you can watch the Giants explain their opinions and advice in their own words, drawing on their own experience.

There is also a 58 page eBook, [Persuasive and Creative Brand Communications – From Magic to Logic](#), covering all the material, with practical advice on how to use key questions as a tool to get team alignment at the outset of a Brand Comms project or conduct an evaluation of a project.

More smart thinking

This is only a summary eArticle of *Creative Brand Communications*. You'll **find much more in the eBook and video** with plenty of valuable information to give you a new and in-depth insight into key business subjects. Quickly gain expert business knowledge you can use right away.

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