

Article

Why Hire an Ad Agency?

“I anticipated a lot of cost ...with advertising agencies.
Actually the reverse is true.”

Debbie Cannon, President, ICPA

Introduction

The above quote demonstrates a common misconception about hiring ad agencies. Indeed, hiring an ad agency does incur costs. However, in the long run, ad agencies can save you money. How? There are many ways ad agencies can help grow your business. This article will show you how and why advertising should be thought of as an investment, not a cost.

First, we will inform you of the value and services that ad agencies can provide an organization. Second, we'll give you insights from experts in the industry as well as the ad business. Here, we conducted a series of in-depth interviews with individuals who have used ad agencies in their business. Their responses provide solid examples of how agencies have helped them become more profitable and efficient. We also interviewed key executives from ad agencies and marketing communications firms. These individuals provided us with further benefits and examples of how they can help your business. Third, we'll provide advice on how to select an agency. Finally, we provide case examples of how ad agencies have specifically helped their clients increase their profitability. Our results show that hiring an ad agency can help you grow your business and let your employees do what they do best.

Why should I advertise anyway?

Advertising agencies can provide many services to help you promote your business. In a recent survey (Martin and Martin 2004), many members of the ICPA mentioned that promoting their business is of great importance to keep customers aware of their company and to distinguish themselves from the competition. However, beyond referrals, many organizations were somewhat unsure as to what promotion methods work best. Some believed that trade shows were very helpful. Others depended a great deal on their showrooms and salespeople. Many had used several methods of promotions such as radio and newspaper ads, web sites, and direct mail. However, respondents mentioned that these promotion methods were costly and were not sure of how effective they really were.

As for advertising content, this same survey revealed that most organizations were focusing on three areas: Service, quality, and expertise. These are quite valid and important issues in our industry. However, if the majority of organizations focus on these three attributes, how does one stand out from the crowd? How does an organization differentiate itself from the competition in order to achieve a competitive advantage? That's where ad agencies can help.

Advertising agencies can help organizations answer these questions in three general ways. First, ad agencies provide an outside objective view of the organization and industry in which it operates. Thus, they can help with a business' overall strategy. Second, ad agencies can provide creativity in advertising content and types of promotions. Third, and most importantly, ad agencies can help organizations become more accountable for their promotional efforts. Here, agencies can help you with promotional costs as well as measuring the effectiveness of your campaign.

A common trap that many organizations fall into is what's termed in the ad world, marketing myopia. Here, organizations become so involved with their own products, they may mistakenly miss an opportunity. There may be a trend amongst consumers that these organizations may have overlooked. For example, the Atkins brand franchise was one of the first organizations to develop low carbohydrate foods. They developed an extensive line of alternative foods for dieters concerned with watching their carb intake. Unfortunately, the organization focused all its attention on intensely loyal Atkins followers. The organization is now struggling to keep up with the competition that recognized there's a large market of consumers concerned about carbohydrates but not as loyal to the low carb regime. Hence, Sara Lee and many other major bread makers have stolen market share from Atkins. An outside and objective advertising agency may have been able to help the Atkins brand foresee this trend.

Creativity is where ad agencies shine. In fact, most agencies win, or lose, their clients with unique and creative ideas. Bold and creative advertising requires a certain amount of risk on both the agency's and client's part. However, taking risks can pay off. In 1999, the American Family Life Insurance Company (AFLAC) was a little known Fortune 500 company that sold supplemental insurance. In fact, AFLAC is the largest provider of supplemental insurance in the world. However, no one knew it. Further, the name "AFLAC" was hardly appealing. This major insurance company had used the same agency for years, spending millions of dollars on a campaign based on emotional family vignettes. This is a typical format for many insurance companies. However, after years of trying, no one could remember or associate anything with the name "AFLAC". And this was all that the Chairman and CEO of the company, Daniel Amos, wanted - simply remember AFLAC for supplemental insurance.

Thus, Amos took a risk and decided to search for a new agency. He had heard of a small agency that was well known for groundbreaking creative ideas - The Kaplan Thaler Group. After months of frustration, the creative team of this agency realized that when they kept repeating the name "AFLAC", they sounded like a duck! Hence, the outlandish idea of the AFLAC duck was born. Amos and his executives at AFLAC had never seen any ad like this for supplemental insurance but his gut reaction told him he knew they had something funny and memorable. Indeed, within six days of running the first new ad featuring the AFLAC duck, the insurance company received more hits on its website than in the entire previous year (Thaler, Koval 2003). After more variations of the AFLAC duck, including airing during the opening ceremony of the 2002 Winter Olympics, AFLAC's sales increased 55%, exceeding both the agency's and the client's expectations. Dan Amos credits the risk of groundbreaking creativity from his agency and stated, "I AM somebody because of that duck!" (Thaler, Koval 2003, p. 24).

Finally, and some would term most importantly, ad agencies can help you become more efficient with your promotional efforts. First, agencies can help you with costs. Ad agencies can find ways to cut costs on production of promotional materials such as brochures. Further, ad agencies can purchase media for you at a cost savings because of their negotiating power. For example, Lintas: Campbell-Ewald handled all media negotiations for General Motors. While other agencies do separate creative work for each of its divisions (i.e., Buick, Cadillac, Pontiac, Chevrolet, etc.), Lintas would purchase media for all of GM's divisions - giving them tremendous negotiating power. Finally, ad agencies can help you set measurable benchmarks to track the effectiveness of your promotions. This can range from developing databases of potential leads from direct response advertising to measuring awareness of advertising efforts. The case studies pre-

sented in the last section of this article demonstrate how agencies can help you track your results.

What can agencies offer

The American Association of Advertising Agencies (AAAA) defines an advertising agency as an independent organization of creative people and business people who specialize in developing and preparing marketing and advertising plans, advertisements, and other promotional tools. The agency also purchases advertising space and time in various media on behalf of different advertisers (its clients), in order to find customers for their goods and services (www.aaaa.org). This definition encompasses the essence of what advertising agencies do. First, they are independent -- the agency isn't owned by the client, the media, or other suppliers -- so it can bring an outside objective viewpoint to the client's business. Second, the agency employs a combination of business and creative people. These include accountants, marketing executives, researchers, media analysts, writers, and artists. These professionals have hands-on experience daily in creating ads, shooting commercials, and finding the best production suppliers. Third, the ad agency has negotiating power via planning and purchasing the right media that reaches the right customer in the right place at the right time. Here, ad agencies can save clients time and money. Finally, because of their range of clients, ad agencies are constantly exposed to a broad range of marketing problems and opportunities. These situations can add value to clients.

Ad agencies come in a variety of forms and can typically be structured by their geographic scope, range of services they offer, and the type of business they handle. Overall, however, successful and competent ad agencies should be able to help clients (Arens 2004):

- Analyze your business' products and services.
- Evaluate various markets for your business, including distribution channels.
- Evaluate your competitive position and offer strategic options
- Evaluate media alternatives and offer rational recommendations.
- Develop an integrated communications plan and implement it with consistency.
- Save you valuable time by negotiating with media, providing analysis, and keeping track of billing
- Assist you in the implementation of sales contests, publicity, grand openings, and other promotional activities.

Local versus national agencies. Most communities have small agencies that can help clients at the local level. These agencies offer vast experience at the local level. They intimately understand the markets, media, and creative talents that best match local clients' needs.

These agencies typically deal with clients that have smaller budgets and trade areas that many national agencies may overlook or simply do not have the manpower in the local area.

National agencies differ from local agencies in that they offer expertise at the national level. They typically work with larger budgets and have more negotiating power with national media. Most national agencies are often global in scope and can offer major clients services all over the world.

Full-service agencies. The typical full-service agency provides advertising and non-advertising services in all areas of communication. These types of services range from strategic planning for the brand, creating and producing ads, to selecting the most appropriate media. Non advertising services can range anywhere from sales promotions to trade shows, public relations, packaging, and event marketing.

Full service agencies can also be divided into two general categories: general consumer agencies or business-to-business agencies. Consumer agencies concentrate on products for the end user such as soaps, automobiles, pet foods, cosmetics, etc. Business-to-business agencies represent clients that market their products to other businesses. These types of agencies can focus on such industries as high-tech software, healthcare, or building suppliers. These agencies do most of their work with trade and business publications.

Specialized Service Agencies. Many agencies choose to specialize in one particular area of communication that they are most competent in. Some agencies are called Creative Boutiques that specialize solely in coming up with the creative concept that is distinctive for the client. Many larger agencies will subcontract with these Boutiques. Other agencies specialize only in media buying. Here, they can purchase media time and space at a high volume level for a number of different clients. These agencies can be at the local level or international level. For example, Initiative Media in Los Angeles places more than \$21 billion worth of advertising annually for such clients as Nextel and Victoria's Secret. Another emerging specialty agency is the Interactive agency. These agencies specialize in designing Web pages and building databases for customers via the Internet. Other agencies specialize in such areas as direct marketing, public relations, and sports marketing.

Agencies frequently offer services beyond basic advertising competency. Market research studies are used to develop and test advertising creatives, but this can be extended to include new product design and/or extending the brand beyond existing categories. This can lead to advise about mergers and acquisitions when an established brand is found to have broader customer acceptance than anticipated.

Agencies usually have people with extensive experience in related businesses and can provide counsel in an unexpected manner.

By redefining a company's business, a new perspective can uncover new opportunities. For example the Hunter Fan Company has been manufacturing ceiling fans since 1886. It has established a leading market position of the highest performing, most durable products. Business is very seasonal centered in the spring and summer. When it redefined itself as a 'comfort conditioning' company, many more opportunities surface beyond fans. Today Hunter Fan is a major provider of programmable thermostats, humidifiers and air purifiers. They fit underneath their brand umbrella of high performing, durable products. They are also seasonal, primarily in the fall and winter. What a fit!

In summary, depending on the needs of your business, ad agencies can provide you with expertise in a vast number of areas. However, the main contribution agencies have to offer is an outside objective viewpoint, creativity, and a strategic partnership. It is oftentimes this last contribution that can be the most important in hiring an agency. Clients must be able to trust the agency's expertise and develop a long-term relationship to really make any type of marketing communication plan work.

Factors affecting the client/agency relationship.

As our research uncovers, developing a trusting strategic partnership with an ad agency is of vital importance. This assures that the agency has your best interests at heart and understands the business you are in. However, not all relationships between agencies and clients are successful. According to Arens (2004), many different factors influence the relationship between agencies and clients. These can be grouped into the four C's: Chemistry, communication, conduct, and changes. First, and probably the most critical is the chemistry between a client and the agency. Agencies spend a lot of time wining and dining their client's to make them feel comfortable. But, this does no good if the agency doesn't understand the environment and strategic mindset the client operates in. Second, communication is usually what makes or breaks the relationship between clients and agencies. Poor communication can lead to misunderstandings about objectives, strategies and expected results of a campaign. Third, agency conduct or performance is the main reason many clients switch agencies. Here, poor tracking of billings, follow through by agency executives and timeliness are major concerns. If a client feels that he or she is being ignored because of a larger "more important" client, the relationship will fail. Finally, changes can affect the agency/client relationship. Perhaps personnel has changed or the client merged with another company. Regardless, the key factor to prevent failure of the relationship between clients and agencies is open and honest communication.

How Can an Agency Help My Company?

In order to invest time and money in an advertising agency, we decided to ask the experts. We conducted a series of in-depth interviews with key informants in the cast polymer industry as well as informants from advertising agencies. Upon reviewing the results, we looked for common themes to emerge. Further, we divided the results between clients and ad agencies. Table 1 summarizes and compares our findings between these two groups. Second, we tailored some specific questions to clients as well as to agencies. The insights from these individuals follow our initial comparisons.

Table 1: Comparison of responses between clients and agencies.

Question:	Client-side response:	Agency response:
Why should a business hire an ad agency?	Creative solutions Outside expertise Trustworthy relationship Long-term strategic focus Extension of marketing capabilities Better coordination of activities	Return on Investment Improve profitability Strategic partnership Expertise in communication Outside perspective
How can an agency make a business more profitable?	Build awareness Improve image Cost savings for promotions Increased sales	Help client set and meet objectives Provide measurable benchmarks
How do you select an ad agency?	Knowledge of our business Creative ideas Long-term focus Reputation	Strategic focus Creative ideas Offer measurable results
What services should a client look for in an agency?	Creative is most important Expertise in business	Strategic focus
How do you evaluate an agency's performance?	"Make the cash register ring!"	Return on ad dollar investment Benchmarks

As the above table shows, many of the answers to each of these questions between clients and ad agencies have commonalities, yet some responses differ. We discuss each of these questions and offer specific quotes in the following paragraphs.

Why should a business hire an ad agency?

When asked why an ad agency should be hired, both clients and ad agency executives responded that an outside objective viewpoint, a strategic focus, and developing a long-term relationship are important. For example, according to Steven Clark, VP Marketing and Business Development, Gruber Systems:

"I look for an agency where we can build personal relationships. Also, one that is willing to invest time and watch what we do, how we do it, and walk away with an understanding about who we are....I also look for an agency that is looking beyond a single promotion...but rather the total picture, image, and direction for the company to follow over an extended time period."

Interestingly, agencies seemed to be more concerned with showing clients that they can help them measure their investment in advertising. Here, Keith Langham, President of Brewer Associates Marketing Communications located in Michigan, stated:

"This starts with a comprehensive marketing communications strategy, including specific, measurable objectives. For example, we don't spend a client's money on reaching the highest possible magazine circulation, but on reaching the highest possible number of buying influences for our client's product or service".

Clients were more concerned with freeing up time for themselves in order to do what they do best and leaving creative advertising up to the experts in the agency. According to Joe Doherty, retired VP for Marketing Communication for Owens-Corning, and former Chairman of the Association of National Advertisers,

"The major reason for hiring an agency is creativity. Does the agency provide creative solutions to difficult marketing problems. Does the agency have examples how their creativity helped a client solve a particularly difficult problem. Just showing creative work without relating it to objectives is not always helpful."

Agencies are focused on advantages they provide clients. When Erin Millerschin, President Auto PR, Rochester, MI was asked this question, she replied:

"We provide our clients with strategic counsel on how and where to best reach our clients' target audience(s), quick access to key automotive and business media, creative ideas, solid writing skills, a seasoned staff, quick turnaround on projects and most importantly, results."

How can an agency make a business more profitable?

Respondents from both the agency and client side both agreed that setting measurable objectives helps make a client profitable. However, according to clients, agencies can help them be more profitable by building awareness, improving their image, saving them money on promotions, and most importantly increasing sales. Here, Debbie Cannon, of CoMar Products and President of ICPA offers some interesting insights:

"I had anticipated a lot of cost which discouraged earlier associations with agencies. Actually, the reverse is true. [My agency] saved me large amounts of printing costs for the brochure which paid for the creative work. The agency also helped me identify where my target customers live which eliminated a Yellow Page directory ad - providing even more savings. A good agency is like an insurance company or CPA...you know your getting a professional job done and you don't have to go behind them to make sure."

Agencies stressed that they can make clients profitable by helping them set realistic and measurable results and by educating clients about what advertising can accomplish.

According to Michael Thompson, Jr., of Thompson and Company, a marketing communications agency in Memphis, TN: "The best way to look at advertising (just like marketing) is like an investment. You invest money and resources into advertising because good advertising has the potential to bring you a positive return on your investment. We measure success by the results of our clients' objectives."

How do you select an ad agency?

Both agencies and clients stressed a strategic focus and creativity as the main factors in selecting ad agencies. Clients also emphasized that the agency's reputation is important and offered several clues on how to evaluate an agency's reputation in the community. Keith Langham, President of Bewer Associates Marketing Communications suggests that when selecting an ad agency:

"Although you can get lucky (one of our long-time clients picked us out of a phone book because we were nearby), it's best not to stab in the dark. If you admire a company's marketing communications, ask who created them. Talk to printers you know, or sales representatives for trade magazines serving your industry. The Business Marketing Association in Chicago is another good resource. So is the worldwide web.

Before contacting any agencies, make a list of the capabilities and experience you're looking for. Consider size as well. Small companies are often more important to smaller agencies. Call some agencies and ask them why you should consider them (they'll be glad to tell you), and invite a few to visit and get acquainted. Ask them for references.

Although large consumer companies often ask agencies to prepare ads at their own expense as part of a presentation, this is not generally a good practice. Creative approaches should be based on analysis and strategy, not guesswork. And asking an agency to research your market for the privilege of competing for your business is not a good way to begin a long-term partnership."

What services should a client look for in an agency?

Again, both agencies and clients agreed that creativity and strategic focus are key services that an agency should be able to offer. Beyond that, it really depended on the industry and type of work that a client believes is needed. Here, Joe Doherty suggests:

"Creative services should be first on the list an agency has to offer. These include copy writing and art direction. Depending on its size they could offer media planning and buying plus market research. Some agencies also offer direct response and other marketing communications specialties like web design. For the most part a client is better served by going to an agency that specializes in the activities."

How do you evaluate an agency's performance?

Respondents from both the agency and client side of the business stressed that a trusting long-term relationship with open communication can go a long way in evaluating an agency's performance. However, in the end, it's the bottom line that matters:

"An agency's major job is to make the cash register ring. Their job is to help increase sales and to help their client meet its agreed upon objectives. The objectives can be market share increases, profit increases, etc. However, they all relate to sales."

Joe Doherty, retired VP - Advertising for Owens-Corning and former President of the Association of National Advertisers.

Interestingly, sometimes the mere presence or absence of advertising can shed light on performance. According to Keith Langham, President - Brewer Associates Marketing Communications:

"Sometimes it's the absence of advertising that makes a difference. Every two years, we conduct benchmark research that compares our client to their key competitors (in awareness and in how they're perceived on key buying factors). In just two years, this client went from leading in 7 out of 8 categories to trailing in 7 out of 8 categories....a change he attributed to a significant reduction in his advertising."

In summary, our in-depth interviews with experts in the field revealed several common themes about using advertising. Overall, an outside objective viewpoint, strategic focus, creative ideas, and measurable results are all important factors when considering an advertising agency. Further, open and honest communication can go a long way to make a successful relationship.

Old Logo



Case Histories

Case Histories offer examples of how agencies have helped their clients. The two cases discussed below were selected because of their effectiveness without substantial expenditure. The first case involves repositioning the brand image of a high-end manufacturer of whirlpool baths. The second case involves a new product launch with a very limited budget. In both of these cases, ad agencies provided timely and unique creative solutions that went beyond even the clients' expectations.

Case 1: Jason International - Brand Image

Situation: Jason International is a high-end manufacturer of whirlpool baths. The Jacuzzi family owns the privately held company.

The brand is well respected within the bath industry but the sales materials and product graphics had a low-end look that did not match the actual product.

Approach: When determining how to prioritize spending, a strategic approach was used. Jim Tumbrink, Archer>Malmo Vice President says, "We determine where the greatest impact can be made by analyzing the marketing communication situation from the product to the consumer. We call it 'inside-out marketing'." From this approach, Archer>Malmo found that the brand image of Jason International needed to match the product offering. They wanted the company to be perceived as hydrotherapy experts. So they sought to rebuild Jason International's image through a series of integrated and focused activities: A new more sophisticated, cleaner logo design, more contemporary sales literature, product graphic overhaul, new web site graphics,

New Logo



POS support and advertising so they can better compete against other upscale designer oriented brands.

Results: The new product catalog, logo, and positioning as hydrotherapy experts received rave reviews and a standing ovation from their national sales force. Customers were equally excited: "Outstanding brochures, you guys nailed

it...top class, exciting, beautiful...Congratulations on a job well done." Said Marilyn Hemance, Westheimer Plumbing. Many new showrooms have taken on the "new" reenergized Jason brand since May of 2003. The plant is hiring production workers to handle increased product demand.

Lesson: "Sometimes we as a manufacturer get too close to our products. We can't see the forest for the trees," said Remo Jacuzzi, President, Jason International. "Archer>Malmo did a great job of helping us get our brand back on track".

Old Spread

What you should know about hydrotherapy baths before you're in up to your neck.

As the temperature of your bath water rises, the pores open, the circulation improves — as well as your overall health — and makes all the difference in the enjoyment and therapeutic benefits your bath experience. It's all in the water and the heat.

1. Water at 100°F (38°C) is the ideal temperature for a hydrotherapy bath. Water at 110°F (43°C) is too hot and can be dangerous. Water at 90°F (32°C) is too cold and won't provide the same benefits.

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When the water is at the ideal temperature, the circulation improves — as well as your overall health — and makes all the difference in the enjoyment and therapeutic benefits your bath experience. It's all in the water and the heat.

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A word about JET ACTION and WELL DEPTH

Jet Action: The strength of the water jets is an important factor in determining the effectiveness of the hydrotherapy bath. The jets should be strong enough to provide a massage effect, but not so strong that they are uncomfortable.

Well Depth: The depth of the water in the hot tub is also an important factor. The water should be deep enough to cover your body, but not so deep that you are uncomfortable.

When the water is at the ideal temperature, the circulation improves — as well as your overall health — and makes all the difference in the enjoyment and therapeutic benefits your bath experience. It's all in the water and the heat.

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New Spread

look deeper

JASSEN

a credit all your art

When the water is at the ideal temperature, the circulation improves — as well as your overall health — and makes all the difference in the enjoyment and therapeutic benefits your bath experience. It's all in the water and the heat.

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From AOC. The Right People...The Best Chemistry

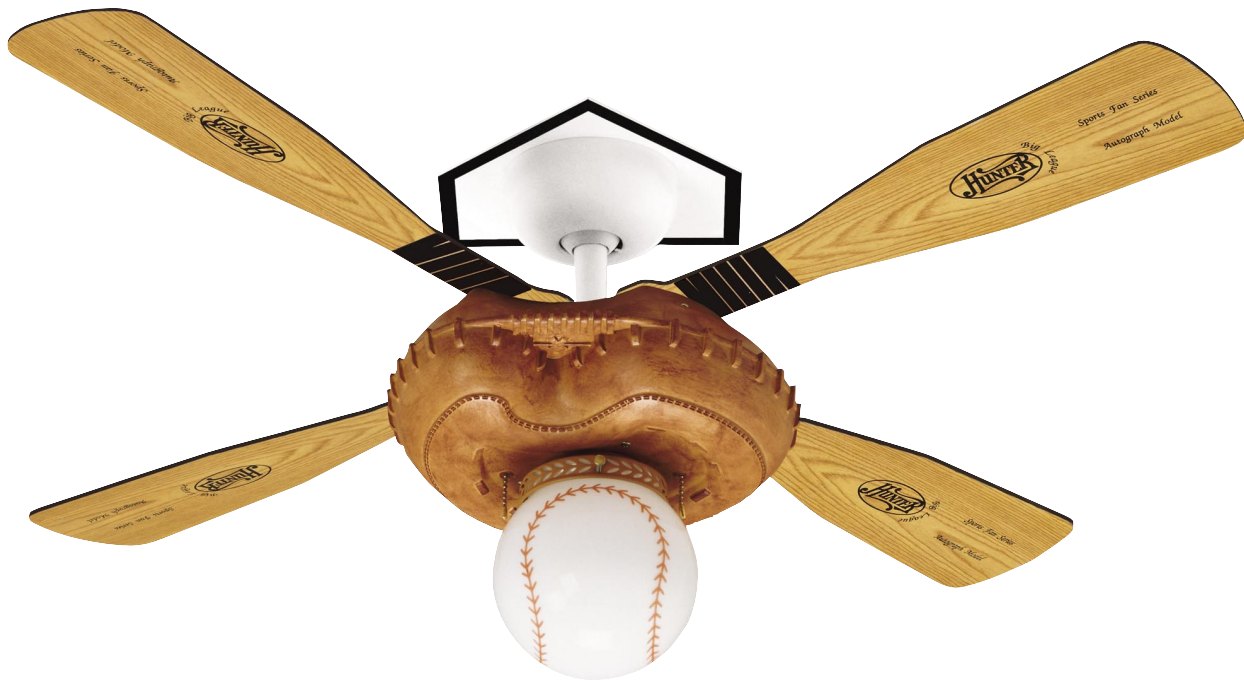
Case 2: Hunter Fan - New Product Launch

Situation: In the mid 1990's Hunter fan decided to develop unique new product, one that was a total departure from their traditional offerings in ceiling fans. The company wanted to create consumer awareness, stimulate interest, and drive consumer purchases. Unfortunately, most of their advertising funds had already been committed to support their basic product line leaving little available for a new niche product launch.

The product: The new "baseball" ceiling fan was designed to include key baseball components. The motor housing was shaped and painted like a catcher's mitt, the blades or paddles were shaped like baseball bats and decorated with typical hickory wood on one side and aluminum on the other, and the light fixture was a round globe with red stitching to resemble a baseball. The ceiling canopy was shaped and painted like home plate. An interesting sidenote was that the product was designed during a dinner meeting on a napkin.

The assumption was that the game belonged to the "Fans", not the owners or players, and a fan company was sponsoring a contest to send a message to those involved in the negotiations to let them know who the real owners were. Each entrant received a Hunter Fan Baseball t-shirt. Chandler-Ehrlich assisted in the selection of nine-second place winners (one for each inning of a typical game). The trip winner was determined by a committee of celebrity baseball personalities: Max Patkin, the Clown Prince of Baseball, Jonathon Spaulding- editor of the Sporting News (the recognized leading baseball publication), and Ken Burns - noted author and PBS producer of multi-segment historical series, including Roots and one about baseball.

To attract national attention to the promotion, press releases and fact sheets were sent to all US radio stations and daily/weekly newspapers. The press kits explained the contest, the rationale of why their listeners/readers would want to know about it, and how to enter. Since the topic of baseball was



Approach: Planning began in the late fall, 1994, the year major league baseball players and owners cancelled the World Series. This had never happened in the game's history, through World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Great Depression; no event had prevented the World Series from being held. Baseball fans were in disbelief, angry with both the owners and players. With this as a background, the marketing team at Hunter Fan challenged Chandler-Ehrlich, Inc., their public relations partner, to put together a plan to introduce this unique new product.

The agency developed an essay contest as the vehicle to create publicity and awareness. The winner received a trip for four to Cooperstown, NY and a guided tour of the Baseball Museum Hall of Fame. The essay's title was "Why I Love Baseball" and was limited to 100 words.

"of high public interest" there was no media cost! However, upon completion of the promotion, the media tracking service reported that there were more than 110,000,000 advertising impressions made. If this were traditional paid media, the cost would have exceeded \$2,000,000. The program cost was limited to agency time to create the concept, coordinate the mailing, and help with reviewing the more than 1,000 responses. Actual dollars spent was less than \$50,000.

Results: The new product introduction was amongst the best first year sales of any introduction in the company's history. "Hunter's Baseball Fan's sales exceeded all our expectations. I was particularly impressed with the Marketing team's creative achievement of record sales while avoiding typical advertising costs," said Robert E. Beasley, Jr. Hunter Fan Company President and CEO.

Case 3: Oscar Mayer Wiener - Name Awareness

Situation: Oscar Mayer was struggling to sell their product in the south where other brands were more entrenched. They had a very small promotional budget but a very large task

Approach: Traditional advertising was considered but when an analysis of competitive spending was completed, it was apparent that a break-through campaign would be too costly. The Oscar Mayer objective of "southernizing" the brand would be virtually impossible with a traditional media strategy. Something newsworthy had to happen. The challenge was to create a "buzz" to expand the media dollars. Then it was determined to devote the entire budget to create a promotion that would capture the attention of the media and connect with consumers.

The Oscar Mayer "Hot Dog It On TV" promotion was developed. This promotion was designed to find southern kids that did a great job of singing the Oscar Mayer wiener song to appear in a regional TV commercial for Oscar Mayer. In other words, a southern talent contest. The audition van was set up in the parking lot of key retailers throughout the marketing area and advertising ran to promote the audition.

Results: Thousands of children, accompanied by their parents, auditioned. In every market we received local TV news coverage of the event. Free radio time was also garnered by giving away T-Shirts to any caller who could call in and get the words right to the Oscar Mayer wiener or bologna songs.

The original budget for this event was around \$200,000 but generated over \$1,000,000 dollars in media time. This event was turned into a national event in 1991 and has been used every year since then.

Case 4: Lawn Boy - Sales Promotion

Situation: Lawn-Boy mowers were going into the fall of the year with the retail pipeline full of product due to summer drought conditions. (In the mower business heavy rainfall is good. The faster the grass grows the more mowers need to be replaced.) To further compound the problem a completely redesigned line of mowers was scheduled to be introduced for the following year, and the company had a new president that was anxious to prove his worth.

Veteran marketing people at the company insisted that past consumer fall sales promotions had failed miserably. There was definitely fear of failure, and job security concerns.

Some how we had to move mowers in the fall of the year to make room for the new line sell-in.

Approach: Traditional dollars off promotions had failed in the past but no one had ever promoted mowers as the ideal tool to make leaf clean-up an easier chore. A "Clean-Up with Lawn-Boy" sale was developed using TV and national print ads showing the mower easily picking up leaves combined with \$20 off savings.

The combination of dollars off and making a nasty job easier was the magic combination Lawn-Boy needed to energize their fall sales.

Results: The pipeline was cleaned out! Customers understood the value of making the tough task of raking leaves easier, and appreciated the \$20 incentive. Retailers loved the promotion for bringing customers back into their stores in the fall where they could sell, not only the mowers but leaf bags, rakes, work gloves, chain saws, etc.

This was in 1986. Now you often see fall clean-up ad campaigns promoting mowers. Successful campaigns often are repeated for years.

Conclusion

As the results of our in-depth interviews and case histories indicate, agencies can be a major source of creativity, objectivity, and accountability. Although agencies require a certain amount of investment they certainly can provide unique and creative results that may even go beyond your expectations. Richard Roth, President of Richard Roth Associates, a New York-based advertising consultancy offers the following insights on choosing an ad agency in the next century (Roth, 1999, p. 18). He suggests these top ten rules. We add our own insights to his rules. A successful agency:

1. understands audience fragmentation. Audiences are no longer couch potatoes; they are mobile and consume media in smaller and more varied venues. Your agency needs to know how to track your target consumer in any of the places they live, visit, or consume.
2. knows how to turn information into intelligence. Your agency needs to offer and be competent in a variety of research methods and analytical tools, which can turn data into superior marketing insight.
3. is brand-centric - i.e., branding is everything. Branding that breaks through ad clutter in a highly competitive environment is important, but only if it comes from a sound marketing strategy.
4. integrates all brand messages flawlessly. The brand must deliver its message thru a variety of unique vehicles while at the same time reinforcing a single consistent brand identity.
5. offers direct involvement of your top management and its high-caliber people, not their "messengers." Make sure you work with the key top individuals in the agency, the ones that develop the strategy, not the worker bees.
6. understands the Internet. Your agency must understand the relationship your brand has with the internet. Go beyond providing information, interact.
7. is administratively quick. Your agency must have an organizational structure that's build for speed because the marketing environment changes at light-speed.
8. produces solutions that meet your needs, not its agenda or operating costs. In other words, it selects a strategy that's right for you, not it.

9. is committed to listening and learning from you. Open communication build trust.
10. meets your budget. It understands your business and your willingness to invest in advertising.

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