No one can teach you to be creative. But you may be surprised how creative you really are. You may not have been an A+ English student. But you may find you’re an excellent copywriter. You may not be a great sketch artist. But you may discover you have a talent for logo design or ad layouts. You may not know much about advertising. But you may have a knack for building communities online through social media. If you’re lucky, you’ll take classes that allow you to discover a lot about creative strategy and tactics, and probably a lot about yourself. At the very least you should learn:

• The correct format for writing copy for traditional and new media.
• The basic rules of copywriting and when to break them.
• How to put more sell into your copy.
• Design basics that apply to all media.
• Sensitivity of issues that affect consumers.
• Awareness of ethical and legal issues.
• How to connect the reader or viewer with the advertiser.
• How to keep continuity throughout a campaign.
• The importance of presenting your work.

Who Wants to Be a Creative?

At the beginning of each semester we ask students, “Who wants to be a copywriter?” We get a halfhearted response from about two or three at the beginning of the class. “Who wants to be an art director or designer?” Usually we get a few more people raising their hands. The truth is most students don’t want to commit to any specific career path in the creative field. These are the most common reasons:

Words of Wisdom

“Properly practiced creativity can make one ad do the work of ten.”

Bill Bernbach, copywriter and founding partner, Doyle Dane Bernbach
“I think I want to be an account exec.”
“I might want to be an account planner.”
“I want to be a media director.”
“I want to work in social media.”
“Words are boring. I’m more of a picture person.”
“I’m not sure I can write.”
“I’m not sure I even want to be in advertising.”

Those are legitimate reasons, but we can make a case for learning about creative strategy and tactics to answer every one of them.

**Account executives** need to know how to evaluate creative work. Does it meet the objectives? What’s the strategy? Why is it great or not so great? When account executives and account managers understand the creative process, they become more valuable to the client and their agency.

**Account planners** have to understand consumers, their clients’ products, market conditions, and many other factors that influence a brand preference or purchase. In essence they function as the voice of the consumer in strategy sessions. The skills required to develop creative strategy are key components in account planning.

**Media folks** need to recognize the creative possibilities of each medium. They need to understand tone, positioning, resonance, and the other basics pounded into copywriters.

**Bloggers and social media specialists** have to be able to merge their mastery of digital media with creative skills. Someone has to write all those blog posts and build those online communities with a few well-chosen words—even if they are limited to 140 characters.

**Designers, art directors, producers, and graphic artists** should know how to write or at least how to defend their work. Why does it meet the strategies? Do the words and visuals work together? Does the font match the tone of the ad? Is the body copy too long? (It’s *always* too long for art directors.) As we’ll stress repeatedly throughout this book, writers also need to understand the basics of design. Design can’t be separate from the concept.

**There is English, and there is advertising copy.** You’re not writing the Great American Novel. Or even a term paper. You are selling products and
services with your ideas, which may or may not include your deathless prose. What you say is more important than how you write it. Ideas come first. Writing with style can follow.

**Creativity outside of advertising.** You can put the skills learned through developing creative strategy and tactics to work in more fields than advertising. The ability to gather information, process it, prioritize the most important facts, and develop a persuasive message is useful in almost every occupation.

Even if you don’t aspire to be the next David Ogilvy, you might learn something about marketing, advertising, basic writing skills, and presenting your work. Who knows? You might even like it.

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**The Golden Age of Creativity**

Every generation seems to have a Golden Age of something. Many people who built their careers in the post-*Mad Men* era look back to the 1950s through the early 1970s as the Golden Age of Advertising. This so-called Creative Revolution was one of many uprisings during turbulent times. Unlike any other era before or since, the focus was on youth, freedom, antiestablishment thinking, and—let’s face it—sex, drugs, and rock ’n’ roll. So it’s not surprising that some of the world’s most recognized ads (some of which are included in this book) were created during this time.

What made these ads revolutionary?

- First, they began to shift focus to the brand, rather than the product. They developed a look, introduced memorable characters, and kept a consistent theme throughout years of long-running campaigns. All of these factors built brand awareness and acceptance.

- Second, they twisted conventional thinking. When most cars touted tail fins and chrome, VW told us to “Think Small.” When Hertz was bragging about being top dog, Avis said they tried harder because they were number two. When Levy’s advertised their Jewish rye bread, they used an Irish cop and a Native American as models.

- Third, they created new looks, using white space, asymmetrical layouts, minimal copy, and unique typography—all design elements that we take for granted in today’s ads.

The driving forces of this revolution included such giants as Leo Burnett, David Ogilvy, Mary Wells Lawrence, Howard Gossage, and Bill Bernbach, who are mentioned prominently in this

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*Think Small.*

![Image of a 1970s Volkswagen advertisement with a message emphasizing simplicity and innovation.]

When other automakers were crowing about being bigger, faster, and more luxurious, VW took the opposite position. VW’s innovative campaigns not only established a very successful brand; they also ushered in a new age in creative advertising.

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*Chapter 1  Copy, Design, and Creativity  3*
text. First and foremost, they were copywriters. But they were also creative partners with some of the most influential designers of their era, such as George Lois, Helmut Krone, and Paul Rand. Even though these top creative talents went on to lead mega agencies, their first love was writing and design.

Today we look to creative inspiration in the digital space from visionaries such as the late Steve Jobs, Mark Zuckerberg, and Biz Stone. In this brave new world where the “third screen” is rapidly becoming our primary communication, news, and entertainment source, we may be entering a new Golden Age. Who knows? Maybe you could become a leader in the next creative revolution.

The Creative Team

Most copywriters do a lot more than just write ads. In fact, writing may only be a small part of their jobs. Although this section focuses on the copywriter, designers and art directors also handle many of these functions.

Co-captain of the Creative Team

Traditionally a creative team has comprised a copywriter and an art director, with participation by web developers and broadcast producers. This team usually answers to a coach—the creative director.

Every player has his or her role, but in many cases the copywriter drives the creative process. However, once the art director understands the creative problem, he or she may become the idea leader. No matter who drives the process, the creative team needs to know the product frontward and backward, inside and out. They have to understand who uses the product, how it compares to the competition, what’s important to the consumer, and a million other facts. No one does it all. Sometimes art directors write the best headlines. Or writers come up with a killer visual. Sometimes the inspiration comes from a comment on Facebook or a tweet. However, the creative leaders need to be able to sift that nugget of an idea from all the white noise that surrounds it.

So, What Else Does a Writer Do?

In small shops, the writers wear so many hats, it’s no wonder they develop big heads. Some of the responsibilities besides writing copy include:

- **Research**—primary and secondary.
- **Client contact**—getting the facts direct from the source rather than filtered through
an account executive, presenting those ideas, and defending the work.

- **Broadcast producer**—finding the right director, talent, music, and postproduction house to make your vision come to life.
- **New business**—gathering data, organizing the creative, working on the pitch, and presenting the work.
- **Public relations**—some copywriters also write the news releases, plan promotional events, and even contact editors.
- **Internet/interactive content**—the Internet has become an integral part of a total marketing communication effort. A lot of “traditional” media writers are now writing websites, blogs, and social media content.
- **Creative management**—much has been written about whether copywriters or art directors make the best creative directors. The answer: yes.

**Controlling the Creative Process**

**Step 1: Getting the facts.** If you have a research department and/or account planners, take advantage of their knowledge. But don’t settle for someone else’s opinion. Talk to people who use the product, as well as those who don’t or won’t even consider it. Talk to retailers who sell the product. Look at competitive advertising: What’s good, and where is it vulnerable? In short, know as much as you can about the product, the competition, the market, and the people who buy it. Try to make the product part of your life.

**Step 2: Brainstorming with a purpose.** If you’ve done your homework, you should know the wants and needs of the target audience and how your product meets those needs. From that base, you can direct the free flow of creative ideas. Thanks to your knowledge, you can concentrate on finding a killer creative idea rather than floundering in a sea of pointless questions. But you must also be open to new ideas and independent thinking from your creative team members.

**Step 3: Picking up a pencil before you reach for the mouse.** This is critical, because it’s all about the creative concept. Even if you can only draw stick people, that’s OK. Where does the headline go? How much copy do you think you’ll need? What’s the main visual? How should the elements be arranged? Even though artists may ridicule your design, they will appreciate having the raw elements they can massage into a great-looking ad.

**Step 4: Finding the reference/visuals.** You may have a clear vision of the creative concept. Can you communicate that to your art director, creative director, account exec, or client? You can help your art director by finding photos, artwork, or design elements, not to rip off but to help you make your point. The finished piece may not look anything like your original vision, but at least you can start with a point of reference. Browse the web, stock photo books, and awards.

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**Words of Wisdom**

“The people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world are the ones who do.”

Apple’s “Think Different” campaign

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"The people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world are the ones who do." —Apple’s “Think Different” campaign
annuals. We can’t emphasize this enough, especially for beginning writers—if you can’t find what you want, it might trigger a new idea. The visual selection is a starting point, not the end game.

**Step 5: Working with the rest of the team.** For most creatives, the happiest and most productive years of their career are spent collaborating with others. When two creative minds click, the whole really is greater than the sum of the parts. A great creative partnership, like any relationship, needs to be nurtured and will have its ups and downs. While one person may want to drive the whole process, it’s best not to run over other teammates. They may come up with some ideas that will make you look like a genius.

**Step 6: Preselling the creative director and account executive.** Chances are you will not be working directly with the client, and even if you are, you probably won’t be the sole contact. That’s why you need the people who interface with the client to buy into your ideas. Maintaining a good relationship with the creative director not only protects your job; it also gives you an ally when you pitch your idea to the account executive and client. In many cases, the account executive represents the client in these discussions. He or she may try to poke holes in your logic or question your creative choices. That’s why every creative choice must be backed with sound reasons. In the end, if the account executive is sold, you have a much better chance of convincing the client.

**Step 7: Selling the client.** As the person who developed the idea, you have to be prepared to defend your work, using logic rather than emotion. Many times your brilliant reasoning will fail since clients usually think with their wallets. Over time you’ll know how far you can push a client. The trick is to know when to retreat so you can fight another day. Most clients don’t mind being challenged creatively, as long as there are sound reasons for taking chances.

The three things you *never* want to hear from a client:

- “That looks just like the competitor’s ads. I want our ads to stand out.”
- “I was looking for something a lot more creative. Take some risks.”
- “You obviously don’t understand our product or our market.”

You won’t hear those things if you take care of Steps 1–6.

**Step 8: Getting it right.** OK, you’ve sold the client. Now what? You have to hand your creation to the production team, but your responsibilities don’t end. Does the copy fit the way it should? If not, can you cut it? Can you change a word here and there to make it even better? Are the graphics what you envisioned? Your involvement is even more critical for broadcast. Did you have a specific talent in mind for voice or on-camera roles? Does the director understand and share your vision? Does the music fit?

If you remember nothing else, keep the following quote from the great Leo Burnett in mind and follow it through Step 10: “Nothing takes the guts out of a great idea like bad execution.”
**Step 9: Maintaining continuity.** Almost everyone can come up with a great idea. Once. The hard part is extending that great idea in other media and repeating it, only differently, in a campaign. Over time, elements of a campaign tend to drift away from the original idea. Clients usually get tired of a look before the consumer. Art directors may want to “enhance” the campaign with new elements. Someone on the creative team needs to continually monitor the elements of an ongoing campaign to make sure they are true to the original idea.

**Step 10: Discover what worked and why.** If the ads in a campaign achieve their objectives, great! If they win awards, but the client loses market share, look out. Keep monitoring the efficacy of the campaign. What are the readership scores? What do the client’s salespeople and retailers think? How are sales? If you had to make any midcourse corrections, what would you do? If you never stop learning, you’ll never miss an opportunity to make the next project or campaign even better.

Fifty years after its groundbreaking introduction of the original Beetle, VW continues to lead with innovative concepts that resonate with buyers. This Super Bowl favorite enjoyed widespread viral popularity as well.

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It’s really very simple: Clorox makes it easy to lift out ink and wine stains—almost as easy as removing a LEGO® piece from its base. This Dubai agency found a dramatic way to depict the simplest of ideas.

**Where Do I Go From Here?**

A lot of entry-level copywriters and art directors set lofty career goals—most often the coveted title of creative director. However, many junior writers or designers don’t consider the other exciting possibilities. We’ve listed a few to consider. You may actually take several of these paths in your career.
Copywriter/art director for life: It could happen. Many people are happy to hone their creative talents throughout their whole career. You can do it if you continue to improve and never stop growing.

Management/creative director: A great job with great responsibilities. It often involves more personnel management than creative talent, requiring the skills of a head coach, sales manager, and kindergarten teacher.

Account manager: Many writers are drawn to the “dark side.” It makes sense, especially if you like working with clients and thoroughly understand the product, market, and consumers. In some small shops, the copy-contact system gives account execs an opportunity to create and creative types a reason to wear a suit. Art directors also work directly with clients, and in many cases are the primary agency contact.

Account planner: A natural for many writers who like research and enjoy being the conduit between the account manager, the creative team, and the consumer. It involves thorough knowledge of research, marketing, creative, and media, as well as a lot of intuition. Most successful advertising copywriters already possess those skills.

Promotion director: Writers and art directors are idea people. So it makes sense to use that creativity to develop sales promotions, special events, sponsorships, specialty marketing programs, displays, and all the other marketing communication tools not included in “traditional advertising.” This is a rapidly growing area with a lot of potential for creative people.

Public relations writer: Although most PR people won’t admit it, it’s easier to write a news release than an ad. Most advertising writers won’t admit that editorial writing is usually more persuasive than advertising. PR writing involves much more than news releases, though. You may become an editor for a newsletter or an in-house magazine. You may produce video news releases or schedule events, press conferences, and any number of creative PR efforts.

Internal advertising department rep: So far, we’ve outlined agency jobs, but other companies need talented creative people. In small companies, you may handle brochure writing or design, PR, trade shows, and media relations, in addition to advertising. In larger companies, you may handle promotional activities not covered by your ad agency. You may even write speeches for your CEO.

Web/interactive expert: The web is so integrated into most marketing communication programs it seems ridiculous to consider it nontraditional media. Any writer or designer today should be web savvy. You should

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Chick-fil-A’s cows have waged a long-term guerrilla war against burger joints. The antibeef campaign has been extended across all media, but it really made its mark in out-of-home media.

Words of Wisdom

In the ad game, the days are tough, the nights are long, and the work is emotionally demanding. But it’s worth it, because the rewards are shallow, transparent and meaningless.”

Unknown copywriter

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Advertising Creative
know the terminology and capabilities of the Internet—just as well as you understand magazines or television. You don’t have to be a whiz at HTML, but having some technical expertise is a huge plus. As with any phase of advertising, creativity, not technology, is the most precious commodity.

Social media specialist: This job usually involves daily monitoring, posting, and content development. It can also mean developing social media advertising and creating brand awareness online. You could moderate chats as well as initiate conversation through forums, Twitter, and postings. Writing skills, creativity, and knowing when social media is not the solution are keys to success.

Freelance writer/designer: A lot of people like a flexible schedule and a variety of clients. Being a successful freelancer requires tremendous discipline and endless self-promotion, plus the mental toughness to endure the constant rejection, short deadlines, and long stretches between assignments.

Video and broadcast producer/director: Like to write video or radio commercials? Maybe you have the knack for writing scripts, selecting talent, editing, and other elements of audio and video production. As for web/interactive experts, creative talent and a logical mind are the keys. Technological expertise can be learned on the job.

Consultant: Too often it's another word for unemployed. A select few actually make a living as creative consultants. Sometimes they are no more than repackaged freelancers. Sometimes they are "rainmakers" who help with a new business pitch. Still, a number of downsized companies and agencies will pay consultants for skills and contacts they don’t have in-house. Keeping current and connected is the key to success.

Coca-Cola Australia launched their version of the “Share a Coke” campaign by offering to put one of 50 common first names on their bottle (in place of the Coke brand). Friends were invited to share the customized Coke with their friends and to make their own commercials. Companies have to be really confident in their brand equity to alter their packaging this way.
Creativity and Online Media

While traditional media advertising usually rides up and down on the waves of economic conditions, many advertisers have shifted more money into social media and mobile. According to the MagnaGlobal Advertising Forecast, mobile advertising grew by 32% and online video advertising grew by 40% in 2011, while more traditional advertising experienced modest gains and losses.

So what does this mean for the future of creative advertising? Many marketers will shift their emphasis to such “middle of the funnel” approaches as social media, in addition to paid search and e-mail marketing. Creatives will have to understand how to do business in the digital space and anticipate an increasingly faster pace to changes in technology, pop culture, and online viewing trends. That means you will have to know more than how to create a banner ad. You may have to develop entire online communities for very specific target audiences and find ways to keep them engaged... and oh, by the way, you still have to sell something.

What's in It for Me?

You might have discussed the role of advertising in society and explored ethical issues. You have probably reviewed theories of communication and might have even read about the greatest creative people of all time. That's all good, but let's be honest—if you want a creative career, you're only interested in three things: fame, fortune, and fun. Not necessarily in that order. Let's look at each one in a little more detail.

Fame: Everyone wants recognition. Since advertising is unsigned, there are only two ways to get recognized—awards and having people say, “You're really the person who did that?” If they're judged good enough, writers and art directors are immortalized in Communication Arts annuals. Last time we looked, there are no books showcasing account execs and media buyers.

Fortune: Depending on experience, the economy, the results they generate, and a million other factors, creative people can make as much or more than
any other people in advertising. Recent salary surveys show salaries for top creatives and top account supervisors are pretty much the same. But as a writer or an art director, you get to wear jeans, have a tattoo, pierce your nose, and spike your hair. But only if you want to.

**Fun:** You can be famous and rich and still be unhappy in any business. Even if you're not well known or a millionaire, you can still get a kick out of solving problems for clients. It's still a treat to work with other creatives, interact with musicians and actors, win presentations, and travel to exotic locales. No matter how much you're earning, when it stops being fun or if you lose your edge, you should probably consider getting out.

**Knowing the Rules and When to Break Them**

We will not dwell on too many of the rules of advertising writing and design, but we will look at some accepted practices. These are the tips and techniques that have proven successful over time.

One “rule” will always be true. Advertising is a business. A business populated by a lot of crazy people, but still a business. Although the slogan “It’s not creative unless it sells” has lost its impact, we still have to persuade someone to buy something. This reality leads to something we call “creative schizophrenia”—the internal conflict between the stuff you want to do and the stuff clients make you do. For example, if you want to get a job, you need really cool, cutting-edge stuff in your portfolio, which is usually not usable in the real world. When you land that job, you’ll probably be forced to do a lot of boring stuff that sells products but looks terrible in your book. That’s the nature of this business, and unless you can live with a split personality, it’s hard to survive.

**You Don’t Have to Be Crazy, but It Helps**

Psychologists have spent years studying creativity. We know that creativity is not an isolated right-brained activity. Rather, it “reflects originality and
appropriateness, intuition and logic. It requires both hemispheres. The left side likes words, logic, and reasons. The right side likes pictures, emotions, and feelings. Bringing both hemispheres together in a mediated form is what Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi calls “flow . . . a phenomenon constructed through an interaction between producers and audience.”

Flow requires flexibility and “the capacity to adapt to the advances, opportunities, technologies, and changes that are a part of day-to-day living.” Advertising creativity is the end product of balancing logic with irrationality, artistic freedom with the constraints of the creative problem, and divergent thinking with convergent thinking. It’s about making strategy come to life. What does that mean for you?

Daniel Pink, in his groundbreaking book *A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future*, argues that we are moving away from left-brain leadership toward the attributes associated with the right brain. Pink describes right-brain thinking as holistic, big picture, intuitive, and nonlinear. He states, “The Information Age we all prepared for is ending. Rising in its place is what I call the Conceptual Age, an era in which mastery of abilities that we’ve often overlooked and undervalued marks the fault line between who gets ahead and who falls behind.” So we are moving from high tech to high concept and high touch. The Information Age was about knowledge workers. *The Conceptual Age is about creators and empathizers—in other words, right-brain thinking.*

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**Before You Get Started**

Most texts will tell you that you just can’t start creating an ad from scratch. Of course you can. And you just might get lucky the first time. But can you repeat that success? That’s why we need to discuss the foundations of marketing communications. First, a few definitions.

**Advertising, MarCom, IMC, or What?**

Everyone knows what advertising is, right? George Orwell said it was “the rattling of a stick inside a swill bucket.” H. G. Wells claimed, “Advertising is legalized lying.” For a less cynical take, Professor Jef Richards of the University of Texas says, “Advertising is the ‘wonder’ in Wonder Bread.” You’ve probably learned that advertising is paid communication to promote a product, service, brand, or cause through the media. Is direct mail advertising? Well, if you consider mail a medium, yes. How about a brochure? Probably not; however, it can be mailed or inserted into a magazine as an ad. The Internet? Yes and no. A website by itself is not really advertising although a banner ad on that site is.
Social networks? They can be a vehicle for ads, but they are even more effective when they influence consumer behavior without obvious advertising. Public relations? No, because the advertiser is not paying the editor to publish an article (at least not directly). Confused? Don't feel alone. Many marketing professionals can't make the distinction between advertising and other forms of promotion.

MarCom (Marketing Communications)

That's where the term MarCom arose. MarCom to some people takes in every form of marketing communication. Others describe MarCom as every form of promotion that's not traditional advertising. Traditional advertising usually covers print (newspapers, magazines), television, radio, and some forms of outdoor advertising. “Nontraditional” promotion includes direct marketing, sales promotion, point of sale, public relations, e-mail, online advertising, search

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Birth of a Network

Verizon Wireless had been running the “Can you hear me now?” guy (or Test Man as we called him) for about four years. He had quickly become an icon and had helped reinforce the perception that Verizon had a better network. While it was true that Verizon’s network was in fact better, AT&T had begun attacking that perception with their “Fewest Dropped Calls” campaign. And the effects of that were showing in tracking results.

We were faced with two problems: After four years Test Man was beginning to wear thin (there are only so many times you can hear “Can you hear me now? Good” before you never want to hear it again), and AT&T’s offensive was gaining ground. Verizon wanted a new idea that upped the perception of their network difference, convinced consumers of the value of that difference, and, hopefully, didn’t abandon the equity they had built with Test Man.

Trying to convince consumers about the value of an intangible telecommunications network is a tough thing. It’s a little like trying to convince diners of the value of a brilliantly efficient kitchen when all they care about is the food on the plate. We had to make it clear that the brilliant efficiency of the kitchen is directly connected to the deliciousness of the food.

In a couple of weeks we had come up with about a half-dozen ways of doing this, including one simple executional idea of literalizing the network as an infinite army of technicians, equipment, and high-tech gizmos with one person leading it all—Test Man.

It honestly took us a little while to appreciate how smart it was. It took an abstract concept and made it real, it gave our consumers a feeling of personal strength by giving them an army behind them, it had an unintended consequence of implying better customer service, and, of course, it created a new role for Test Man.

Over time, it too wore thin. And it was expensive to produce (we became experts in the digital art of cloning). But for four years and dozens and dozens of spots and ads, it did its job wonderfully. Verizon’s network superiority perception gap over AT&T began increasing once again and stayed there.

And it worked not only as a brand idea but also as a retail deal breaker—if Verizon and AT&T had the same phone on sale for the same price, well, the one that comes with the network suddenly looks like a better deal.14

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Steve Ohler, executive creative director, McCann Worldgroup, New York, mccann.com.
engine marketing, mobile, social networks, guerrilla marketing, viral/buzz, word of mouth, and everything else you can attach a logo, slogan, or message to. These divisions evolved as large agencies discovered that they could make money beyond earning media commissions for “traditional” advertising. So they created MarCom units or separate interactive, direct, and sales promotion divisions. Sometimes these are set up as separate entities under the corporate umbrella of a large agency.

### IMC (Integrated Marketing Communications)

IMC (integrated marketing communications) unites the MarCom elements into a single campaign. IMC has become a buzzword, especially for agencies that recently set up MarCom divisions. Actually, IMC is nothing new. Smaller full-service agencies and in-house ad departments have been doing it for years under the banner of “doing whatever it takes to get the job done.” With limited budgets, companies need to get the most mileage from their promotional dollar with a variety of tools, including advertising.

### Advertising’s Role in the Marketing Process

The buying process for some products may take a couple seconds, such as picking out a sandwich at the drive-through, or it may take years, as with buying a multimillion-dollar piece of industrial equipment. No matter the time frame, there is a process that starts with awareness and ends with the sale. One of the best ways to describe the process is using the acronym AIDA. It’s not the opera, but rather it stands for attention, interest, desire, and action. Understanding AIDA helps you as a creative person to guide a consumer from just recognizing your brand to demanding it. Here’s how AIDA works in advertising:

1. **Attention:** How do you get someone who is bombarded with hundreds if not thousands of messages a day to look at your ad or commercial? If you’re a writer, one way is to use powerful words, or if you’re an art director you need a picture that will catch a person’s eye.

2. **Interest:** Once you capture a person’s attention, he or she will give you a little more time to make your point, but you must stay focused on the reader or viewer’s wants and needs. This means helping that person to quickly sort out the relevant messages. In some cases, you might use bullets and subheadings to make your points stand out.
3. **Desire:** The interest and desire parts of AIDA work together. Once people are interested, they need to really want the product. As you’re building the readers’ interest, you also need to help them understand how what you’re offering can help them in a real way. The main way of doing this is by appealing to their personal needs and wants. Another component of desire is conviction—the willingness to buy when the opportunity is right. So even if your message does not result in an immediate sale, keeping your messages on track and on time could eventually trigger a sale.

4. **Action:** OK, they’re hooked. Now what do you want them to do? Visit a website? Take a test drive? Call for information? Plunk down some cash now? You should be very clear about what action you want your readers or viewers to take.

**Knowing What Makes the Consumer Tick**

Consumer behavior is the study of how people buy, what they buy, when they buy, and why they buy. It blends elements from psychology, sociology, and marketing, and quite a bit of insight. Marketers attempt to dissect the buyers’ decision-making process, both for individuals and for groups. They study demographics, psychographics, and lifestyles to understand what people want and how they want to get it. Billions of dollars are spent on research to test new products and the consumer’s willingness to buy. But many times the most successful marketing concepts spring from some crazy idea no research could predict. Can you say Google? Steve Jobs relied on his intuition instead of focus groups. He and his talented team developed products consumers didn’t even know they wanted—the Macintosh, iMac, iTunes, iPod, iPhone, and iPad—and in the process created the most valuable technology company in the world. We’ll discuss some of the tools you can use to gauge consumer attitudes and opinions later in this book. However, at this point, suffice it to say a successful creative practitioner writes and designs materials that appeal to a consumer’s wants and needs. Unless you’re the next Steve Jobs, you may need some research to guide you.

**Creating From the Consumer’s Point of View**

If you remember nothing else from this chapter, remember this:

*People do not buy things.*

*They buy satisfaction of their wants and needs.*
You may have studied Abraham Maslow’s theory of the hierarchy of needs. This model is usually depicted as a pyramid, ranging from the most basic needs to the most complex and sophisticated.

According to Maslow, the needs at each level must be met before one can progress to the next level. Maslow considered less than 1% of the population to be truly self-actualized. Some communication theorists have expanded on Maslow’s list. Some texts list more than 30 needs. To simplify matters, we can probably sum up wants and needs from a marketing communication standpoint as follows:

- Comfort (convenience, avoid pain and discomfort)
- Security (physical, financial)
- Stimulation (aesthetic, physical)
- Affiliation (esteem, respect)
- Fulfillment (self-satisfaction, status)

Gut Instinct
I have shaped my career based mostly on gut instinct. In a pre-journalism class my freshman year at the University of Colorado at Boulder, my professor talked for 20 minutes about advertising. It was in those 20 minutes, of all the minutes I sat in class that semester, that my life truly changed. I knew I wanted to get into advertising.

After graduate school, it was that same gut instinct that told me to move to Los Angeles and take a freelance job at a shop that most people had never heard of, Goodness Mfg., rather than a full-time job at a bigger, more established agency. A year later it happened again, resulting in a move to New York City, and ultimately a job at a smaller, less known agency, Johannes Leonardo. When I took the position, I was one of eight people at the agency and the only person in the creative department, a big risk but one I knew was right.

It is that same gut instinct that has driven me creatively to do work that in my wildest dreams I never thought I could do, or be a part of. I just knew what felt right and went for it. Without my gut instinct I know my creative output would have suffered, and I would not have made the same impact on the world that I have currently made.

In short, never be scared of what you feel is right. If I have learned anything, it is that the voice inside you, your gut instinct, will take you on the wildest, most exciting, best ride of your life if you let it.

Emmie Nostitz, art director, Johannes Leonardo, New York, @emmienostitz.

Tapping into the self-perception of their loyal users, Apple ran a four-year TV campaign that personified the Mac and the PC. Mac was young, hip, and unassuming, but confident. PC was frumpy, jealous, and clueless. Who would you rather be? We thought so.
So how does all this talk about Maslow and wants and needs play in the ad business today? That’s where account planning comes into play. The account planner is the connection between the business side and the creative side of a marketing campaign. The planner works with the account manager to understand what the client is looking for and then relate that to what the consumer wants. The planner also helps the creative team develop a more focused creative brief to lead them to that One Thing. Planners want to know what makes people tick—to bring the consumers’ voice into the strategic process. They use that information to develop branding strategy for the campaign. It is the planner’s job to take all this information, insight, and nuance and condense it into a form that the creative

A handy person doesn’t just buy a can of oil. He or she wants and needs something that helps make jobs around the house and workshop easier.

Words of Wisdom

“If you can’t turn yourself into your customer, you probably shouldn’t be in the ad writing business at all.”

Leo Burnett, copywriter and founder, Leo Burnett

Don’t tell me about your grass seed; talk to me about my lawn. Here’s a classic example. The copy almost reads like poetry: “Green says we’re committed to something. Something the whole neighborhood believes in. Something good. Something the world, even in its best days, could use more of.” While this ad isn’t for grass seed, it’s about a lot more than fertilizer.
team can understand (preferably short sentences for the writers and pictures for the art directors). We provide more detail about account planning in Chapter 2.

But what exactly do we do with all this? Once you have discovered the consumers’ sweet spot, you have to communicate in a way that convinces them your brand can satisfy their wants and needs. One of the best explanations of a consumer’s wants and needs can be found in this simple declarative sentence: *Don’t tell me about your grass seed; talk to me about my lawn.*

Think about that. People aren’t really looking for seed. They need a play area for their kids. They want a calm green space for relaxing or a yard the neighbors will envy. Security. Comfort. Fulfillment. Wants and needs. A $30 Timex will probably tell the time just as well as a $3,000 Rolex. (Well, close enough for most folks.) Which wants and needs are satisfied by spending 1000% more? Hint: It’s really not about telling time.

### Who’s Who?

In this and future chapters, you’ll see some Words of Wisdom floating around. Who are these wise guys and gals? At the end of most chapters we’ll provide a very brief bio on some of the best-known voices in advertising, as well as other innovators whom we have cited in Words of Wisdom and Ad Stories.

**Leo Burnett**—Founder of the agency that still bears his name, he established a new creative style of advertising, along with many memorable characters that are still working today, including Tony the Tiger, the Jolly Green Giant, the Keebler Elves, the Marlboro Man, and the Pillsbury Doughboy. Leo Burnett believed that creativity made an advertisement effective but, at the same time, that creativity required believability.

**Steve Jobs**—This legendary force drove Apple Computer and Pixar to the top of their games. Complex, difficult to work and live with, impatient, and always outspoken, Steve Jobs controlled everything related to his products, including the copywriting for his ads. Biographer Walter Isaacson describes Jobs as “a creative entrepreneur whose passion for perfection and ferocious drive revolutionized six industries: personal computers, animated movies, music, phones, tablet computing and digital publishing.”

**Mary Wells Lawrence**—While CEO, chair, and president of the legendary Wells Rich Greene agency, Mary Wells was the highest-paid, most well-known woman in American business. She was also the first female CEO of a *Fortune* 500 company. Her innovative campaigns for Braniff, Alka-Seltzer, Benson & Hedges, and American Motors brought a fresh new look to established brands. At age 40, she became the youngest person ever inducted into the Copywriters Hall of Fame.

**Jon Steel**—One of the early leaders in account planning, Jon Steel is well known for his innovative approach to focus groups, in which he elicits opinions from people where they live, work, and shop, rather than in sterile interview rooms. As head of Goodby, Silverstein & Partners’ planning department, Steel was named “West Coast Executive of the Year” by *Adweek* in 2000. He also finds time to share his depth of knowledge in the world of academia at Stanford University’s Graduate School of Business as a regular lecturer. His first book, *Truth, Lies, and Advertising: The Art of Account Planning*, has become a must-read for anyone interested in account planning.
Exercises

1. No More Wonder® Bread

Wonder® Bread is bland, white bread. Sorry to insult any Wonder® Bread lovers, but in advertising you can't be bland. You have to have flavor. Back in the 1940s Wonder® Bread made the claim that it "built strong bodies in 12 ways." That's where we begin.

Below are 12 ways to build strong insights.

- Feel free to add and subtract as you see fit, making these experiences relevant to your environment. By semester break you must have experienced all 12.

- Keep a journal with an entry for each experience: who (alone or with friends), what (use brief detail, for instance, the title of a foreign film or name of a club), where (a no-brainer), when (another no-brainer), and why (your reaction, how it made you feel). Use your six senses as you describe how each experience made you feel. That's where you'll find the insights.

  1. Go to the local public market, where “slow” food is sold.
  2. Watch a subtitled foreign film.
  3. Hit the Latin dance floor.
  4. Catch the week’s news on BBC online: www.bbc.co.uk.
  5. Check out live jazz or blues at a neighborhood club.
  6. Attend an event sponsored by the Gay-Straight Alliance Network, the Muslim Students Association, the Black Student Council, or an international student organization—one for which you don’t fit the demographics.
  7. Attend a local Rotary function.
  8. Dine on tofu.
  9. Settle in for an afternoon of NASCAR racing or WWE (World Wrestling Entertainment) viewing.
  10. Experience a meeting of the college Republican/Democratic student association—and it has to be the opposite of your political point of view.
  11. Join in the fun at a bingo gathering.
  12. Visit the local art museum and check out the current special exhibits.

2. Personal Branding Timeline

- Create a map moving across your life at 5-year increments. Begin with birth and end with your current age (which might be less than a 5-year gap). For each 5-year stage generate a list of the brands you associate with that time of your life.

- After each brand write a single sentence about what that brand meant to you at that time.

- Now extend this map out by 10-year increments, 30, 40, 50, 60, and 70. List brands you think will be a part of your life. Again write a single sentence about why you believe each brand will be relevant to you at that time.
• Now discuss what factors are influencing your choices: familiarity, aspiration, current usage, personal or family associations, trends, and so on.

• Next see if there are any brands that were constant over a long period of time. Discuss what makes those brands have traction over time. What inherited qualities and brand messages enable brand loyalty?

3. AIDA in Action

Consider the buying process for the following product categories using the AIDA steps: hybrid cars, microbrews, running shoes, frozen vegetables, and cosmetics. Or create your own categories.

• Make a list based on the following questions: What gets your attention? What part of the brand messages within this category captures your interest? At what point and due to what circumstances do consumers feel a compelling desire for the product? What are common intended actions that might be relevant to this product category?

• Now find an ad for each category and discuss how the AIDA process works for that brand. How much influence do advertising and promotion have on the buying decision for that brand?

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