Persuasive Advertising

Evidence-based Principles

J. Scott Armstrong

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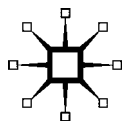# PERSUASIVE ADVERTISING

Evidence-based principles

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To my wife, Kay Anderson Armstrong.
My shipmate, partner, and pal for nearly half a century so far.
My work on this book was a test of her patience.
For example, Persuasive Advertising *traveled with us*
on all of our vacations over many years.
Her career in social science research and her commonsense approach
enabled her to make numerous improvements to this book.

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Advertising is fundamentally persuasion.
Bill Bernbach, 1960

Persuasive Advertising is a guide for all who create or evaluate advertisements—for people in advertising agencies and advertising research companies, for those who hire agencies, and for those in companies that do their own advertising. The basic proposition is that evidence-based advertising principles underlie persuasion. And experimentation is the bedrock of the knowledge about these principles.

To date, much of what is known about advertising has been hidden in obscure academic papers. The objective of this book is to put useful knowledge about persuasion into an understandable and easy-to-access format. Therefore, I use everyday language. For example, customers "think about a product" instead of "engage in cognitive processing of stimuli."

Many of the principles have profound effects, some of which are counter-intuitive. At points in the book, you will have the opportunity to predict the outcome of some of the studies underlying the principles. I hope you will find much evidence that contradicts your current beliefs. Such evidence will be useful to readers who heed Winston Churchill's warning, "Men occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of them pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing had happened."

While typical practice and expert opinions are consistent with many of the principles, empirical evidence provides the most valuable support. This book draws upon thousands of research studies that reveal when the principles are most effective and how to apply them.

Understanding evidence-based principles can improve the ability of novices and experts to develop persuasive advertising. It will help advertisers appreciate the challenges that their advertising agencies face as well as contribute to good long-term relationships between sellers and buyers. As you will discover, some commonly accepted practices that appear to be persuasive could be detrimental in the long-term.

Each year advertisers spend enormous sums to market their products and services. Understanding and applying the *Persuasive Advertising* principles will enable them to accomplish the job of marketing more effectively and at a lower cost.

J. Scott Armstrong

Acknowledgments

Introduction

Advertising is the very essence of democracy.
Anton Chekhov, late 1800s

[Advertising is] interpreting to the public, or to that part of it which it
is desired to reach, the advantages of a product or service.
American Association of Advertising Agencies, 1918

In July 2001, I visited the American Advertising Museum in Portland, Oregon. When visiting museums, I am often excited by the progress they reflect. But after thinking about the exhibits in this museum, I concluded that little progress had been made since the 1960s with respect to persuasive advertising.

Many people share the belief that practice of advertising is stagnant or deteriorating. An examination of 38 public opinion surveys from the 1930s through the 1970s showed that responses to questions such as "how believable (truthful) (informative) are ads?" reflected positive attitudes toward advertising through the mid-1950s, reaching an eight on a nine-point scale. However, by the 1970s, the ratings had plummeted to below three (Zanot 1984). Judging from reviews of consumer surveys, the general sentiments towards advertising have remained unfavorable in recent decades (Gaski & Etzel 2005).

Advertising experts also believe that advertising has worsened. In 1991, David Ogilvy said, "Who is approving this junk called advertising? Have the clients gone crazy?" Graham Phillips, former CEO of Ogilvy and Mather, said in *Advertising Age* (May 20, 2002, p. 26): "Too much of today's advertising is irrelevant and a waste of money. Ten years ago, some observers noted that ad agencies seemed 'more interested in selling their product than the client's product. Since then, it has gone from bad to worse." Tellis (2004, p. 29), a marketing professor, concluded, "Much advertising, as preached today, is ineffective."

Many believe that advertising is an art that changes with the times. As a result, they believe that what was learned in the past has little relevance to advertising today. Fox (1997), an advertising historian, wrote: "Advertising practitioners, in blithe, traditional ignorance of their trade's history, have continued to rediscover and rename old techniques (and imagine they have thereby come up with something unprecedented)."

A broad view of what constitutes persuasive advertising

Every one is practicing oratory on others thro the whole of his life.
Adam Smith

This book takes a broad view of advertising. It considers actions intended to

influence others through all types of media—including TV, radio, direct mail, magazines, billboards, and the Internet.

The principles in the book relate to attempts to persuade in many forms, with or without the motive of financial gain. The principles can be applied to a broad range of activities, including but not limited to selling products, gaining votes, helping to pass legislation, obtaining support for causes, and convincing people to avoid behaviors that are self-destructive or detrimental to others. They extend beyond advertising per se. In sum, the principles apply whenever there is a need to persuade someone to do something.

How big is the persuasion business? One admittedly crude estimate was made in the paper titled "One quarter of GDP is persuasion" (McCloskey and Klamer 1995).

Evidence-based principles

The application of the principles and methods of psychology to advertising
was a need which was felt by all [advertising leaders].
Walter Dill Scott, 1912

Prior to about 1940, if you had a disease, it made little difference what doctor treated you. The treatment of diseases is so complex that doctors, who had to rely on experience, were able to learn little about how to treat diseases. Then things changed. Why? – Because the discipline of medicine began to use the findings from experiments to develop principles for treating patients. The change was gradual, but today many medical schools embrace the teaching of evidence-based medical principles. Thanks to the Internet, doctors can find evidence-based treatment principles on sites such as Cochrane.org. Patients can also go to such sites to find out what treatments are relevant given their symptoms. As a result, people's lives are now much longer and suffering has been reduced (Gratzer 2006).

Management is far behind medicine. Managers rely on gut feelings and experience rather than evidence. This applies especially to advertising. Randall Rothenberg, an advertising expert at Booz Allen Hamilton (personal communication, December 14, 2006), wrote that, "Having spent the past seven years in management consulting, I've found myself stunned by the degree to which agencies' continual search for 'the new' has them ignore otherwise articulated bodies of knowledge."

Although an enormous amount of useful research has been produced in management, it has not been translated into useful principles, or even into plain English. However, after a century-long accumulation of empirical knowledge—and the advent of the Internet—management is able to begin the transition to comprehensible evidence-based principles. By increasing the attention to evidence-based findings, *Persuasive Advertising* seeks to advance the science of advertising.

Formulating the principles

In formulating the principles, I used the systems approach. That is, I am interested in seeing how a principle affects not only the seller, but also the buyer and

other stakeholders. In addition, I am concerned about long-term implications. For example, deceptive practices may be profitable in the short run but are unlikely to be profitable in the long run. Conversely, short-run practices that lose money, such as making good on guarantees, might be profitable in the longer run. In other words, because I used the systems approach in the formulation of evidence-based principles, they offer opportunities for advertisers to improve the effectiveness of their advertising in delivering long-term benefits for sellers and customers.

Ideally, principles should apply across time and space. Does anybody believe that because Newton's law of gravity was discovered long ago it is irrelevant today, or that because the discovery occurred in England it does not apply in the United States? The principles in this book are drawn from research conducted over more than a century and in many countries. Dave Walker, who has conducted statistical analyses of advertisements worldwide, has concluded that the principles he has examined apply across countries (Walker 2008).

Basic books in a field should summarize the principles for that field. In the social sciences, however, they rarely do, even when they claim to have done so. For example, we (Armstrong & Schultz 1993) examined nine basic marketing textbooks, published between 1927 and 1989, to determine whether they contained useful marketing principles. Some of the book titles included the word "principles." Four doctoral students acted as coders and found 566 principles related to product, price, place, or promotion. None of these principles was supported by empirical evidence. Four raters agreed that only 20 of these 566 principles were meaningful. Twenty marketing professors rated the 20 meaningful principles as to whether they were correct, supported by empirical evidence, useful, and surprising; none met all the criteria. Finally, the professors judged nine of the 20 principles to be nearly as correct when their wording was reversed.

The evidence presented in *Persuasive Advertising* is drawn from about 640 papers and 50 books. These sources were themselves based on prior publications. There were 33 meta-analyses covering almost 1,800 studies. There were also many traditional reviews citing hundreds of studies. In all then, *Persuasive Advertising* rests on a foundation of approximately 3,000 research sources.

The studies were conducted in the fields of accounting, behavioral economics, cognitive psychology, consumer behavior, language, law, marketing, mass communication, organizational behavior, politics, propaganda, social psychology, and public opinion. This search for evidence was aided by excellent books including the following:

Books summarizing research findings
Cialdini (2009), *Influence*
Dillard and Pfau (2002), *The Persuasion Handbook*
Levine (2003), *The Power of Persuasion*
Lynch and Horton (2009), *Web Style Guide*
Knowles and Linn (2004), *Resistance and Persuasion*
Messaris (1997), *Visual Persuasion*
O'Keefe (2002), *Persuasion: Theory and Research*
Petty and Cacioppo (1984), *Attitudes and Persuasion*

Pratkanis and Aronson (2000), *The Age of Propaganda*
Rossiter and Bellman (2005), *Marketing Communications*
Rossiter and Percy (1997), *Advertising, Communications and Promotion Management*
Stiff and Mongeau (2003), *Persuasive Communication*
Tellis (2004), *Effective Advertising*
Zimbardo and Leippe (1991), *The Psychology of Attitude Change and Social Influence*

Without the numerous review papers, this book would not have been possible. For example, Grewal et al. (1997) reviewed 77 studies on comparative advertising. When such reviews were available, I relied on them rather than going to the original sources (a decision made after calculating my expected lifespan).

Social scientists often cite research that they have not read, with the result that incorrect quotations are propagated throughout research studies. For example, by examining a sample of 50 papers that cited one paper, we found that 95 percent of those did so incorrectly (Wright and Armstrong 2008). To put you at ease on this, I hereby certify that I have read all of the relevant sections of the books and articles that I cite in this book.

To help ensure that the academic papers were summarized accurately, my research assistants and I attempted to contact all of the researchers whose work is cited in this book. We sent e-mails to each author we could locate, with my summaries of their research, and asked whether I had summarized their findings faithfully and whether I had missed any relevant studies. In cases where authors did not respond, we sent a follow-up e-mail. This process lasted several years. I estimate that we reached about 80 percent of the authors. Some of the authors were deceased and we were unable to locate others. Of those we were able to contact, over 90 percent responded. In most cases, the authors agreed with the summary of their work. In many cases they offered useful corrections, added to the clarity of the summary, and suggested additional research studies.

The book also presents previously unpublished research on the effectiveness of various principles for TV advertising. Dave Walker at Ipsos ASI conducted these analyses.

Sandeep Patnaik and I conducted original research for this book to provide additional evidence on the effectiveness of various principles. These analyses were conducted on print ads that had been tested by Gallup & Robinson.

Presenting the principles

I have tried to translate the research findings into everyday language. Here is an example I encountered in one of the papers I cited for this book: "Interestingly, increases in set incidence entropy and increases in verbal incidence entropy were associated with lower miscomprehension levels (Beta = -0.2103 and -0.3669, respectively)."

I do not report statistical significance. After wading through the literature on the value of significance testing and doing my own analyses, I concluded that tests of statistical significance are detrimental to the advancement of knowledge

(Armstrong 2007a, 2007b). They are also detrimental to decision-making (e.g. see Hauer 2004). In my work on this book, I found no case in which statistical significance tests played a useful role in the development of an advertising principle and many cases where they were misleading. For a review of the history and evidence on the use of tests of statistical significance, see Ziliac and McCloskey (2008).

The book is organized so that relevant principles can be located quickly via end-of-chapter checklists. In addition, the Glossary explains some of the important terms that are frequently used in this book. The references are linked to the pages on which they are discussed. There is a map of the principles and a guide to the checklists on the inside back cover. Finally, subject and name indexes are provided.

Types of evidence

Casual observation provides the weakest type of evidence. Non-experimental data improves upon casual observation, but it is a poor guide, especially in complex situations. The primary focus in this book is on experimental evidence. The types of evidence are described in this section.

Casual observation

If you believe that you can only learn from experience, how can you learn that you can't?
Anonymous

Casual everyday observation can only provide useful evidence in simple situations when feedback is clear and frequent. Unfortunately, there are few situations like this in advertising. Let me state that another way: Given the complexity of advertising and the difficulty on getting good feedback, experience provides a poor way to learn how to persuade people through advertising. However, we all believe that this rule does not apply to us.

Typical practice is based primarily on casual observation by advertisers. I refer to this type of evidence as "received wisdom," and draw upon it in the book when empirical evidence is lacking, the situation is simple, or the principle is obvious. Received wisdom is useful for such situations.

I relied on many sources related to typical advertising practices. These six books were especially useful: Presbrey (1929), *The History and Development of Advertising*; Mayer (1958), *Madison Avenue USA*; Pope (1983), *The Making of Modern Advertising*; Goodrum and Dalrymple (1990), *Advertising in America*; Mayer (1991), *Whatever Happened to Madison Avenue*; and Fox (1997), *The Mirror Makers*.

Casual observation falls short when advertisers do not have or use accurate, timely, well-summarized feedback about the outcomes of their procedures relative to alternatives. Additionally, knowledge based on typical practice is ineffective when many conditions are involved. It becomes too difficult to determine how each condition relates to the effectiveness of an advertisement.

Finally, typical practice can suffer when short-term success conflicts with long-term results. For example, advertisers might learn that a specific practice in a given campaign is effective in increasing short-term sales. However, determining whether that practice improves long-term profits and customer relationships is more difficult.

Experts draw upon their experience. In addition they may learn from experimental evidence published in journals or in-house studies. I found expert advice to be useful in formulating the principles. These nine books were particularly valuable: Scott (1912), *The Theory and Practice of Advertising*; Starch (1914), *Advertising*; Hopkins (1923), *Scientific Advertising*; Reeves (1961), *Reality in Advertising*; Ogilvy (1983), *Ogilvy on Advertising*; Antin (1983), *Great Print Advertising*; Franzen (1994),

Advertising Effectiveness; Roman, Maas and Nisenholtz (2003), *How to Advertise*; and Sutherland and Sylvester (2000), *Advertising and the Mind of the Consumer*.

Beware that experience tends to reinforce beliefs even when the beliefs are wrong. This applies to experts in many fields. For example, in one experiment, clinical psychologists were asked to examine information about individuals to identify which were homosexual and which were heterosexual. Data were contrived so that there were no relationships among the variables. Nevertheless, the experts saw the data as supporting the relationships they expected to see. When the clinicians were presented later with valid information about the relationships, they did not use it because it conflicted with their beliefs (Chapman and Chapman 1969). Advertising experts are also prone to this problem. If they think that an advertising technique will work, their experience is likely to confirm this belief.

Using one's judgment to develop principles in situations that involve several conditional factors is also difficult. For example, some experts have concluded that humor harms persuasion, while others have concluded the opposite. As it turns out, research has shown that the effectiveness of humor depends on the conditions—under some conditions it helps and under others it harms.

Another problem with relying on experts is that they often overlook conditions when giving advice. For example, Ogilvy (1985, p. 75) said, "When you put your headline in quotes, you increase recall by an average of 28%." In research that I conducted with Sandeep Patnaik, we discovered that this increased recall was due to the use of testimonials—not quotation marks.

Empirical evidence

When situations are complex, empirical research is needed to identify how conditions affect the outcomes of various actions.

The dangers of complexity can be illustrated by an example from medicine. In 1847, Ignaz Semmelweis observed that the obstetric clinic of a hospital that was served by doctors had three times the mortality rate of a "lower-class" clinic, which was served by midwives. Given the many factors involved, it required much research to determine the cause—which was that the doctors were coming into the obstetric clinic after having performed various procedures and their hands contained germs. Semmelweis concluded that they should wash their hands prior to each procedure. However, his findings were met with skepticism. Despite his scientific publications, it was years after his death that hand washing gained acceptance. Typical practice and expert opinion failed in this life-and-death situation involving hand washing. You might ask whether this would happen in advertising.

Let's look more closely at the types of empirical evidence: non-experimental, quasi-experimental (meaning partly experimental), and experimental.

Non-experimental data

You have seen thousands of advertisements for analog watches in your lifetime. Do you know what time is typically displayed on the watches in the ads? When

I have asked my people this question, approximately 10 percent give the correct answer.

Systematic observation and record keeping can greatly improve the ability to learn. Certainly it is more effective than casual observation. For example, if you record the time shown in the next few watch ads you see, you'll quickly learn that almost all watch ads show the same time.

Non-experimental studies are most useful when studying simple situations—that is, the relationship depends upon few conditions. Sometimes even a single condition can obscure the effects of a persuasive technique.

In reasonably simple situations, where there is ample data, it is sometimes possible to use statistical procedures to control for some conditions. For example, analyses of extensive records kept in baseball and football have shown that coaches' guidelines (e.g., go for a field goal on fourth down when inside the opponent's 10-yard line) often conflict with those based on empirical studies of what is best. Surowiecki (2004) reports that some football coaches benefit from analyses of non-experimental data. Lewis (2003) describes how analyses of non-experimental data have aided decision-making in baseball. The 15 National Basketball teams with at least one full-time statistician on their staff won 59 percent of 962 games to date in 2009–10, while the 15 teams with no statisticians won only 41 percent of 958 games (David Biderman, *Wall Street Journal*, March 12, 2010).

However, in complex situations, non-experimental data can be misleading. Consider another example from medicine. In a former British colony, healers believed that a distillation of fluids extracted from the urine of horses, if dried to a powder and fed to older women, could preserve youth and ward off a variety of diseases. The preparation become popular and non-experimental studies using hundreds of thousands of older women showed that those who took the drug were healthier.

The former colony is the United States; the time was the latter part of the 20th century and on into the 21st century; the drug is a female hormone-replacement, such as Premarin. Women who were diligent about their health issues sought the best care on all types of problems. These non-experimental studies compared them with women who put less emphasis on taking care of their health. Thus, the non-experimental analysis of data misled doctors. This ended only when experimental studies were done. These experiments suggested that long-term use of the horse-urine extract did not help older women: worse, it seemed to cause tumors, blood clots, heart disease, and perhaps brain damage (Avorn 2004). In short, non-experimental studies can mislead people in complex situations.

Non-experimental data analyses have proven useful for assessing advertising principles that involve only one or two minor conditions, especially when they have a strong effect, such as the use of a "brand-differentiating message." However, analyses of non-experimental data suffer from the same problem that was noted in the studies of female hormone replacement drugs. Namely, the more informed advertisers are aware of expert advice and they may employ a set of recommended procedures, some of which are of no value, but, as they are used along with procedures that do matter, they appear to help. Based to some extent on my research

for this book, I have become skeptical about the value of non-experimental data in complex situations.

Non-experimental data are often used by advertisers. For example, a study by Ogilvy and Raphaelson (1982) used responses from viewers of 951 TV commercials analyzed by the Mapes and Ross research firm. This approach took a giant step forward thanks to Stewart and Furse's (1986) analysis of 1,059 TV commercials that had been tested by Research Systems Corporation (RSC). It used before and after viewer responses from many thousands of viewers to assess the effects of over 160 features of commercials on recall, comprehension, and persuasion. It examined such data for 356 brands from 63 firms in 12 product categories. It was a massive undertaking. Their study inspired further studies of tested TV commercials, including Stewart and Koslow (1989), with an additional 1,017 commercials from RSC; Laskey, Fox and Crask (1994), with an analysis of data on 1,100 30-second commercials for fast-moving food and household items; Stanton and Burke's (1998) analysis of 601 commercials; Phillips and Stanton's (2004) analysis of 5,000 commercials; and Walker's (2008) analysis of 1,513 commercials that had been tested by Ipsos ASI.

At first glance, the findings from these studies seem disappointing. Few variables mattered. Why was that? The primary reason is that different approaches to advertising are used in different situations. Another reason is that there are an enormous number of conditions, and what works under some conditions may be harmful in others. As a result, what seem to be large sample sizes of over 1,000 commercials and a vast number of viewers were woefully inadequate. Massive sample sizes would be required so that the analyses could be done for ads facing similar conditions. In short, as a general strategy for learning how to persuade through advertising, the analysis of non-experimental data falls short. However, this was in itself an important finding. The analysis of non-experimental data has been widely used in advertising, and there are studies showing that even when done on a large scale by highly competent researchers, the findings can be misleading.

Another important conclusion is that for simple situations, the non-experimental findings to date have been useful. In this book, I have limited the discussion of non-experimental data to situations with few conditions. These findings are useful where experimental data are lacking. Even then, I advise caution. We conducted an analysis of 24 principles where non-experimental data seemed relevant and where we had experimental evidence. The findings from the non-experimental analyses agreed with those from the experimental data on 67 percent of the principles (Armstrong and Patnaik 2009). Better than chance (50 percent), for sure, but obviously calling for caution.

Non-experimental findings, when relevant, are provided at the end of each section on evidence. The reports are brief. Those who are interested in details can find them in the annotated references for the cited authors as well as in the original studies.

I believe that non-experimental studies have outlived their value for advertising. We currently have an immense body of knowledge. Non-experimental research that is not designed to build on this knowledge is unlikely to lead to

advances. In particular, stepwise regression and data mining offer little hope. Fortunately, we know what works: experimentation. So let's look at that next.

Quasi-experimental data

I use the term "quasi-experimental" to represent an approach where the research design controls for some, but not all variables, in comparisons of different ways of advertising. For example, a quasi-experimental study might compare two ads for the same product, brand, and media. The disadvantage is that some factors are not held constant. Nevertheless, the quasi-experimental approach can be valuable to the study of persuasive advertising even though, on occasion, an uncontrolled variable might impinge on validity.

Our quasi-experimental analysis drew upon data on 240 pairs of print ads from the *Which Ad Pulled Best* series (Burton and Purvis 1987…). Those books provide full-page magazine ads that had appeared from the 1980s up through 2002. I refer to them as "*WAPB* analyses." The ads had been tested for recall, and in some cases for persuasion, by the advertising research firm, Gallup & Robinson. Our coding of these ads was done without any knowledge of the effectiveness of the ads. The approach is briefly described in the Glossary and a more detailed discussion is provided in Appendix B. Such analyses are reported for 58 principles in this book.

We searched for pairs where one of the ads follows a principle and the other ad does not. A typical pair of advertisements is shown opposite.[1] For example, to test the principle on whether the headlines mention the brand, we compared the recall score for the ads that followed the principle (ad B in this case) with the score from those that did not (ad A). Note that while the ads are for the same brand, there are many differences, such as ad A having poorer contrast between the text and the background than ad B, and ad B also having more specific benefits. We then compared the scores for all ads that followed the given principle with those that did not. In this case ad B's recall was much better than that for ad A, 29 percent to 19 percent. By averaging across all pairs of ads that differ on this principle, we can assess the effect of putting the brand name in the headline.

The findings from the quasi-experimental analyses are valid. We were astonished to find that the directional effects of quasi-experimental findings in *Persuasive Advertising* agreed with those from the experimental evidence that was available. This applied to all of the 26 principles for which we also had lab experiments and all seven principles for which we also had field experiments (Armstrong and Patnaik 2009).

Given this high level of validity, we gained knowledge on 58 of the advertising principles. We also have confidence in the principles for which the quasi-experimental analyses provided the only experimental evidence.

These analyses also contributed to the formulation of the principles. Here is an example. Experts suggested that headlines should be short. But our analysis of quasi-experimental data from *WAPB* indicated that the number of words made little difference. Which viewpoint was correct? Sandeep Patnaik and I re-

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1   Used with the kind permission of P&G.

Sample ad pair from *Which Ad Pulled Best*
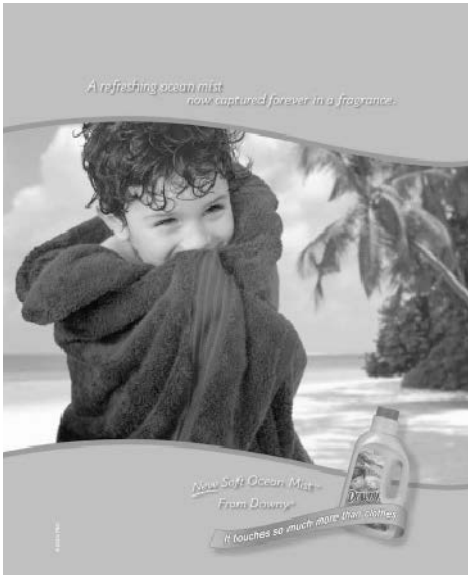
A

A refreshing ocean mist now captured forever
  in a fragrance.
New Soft Ocean Mist from Downy
It touches so much more than clothes

B

Get in the mood with new Downy simple
  pleasures
Essences of water lily & jasmine
Essences of vanilla & lavender
Essences of morning glory & honeysuckle
Introducing a new collection of fabric softeners
  from Downy with blends of essences and
  natural essential oils
An everyday simple pleasure for your clothes …
  and your mood.

examined quasi-experimental data on tested print ads. We believed that a key condition had been overlooked: namely, whether the ad is for a high-involvement product (where the customers give much thought) or for a low-involvement product. By comparing ads separately for each group, we found that ads for low-involvement products were more effective with short headlines than long ones, while ads for high-involvement products were more effective with longer headlines.

Experimental data

In experimental studies, the values of all key causal variables are controlled. For example, an advertiser (or researcher) who wants to know whether humor is persuasive creates two identical ads except that one version is humorous and the other is not. The ads are shown to similar people (assigned by a random procedure) in identical situations, and their reactions, are recorded. This is the most effective way to assess the effects of principles.

Experimental evidence comes in two types: laboratory experiments and field experiments. The former allows for tighter control, while the latter are more realistic.

Some people believe that laboratory studies (which will simply be referred to as lab experiments for the rest of this book) cannot be used to generalize to real-world problems. To address this issue, leading researchers were asked to compare findings from laboratory experiments with those from field experiments in 11 areas of human and organizational behavior; the findings were similar (Locke 1986). In addition, an analysis of 40 studies on sources of communication found similar effects from field and laboratory studies (Wilson and Sherrell 1993).

Exhibit A provides a summary, starting with the weakest evidence and moving toward the strongest. The weak forms are adequate only for the principles that have few conditions and where advertisers receive good feedback on effects.

The best evidence—and the source of much of the evidence provided in this book—is the meta-analysis, which involves a formal collection and analysis of all relevant evidence on a given principle, especially when the evidence involves laboratory and field experiments. Meta-analyses provide full disclosure on how the researchers searched for studies, coded the results, and summarized the findings. Findings from meta-analyses are more valid than those from traditional reviews (Beaman 1991). The meta-analyses are of particular value when the conditions are well specified.

Exhibit A Types of evidence (listed from weak to strong)

Casual observation
        Typical practice
        Expert advice

Empirical evidence
        Non-experimental data
        Quasi-experimental data
        Experimental data
                Lab experiments
                Field experiments
        Meta-analyses of experimental findings

Not all principles are based on evidence. Some seem so obvious that no one has bothered to study them. An example of an obvious principle from another area is "ensure that the computer is plugged in before calling tech support." I provide some obvious principles because they are an important part of the checklist. For example, I have seen ads that, by mistake, omit critical information about how to obtain a product or when an advertised event will take place.

The book is organized so that you can easily skip the evidence as these sections are flagged by sub-titles. But I do not advise doing that, especially if a principle conflicts with your beliefs – and some will. It is not wise to change one's opinion without seeing the evidence.

The various studies can help you to understand how to apply the principle to a given situation. They allow the reader to see the nature and strength of the evidence for each principle. Some of the studies might be of particular relevance to your problem, so I provide the sources. In doing so, *Persuasive Advertising* follows a convenient academic convention: author name and publication year,

such as "(O'Keefe 1999)," typically placed at the end of the description of the evidence. Thanks to the Internet, the studies are easy to track down. For example, most papers are in full text on the Internet so that one only needs to enter a few words from the title into a Google Advanced Search.

Barriers to the use of evidence-based principles

A survey of 40 respondents from the ten largest advertising agencies in Norway found that these advertisers were largely ignorant of the research literature on advertising (Helgesen 1994). For example, none of the advertising agencies vying for Subaru's U.S. account used prior research on advertising in their proposals (Rothenberg 1994).

Advertisers might question the value of using findings from empirical research, preferring instead to rely on their judgment. Of course, there are potential problems with all experiments. Here are some criticisms that seem plausible but have little relevance for the findings described in this book:

- Convenience samples (e.g., students or customers in mall intercepts: that is, those approached while on shopping expeditions) are used as subjects in nearly all studies.
- Subjects try to help researchers confirm their hypotheses.
- Some studies are too old.
- Most findings are just common sense.

In Appendix A, I explain why you should ignore these arguments.

However, keep the following in mind. First, only a small percentage of relevant studies in advertising look at behavior, and, second, many advertising studies are one-shot efforts. That is, they have not been replicated or extended.

Why do so many advertisers ignore the research on advertising? Here are some valid concerns:

- *Relevance:* Even if advertisers have easy access to a research library, they must comb through a vast body of literature to identify useful findings. To make matters worse—as I found in preparing this book—probably less than 5 percent of journal articles on advertising contain useful findings.
- *Replication:* Only a small percentage of the studies in advertising have been replicated, thus posing a question about their reliability. For that reason, *Persuasive Advertising* relies primarily on studies that have been replicated. Fortunately, given the thousands of published studies, there were many studies that were replicated or extended.
- *Bafflegab:* Many academics write in a manner that is nearly incomprehensible. Thus, many relevant studies needed to be "translated."

There are good reasons then, that advertisers have not capitalized on the extremely valuable evidence that has been accumulated.

In this book, my aim is to provide easy access to the world's storehouse of empirically validated knowledge on how to persuade through advertising.

Conditions

In the late 1800s, John E. Powers, a noted advertiser, recognized the importance of conditions—although he did not specify them. He said an appeal that worked well for one advertiser in a given situation might fail when used by another advertiser. For example, one would not use the same appeal for inexpensive grocery items as for high-priced goods valued for their workmanship. This book provides enough detail about the conditions to permit the reader to apply principles sensibly, whatever the circumstances happen to be.

Principles are action steps to be taken under given conditions. Conditions refer to the way in which one describes and defines the advertising problem being considered. This includes issues such as the objectives of the campaign, the nature of the product, and the target market.

Experts have often provided advertising principles that they claimed apply in all situations. Example: "Do not use humor in advertising." In fact, principles that apply to all situations are rare—and humor is no exception.

Experts criticized Apple's "1984" ad, perhaps the most famous TV ad, for violating many guidelines such failing to identify the brand early. But when I rated the commercial using the principles in this book, the actions were consistent with the conditions. For example, because there was extensive media coverage leading up to the airing of the commercial, there was no need to mention the brand name early in the commercial.

The task of identifying the conditions for each principle was difficult because academic researchers often fail to describe conditions. This is not unique to studies of advertising: In a study of 1,700 empirical papers in six leading marketing journals from 1984 to 1999, we found that only 11 percent had hypotheses that included conditions (Armstrong, Brodie, and Parsons 2001). Fortunately for the purposes of this book, it was often possible to infer conditions.

Some conditions are necessary—otherwise the principle does not apply. For example, "Provide news, but only if it is real." In such cases, the condition is stated as part of the principle. A helpful condition is not necessary, but, when present, the principle is expected to have a stronger effect. For example, "News is especially persuasive when it relates to important benefits for customers." A harmful condition, on the other hand, reduces or even reverses the effectiveness of a principle when it is present. For example, the principle "Make the brand name prominent" will have little value if the brand is unknown, and it would be harmful when the brand has a poor reputation. When there are helpful or harmful conditions, I discuss them after presenting the principle.

There are three important and overarching conditions that I will now describe: the advertisers' objectives, product offerings, and target markets.

Objectives

Don't care how bright or how catchy ... nor how much general interest.
The key is "does it sell?" What's the profit of the ad investment?
L. Thomas of Lord and Thomas, the largest U.S. ad agency in 1905

The development of an effective advertising campaign should begin with a meaningful, complete, and clear statement of objectives. Although this might seem obvious, advertisers often plunge ahead without knowing what they want to accomplish. This happens even with prize-winning campaigns where the submission form had asked that the objectives be stated.

In one study, 68 entries in the print-ad classification from the annual Business/Professional Association Gold Key Awards were examined. Those who participated had been asked to include a statement of objectives and a summary of results. Two judges independently evaluated the entries' objectives. None of the entrants specified the desired effect of the campaign in measurable terms or the time frame to achieve it. In addition, the assessments were seldom related to the statement of objectives; for example, of those entries stating that an objective was "to increase purchase rate," only 12 percent measured purchase rates (Hartley and Patti 1988).

In another study, the 43 winners of the EFFIES[1] were asked to share copies of their entries and 29 responded. The intent of the awards is to evaluate the effectiveness against the company's objectives. Despite this criterion, of the 167 objectives stated by the winners, only 17 percent were measurable (Moriarty 1996).

Although there is much to admire in the bi-annual *Advertising Works* of the U.S. Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA), the statements of objectives of the award-winning campaigns often fall short. As an example, consider this IPA submission by Levi Strauss for the objectives of its jeans campaign in Europe in 1988: a) maintain and increase brand share, b) maintain the 501 brand's price premium, c) introduce and establish pan-American advertising support in Spain, and d) achieve the above using TV advertising (Baker 1993). Their "objectives" did not specify profits and timing. They do not take account of all stakeholders. They are not measurable. And they confuse strategies with objectives.

The statement of objectives is largely up to the advertiser to develop. The agency can contribute, but the responsibility falls on the advertiser. I suggest that you ignore mission or vision statements. As you will see, they typically fail to use evidence-based procedures for setting objectives.

Relevant objectives

Our job is to sell our clients' merchandise ... not ourselves.
Bill Bernbach

The objectives of an advertising campaign should be relevant to the ultimate objectives of the organization. One way to identify ultimate objectives is to keep asking "why?" until it is no longer sensible to ask. For example: Why would you want to increase market share?

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1 Effectiveness awards by the New York Chapter of the American Marketing Association.

For most companies, the ultimate objective for advertising should be to have a good return on the investment in the advertising campaign. One should also consider the impact of advertising on other stakeholders, such as creditors, employees, customers, suppliers, and retailers.

Advertising can lead directly to sales. It can help also with related sales efforts—such as making potential customers more receptive to sales calls. It can stimulate other behavioral changes, such as voting, protesting, or donating time and money to charitable causes. A 1906 ad by the American Civic Association, headlined "Niagara Falls will be Destroyed," was instrumental in saving the Falls. In June 1966, ads by the Sierra Club stymied the U.S. government's plan to dam the Grand Canyon (Glatzer 1970).

Advertising can be used to maintain loyalty by encouraging customers to resist switching to a competitive product. The notion of building brand loyalty was popular in the early 1900s and has grown substantially since then (Pope 1983). A Tareyton cigarette campaign of the 1960s, "I'd rather fight than switch," illustrates this type of advertising.

Much advertising is done to help customers feel better *after* they have made a purchase. It can provide reassurance that the purchase was a good one. It can also help manage customer expectations regarding the benefits offered because customers often overestimate the pleasure they will receive from new purchases.

Advertising can also produce benefits for employees. For example, consumer banking revenues at the Halifax, one of Britain's largest banks, had been slipping during the 1997–2000 period. To let customers know about its benefits (higher interest rates and friendly service) and to motivate its employees, the bank involved its employees in a "Staff as Stars" ad campaign. Over 1,000 employees auditioned for parts in the ads, and the bank built the campaign around 20 finalists. The campaign, which won an IPA Effectiveness Award, motivated employees and attracted new business (Rimini 2003).

When the ultimate objectives are specified, one can then specify relevant sub-objectives. This process requires much care and thought because managers have a tendency to inject sub-objectives that are not relevant to the ultimate objectives.

Do not confuse strategies with objectives. Unfortunately, statements of objectives for advertising campaigns often focus on strategies, such as increasing awareness or informing people about a new feature. Some managers are more comfortable specifying how to do tasks than explaining why the task needs to be done. In World War II, Willy Messerschmitt, the German aircraft designer, put this issue perfectly: "You can have any combination of features the Air Ministry desires, so long as you do not also require that the resulting airplane fly."

Likeable ads represent a strategy, not an objective. While many successful ads are likeable, many are not. For example, comparative ads and those based on fear, guilt, or provocation are sometimes very effective though not likeable. Because of its potential misuse as an objective, my advice is that advertisers should not ask whether customers or experts or clients like an ad. This conflicts with current practice. A U.S. survey showed that 73 percent of advertisers and 53 percent of advertising agencies use ad likeability as an objective (Cook and Dunn 1996).

The Advertising Research Foundation claimed that ad likeability is the single best copy-test predictor of campaign success. However, I have not been able to find experimental evidence to support this belief (nor were Bergkvist and Rossiter 2008). The value of ad likeability is conditional on the situation, and it makes no sense to use likeability as an objective. Rosser Reeves said, "Liking be damned."

In discussing objectives, *The Handbook of Advertising* advised that, "Establishing market share and increasing market share, then, are the 21st century touchstones by which a company gauges the effectiveness of its advertising" (Lewis and Nelson 1999, p. 172). But is market share relevant as an objective in business? Consider the following situation:

> You are the marketing manager of a manufacturing firm known as "Big Guys Incorporated." You are responsible for all marketing decisions and strategies, including the pricing structure of the firm's products.
>
> Recently your company introduced a new, highly technical product, and you have been asked to set the pricing strategy for this product. You are aware that your main competitor, "Other Guys, Inc.," intends to introduce a product that is very similar. You should assume that the competitor's product is as good as yours in every way that is important to the market, and the market is the same for both products. Therefore, the pricing strategy that you must formulate for your product should take into account this competitive force.
>
> You are essentially faced with the choice between two strategies.
>
> *Low price*: keep your price low, which causes your competition to suffer a substantial loss.
> *High price*: choose a higher price that produces higher profit for your firm, but which also allows the competition to prosper.
>
> You then calculate the present value of the total profits expected for your firm over the next five years, as well as for the competitors ("Other Guys"). You determine the following results for both strategies:

Expected profits over 5 years in US$ million		
Firm	Low-price strategy	High-price strategy
Big Guys	40	80
Other Guys	20	120

> At this point you must choose your strategy, either a low price or a high price. Which strategy would you choose, a low price or a high price?

The above description is one of a series of lab experiments. In all, 1,016 subjects (management students from various countries) made pricing decisions using variations of the above situation. When information about the competitor's profits was provided, over 40 percent of the subjects ignored the ultimate objectives (that is, maximize profits) and instead chose a strategy designed to beat or harm the competitor. Furthermore, in a field study that examined the performance of 20 large U.S. firms over a half-century, those with competitor-oriented (market-share) objectives were found to be less profitable and less likely to survive than those whose objectives were directly oriented to profits (Armstrong and Collopy

1996). A ten-year follow-up located an additional 12 studies and all supported the original findings (Armstrong and Green 2007).

Similar results have been found for advertising decisions. In one study, 57 subjects were asked to make "advertising spending decisions as marketing managers of a medium-sized manufacturer selling in mature markets," and to assume they were committed to remaining with the company for five years. The advertising decision involved high (competitive) or low (cooperative) budgets. The payoffs were constructed so that cooperative decisions had much higher profits. Of the 57 subjects, 78 percent focused on beating their competitor—and thus earned lower profits (Corfman and Lehmann 1994).

Turning to non-experimental data, an analysis of 29 winners of the 1993 EFFIES awards found that 38 percent of the marketing objectives were focused on beating competitors. This suggests that many advertising experts favor competitor-oriented objectives (Moriarty 1996).

I expect that the following example is common. In 1990, when setting objectives for marketing a new dish soap, Persil, in the United Kingdom, Lever acted as if its goal was to defeat Procter & Gamble's Fairy brand. Lever set a goal to achieve an 18 percent market share. In response, P&G vowed to get Persil off the shelves within a year, although Persil tested initially as a superior cleansing product. Both firms increased their advertising levels. By 1992 Lever had failed to reach its objective. More importantly, it had failed to make a profit. According to an executive from J. Walter Thompson (Lever's ad agency), "What we have succeeded in doing is creating the ultimate spoiler operation, where nobody makes any money" (Ind 1993). Lever should have focused on making money for itself.

Why do many managers cling to their beliefs that market share is a useful objective? I attribute this to folklore—a belief in techniques and concepts without any experimental evidence of their effectiveness, simply because others are using them. Managers' experience is likely to lead them astray. One chief financial officer, frustrated over his firm's focus on market share, told me that as best he could tell, the explanation for the competitor orientation was that "the other guys started it."

Folklore applies to academics as well as to managers. At a presentation in 1992, I asked 23 academics whether empirical evidence would affect their opinions about the use of market share as an objective. Approximately one-third said it would not. I have also challenged colleagues to provide evidence favoring the use of market share as an objective. They replied only with examples, such as "What about General Electric? Didn't they succeed by emphasizing market share?" While the use of anecdotes is a fallacious form of argument, even the GE story is suspect. GE's return on investment (ROI) was lower in the decade after it espoused a goal of market share than it had been in the preceding decade (Armstrong and Collopy 1996).

I am not suggesting firms should ignore their competitors' actions; they might have some good ideas about how to better satisfy users. However, you should ignore them *when setting objectives*; a firm's aim should not be to defeat its competitors. This does not apply however, to all organizations. For example, it does not apply to political organizations.

Comprehensive objectives

To specify comprehensive advertising campaign objectives, consider all stakeholders—stockholders, employees, suppliers, retailers, customers, and local community members who might be affected by an ad. What are the ultimate objectives for each of these groups?

Stockholders benefit because advertising could attract more buyers, induce buyers to pay more for the product, or reduce the costs of getting needed product information to customers, thus increasing profits and the value of their stock.

Customers gain from advertising because it helps them find better products, reassures them that their decisions were sensible, and increases their enjoyment in using a product. Here's an experiment that demonstrated the importance of advertising in enhancing customers' experience. Three jars of peanut butter were given to subjects. One brand was familiar; the other two were fictitious. In fact, the peanut butter in the three jars was identical. Nevertheless, three-quarters of the subjects preferred the known brand; the remaining quarter were split between the two unidentified brands (Hoyer and Brown 1990). Experiments with beer have shown similar findings (Allison and Uhl 1964).

Distributors can also benefit from advertising. When Kellogg advertised its Nutri-Grain bars in the United Kingdom in 1997, many independent retailers called, asking whether they could stock them. Moreover, advertisers should ensure that a campaign helps its distributors. And certainly the campaign should not harm distributors. For example, a Subaru dealer in Chicago did not want to run the manufacturer's "Lack of Pretense" campaign. He asked, "Does this mean that we were pretentious before and now we're not?" (Rothenberg 1994, p. 337).

Advertising might also affect employees. In 1997, the Co-op Food Retail Stores in the United Kingdom was one of a dwindling group of cooperatives (the number of cooperatives had fallen by 90 percent from 1960 to 1996). It was suffering from declining sales and low staff morale. As a result, the company decided to emphasize its benefits (convenience, honesty, and a decent way to run a business) in its campaign: "Business with the values of today's family." The campaign's objectives were not only to increase sales but also to reduce employee turnover. Employee surveys showed improvement, with comments such as "It [the campaign] makes you feel a bit more proud to work for them." The employee turnover fell by about a quarter. The campaign won an IPA Advertising Effectiveness Award (Broadbent 2000).[2]

Finally, advertisers should consider the desires and needs of the community. For example, might a campaign cause visual or noise pollution? Long ago, Ogden Nash captured one such concern when he said: "I think that I shall never see a billboard lovely as a tree—indeed, unless the billboards fall I'll never see a tree at all."

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2 The IPA awards in the United Kingdom are based on quantitative assessments of the effectiveness of advertising campaigns. For more details see the Glossary. I refer frequently to the IPA awards because they are outstanding with respect to the quantitative analyses that award-winning agencies have taken to assess the effectiveness of their campaigns and to rule out alternative explanations.

Explicit, challenging, and achievable objectives

An advertising campaign should be centered on explicit written objectives. They should be challenging but achievable.

It is often difficult to state appropriate objectives—and to agree upon them. It is worth making the effort. Experiments show that well-specified objectives increase motivation and improve performance. Support for this conclusion comes from a review of studies on over 100 different tasks involving lab and field experiments and more than 40,000 participants in eight countries (Locke and Latham 2002).

Measurable objectives

> *Having lost sight of our objectives, we redoubled our efforts.*
> *Walt Kelly, cartoonist*

Measurable objectives enable advertisers to assess the success of a campaign. "Measurable" means that progress should be assessed in quantitative terms that specify the period over which they will be achieved. For example: "This campaign is expected to produce a return of 1.3 times the advertising investment within the year following its launch."

If the objective is to increase profits, plot profit for the subject of the advertising campaign for as long a historical period as possible. Then forecast profit if the proposed advertising campaign is launched and compare it with the profit if the proposed campaign is not launched.[3]

Some advertisers seek arrangements whereby their agency shares the gains from a profitable campaign in order to bring the agency's objectives in line with the advertiser. This was done by Coca-Cola in 2009.[4]

Product

I use the word "product" in the most general sense here. It applies not only to the features of a good or service, but also to its image, price, method of distribution, support, and guarantees.

The following conditions represent the most important aspects of the product. Understanding them helps in using the advertising principles.

Comparative advantage?

Does the product offer meaningful benefits that competitors' products do not offer? If yes, advertisers can make strong arguments in their ads.

Advertising is difficult if a product has no advantage. In the 1950s, Rosser Reeves said: "Our problem is that a client comes into my office and throws two newly minted half dollars on my desk, and says 'Mine is the one on the left. You prove

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3 For advice on how to forecast, I recommend one of my favorite books, *Principles of Forecasting* (Armstrong 2001).
4 "Coke pushes pay-for-performance model," *Advertising Age*, April 27, 2009.

it is better.'" But Reeves would then show them that they had a comparative advantage.

High or low-involvement products

In the early 1900s, experts described "short-circuit" approaches for goods (i.e., when customers do not do much thinking when considering a purchase), and "long-circuit" approaches (i.e., customers think carefully about the purchase). In 1965, Herbert Krugman coined the terms "low involvement" and "high involvement" for these concepts. In a high-involvement situation, people think about an ad's claims; however, in a low-involvement situation, customers are influenced by seemingly irrelevant considerations because they are paying little attention. These are important concepts for practitioners and researchers.[5]

People are easily led astray when they are not involved. Consider these questions. You might try your hand at answering them. Are you feeling involved?

1. A bat and a ball cost $1.10 in total. The bat costs a dollar more than the ball. How much does the ball cost?
2. If it takes five machines five minutes to make five widgets, how long would it take 100 machines to make 100 widgets?
3. In a lake, there is a patch of lily pads. Every day, the patch doubles in size. If it takes 48 days for the patch to cover the entire lake, how long will it take for the patch to cover half of the lake?

When these questions were presented to 3,235 students at universities (e.g., at MIT, Princeton, Harvard, and Carnegie Mellon) with no time limit on responding, only 17 percent were able to correctly answer all three, while 32 percent missed all three (Frederick 2005).

If people are involved enough to think carefully about their answers, and to check them, they are quite likely to answer correctly. However, if they are impatient and answer quickly, they are likely to make mistakes. If you answered them quickly, you could see how easy it is to be misled.

Involvement is not the only factor, of course. There are also substantial differences among people. So, for example, in the study by Frederick, almost half of MIT students answered all three questions correctly versus only about 5 percent at Michigan State University.[6]

It is not entirely correct to describe a product as high or low-involvement because the terms relate not only to the nature of the product, but also to the involvement of the customers who are considering the product being advertised. Customers put more effort into the evaluation of some products than others. They are more involved when products are expensive, (e.g., automobiles), or might lead to personal risks (e.g., surgery), or may affect how the consumer is viewed by the consumer's peer group (e.g., clothing). In addition, customers' prior attitudes,

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5   Much research has been conducted on the effects of involvement on consumer behavior as formulated by Petty and Cacioppo (1984) in their Elaboration Likelihood Method (ELM).
6   Incidentally, the ball costs 5 cents, the machines will produce the widgets in five minutes, and the lake will be half covered in 47 days.

knowledge, interests, or needs—as well as the nature of the product itself—can affect involvement. Finally, they are more involved when they are considering the purchase of such products. For simplicity, I will focus on the nature of the product.

Identifying a product as high or low-involvement could be critical to the design of an advertising campaign.

Utilitarian or hedonic products

Some products are purchased primarily to solve problems. These are referred to as "utilitarian products." Examples include glue, maps, soap, can openers, trucks, and drills. In contrast, some are purchased primarily for enjoyment. They are typically referred to as "hedonic" products. Examples are art, perfume, chocolate, and vodka.

Distinctions between utilitarian and hedonic products can be difficult to make, as few products are at either extreme. However, some studies have found that products can be reliably classified using this scheme. For example, good inter-rater reliability was found in a study involving 34 experts who rated 43 products as to hedonic versus utilitarian (Kennedy and Sharp 1997). In addition, employees at Research Systems Research Corporation independently rated 891 television commercials as to whether the products were utilitarian or hedonic; using the criterion that four of five coders must agree, 94 percent of the ads were coded consistently (Laskey, Day, and Crask 1989). Finally, high agreement was found among ten judges when coding Dutch consumer magazine ads for 643 utilitarian and 720 hedonic products (Pieters and Wedel 2004).

Whether a product is hedonic or utilitarian can be important to how the product is advertised. For example, in 2003, Song Airlines, a subsidiary of Delta Airlines, ignored the fact that their new airline was a utilitarian service and instead treated it as hedonic in their advertising. They introduced their airline in 2003 using emotion as opposed to describing relevant features and benefits. Song lost money and ceased to exist in 2006.

Pro-social versus commercial products

Pro-social products are those that appeal to altruism; for example, "Please help to reduce hunger in Africa," or "Let's work together to save the planet." The advertiser is seen as trying to help others rather than seeking personal gain. As a consequence, people are inclined to trust the ad's claims. In contrast, a for-profit ad is obviously self-serving so people tend to be wary.

Search, experience, or credence products

Products can be classified by how consumers learn about them:

- *Search products* are those whose features can be checked prior to purchase, e.g., "This car has four doors."
- *Experience products* are those that can be accurately evaluated only after the product has been used (e.g., the Bose Wave radio.) Of course, people might also

check with friends to learn about their experiences, or even better, check with *Consumer Reports* or various Internet sites.

• *Credence products* are those that cannot be evaluated accurately even after the product has been used because of the consumer's lack of technical expertise or because the cost of checking the truth of a product's claim is higher than the value of the information. For example, typical customers are not able to determine whether "Intel Inside" improves their experience with a computer.

Target market

Woman is the buyer of everything.
N. C. Fowler, 1904

Advertisements should focus on benefits relevant to the product's target market. While advertisers discussed this concept in the late 1800s, it was not widely used until after the 1950s when, due to improved technology, firms were better able to target specific groups with their messages (Goodrum and Dalrymple 1990). For example, magazine, and especially Internet, advertisers can now tailor their advertising to different segments of customers.

When a given product can be sold in many distinct target markets, each market might require a different campaign. Advertisers occasionally overlook this.

Many characteristics of customers can influence thinking about how to best influence them. For example, is the target market intelligent? Able to purchase? A business agent or final consumer? Old enough to make decisions? A current customer? Able to see and hear easily? Experts can often provide reasonable judgments of these questions. Target market surveys can supplement these judgments.

What does the target market currently know and believe about the brand and product category? Find out what customers need to know about your product prior to taking action. This involves asking questions such as: What benefits are they seeking? Do they know how to purchase the product?

Some of the more important considerations regarding target markets are as follows.

What interest groups are relevant?

Ads can be targeted not only to customers, but also to the community, employees, investors, suppliers, retailers, or employees. The Avis "We try harder"™ campaign was aimed at both its employees and customers. A copywriter for DDB, the ad agency for Avis, rented an Avis car and found the ashtray full of cigarette butts. His next copy was: "I write Avis ads for a living. But that doesn't make me a paid liar. If I am going to continue writing these ads, Avis had better live up to them. Or they can get themselves a new boy." They ran the ad for the general public, but it also helped raise standards among the employees.

In some cases, you may want to target purchasers who are not the end users. For example, an ad for children's toys might target parents, and an ad for chocolates might target suitors.

Sometimes it pays to target those who can influence others. A World War I recruitment ad in England showed a picture of women looking out a window, with the headline "Women of Britain say – GO!"

When trying to discourage certain types of behavior, it might be better to aim the campaign at influencing people to censure the actions of others. For example, ad campaigns in schools that offered students money for turning in their guns had no effect because it reinforced the idea that defiance of authorities was cool. However, a campaign with cash rewards to those who reported students carrying guns proved quite popular because most students did not regard gun carriers as cool (Kahan 1999).

This approach has been used in anti-smoking campaigns. Advertisements are aimed at people who object to smoking, encouraging them to express their disapproval when they see people smoking indoors. For example, a restaurant put up a sign that said, "No smoking. Enforced by customers."

Is the product (or brand) new to the market?

Is the product an improvement of an existing product, or is it something the consumers have never seen? This aspect, "newness," is important when developing an advertising campaign. The advertising campaign should typically change over the life cycle of the product. Customers need information when products are new; emotional appeals become relatively more effective when products are well known.

Is the message consistent with the attitudes and behavior of the target market?

The task of advertising is easier when it reinforces current consumer attitudes and behavior, or provides an obvious way for customers to meet their needs. Effectively, the advertisement should say, "Here's how to get what you want." If it calls for a change in attitudes, the advertising task becomes more demanding.

The client will be able to provide much of the information needed to specify the conditions relevant to advertising the product. To aid in this process, you can use non-directive interviewing with your client. The glossary provides guidelines for non-directive interviewing.

Exhibit B summarizes some key areas of conditions.

Exhibit B   Key areas of conditions

Objectives	**Product**	**Target market**
– Relevant	– Comparative advantage?	– What interest groups?
– Comprehensive	– High or low-involvement?	– Familiar with product?
– Explicit and challenging	– Utilitarian or hedonic?	– Consistent with attitudes?
– Measurable?	– Pro-social?	
	– Search, experience, or credence?	

The principles

advertising needs principles ... not opinions.
Rosser Reeves, famous advertiser, 1961

The development of principles is a long-held tradition in advertising. Many great advertisers have shared their wisdom in this way. In 1871, George P. Rowell, the founder of *Printer's Ink*, described his "Principles of Advertising," including such advice as "Honesty is by all odds the very strongest point ... in an advertisement." N. C. Fowler followed with three books on advertising principles; the last one, *Fowler's Publicity* (1897), contained over 1,000 pages. While Fowler based his principles on common sense alone, some have endured, such as the value of simplicity, the importance of truth, the need for good taste, and the use of free samples.

The 194 principles in this book are organized to help advertisers design persuasive campaigns. They start with strategy-related considerations: information, influence, emotion, and mere exposure. General tactical principles follow: reducing resistance, gaining acceptance, crafting the message, and attracting attention. The book then deals with principles that are specific to various media. These include still media (e.g., magazines, newspapers, and the Internet), and motion and sound media (e.g., TV, radio, and the Internet). Exhibit C shows the organization of the principles in this book.

Exhibit C Categories of persuasion principles

Strategy	General tactics	Media-specific tactics
1. Information	5. Resistance	9. Still media
2. Influence	6. Acceptance	10. Motion media
3. Emotion	7. Message	
4. Mere exposure	8. Attention	

The principles under each of the three major categories (Strategy, General tactics, and Media-specific tactics) are presented in an order that reflects a natural progression in the design process. They begin with the more general issues and move to the more specific.

While *Persuasive Advertising* is designed to be read from cover to cover, it also serves as a reference. To aid in using the book, each of the ten sections summarized in Exhibit C ends with a checklist of principles. Key concepts are listed in the Subject index to help you find principles relevant to a specific problem. Similarly, a Names index might help you to track down studies or sayings. The Glossary provides explanations of key terms used in the book. Finally, you will find a "persuasion principles map" on the last page (page 388).

Strategy

The "Strategy" section is organized into four areas:

Information is widely used in advertising. Consider an ad for a car: "This car has 8 cylinders and goes 200 miles per hour."

Influence presents information in a way that motivates customers. For example, an ad using a scarcity principle might read: "This car is a limited edition—only 300 will be made."

Emotion comes into play in the process of convincing customers who already have sufficient product information to make a purchase. "Feel the thrill of speed in this sports roadster."

Mere exposure is applicable when an ad provides no information or emotion—only the product, brand name, or logo. "This concert was sponsored by Honda."

These basic strategies are not mutually exclusive. All four might be incorporated into a campaign.

1. Information

Most ads include two or more pieces of information and only 16 percent include none. These findings were based on evidence from 60 published empirical studies conducted over 19 years across countries, products, and media (Abernethy and Franke 1996):

Number of pieces of information in ads in all media	Percentage of ads
None	*16*
One or more	84
Two or more	58
Three or more	33

The information in advertisements mostly relates to the product itself, especially its performance and features. Information on price and how to get the product are also commonly provided (Abernethy and Franke 1996):

Type of information	% of ads	Type of information	% of ads
Product		**Price**	
Performance	43	Price	25
Components	33	Special offers	13
Quality	19	**Distribution**	
Warranties	6	Availability	37
Package	6	**Research**	
Taste	4	Independent	2
Safety	3	Company	2
Nutrition	3		

Customers should be provided with relevant information. In a survey of subscribers to the *Harvard Business Review*, 87 percent of the respondents agreed that "advertising should include adequate information for 'logical' buying decisions, whether or not the consumers choose to use it" (Greyser and Diamond 1974).

Most customers appreciate ads that provide information and are irritated by those that do not, according to a survey of 400 shoppers (Pasadeos 1990).

TV commercials that scored above the median ratings of "informativeness" had 15 percent better recall and 25 percent higher persuasion rates than those that scored below the median (Walker 2008).

Customers are more likely to be persuaded when they have all relevant information. A meta-analysis on the completeness of arguments found 29 comparative experiments: Complete arguments were more persuasive in 79 percent of them (O'Keefe 1998).

The information principles are organized under the following five headings:

1.1. Benefits

People don't buy products, they buy an expectation of benefits.
Old adage

Customers are most likely to buy when the benefits of doing so are clear. Such benefits come in many shapes and forms, both rational and emotional. Consider this ad for a fictitious product: "Gain the following benefits—exercise, enjoyment of the outdoors, improvement in your environment, savings, safety, and the approval of your neighbors. I speak, of course, of the Armstrong Manual Lawn Mower."

The principles on benefits have a long history, as Antin (1993) illustrated using this example:

> In 1914, when Pyrone advertised its fire extinguisher, they went beyond the brass and nickel-plated casing, beyond the easy-pump action. They did not propose that people buy the extinguisher for its physical or mechanical features. They said that Pyrone saved lives. The benefits were peace of mind, and safety for their families.

In the mid-1990s, the *Wall Street Journal* ran an ad that was typical of computer ads at that time: "Take our operating systems. Our version of the UNIX* operating system, DEC OSF/1,* unifies many UNIX versions, like System V, Berkeley, and others, so you can run more applications … etc. …" The ad listed features, and made no attempt to translate them into benefits. The company whose product was being advertised, Digital Equipment Corporation, no longer exists.

1.1.1. Describe specific, meaningful benefits

Every year people buy millions of quarter-inch drill bits—not because they
want quarter-inch drill bits, but because they want quarter-inch holes.
Old adage

Describe specific meaningful benefits early in the ad, especially if the benefits of the product are not already known to people in the target market. This helps people to quickly see whether the ad is relevant to them.

Benefits are not always easy to communicate. For example, how would you advertise the benefits of first-class travel on an airline? Bill Bernbach did it for American Airlines by using a full-page print ad with this headline: "Why generals always had a tent of their own." The ad went on to say, "The privacy, the roominess, the comfort, and the overall atmosphere ease the burden of travel for men under pressure."

Advertisements that call attention to product features can be persuasive when those features are obviously related to benefits. This is especially true when those features are unique.

If the benefits are not immediately obvious from a product's features, the ad should explain the linkage. Bernbach's Volkswagen Beetle ads showed how features relate to benefits in their ad with the headline, "In 1949 we sold 2 Volkswagens in the U.S.A." The copy stated:

> What a kidding the drivers of those two Volkswagens must have taken. But they had something to sustain them. ...An engine in the rear that carried them (and their stranded neighbors) up icy hills. An air-cooled engine that never boiled over or froze ...

In 1972, Procter & Gamble (P&G) was preparing to launch its Dawn liquid dish-washing detergent. Its management debated whether to advertise Dawn's "superior cleaning ability" or a specific benefit, its "grease cutting action." "Grease cutting action" won the debate, and the campaign seemed to go well.

McNeil Nutritionals focused advertising for its Splenda no-calorie sweetener on the product's use of sugar because the taste benefit of sugar is well established. Its advertising strategy—"Made from sugar so it tastes like sugar"—was so successful over the 2003–05 period that competitors filed at least five lawsuits to ban the company from saying that Splenda is made from sugar. As of July 2009, the Splenda tagline said: "It starts with sugar. It tastes like sugar. But its not sugar."

Some ads do not follow this principle. For example, a March 2006 Delta Airlines ad had this mysterious headline, "Buy a bigger memory card." An ad for a laxative warned: "In today's environment, even man could become an endangered species" (Antin 1993, p. 31).

In the 1900s, of the ads in the top ten U.S. magazines, 61 percent mentioned benefits (Pollay 1985). Almost 70 percent of TV commercials mentioned benefits in the early1980s (Stewart and Furse 1986).

While ads often mention benefits, many of them fail to make the benefits specific. Sandeep Patnaik and I analyzed the 480 full-page print ads provided in the *Which Ad Pulled Best* (*WAPB*) series of books (see Burton and Purvis in the References). While 70 percent mentioned meaningful benefits, only 44 percent of these mentioned specific benefits. Thus, only 31 percent of all the ads mentioned specific meaningful benefits.

Evidence on the value of advertising specific meaningful benefits

Here is our first report on the WAPB "quasi-field-experiment data:"[1]

> **Print ads mentioning benefits produced better recall, especially when the benefits were specific.** Our *WAPB* analysis found 42 pairs of print ads in which one ad included benefits, while the other did not. For example, a Visa ad that offered specific benefits, such as global acceptance of the card and a refund

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[1] Remember that you can find some information on the *WAPB* procedures in the Glossary and even more in Appendix B.

in case of loss, elicited better recall than a Visa ad that showed an attractive photograph of a beach. The "benefits ads" had recall that was 1.21 times better than the other ads.

In the 54 cases in which both ads in a pair mentioned benefits, the ads that included more specific benefit claims also had 1.22 times better recall than the other ads. Thus, ads with specific benefits had recall that was half-again better than ads that did not mention benefits.

Sellers can add persuasiveness by advertising a benefit that has not been claimed by any other brand, as this next principle describes.

1.1.2. Communicate a unique selling proposition (USP)

Claude Hopkins was preparing a campaign for Schlitz beer in the early 1900s. When he toured the Schlitz plant, he nodded politely when the manager told him about the wonders of the malts and hops. But he became excited when he saw that the empty bottles were being sterilized with steam. When the manager told him that every brewery uses this process, Hopkins replied that what they did mattered less than what they advertised. He then wrote a classic campaign that said, "Our bottles are washed with live steam!"

The unique selling proposition (USP) is a short statement of a key benefit that no other competing product has claimed or articulated well. The benefit could relate to the product, price, or distribution. It should be a meaningful benefit that customers had not previously considered seriously—or a feature that is obviously related to a benefit.

Try to think of a brand that has no comparative advantages for consumers, either real or imagined. Most people find this to be difficult. In 1921, an economist, Frank Knight, said that nearly every manufacturer "has a monopoly on some features of its product." Thus, it should be possible for advertisers to find a USP for nearly all brands.

Following in the footsteps of Hopkins and Knight, Rosser Reeves coined the term USP in 1960. He believed that all campaigns should have a USP, and he built his agency's advertising campaigns around them.

A non-exclusive USP could open the way for a competitive brand to use comparative advertising. Thus, it is more effective if the USP can be tied to a real comparative advantage that is not found in any other brand.

Some companies have changed their product to be able to claim a USP. For example, Revlon's advertising agency suggested that it add silicon to a hand lotion because no other product contained silicone. Revlon also changed the name to Silicare.

If the USP is stated in terms of benefits rather than features, it is likely to have a longer life span. When Ted Bates was asked to work on the Colgate toothpaste account around 1950, its tagline was: "Ribbon dental cream—it comes out like a ribbon and lays flat on your brush." This statement contained a feature that had become commonplace as pastes replaced tooth powders. Bates replaced the feature with benefits in "Cleans your breath while it cleans your teeth."

Here is a well-done application: Solvite, a U.K. company that makes wallpaper adhesives, decided to use sticking power as its USP. Although other brands were equally sticky, none had used it as a selling point. In one TV commercial, Solvite

used the wallpaper paste to stick a pair of overalls on a panel of plywood. The next day the company put a man into the overalls; a helicopter then picked up the panel (and the man) and flew over Miami to show "the sticking power of Solvite." The campaign, which reportedly had an incredible return on investment, received an IPA Advertising Effectiveness Award (Broadbent 2000).

And another good example: In 1997, the Bartle Bogle Hegarty agency took the 200-year-old Boddingtons beer of Manchester, England and created the highly successful "The cream of Manchester" campaign. While other northern England beers were also creamy, they had not considered advertising this (Berger 2001).

USPs are widely used in advertising. For example, our analysis of *WAPB* found that of the 480 full-page print ads, 56 percent claimed a USP.

Evidence on the effects of USPs

Our analysis of quasi-experimental data supports the use of a USP:

> **Print ads with a USP resulted in better recall.** Our *WAPB* analysis found 18 pairs of print ads in which one ad described a USP while the other ad did not. For example, an American Express card that offered "Global Assist—a new emergency referral service for the exclusive use of American Express card members" had much better recall than another AMEX card ad that did not describe a USP. Recall for ads with USPs was 1.43 times better than for the other ads.

Our analysis of quasi-experimental data on print ads also supports the value of using a USP that could not be claimed by other brands:

> **Print ads with a real USP resulted in better recall than only a "common" USP.** Our *WAPB* analysis found 27 pairs of print ads in which one ad described an actual USP while the other ad claimed a USP that could also have been claimed by other products. An ad for Norland Bone Desensitometer that said "Unique design of the scanner allows scans anywhere on the surface of the table, and at any angle. Your patient does not move, the scanner arm does .... No other system offers this feature" had a recall thrice that for another Norland ad that based its USP on "an uncommon concern for quality." On average, recall for ads with USPs was 1.43 times better than for the ads using a common USP. Thus, the use of a real USP had about twice the recall of ads that did not mention a USP.

Indirect evidence was obtained from 101 Korean undergraduate students in a lab experiment on the related topic of "brand differentiation." They viewed ten Korean TV commercials with a brand-differentiating message and ten without such a message. Purchase intentions were substantially higher for the former (Taylor, Wilson and Miracle 1994).

Analyses of non-experimental data on TV commercials support this principle indirectly. Stanton and Burke (1998) found that the second most important element in persuasion was a "brand-differentiating message." TV commercials with "brand-differentiating messages" scored much better on recall and persuasion (Stewart and Furse 1986; Stewart and Koslow 1989). Finally, commercials coded as —"completely different from what other brands say"— scored 16 percent better on recall and 17 percent higher on persuasion (Walker 2008).

1.2. News

News provides one of the best ways to persuade. Some advertisers believe this to the extent that they claim news even when there is none.

Does it help to proclaim news when there is no real news? While ads touting news are more likely to attract attention, I have found no evidence that they are persuasive if the news is not real.

1.2.1. Provide news, but only if it is real

There are many opportunities to provide real news—new or improved products, price reductions, greater ease of purchase, or faster service to name a few. News is especially persuasive when it relates to benefits that customers perceive to be important. Ads claiming news when there is no real news might annoy customers, especially when they are advertising high-involvement products.

Many ads claim to have news. For example, almost half of TV commercials by leading firms announce news (Walker 2008; Stewart and Furse 1986)

However, advertisers often claim news when there is no real substantive news. Our *WAPB* analysis found that while 28 percent of the 480 full-page print ads claimed to have news, only 59 percent of these contained real news. Real news, then, appeared in only 16 percent of all the ads.

When you have news, put it early in an ad. For example, start with words like, "Introducing," "Announcing," "New," or "Finally." This is common practice. For example, our *WAPB* analysis found that of the full-page magazine ads with real news, 85 percent put the news in the headline.

Evidence on the value of real news

In experiments conducted between 1982 and 1988, some households received TV commercials relating to new products, while matched households watching the same programs saw commercials relating to existing products. The amount of money spent on advertising was then increased in some geographical areas and reduced in others. When did it help to spend more on advertising? The results showed that commercials that provided information about new products were more effective than those for existing products; the average advertising elasticity was 0.26 for 52 new products versus only 0.05 for 89 established ones (Lodish et al. 1995b).[2] The commercials for existing products were also more effective if they provided news (e.g., a new feature or a new package).

In a related study on snack foods, when advertising expenditures were increased, sales increased in response to seven of the eight TV commercials that described a new brand (or brand extension), but only in response to six of the 15 commercials without news (Riskey 1997).

Our analysis of quasi-experimental data on print ads showed that real news had

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2   As noted in the Glossary, the advertising elasticity shows the percentage change in unit sales brought about by a 1 percent change in advertising expenditures. This means that a 10 percent increase in advertising expenditures for new products yielded a 2.6 percent increase in unit sales, which is more than five times the 0.5 percent increase for established products.

better recall. These data refer mostly to minor news items, and there were no new products in the sample:

> **Print ads with real news resulted in better recall.** Our *WAPB* analysis found 20 pairs of print ads in which one ad provided real news while the other ad did not mention news. For example, a Dodge ad that said "Something new has been added to the 1985 Colt," and described the new design, introduction of an electronic dashboard, turbo, and so on, was recalled four times more than another Dodge ad that did not announce news. Recall for ads with real news was 1.64 times better than for the other ads.

The effect also showed up in non-experimental data. TV commercials that "told {customers} something new" were 9 percent better for recall and 23 percent higher for persuasion (Walker 2008). A "new product or feature" was the one of the most important of roughly 160 factors related to the effectiveness of TV commercials (Stewart and Furse 1986; Stewart and Koslow 1989; Stanton and Burke 1998).

1.2.2. If real news is complex, use still media

If the news is real and complex, use print or the Internet to advertise it. This allows people to set their own pace. They can pause to reflect or go back at any time to check details.

Still media lead to better comprehension than motion media (TV, radio, or streaming media on the Internet) for messages containing new or complex information.

Ads using multimedia must be carefully constructed because it can be difficult for people to comprehend sound and visuals at the same time. Multimedia is risky for complex messages.

Evidence on the effects of using still media for real news

I found only indirect evidence that goes beyond news, but which applies to any message with new information. Identical information was transmitted via different media in 14 lab experiments. In each experiment, print messages were better recalled than audio-visual or audio-only messages. Some of these experiments involved advertising messages (Furnham, Gunter, and Green 1990).

1.3. Product

The product. Always stay with the product.
Bill Bernbach, 1960s

When Bill Bernbach was seeking the American Airlines account, he displayed ads from competing airlines on the wall of the meeting room—with the brand names and logos covered. The ads provided no distinguishing information about any single airline. In contrast, Bernbach developed campaigns that were identified closely with the product. For example, it would be difficult to confuse his VW ads with those by other car companies.

The product information principles described below are relevant for nearly all products and services. However, they are especially relevant for high-involvement products. The product-information principles are also important when the objective of a campaign is to alter behavior, as opposed to simply maintaining it.

1.3.1. Provide product information that customers need

> *The more informative your advertising, the more persuasive it will be.*
> *David Ogilvy, 1960s*

One of the primary functions of advertising is to provide the information that people need in order to make a decision. In deciding what information to include in a campaign, advertisers and their agencies should obtain extensive information about the product. This should include previously published material, such as brochures, past ads, annual reports, product specifications, illustrations, catalogues, technical papers, articles, complaints, letters from users, and market research reports. It might also include information related to buying and using the product. When David Ogilvy obtained the Rolls-Royce account, and wanted to "know" the product, he bought a Rolls-Royce.

Manufacturers and retailers are good sources of relevant information, as are market research procedures that seek information about consumers. You could also study the buying process in stores to see which factors encourage transactions and which inhibit them.

Advertisers trying to communicate a substantial amount of information about a product should use still media. This is especially so when the information is complex. Television and radio advertising cannot provide as much information as print and the Internet.

Arriva, a private bus line in the United Kingdom, showed that a purely informational campaign—printed bus routes and timetables—increased bus usage by 11 percent in a field experiment representing about half of their routes, compared with usage in areas for which they did not use the campaign. The campaign won an IPA award for demonstrated effectiveness (Binet 2006).

Evidence on the value of providing information that customers need

Our analysis of quasi-experimental data supports this principle:

Print ads with product information had better recall. Our *WAPB* analysis found 37 pairs of print ads in which one ad provided information about the product, while the other did not. For example, an ad for Panasonic cordless telephones that detailed six important features of the phone, such as Secure Guard for protection from eavesdropping and up to 21-day battery charge, had much better recall than a Sony ad that did not contain any product information. Recall for informative ads was 1.34 times better than for the other ads.

1.3.2. Provide choices

Happiness is related to economic freedom and to the ability to choose (e.g., as shown in the cross-national study of 46 nations by Veenhoven 2000). However, in recent years there has been much discussion on whether people might now have too much choice. Some studies suggested that when people are faced with many choices, they make poorer choices and are less satisfied. This has been referred to as the paradox of choice.

In general, there is no paradox of choice. A meta-analysis of 49 published and unpublished studies on the "too much choice" effect found that across all studies there was no effect from the number of choices available (Scheibehenne, Greifeneder, and Todd 2010). As you will see below, however, the number of choices does matter—it all depends on the conditions.

If an ad makes an offer containing no choices, the customer's energy goes into deciding whether or not to purchase. This could lead them to think of arguments against buying. By offering choices, the advertiser could change the customer's task from "should I purchase?" to "which item should I purchase?"

Here is an example of the effect of changing the viewpoint from "whether" to "which one." Williams-Sonoma offered only one bread-maker and priced it at $275. The company then added a larger model which cost 50 percent more. While few of the larger models sold, sales of the less-expensive unit nearly doubled (Simonson and Tversky 1992).

Customers nearly always appreciate a large number of options when they relate to easy choices, by which I mean uni-dimensional (alignable) choices—those that a customer can order on a single dimension. For example, when buying shirts, it is good to have many sizes to choose from. It is obvious also that customers want to have these choices organized (e.g., by sizes). So subject to cost considerations, sellers should provide many uni-dimensional options to their customers.

Evidence on the value of providing choices in ads

In an experiment involving chocolate, consumer satisfaction was lower when a chocolate was picked for a person than when they could make their own choice (Iyengar and Lepper 2000).

Subjects were asked about their intentions to purchase microwave ovens. Of those subjects offered a single oven, 53 percent said they would purchase it. Of those given a choice of five ovens of different sizes, the intentions to purchase increased to 73 percent (Gourville and Soman 2005).

Because people like having choices, retailers that provide many choices attract more customers. Eight lab experiments support this conclusion (Scheibehenne, Greifeneder, and Todd 2009).

1.3.3. When there are many substantive multi-dimensional options, organize them and provide guidance

When there are many multi-dimensional choices with clear benefits for customers, the key is to *guide customers* in a way that makes the task look simple—and *be* simple.

From the sellers' viewpoint, it is nearly always cheaper to restrict the number of

options. This saves with respect to manufacturing, inventory, and marketing costs. From the customers' viewpoint, it is good to restrict options to those that differ in substantive ways. For example, I have shopped for shampoos for many years and have never graduated beyond the uninformed status. Perhaps it is due to the bewildering array of superficial features. P&G is alleged to have recognized this issue, and reduced its Head & Shoulders shampoo choices from 26 to 15; in doing so, it increased sales by 10 percent. In addition, I expect that P&G reduced costs.

Informed customers tend to cope well when faced with multi-dimensional choices. For example, wine connoisseurs enjoy shops that have many varieties. However, this can be confusing for uninformed (e.g., new) customers. As a result, multi-dimensional choices lead uninformed customers to become uncertain and they might defer making a selection. In many cases, of course, it is rational for customers to defer a choice until they can obtain more information, especially for high-involvement choices.

To guide customers, put the choices into informative categories, each of which contains up to, say, ten options. This will be appreciated especially by uninformed customers. It simplifies the problem, as they need only to chose a category and, within that, to make a choice. By using informative categories, you will be helping to educate customers and to move them into the informed category. This approach can be used in print, point-of-purchase, and Internet advertising.

It is difficult to say what is the optimum number of options per category. Perhaps Miller's (1956) speculation about the magic number seven, plus or minus two, is relevant here (also see Baddeley 1994). He presented findings from various areas of research related to people's ability to remember items—along with such associations as the seven wonders of the world, seven days of the week, seven primary colors, seven notes of the musical scale, and so on. However, the optimum number of choices would vary according to individual capabilities, ability to purchase, time allowed for the decision, expertise, and involvement.

Another way to guide the consumer is to include choices that are easy to compare and to show that one of the choices clearly dominates. The consumer is then more likely to select the choice that is easy to compare with an alternative. This is sometimes done by inserting a decoy. In other words, to guide people in making a difficult choice between brands A and B, insert a choice, C, that is similar to but obviously inferior to choice A. After seeing the superiority of A to C, people will focus on A rather than B.

Still another way is to organize the information about the features. Most people make choices by focusing on a single variable. For example, when deciding which political candidate to vote for, people may focus on a candidate's position on taxes. Advertisers can focus on a single feature when it is the most important consideration for a large part of the market. They could still provide information on other features, of course, but give them less attention. This strategy is most effective when the de-emphasized features are less important for the customers and when they tend to be correlated with the features that are emphasized.

Finally, websites can be designed so that customers can specify the features that they are looking for and then receive a list of the products that match their specifications. This makes it easy to narrow a large number of choices to a manageable set.

Evidence on making choices from many multi-dimensional options

Shoppers in an upscale grocery store in California were offered taste tests of jam. In some cases this was done when they passed a table offering 24 flavors, while in other cases there were only six flavors. Of those passing the 24-flavor table, 60 percent stopped for a sample versus only 40 percent at the six-flavor table. This is consistent with previous research that people report a preference for variety. However, at the table with many choices, fewer than 3 percent made a purchase. In contrast, 30 percent of those visiting the six-flavor table made a purchase. Thus, the limited-choice table sold nearly seven times more jam (Iyengar and Lepper 2000). Interestingly, however, an attempt to replicate the "jam study" did not hold up (Scheibehenne, Greifeneder and Todd 2010).

A number of other studies provided findings similar to the jam study. In one, employee participation in pension plans was found to be higher when the number of options was smaller. For example, when two funds were offered, 75 percent participated; however, when 59 funds were offered, only 60 percent participated (Iyengar, Huberman, and Jiang 2004). This study assumes that people are better off by participating and that there is no benefit in deferring a choice.

In the previously-mentioned lab experiment by Gourville and Soman (2005), when subjects were presented with a single oven, 53 percent said they would purchase it. When given a choice of five ovens that varied on different dimensions, such as power, on-line help, and warranty, the intentions to purchase fell to 40 percent.

Evidence on the importance of categories is provided by the following experiments. While the context is retail shopping, we might generalize to organizing choices in print ads, point-of-purchase ads, and Internet ads:

Poorly informed customers were more satisfied when the products were put into categories. Mogilner, Rudnick, and Iyengar (2008) conducted surveys of shoppers in the magazine aisles in ten branches of a supermarket chain store. The stores differed in the number of magazine options and in the categories used to display these options. Irrespective of the number of magazine options, when there were more categories, customers thought there was more variety and they were more satisfied with their choices.

Then, in a lab experiment, participants were asked to select from among an assortment where the number (144) and placement of magazines remained constant. But the number of categories differed:
1) three categories ("Men's," "Women's," and "General interest") of 48 magazines each
2) 18 categories (e.g., amongst the men's magazines, there were categories such as "Auto," "Hunting and fishing," and "Sports"). Thus, there were eight items in each category.

The categories had no effect on the satisfaction of *informed* shoppers, who presumably had no trouble finding what they were looking for. However, the uninformed shoppers thought there was more variety and they were more satisfied with their choices when there were more categories.

The researchers followed this with a field study in which café customers

ordered coffee. The customers were randomly assigned—depending on what table they were sitting at—to one of four treatments. Each customer was offered the same 50 coffee flavors, always presented in the same order. The control group received no guidance, just a list of the 50 flavors. Customers in the three experimental groups were presented with menus with the coffee flavors grouped into ten categories of five flavors each. The experimental groups were given one of the following three kinds of categories:

1) descriptive categories (e.g., "dark roast," "mild," "sweet")
2) uninformative categories using fictitious names of coffee shops (e.g., "The Living Room")
3) obviously uninformative categories ("Category A", "Category B").

Satisfaction was assessed after the people drank the coffee (unbeknown to the participants, the same coffee was used in all cases). People who knew little about coffee were more satisfied with their choices when the options were categorized than when there were no categories. Surprisingly, these gains in satisfaction were almost as strong when the categories were obviously uninformative as when they were descriptive. The fact that uninformative categories were almost as useful as informative categories illustrates that they reduce *perceived* confusion for customers. The experiment provided evidence on short-term comparison; in the long term, advertisers can educate their customers about how to make rational choices, and informative categories can help in this effort.

I had suggested using about seven products per category. This is consistent with the study that I just described in which eight categories worked well. It is also consistent with Iyengar and Lepper's (2000) experiment involving chocolates, where subjects who were offered six choices of chocolates were more satisfied than those offered 30 choices, and with their jam-tasting experiment, where customers were more satisfied with six choices than with 24.

Two experiments directly addressed the issue of the optimum number of options. One offered from two to 20 choices of pens in increments of two. As the number of alternatives increased from four to ten, purchases increased from 50 percent of the customers to 80 percent; however, as the choices increased to 18, the proportion of buyers decreased to 30 percent (Shah and Wolford 2007). In another study, 120 subjects were offered gift boxes that differed in color and shape, where the number of options varied from 5 to 10 to 15 to 30. Satisfaction with the buying process and the product peaked at ten options (Reutskaja and Hogarth 2009).

The use of a decoy was examined using an ad for *The Economist*. The offer was:

1. Internet-only subscription for $59
2. print-only subscription for $125
3. print-and-Internet subscription for $125.

Customers can see that choice #3 is clearly better than choice #2, thus distracting them from the hard choices between #1 and #2. They will take the easy choice, #3. Choice #2 is the decoy. When these ads were tested among 100 subjects, 84 chose the combination, while 16 chose Internet only, and none chose print. When the decoy (#2) was not provided, only 32 percent chose the combination while

68 percent chose the Internet subscription. *The Economist* apparently found the decoy approach to be worthwhile. Similar findings were obtained for selecting a travel destination (Rome vs. Paris) or a blind date (Ariely 2008, pp. 1–6).

With respect to the number of features and to the manner in which they are presented, a simulation was conducted of choices among 21 cameras given information on six features. Good choices can be made when some features are more important than others, and where the excluded features involved few trade-offs with the included features (Fasolo, McCelland, and Todd 2007).

In Germany, in the early 2000s, approximately 12 percent of the people participated in organ donations, while in neighboring Austria, nearly 100 percent did. Why was there a difference?

1.3.4. Make the recommended choice the default choice

> *To do nothing is in everyone's power.*
> *Samuel Johnson, mid-1700s*

A default choice is one that will be used if the customer takes no action. People tend to "select" a default choice. They do not go out of their way to change the current situation. This principle is consistent with the law of inertia (the status quo bias).

Evidence on default choices

In their study on organ donations (mentioned in the lead-in to this principle), Johnson and Goldstein (2003) cited a 1993 Gallup survey showing that 85 percent of those surveyed in the United States approve of organ donations. However, approximately 45,000 people died waiting for organ transplants in the United States in 1995 partly because only 28 percent of U.S. adults agreed to be organ donors upon their deaths. In other countries, large-scale advertising campaigns have had negligible effects. For example, in the Netherlands nearly all adults received a letter in 1998 asking them to agree to be organ donors upon their death; this failed to change the consent rate. Johnson and Goldstein showed that in seven European countries in which people had to take action to opt out of the organ-donor program, over 98 percent of the people were, in effect, consenting organ donors. In four countries in which people had to take action to be an organ donor, only 15 percent agreed to donate. Johnson (2008) discusses additional research on the importance of a default option.

In a natural field experiment, Johnson et al. (1993) reported that when Pennsylvania residents were given an opportunity to save money by rejecting the right to sue on their automobile insurance, 75 percent of them retained the right to sue. On the other hand, when New Jersey residents were given an option to pay more on their auto insurance policy to gain the right to sue in automobile accidents, only 20 percent chose the right to sue.

The status quo bias is powerful.

A pizza store is considering two in-store ad campaigns. One starts with a fully loaded pizza (at a higher price) and allows the customer to save money by removing toppings. The other starts with a basic cheese pizza (at a lower price) and allows customers to add toppings at price per topping. Which campaign would produce higher sales revenue, the scale-down or the build-up?

1.3.5. Inform committed customers that they can delete features, rather than add them

Note the condition, "committed customers." If the ad is directed at people who have no prior intention to purchase, advertisers often reverse the principle. They try to draw in customers using a no-frills version at a low price, and then offer options.

Evidence on the effects of deleting versus adding features

Three lab experiments made offers of automobiles, computers, or treadmills to 529 subjects. Those subjects who were initially offered a product that included many options (with the ability to delete some) had higher intentions to purchase the options than did subjects given the stripped-down model (with an ability to add options). However, this occurred only for people who intended to make a purchase in that product category. It did not apply when the advertiser was trying to attract customers; in that case the low-price stripped-down option was more persuasive (Park, Jun, and MacInnis 2000).

Now consider the pizza problem posed above. This was tested in lab experiments in Italy and the United States. In each country, almost twice as many toppings were sold using the scale-down approach as with the build-up approach (Levin et al. 2002).

Which option would you prefer? ___ 1) $500 guaranteed or ___ 2) a 15 percent chance of winning $1,000,000 (but an 85 percent chance of receiving nothing)?

1.3.6. To reduce customer risk, use a product-satisfaction guarantee

In 1865, John Wanamaker offered cash refunds to unsatisfied customers of his department store. This innovation was so startling that many businessmen predicted an early bankruptcy for him. As it turned out, this guarantee drew so many customers that he soon had the largest department store in the country. Guarantees became so popular that Hopkins (1923) said "practically all merchandise sent by mail is subject to return [at no charge]."

This principle continues to be used widely. According to Sam Walton (1992), "The two most important words I ever wrote were on that first Wal-Mart sign, 'Satisfaction Guaranteed.'" His stores have a no-questions-asked, money-back guarantee. Nearly everything in the store can be exchanged with a receipt within 90 days of purchase. Similarly, Gore-Tex™ guarantees that, "If you are not completely satisfied with the waterproofness, windproofness, or breathability of our GORE-TEX outerwear, then we will repair it, replace it, or refund your purchase price."

Offers with product-satisfaction guarantees are especially persuasive when the customers are not knowledgeable about the product or brand.

Risk makes most people uncomfortable. Consider the choices posed in the lead-in to this principle. When students at various U.S. universities were asked which of the options they would take, approximately half chose $500. Given that the expected value of the second offer is $150,000, the desire to avoid risk is apparently very high among people (Frederick 2005).

One way to reduce risk is to include an insurance policy in the product's purchase price. This could eliminate costly litigation and lead to substantial cost savings for both the seller and the buyer. Of course, this requires the seller to calculate the expected cost of the guarantee. Rosenbluth, a travel agency, failed to do this in 2001 when it offered guarantees on its Biztravel.com website. One ad offered, "$25 for flights arriving 30 minutes late, $50 for one hour late, $100 for two hours late, or for cancelled flights, or for lost luggage—and more." While Rosenbluth did not properly calculate the costs and benefits, its customers did. This insurance policy was good for customers, but it led to huge losses for Rosenbluth. Biztravel died quickly.

Advertised guarantees can be especially useful for products that might pose dangers to users. U.S. courts often do not recognize contracts in cases that involve injury from the use of products. Instead, they rely on tort law and seek a remedy from those who can pay. This adds enormously to the costs of risk-prone products, such as ladders, football helmets, and vaccines.

Consider how an advertised guarantee would work. Assume that you fell off a ladder and broke your arm. You are told that you are entitled to the advertised guarantee amount—say $5,000. You are also told that you can reject the $5,000 and have the right to sue, which implies the need to find a lawyer to gain some unknown amount of money to be decided at some unknown future time with an unknown likelihood of winning. What would you do? According to Huber (1988), including insurance policies in the purchase price (he calls them "quasi-contracts") could produce substantial savings on lawyers' fees and court costs, leading to gains for both sellers and claimants. In the few cases where quasi-contracts have been tried, Huber found that nearly all those injured took the immediate, risk-free payoff.

Evidence on the effects of product satisfaction guarantees

In a small-scale lab experiment, mock ads for bicycles contained either a two-year or a 20-year warranty. They were randomly assigned and shown to 175 people with roughly equal numbers of experts and non-experts. Not surprisingly, the ads with the longer warranty period led to higher quality ratings for the bicycles (Blair and Innis 1996).

1.4. Price

> *The offering of a shilling, which appears to us to have plain and simple*
> *meaning, is, in reality, an argument to persuade one to do so and so.*
> *Adam Smith*

The way a price is advertised could affect a customer's likelihood of purchase,

satisfaction with the transaction, ability to make an informed decision, and enjoyment when using the product. Price advertising could also affect how competitors respond.

Advertised prices are less important for products where quality is difficult to judge, such as hedonic products (those bought for enjoyment) and products designed to show off a customer's good taste (e.g., designer labels, works of art).

Other factors, such as the difficulty of specifying the requirements of the product or service, also play a role. For example, advertising agencies seldom advertise their own prices. In 1988, a Philadelphia agency, HEC, created a lot of attention when it advertised fixed prices for various types of advertising projects (e.g., "a 30-second TV commercial for $15,320, a black-and-white print ad for $5,535, or a 10-second radio ad for $415"). This strategy had a short life.

1.4.1. State prices in terms that are meaningful and easy to understand

Approach the problem from the perspective of customers. What is the easiest way for them to understand—and remember—prices?

One way to judge the ease of remembering a price is to count the number of syllables. For example, 747 is "sev-en-hun-dred-for-ty sev-en"—eight syllables. Rounded prices are easier to remember (e.g., sev-en-fif-ty). In addition, the manner of pronunciation could help in ads with sound. Thus, $2,420 can be cut from eight to five syllables by saying "24-20," or four syllables with "2-4-2-0."

In the interest of generating good and lasting customer relationships, an ad should describe all relevant costs to customers. This is the fair way to advertise and will likely improve customer satisfaction with the purchase. The U.S. Fair Packaging and Labeling Act stated that "packages and their labels ... should facilitate value comparisons." The American Marketing Association's Code of Ethics includes a similar statement of conduct.

A consumer's cost of using a product might include the initial purchase price as well as the costs of learning about, installing, and maintaining the product.

Rational customers like to compare prices. Websites can help them by providing an organized list of product features and prices. Bestbuy.com is one of the many websites that facilitate price comparisons among different brands of a given product. For example, a consumer who is interested in buying a digital camera could list the brands by prices. In 1996, Progressive Auto Insurance, recognizing that some people will want to see comparative prices before making a decision, offered to provide competitors' price quotes. Progressive usually has the lowest rate, but not always. By openly providing this useful information, customers have developed trust in Progressive.

Given their expectations that they will save money by purchasing larger sizes, "quantity surcharges" (where the large size costs more per ounce than the small size) may lead customers to think that the seller is trying to trick them. So how often do people pay more per ounce for larger sizes of the same product? Widrick (1979) found that such "quantity surcharges" occurred for about 18 percent of the 2,117 brands in his survey of 70 grocery stores in Monroe County, New York. He also found that the percentage varied substantially by store chain; Supersaver had the highest percentage of quantity surcharges (28 percent) while IGA had the fewest

(8 percent). The variation across brands was large: Starkist, SSC International, and van Camp had quantity surcharges on more than 85 percent of their items; General Mills and Kellogg's had less than 5 percent; and General Foods, Uncle Ben's, and Purex had no surcharges.

In summary, ads should present prices in ways that are easy for customers to understand. Customers faced with making many decisions are often confused about prices. This is especially relevant for point-of-purchase and Internet ads. Customers with less education are especially likely to be confused. Price clarity might improve long-term relationships.

Evidence on the effects of meaningful information on prices

Does it help the advertiser to provide information about competitors' prices? An experiment mirrored the Progressive strategy for an online book retailer by showing book prices of six competitors. When the competitors' prices were displayed, the subjects rated the seller as more trustworthy and they selected more of its products. The strategy was especially useful when the price comparisons were mixed: that is, when prices were lower on some items and higher on others (Trifts and Haubl 2003).

Simple prices are more memorable. A study using candy, DVDs, and digital cameras, found that each extra syllable in the pronunciation of a price decreased the chances of properly recalling prices by 20 percent (Vanhuele, Laurent, and Drèze 2006).

I expected that quantity surcharges would be indicative of a company's failing to think of transactions from the buyers' viewpoint. As a simple test on the long-term effects of quantity surcharges, I did a Google search for the five brands in Widrick's (1979) study that had 60 percent or more items with quantity surcharges, and found that only one of these brands existed in December 2006—a 20 percent survival rate. In contrast, of the eight brands with fewer than 10 percent of the items having surcharges, seven were still going strong—an 88 percent survival rate.

Supermarkets have addressed this problem of providing meaningful prices by posting "unit prices." A field experiment found that customers saved about 1 percent when unit-price information was readily available. This rose to 3 percent when the unit prices were put on a list that organized them from low to high (Russo 1977).

Widrick (1979) found that only 22 percent of the brands were packaged in sizes that were easy to compare because the ratio of the sizes was an integer (e.g., one box weighed twice as much as another). Otherwise things are difficult for customers— "Let's see, if this box is 1.62 times larger than the other, which has the lower unit price?" Widrick concluded that the use of non-integer size differentials was consistent with a pattern of confusing customers; the brands that used easy-to-remember integer ratios also used quantity surcharges only 5 percent of the time, versus 17 percent for those using the non-integer sizes.

Imagine that you are a retailer. You learn of a new pricing principle X that you could implement at little cost. Customers say they would prefer this change, and they believe

it to be a more honest way to do business. It would save time both for your customers and your retail clerks. It would reduce confusion. It would improve your image as a retailer and likely increase profits in the long run. Would you adopt this new pricing policy?

1.4.2. Use round prices

Round prices (sometimes called even prices) refer primarily to rounding up so as to avoid "just below" prices. This is the principle X that I referred to above.

Round prices apply when advertisers are interested in building long-term relationships with customers, and when they would like to be viewed as providing high-quality products and services. However, achieving long-term profitability might entail short-term losses.

The alternative "just below pricing" is also referred to as "odd" or "psychological pricing." Odd pricing is of particular interest when it reduces the left-most digit (e.g., $29.99 rather than $30.00).

Odd prices are associated with lower quality. Advertising experts figured this out long ago. In the late 1800s, John E. Powers avoided odd pricing for quality products when he advertised John Wanamaker's expensive men's suits.

One argument for odd pricing is that "everyone else is doing it," as was explained when I asked Bob Ramsey, my favorite gas-station owner, to try round prices.

Although round prices are the norm and they seem to be gaining over time, odd prices are still widely used. An examination of 1,415 selling prices from U.S. newspaper advertisements found that 31 percent used odd pricing (Schindler and Kirby 1997). Interestingly, odd pricing varies substantially by country. Prices ending in 9 ranged from 3 percent to 5 percent in Japan, India, and Hong Kong, to 35 percent or more in Australia, Norway, and the United States (Nguyen, Heeler, and Taran 2007).

In summary, odd prices confuse customers, especially those with less education, and they waste customers' time. They harm the brand's quality image. Finally, they might harm long-term relationships with customers.

Evidence on the effects of round prices

There is mixed evidence on the short-term effect of odd pricing on sales. Some experiments found that odd pricing increases sales in the short term. For example, in a field experiment using a catalogue of women's clothing which contained 169 items, odd and round-price versions of the catalogue were sent out, each with 30,000 copies. The odd prices produced approximately 8 percent more sales. The major explanation seemed to be that odd prices communicated "sale!" (Schindler and Kibarian 1996). Three similar field experiments with catalogue sales of approximately 200 items of women's clothing found higher sales for odd prices (Anderson and Simester 2003).

In contrast, a field experiment used four matched pairs of German drugstores. It found a 6.8 percent increase in unit sales and a 4.8 percent increase in sales volume for detergents and health care products when the stores used even prices for all brands in these product categories over a four-week period (Diller and Brielmaier 1995).

Now consider the effects on quality perceptions. Pricing data from 15 stores revealed that the prestigious stores were more likely to use round prices (Stiving 2000). For example, Neiman-Marcus used round prices on 84 percent of its items while Kmart used them on 1 percent. Another study showed that round pricing is associated with better quality perceptions for restaurants and other high-end products. Fine-dining establishments are much more likely to use round prices than are fast-food restaurants (Naipaul and Parsa 2001).

Odd prices are difficult to remember. In a lab experiment using 20 products, 145 subjects were presented with either odd prices (.99 or .98 endings that reduced the left-most digit) or even prices. Two days later, the subjects had more difficulty remembering the odd prices. Furthermore, they underestimated the odd prices (Schindler and Wiman 1989).

In a lab experiment, subjects were given a list of 20 items, 8 of which used either round prices or .99 prices, and asked them "How many [of these] items could you purchase for $73?" Subjects receiving 00-ending prices thought they could purchase 17.5 of the items, whereas those with 99-ending thought they could purchase 18.3 items—an estimation error of about 5 percent (Bizer and Schindler 2005). In another experiment, 46 university students were given bundles of either odd prices or even prices, and were asked to quickly add the prices in their heads. On average, the students valued the odd-priced sets at 25 percent below the even-priced sets (Lambert 1975). Members of the general public are likely to be even more misled than college students.

Odd prices waste time for customers. Lab experiments found that odd prices take one-third more time to understand (Estelami 2003). Diller and Brielmaier's (1995) field study in Germany found that the purchase decision time for health care products and detergents took 23 percent longer for odd than for even prices (49.5 versus 40.1 seconds). Given the number of products that customers consider when making purchases, the annual time lost because of odd prices is substantial. I have tried several admittedly rough calculations and have concluded that the complete elimination of odd pricing would save a good part of a day per adult shopper per year. Feel free to make your own estimate.

In their study of shoppers at German drug stores, Diller and Brielmaier (1995) found that 66 percent of their respondents favored round prices, while only 13 percent preferred odd prices. Moreover, 76 percent of them thought even prices were more honest.

1.4.3. Show the price to be good value against a reference price

In arguing about funding cuts for the National Endowment for the Arts in 1995, proponents said the cuts would save $168 million per year, while those opposing the cuts said that the savings amounted to only 64 cents a day per citizen.

Reference prices can have a substantial effect on customers' perceived value of a product. Chesebrough-Ponds priced its petroleum jelly 14 times higher per ounce when packaged and sold as Vaseline Lip Therapy because its competitor, Chapstick, was selling for a similar price (Nagle and Holden 2002).

Reference prices are used to show that a price is favorable. Reference prices could be stated in many ways, such as: "Original price ...," "Regularly priced at

...," "Compare elsewhere at ...," "Manufacturer's suggested list price ...," and "Was ...."

Make comparisons that are relevant to the decision. For example, when an ad is sent to customers' homes, it should show comparison prices at other stores to help customers decide where to shop. For customers who are already in a store, point-of-purchase ads can make comparisons with previous store prices to show that this product is now a bargain.

One reason for using a reference price is that people often have little knowledge about the typical price of a given product. Observers in supermarket aisles watched as customers selected products. Immediately after a customer placed an item in a shopping cart, an observer asked the customer, "Off the top of your head, without checking, what is the price of the [product name] you just chose?" Approximately 21 percent did not even offer an estimate. Of those offering an estimate, 44 percent were unable to come within 5 percent of the price. Half of the customers who purchased a sale item were unaware that the price had been reduced (Dickson and Sawyer 1990).

When making price comparisons, it might help to present the price from a different perspective. In doing so, look for analogies to inform consumers that the product is reasonably priced. Consider this Kellogg's advertisement from many years ago: "For less than the cost of a postage stamp, you can address a bowl of Kellogg's Corn Flakes."

Another way to frame the price is to change the time context, such as in the "Pennies a day" (PAD) approach. In 1901, the Chicago Telephone Company advertised telephone service for 16 cents a day. Bernbach's Burning Egg ad for GTE said: "Why not get an extension phone in your kitchen? It costs less than an egg a day." PAD framing will encourage purchase if the price appears to be low.

If you were trying to discourage behavior, the recommendation would be reversed. Thus, to discourage smoking, it would be better to state an aggregate cost, such as $1,825 per year, rather than $5 per day.

Several U.S. states (including California, Colorado, New York, and Maryland) require truthful price comparisons. Compeau, Grewal, and Grewal (2001) suggested that to avoid lawsuits, ad campaigns should offer the "regular price" at least half of the time and make at least 25 percent of their transactions at this level.

References prices are widely used. For example, on the U.S. Labor Day weekend in 2001, an assessment of ads by six national retailers revealed that 72 percent contained reference prices (Chandrashekaran and Grewal 2003).

Evidence on the effects of reference prices

Control-group subjects were shown a newspaper ad that featured an RCA TV set at a sale price of $319. Experimental group subjects saw ads that mentioned that the $319 price was a reduction from one of three reference prices: $359, $419, or $799. Compared with having no reference price, ads with a plausible reference price raised the perceived value of the offer. While the subjects rated the exaggerated reference price, $799, as less believable than the plausible reference price, they still rated the offer's value higher than for an ad with no reference price (Urbany, Bearden, and Weilbaker 1988).

A lab experiment was used to test the effect of highly exaggerated claims about price savings. Subjects saw ads for 35mm cameras with widely varying price reduction claims. The exaggerated claims had little effect on the perceived value of the offer (Compeau, Grewal, and Chandrashekaran 2002).

Different versions of ads for bedspreads and ladies housecoats were mailed to 968 female heads of households. Some ads had no reference price and listed prices simply as 'Special—$11.98,' while the others included reference prices (e.g., 'regular price $15.98, sale price $11.98'). The ads with reference prices were seen as more believable, their products were judged to be a better value, and the intentions to purchase were 6.5 percent higher (Barnes 1975).

In a hypothetical situation, 120 subjects were asked to donate to a charity through payroll deductions. Half were asked to donate $0.85 per day and 52 percent of them donated. The other half were asked to donate $300 for the year and only 30 percent donated. And indeed, magazines have used PAD to sell subscriptions. Industry studies showed that per-issue price framing yielded about 10 percent to 40 percent more magazine subscriptions than did annual prices (Gourville 1998).

1.4.4. If quality is not a key selling point, consider advertising price reductions

Advertisers often advertise price reductions in efforts to increase sales volume. This makes sense when the competing products are thought to be of equal quality. However, when quality is a key selling point, reduced prices pose problems. They send a message of good value for the immediate transaction, but they lower the perception of quality in the long term, especially for products where quality is hard to judge or where people are unfamiliar with the product. In effect, short-term gains are likely to be achieved but with long-term losses.

To avoid the lower-price–lower-quality perception, provide a good reason for the price discount. For example, it is easy to justify reduced prices for goods nearing an expiration date. Another approach is to offer a free gift with a certain volume of purchases rather than to reduce prices.

Consider whether competitors are likely to respond in kind if your firm lowers its price. For example, they are more likely to respond if your brand has a substantial market share and if you do not have substantially lower costs.

Customers are often trusting when they see the word "sale." Because of this trust, low-involvement purchases will increase when a sale is advertised, even if the price reduction is trivial. A simulated store experiment on toothpaste, peanut butter, and toilet paper found that customer purchases increased even when the "sale" involved no price reduction. The paper quoted Jeff Thomas, an executive at H-E-B supermarket: "Occasionally we attach signs marked 'Everyday Low Price' in front of two randomly selected brands in our store, leaving their prices unchanged. Even though customers should be accustomed to these signs … sales typically doubled" (Inman, McAlister, and Hoyer 1990).

It is deceptive to advertise a product as being on sale when it is not. Such a practice could cause customers to lose trust in a brand. In the United States, it is also illegal to advertise negligible price decreases.

Shoppers value bargains for reasons other than financial savings. Bargains can

enhance the purchasing experience by helping to convince buyers that that they are good shoppers and that they received a fair price. Also, customers could become dissatisfied if they compare prices and learn that others received a better deal.

Evidence on effects of advertising prices when product quality is unimportant

The above discussion on conditions drew heavily on a review of empirical evidence from 16 studies (Darke and Chung 2005).

Customers discount advertised claims about price reductions. In one study, when shown ads for four durable products, subjects thought that the savings were overstated by about 25 percent (Blair and Landon 1981).

Should you state a price as "$30" or as "$25 plus a $5 service fee"?

1.4.5. Consider partitioned prices when the add-on prices seem fair and are small relative to the base price

Partitioned prices are more persuasive when the add-ons seem fair and do not attract attention. This principle is applicable when the add-ons are (1) traditional and consistent with customers' expectations (e.g., shipping costs), or (2) based on costs that the seller cannot anticipate (e.g., a temporary tax by the government). When these conditions hold, partitioned prices can be persuasive. However, when they deviate from the conditions, partitioned prices could displease customers.

When using partitioned prices, advertisers should display the price information clearly and include the total price. However, they should not highlight the add-on prices (Kim 2006).

Xia and Monroe (2004) summarize the evidence: "When used appropriately, price partitioning enhances [customer] satisfaction with the price, perceived value, willingness to buy, and store trustworthiness." The key factor is whether customers view the surcharges as fair.

Avoid partitioned prices if they tend to mislead. In early 2006, Air New Zealand was fined for misleading customers by partitioning fares. The add-ons were apparently so large that people thought they were being misled. Air New Zealand agreed to provide all-inclusive prices in its advertising (*International Herald Tribune*, June 17–18, 2006).

Partitioned pricing can help to justify high prices by showing pricing components such as shipping, and allowing sellers to offer attractive pricing on these components. In addition, focusing on the product's base price can make the price seem lower.

Evidence on effects of partitioned prices

Three experiments involved sales of a CD Walkman, digital watch, and laptop computer. Purchase intentions were much higher when, instead of a single price, there was a surcharge that was small compared with the base price of the product (Sheng, Bao, and Pan 2007).

On the negative side, in a lab experiment in which 141 subjects viewed computer and stereo advertisements, customers had poorer short-term recall of partitioned prices than of all-inclusive prices. Moreover, when they incorrectly recalled prices, they were annoyed, often assigned blame to the advertiser, and lowered their opinions of the brands and retailers (Lee and Han 2002).

The conditions for this principle relied partly on lab experiments (Morwitz, Greenleaf, and Johnson 1998; Kim 2006).

One year ago, Mr. A paid $40 for a ticket to a football game to be played this weekend. On Friday, Mr. B paid $40 for a ticket to the same game. The men have anticipated this game with equal enthusiasm. On the day of the game, there is a snowstorm. Who is more likely to brave the snow and attend the game, Mr. A, who paid for his ticket long ago, or Mr. B, who recently incurred the $40 expense?

1.4.6. To retain customers, consider linking payments to consumption

When customers are more aware of how much they have paid for products or services, they tend to use them more often, and also tend to become repeat purchasers.

When subjects were asked the above football game/snowstorm question, they expected that Mr. B would be more likely to attend the game because, given his more recent purchase, the cost looms larger in his mind (Thaler 1980).

To make people more aware of how much they are spending, an ad might ask them to pay by cash rather than credit cards. As an incentive to do this, it could offer discounts for cash payments. And because people consume more services closer to the time when they pay for them, the ads might run during periods when demand is low.

Evidence on linking payments to consumption

In a lab experiment, 80 subjects were asked to imagine that they had pre-purchased four days' worth of lift tickets at a Colorado ski resort. One group was told that they had purchased a $160 four-day (bundled) pass; the second group had purchased four one-day ski tickets at $40 each (unbundled). After three excellent days of skiing, it rained the night before the last day and conditions were poor. The subjects were told "You look at your [ski pass/remaining ticket] and are not sure if you want to go skiing or leave early." They responded on a scale from 1 (= "definitely will not go skiing") to 10 (= "definitely will go skiing"). Those with the unbundled tickets were much more likely (5.2 vs. 3.6) to say that they would go skiing. Further support for the effects of bundling was provided by another lab experiment that extended this ski study, yet another extension that used a vignette about going to three plays, and an analysis conducted using non-experimental data on attendance at a Summer Shakespeare Festival (Soman and Gourville 2001).

Debit cards do not offer frequent-flyer points, and they remove money immediately from your account when purchases are made, rather than at the end of the month as with credit

cards (thus, you lose out on having an interest-free loan). So why is it that in Europe, in 2006, consumers spent more than three times as much on Visa debit cards as on Visa credit cards?

1.4.7. Consider separating payments from benefits—if the payments are completed before the benefits end

> *Easy terms of payment, without extra charge, for those who cannot pay the full price at once.*
> *Wilcox & Gibbs Silent Sewing Machine print ad, 1869*

People often find it less stressful to purchase goods when they do not think much about the price. To reduce the stress, separate the painful part, the payments, from the purchase decision.

Installment plans, which provide a way to separate payments from purchases, are often used when purchasing durable goods, such as automobiles. However, they should not be used if the payments linger after the benefits have been fully consumed. People prefer to pay prior to or during consumption of a product rather than to have to make payments after the product has been consumed or the services completed. Thus, they would rather prepay for a vacation than have a series of "easy payments" after the vacation. On the other hand, they are comfortable with easy payment plans as long as they continue to enjoy the goods—as with automobiles. These statements are consistent with conventional wisdom among advertisers.

Consider now the lead-in question. Debit cards are popular because purchasers do not incur debt when they make purchases, as happens with credit cards. The credit card debt hangs over them and they must address this at the end of the month. In addition, they might run over their limit.

Prepayments also provide a way to separate the payment from the benefits. Which offer should the seller of a health club service make: $400 for the coming year or $8 per session? Most customers would prefer to pay the $400 up front for the year. Having prepaid, they will be more motivated to use the health club, and not have to think about whether a visit is worth the cost. It avoids the "taxi-meter effect." Furthermore, customers tend to overestimate how much they will use a service; therefore, the health club will also profit from the up-front fee system. This principle applies to non-durable hedonic (for enjoyment) products.

Consumers who are trying to curtail a bad habit might prefer to use a painful payment process, such as purchasing one pack of cigarettes at a time. A similar approach might also be used in campaigns to reduce obesity. That is, it could get cooperating restaurants to go on a "cash only" basis for people who sign up to be on a weight-loss program. Alternatively, the weight-loss program could put a block on food purchases under debit or credit cards so those on the program would have to use cash. Restaurants for weight watchers and universities might want to charge for food on a per-ounce basis.

Lab experiments show that people get more enjoyment from purchases if the act of paying is done at a different time than the product is consumed. For this reason, more expensive lump-sum payment plans can sometimes be preferable to consumers over cheaper but frequent payment options (Prelec and Loewenstein 1998).

Would you rather purchase an insurance policy for a $1,600 premium with a promise of a $600 rebate for safe driving, or buy an otherwise equivalent policy for $1,000 with the possibility of having to pay up to $600 for an accident?

1.4.8. State that the price can be prepaid if it might reduce uncertainty for customers or enhance anticipation

Customers do not like uncertainty. So they often prefer to pay a set price upfront instead of an uncertain price in the future.

It might seem rational for people to desire to receive the benefits of a product as soon as possible but to defer paying for as long as possible. However, when it comes to personal behavior, the typical consumer does not think that way. People get enjoyment from the anticipation of planning a pleasant event, such as a vacation, and prepayment can add to this anticipation. Thus, this principle is especially appropriate for advertising hedonic products.

Evidence on the effects of reducing uncertainty about prices

Now back to the lead-in question about insurance policies: Economically, the $1,000 up-front policy is a better buy than a $1,600 policy with a $600 rebate for safe driving because the former represents an interest-free loan to the insurer. However, most people want to avoid the uncertainty of having to pay an additional fee in the future. In this study, 68 percent of the 187 subjects said they would purchase the $1,600 policy, versus 44 percent in the groups offered the $1,000 policy (Johnson et al. 1993).

Three lab experiments showed that people are happier to pay upfront for hedonic products such as a vacation than for utilitarian products such as a washer/dryer (Patrick and Park 2006).

An analysis of data on Internet services concluded that customers typically pay much more for flat-fee service contracts than they would have paid on a per-use basis. This, plus findings from related areas, led to a paper with the clever title, "Paying too much and being happy about it" (Lambrecht and Skiera 2006).

Suppose you receive two ads for identical-looking, attractive shirts made from the same material. One states that it took 8.5 hours to make the shirt by hand. The second says, "thanks to modern technology, this shirt was made in 37 minutes." Assuming the same price, which shirt would you purchase?

1.4.9. Use high costs to justify high prices

> *The value of a commodity is the amount of labor it has within it.*
> *Karl Marx*

From Hathaway's founding in 1837, its shirts were known for quality and style. Prior to 1951, Hathaway did little advertising. In September 1951, Ogilvy ran an advertisement in the *New Yorker* magazine in which Baron George Wrangell, wearing an eye patch, appeared handsomely dressed in a Hathaway shirt. To justify

the high price of the shirts, the ad claimed that the shirts were made by "dedicated craftsmen, who have been at it man and boy for one hundred and fifteen years." Sales soared. The Hathaway man lived for 40 years.

Customers are concerned with fairness in pricing. This often leads them to think that prices should be based on production costs. This is an old idea. In the 13th century, Thomas Aquinas said, "he who in trading sells a thing for more than he paid for it must have paid less than it was worth or be selling it for more. Therefore, this cannot be done without sin." Thus, when advertising high prices, consider explaining that costs are high, if this is indeed the case.

The tag line for Waitrose supermarkets in the United Kingdom provides an excellent application of this principle in their slogan, "Quality goods, honestly priced." The ads explain the high costs of getting the best ingredients.

The strength of this effect is substantial. So, this might be a good time to remind you that the book you are reading took over 16 years to complete and drew upon help from more than 80 people.

Evidence on the effects of using high costs to justify high prices

In four experiments, 366 subjects were given different information about the effort required to produce a product, and were asked to rate the product's quality. In an experiment on shirts, the subjects gave much better ratings to the shirts that took longer to make—thus the Hathaway man. The same results were found in experiments on food quality, preparing lists for those seeking to purchase a house, or presenting a talk. Interestingly, the findings were the same whether the subjects received information about effort and time before or after they experienced the product. The findings were also similar for those who had claimed that the time spent to produce the product did not matter (Chinander and Schweitzer 2003).

Unsurprisingly, a review of seven empirical studies showed that buyers think that cost-based pricing is fairer than market-based pricing (Xia, Monroe, and Cox 2004).

In three lab experiments, subjects gave better ratings to a real estate agent who spent nine hours preparing a list of ten apartments than to an agent who used a computer to generate the same list in an hour (Morales 2005). In addition, experiments using poetry, paintings, and suits of armor found that people judged the objects as more valuable if they had taken longer to produce (Kruger et al. 2004).

1.4.10. When quality is high, do not emphasize price

Price advertising leads customers to become more sensitive to price. This might have unfortunate consequences if firms begin to compete on price. If prices do become an issue, the advertiser of a high-quality product should explain why the price is low. For example, "Thanks to a new manufacturing process, we have been able to improve quality, and at the same time to reduce costs, so we are passing savings along to you." Or, "Because of a temporary price reduction in our primary ingredient, sugar, we are able to pass along savings to our customers."

Evidence on the effects of advertising prices

A meta-analysis of 25 experimental studies found that price advertising leads customers as well as competitors to focus on prices. In contrast, non-price advertising leads customers to show less concern about prices—and presumably more about quality (Kaul and Wittink 1995).

1.4.11. Use high prices to connote high quality

The Foote, Cone & Belding advertising agency developed a campaign for Johnson's car polish. The polish was inexpensive, and the agency's staff thought that customers would not believe that such an inexpensive product could produce the claimed benefits. Test runs at various prices showed that customers were more likely to purchase the polish at a higher price. As a result, the company decided to double the price that had initially been proposed.[3]

People tend to believe that "you get what you pay for." This principle is relevant when quality is important yet hard to judge even after product use. It is less relevant if the customers are knowledgeable about the costs of producing the product.

Universities meet the conditions for this principle, and they use high prices to connote high quality. They compete for applicants by charging high tuition fees, then use large discounts (packaged as "need-based scholarships") to many students.

Robert Cialdini related a personal account of a jewelry store owner at a shop called The Beaderie in Tempe, Arizona. A particular item had not been selling well, so the owner, before leaving for a vacation, left a note to her assistant to cut the price in half. Because of her poor handwriting, the assistant interpreted it as to double the price. The item sold out rapidly.

Neil French had an advertising problem with his client Chivas Regal Scotch. At the time, Johnny Walker was the leading brand of Scotch whisky, and Chivas was priced lower. French's solution? "Put the price of Chivas up, and tell everyone they can't afford it." He hammered away at this theme with full-page ads which included such copy as, "This is an ad for Chivas Regal. If you need to see the bottle, you obviously don't move in the right social circle," "If you need to know what it costs, turn the page, young man," and, "It has been said of Chivas Regal advertising that it smacks of elitism ... how true." The campaign was judged to have been successful. It seems to work also for beer: Stella Artois advertises, "Reassuringly expensive."

High prices serve as an indicator of quality when purchasing an item for someone else, such as a gift for a friend. It implies that the purchaser made an effort to get the best quality. Buying agents for organizations face this issue. For example, they may prefer to pay a high price when hiring a consultant. The message is, "We got the best consultant: Look how much he charges."

Evidence on the effects of using high prices to connote quality

Does a high price affect people's experience with a product? Subjects were given

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3   I was unable to verify the source of this example.

SoBe Adrenaline Rush, an energy drink that claims to increase mental acuity. Over 90 percent of the subjects had heard of this drink and about half had drunk it previously. A randomly assigned group of subjects were told that they would be charged $1.89, the regular retail price, while others were told that they would be charged $0.89 because the drink was purchased at an institutional rate. After ten minutes had been allowed for the drink to kick in, the subjects were asked to solve 15 word puzzles within a 30-minute limit. The effects were astonishing. In a control group (no energy drink), the average number of puzzles solved was 9.1. When the subjects had high expectations that the drink would help, those who paid the discounted price solved 5.8 of the problems versus 9.9 for those who drank the regular-price drink. The findings were also substantial for those with low expectations (7.7 for the discounted drink vs. 9.5 for the regular-priced drink). Two extensions of these experiments provided support (Shiv, Carmon, and Ariely 2005). Experiments also showed that a placebo drug with a high price was much more effective in reducing pain than a low-priced placebo (Waber et al. 2008).

Customer perceptions of quality often differ from reality. Three studies looked at the correlations of price and quality as rated by *Consumer Reports* or *Consumer Research Magazine*. The relationship between price and quality was modest. In some cases, such as laundry detergents, orange drinks, and frozen French fries, they were negatively related (Ordóñez 1998). Similar findings were obtained in a meta-analysis of 23 studies (Völckner and Hofmann 2007).

Responses from 149 members of the Purchasing Management Association found that the "high-price-means-high-quality" belief persists even when there is little relationship between price and quality (Rao and Bergen 1992).

1.4.12. For inexpensive products, state price discounts as percentage saved; for expensive products, state price discounts as money saved—or present both

The safe approach to this principle is to state price discounts in both cash and percentage terms. Customers appreciate detailed information about prices.

Evidence on the effects of stating money savings versus percentage savings

Early researchers asked questions such as: "You are planning to purchase a book for $50. Then you learn that the same book is available at another store for $25. You would need an hour to get to the other store and back. Would you go to the other store?" Other subjects were asked: "You are purchasing a tennis racket, and you have found a model that you like for $350. Then you learn that the exact same racket is available in another store for $325. You would need another hour to get to the other store and back. Would you go to the other store?"

In each case, you can save $25 by spending an hour. But fewer people said they would go to the other store in the second situation, presumably because some of them tend to perceive savings in percentage terms instead of dollar terms.

Tversky and Kahneman (1981) concluded that "consumers hardly exert more effort to save $15 on a $150 purchase than to save $5 on a $50 purchase." Reviews added support (Krishna et al. 2002; Nunes and Park 2003). However, some experi-

ments found that customers were also interested in the amount of money saved, regardless of the percentage. Contrary to conclusions from earlier research, many customers did in fact act rationally. A "percentage off" sale caught their attention, but for expensive items, customers also considered whether the added effort was worthwhile (Darke and Freedman 1993; Darke, Freedman, and Chaiken 1995).

A review of research and a lab experiment concluded that price discounts should be stated as the amount saved for high-priced goods, and as "percentage off" for low-priced goods (Gendall et al. 2006).

People appreciate detailed information about prices. This finding was supported in lab experiments that presented ads for electronic calculators to 800 undergraduate subjects. Some subjects received only the sale price while others, randomly assigned, received various combinations of sale price, regular price, dollars off, and percentage off. Purchase intentions were highest for ads that contained all four pieces of information (Della Bitta, Monroe, and McGinnis 1981).

You are introducing a new brand of mouthwash in a discount store. Would you advertise it at a low introductory price or sell it at its list price?

1.4.13. Minimize price information for new products

In general, new-product advertisements should try to get customers interested in the product for its benefits rather its price (or bonus offers). This is especially so for high-involvement high-quality products.

First impressions are important. If you would like customers to view your product as one having high quality, introduce it with a high price. Avoid using a low introductory price or a promotional offer.

Bose used this principle in its ad for a new home theater sound system. It focused on benefits and offered a free trial. Customers had to contact Bose to learn about prices. We know that Bose tracks the effectiveness of each ad; this one must have worked because the ad ran frequently.

Evidence on the effects of price and promotional information for new products

The first study relates to the problem posed in the lead-in to this section:

> **Low introductory prices harmed long-term sales for low-involvement products.** In a field experiment, 12 matched pairs of discount stores were randomly assigned to sell a new brand of mouthwash (a store brand) either at the regular listed price ($0.39 per quart bottle) or at a sale price ($0.25 per quart) for a nine-day period. The low price sold more units during the introduction; however, because of the lower price, total revenues were lower. But from weeks 2 through 5, when all stores charged the regular price, sales in the stores that had offered the reduced introductory price were substantially lower. This persisted in a follow-up at week 20. Similar results were obtained when the researchers repeated the experiments with toothpaste, aluminum foil, light bulbs, and cookies. Based on "cognitive dissonance," when people take an action for no

extrinsic reward, they try to justify this action to themselves. Thus, when the new brand of this credence product was introduced at a low price, customers concluded that they were buying it to save money. When the sale ended, the reason to purchase also ended. Customers who had made their original purchases at stores with the regular price purchased the mouthwash because of its quality, and thus were more likely to continue to purchase it (Doob et al. 1969).

In three lab experiments, 427 subjects were asked to evaluate brands of experience goods—a dentist, health club, and mutual fund. Some subjects had received information about short-term price discounts. When a brand had not previously been promoted and subjects had little product knowledge, the subjects rated the quality of the brand lower when a price discount had been used (Raghubir and Corfman 1999).

In a commercial field experiment involving a direct-mail offer for credit cards, half the people received an offer describing benefits but stressing a promotional offer (5,000 frequent-flyer bonus miles), whereas the others were simply told about the benefits of the card. The frequent flyer promotion brought in 34 percent more new cardholders, but one year later, those recruited without the promotional offer generated 2.5 times more revenue (described by Rossiter and Bellman 2005, p. 356, based on an unpublished—and unavailable—report).

Which offer would generate the highest sales, assuming that prices are the same: a) a wristwatch, or b) the same wristwatch that also shows time on both the East Coast and West Coast of the United States?

1.4.14. Consider bundling prices of features or complementary products or services if they are desirable to nearly all customers

When charged a single price for bundled products, people think less about the price of each product. This can enhance the transaction because the bad news (price) is handled using a single number. This is likely to make potential purchasers less sensitive to price.

In some cases bundling of non-complementary products might increase the probability of purchase, but it might also confuse customers. For example, an ad trying to persuade people to switch telephone long-distance carriers offered a pint of Ben & Jerry's ice cream every month for a whole year. This bundling of an unrelated promotional item makes comparisons difficult.

In the 1970s, the U.S. National Football League (NFL) found it hard to motivate players to attend the annual Pro Bowl game. Offering higher payments had little effect because these players were wealthy. In 1980, the League officials solved the problem by moving the game to Hawaii and providing each player with two first-class tickets and luxury accommodation. This package was more persuasive to the players than paying them an equivalent amount of money. (This description is from Thaler 1999.)

The addition of a product that is not attractive to all might harm a product's image. For example, the addition of late-night X-rated movies might damage the image of a TV channel that primarily targets families.

The opportunities for bundling prices often evolve over the product life cycle. For example, in the early twentieth century, people had to pay extra for automobile accessories, such as bumpers and headlights. Cars now have many features bundled into the initial selling price. Of course, much of this is due to economics; it is often less expensive for the product to include the features that almost all people want.

Sometimes, as with a concert series, an offer is initially made only in a bundle, which some customers purchase to ensure that they gain access to the most popular events.

To many, bundling implies a better deal. However, this is not always the case. For example, in 2009, when customers selected a book on Amazon.com, the site suggested another book in a bundled offer. However, the bundled price was simply the addition of the two prices; there was no reduction. Given that Amazon uses odd prices, it might take a bit of thought for customers to realize that they have not been given special pricing.

Evidence on bundling popular features or complements

Consider the problem posed at the lead-in to this principle. A lab experiment showed that the addition of a feature that appealed to few people led to reduced intentions to purchase for a CD player, calculator, dental plan, VCR—and the wrist watch mentioned above. For these high-involvement products, the subjects' purchase intentions were 46 percent for the products that had no unnecessary features; in contrast, they were only 30 percent when the product also included a feature that most people viewed as unnecessary. It apparently seemed wasteful (Simonson, Carmon, and O'Curry 1994).

The following experiments supported this principle for bundled prices:

Bundling of complementary products led to higher purchase intentions in a study on durable goods. A lab experiment involving 83 subjects and ten products—five durables and five non-durables—found that intentions were 17 percent higher when complements (e.g., TV and VCR) were bundled than when they were sold separately. This worked whether the ad said, "Buy X and Y together at $___" or "Buy X at $___ and get Y for free" (Harlam et al. 1995.)

Customers considering a car purchase were more likely to purchase when offered "bundled prices." In a field experiment, offers were made to 360 owners of a particular German automobile on the purchase of a newer model. The customers were split into 12 groups; members of each group received an offer that differed from group to group only in the extent to which prices for 12 features (e.g., air conditioning, radio, and sun roof) were bundled. The options ranged from no bundling to extensive bundling. Those presented with bundled prices reported that they were more satisfied with the offer, more likely to recommend it to others, and more likely to repurchase the brand (Johnson, Herrmann, and Bauer 1999).

"Sears Carpet Cleaning: $14 a room … 2 rooms: $28! … 6 rooms only $84!"
Was this newspaper ad effective?

1.4.15. Advertise multi-unit purchases for frequently purchased low-involvement products if it is also in the consumers' interest

When customers shop for low-involvement products, they try to simplify their purchase decisions. For example, they might decide how much to buy based on purchases from previous shopping trips. A customer who has purchased two or three cans of soup on previous trips will, without giving much thought, probably do about the same on the next trip. By increasing that anchor through advertising, however, purchase amounts might rise. Consider these offers that provide no obvious benefits for consumers: Multiple unit pricing (e.g., "Four for $2" rather than "50 cents a can") and Suggestive selling (e.g., "Buy 12 for your freezer").

Sears Carpet Cleaning is a high-involvement purchase, and customers will think about it prior to purchase. So in this case, the ad seems ill advised.

Evidence on the effects of multi-unit purchases

In four field experiments on alternative point-of-purchase ads in supermarkets, multi-unit pricing raised purchase amounts by 32 percent over baseline pricing. These experiments support the common and seemingly irrational customer behavior of buying a number of units for no good reason. Yes, some people might purchase more units because they think there is a cost-saving opportunity; however, this effect occurred even when further experiments ruled out such an explanation (Wansink, Kent, and Hoch 1998).

Indirect evidence was provided by this lab experiment: Subjects sitting in front of a "wheel of chance" were asked, "What is the percentage of African nations in the United Nations?" The spinner lands on 65. For another group of subjects, the spinner stops at 10. Would this obviously irrelevant information affect responses? It did. Subjects starting with 65 had a median estimate of 45; those starting with 10 had a median of 25. They "anchored" on those numbers even though it was obvious that the numbers were selected arbitrarily. Note however that this was a low-involvement situation (Tversky and Kahneman 1981).

1.5. Distribution

Information about when, where, and how to purchase a product can be important selling points. The distribution channel might allow customers to obtain the product quickly or to experience the product in a showroom. It can help build relationships with customers, which is important both for future sales and for word-of-mouth promotion. In some cases, such as stores at historic sites or museums, the channel enhances the shopping experience. The channel might make customers feel welcome, provide useful advice when deciding on a product, and offer follow-up service. Finally, consumers might enjoy a product more if they obtain it at a store they like.

Another way to enhance the shopping experience is to reduce the customer's perceived risk. Customers feel more comfortable buying from a reputable store than from an unknown vendor. The perception of risk is one reason the

migration to online shopping began slowly. It also helps to explain why shoppers go to Amazon.com, a trusted and established site, even when they can often purchase the same product for less money elsewhere.

1.5.1. Include information on when, where, and how to buy a product

If the target market already knows how to obtain the product, this principle can be ignored.

Inclusion of distribution information in an ad is a common-sense issue that requires no empirical evidence. It has been used in advertising for centuries, such as: "Traveler. Going from here to the twelfth tower, there Sarinus keeps a tavern" from a tablet in Pompeii (prior to 79 AD). That said, advertisers sometimes overlook this principle.

Landmarks and logos were especially prominent in early advertising. Prior to the establishment of national post offices, buildings and houses in many countries had no street numbers; therefore, landmarks were necessary. Even with addresses, landmarks are useful because they reduce the amount of thinking about how to find a location.

Evidence on the effects of information about how to buy the product

We analyzed quasi-experimental data on tested print ads:

> **Print ads with distribution information had better recall.** Our *WAPB* analysis found 65 pairs of ads in which one ad provided information about distribution while the other did not. Recall for the informative ads was 1.13 times better than the other ads.

We also analyzed non-experimental data in *WAPB*. In comparison with the industry norms for each ad, the average persuasion score for the 23 ads with information about distribution was 9 percent higher than the comparable score for the 215 ads that did not provide distribution information.

Imagine that you are lying on the beach on a hot day, and all you have to drink is water. For the last hour you have been thinking about how much you would enjoy a nice cold bottle of your favorite beer. A friend gets up to go make a phone call and offers to bring back a beer from the only nearby place where beer is sold—stated for half of the subjects as a fancy resort hotel and for the other half as a small, run-down grocery store. He says that the beer might be expensive, and asks how much you are willing to pay for it. He will only buy the beer if it costs as much as or less than the price you state. You trust your friend, and there is no possibility of bargaining with the bartender or the storeowner. What price would you tell him if the beer was from the fancy resort, and what price if from the run-down grocery store?

1.5.2. Feature a sales channel when it is impressive

Clark's, a U.K. shoe manufacturer, wanted to turn its desert boots into a fashion statement. It hired a renowned photographer, Helmut Newton, and took his ad

photos of the boots to fancy shops in London such as Woodhouse, Jones, and Harrods, to ask if the boots could be advertised as being sold there. They agreed and these locations served as endorsements. This low-budget, successful campaign received an IPA Advertising Effectiveness award (Feldwick 1990).

Featuring an impressive sales channel (e.g., store or location) is especially important for high-status products. An impressive sales channel also builds on the issue of fairness: People are willing to pay more because the seller's costs are higher.

When selling exclusive high-status goods, such as clothing, advertise that they are available only at fine stores, such as one located on Rodeo Drive in Los Angeles. The buyer can tell her friends about the shopping event and enjoy the clothes more because of that.

Another example: In a *Wall Street Journal* ad in 2004, Cartier advertised its watches by using a photograph of its store located on "Fifth Avenue at 52nd Street" in New York City. The photo covered about half of the quarter-page ad.

When Sears merged with Kmart in 2005, Nike pulled its products from Sears stores. Nike did not want its brand to be associated with a low-price, high-volume store which it felt would reflect poorly on its image.

Evidence on the effects of advertising the channel of distribution

Now let's look at the results for the beach-beer problem. On average, subjects were willing to pay 73 percent more if the beer came from the fancy resort hotel than from the run-down grocery. They believed it was fair to pay more because the sellers' costs are higher (Thaler 1985).

Similar findings were obtained in a lab study involving subjects who were asked what would be a fair price for a brass picture frame being sold in a gift store before or after the store was remodeled. They stated a higher price for the picture frame purchased from the remodeled store (Grewal and Baker 1994).

Do you like Absolut Vodka for its taste or because it comes in a nice bottle?

1.5.3. Use the package to enhance the product

> *If you can't sell the product, sell the package.*
> *Old adage*

In early 1978, in preparing for an advertising pitch in New York, Gunnar Broman, from Stockholm, brought some bottles that had a medicinal appearance. Those at the meeting agreed that it would not matter what vodka was put into the bottles; it would become a success. Thus, Absolut was born (Hamilton 2000).

The design and quality of the packaging can help to communicate product features such as safety, freshness, size, and portability. It can enhance the image of a product. The Absolut Vodka bottle conveyed an image of drinking strong alcohol in a socially acceptable manner.

Assume that a customer is concerned about receiving a product quickly after having ordered

it on August 10. Should you give a delivery date (e.g., September 10) or a time interval (e.g., in one month)?

1.5.4. If a product is desirable, specify delivery dates rather than waiting times

As with many of the other principles, it is better to focus on the positive than the negative. Most customers will feel better if they think about receiving a desirable product rather than thinking about how long they must wait.

Some advertisers might advertise waiting times (delays) in hopes that customers will pay extra for faster deliveries.

Evidence on effects of delivery dates versus waiting times

In five lab experiments conducted with 489 subjects at the London School of Economics, subjects were given either waiting times or arrival dates for receiving money (e.g., $370 in 17 weeks or by the given date). Those given arrival dates were about twice as satisfied as those given waiting times (Read, Orsel, and Rahman 2005).

Here are two possible ways to advertise a rebate offer:

A. Return this coupon within one week of purchase and you will receive a $50 refund.
B. Return this coupon within one year and you will receive a $50 refund.

Which is better for the buyer? Which is better for the seller?

1.5.5. Tell customers they can achieve benefits over a long period if you want to reduce the use of an offer—and vice versa

Customers will feel more comfortable if you allow them additional time to take advantage of a refund. For example, wouldn't you prefer that your airline frequent-flyer benefits never expire?

Sellers also benefit from a long redemption periods because customers will take more time to redeem the offer, thus providing a free loan to the seller. Furthermore, there is an increased likelihood of customers forgetting about the coupon. Overall, it is expected that fewer coupons would be redeemed.

Thus, in the above question about coupons, B is the preferred choice for both sellers and buyers.

If the purpose of a rebate is to encourage product trial, give customers only a short time to use the coupon. And when feasible, remind customers about the expiration date.

Evidence on the effects of expiration dates

In one experiment, subjects were offered $5 for answering and returning a long questionnaire. One group was given no deadline, a second was given three weeks, and a third five days. The return rates were 25 percent for those with no deadline, 42 percent for those given the three-week limit, and 60 percent for those given the five-day limit (Tversky and Shafir 1992).

Information principles are vital to advertising when you have something to say, especially for new or improved products. Checklist 1 summarizes the information principles.

Checklist 1 Information

1.1.   Benefits
1.1.1. Describe specific, meaningful benefits.
1.1.2. Communicate a unique selling proposition (USP).

1.2.   News
1.2.1. Provide news, but only if it is real.
1.2.2. If real news is complex, use still media.

1.3.   Product
1.3.1. Provide product information that customers need.
1.3.2. Provide choices.
1.3.3. When there are many substantive multi-dimensional options, organize them and provide guidance.
1.3.4. Make the recommended choice the default choice.
1.3.5. Inform committed customers that they can delete features, rather than add them.
1.3.6. To reduce customer risk, use a product-satisfaction guarantee.

1.4.   Price
1.4.1. State prices in terms that are meaningful and easy to understand.
1.4.2. Use round prices.
1.4.3. Show the price to be a good value against a reference price.
1.4.4. If quality is not a key selling point, consider advertising price reductions.
1.4.5. Consider partitioned prices when the add-on prices seem fair and are small relative to the base price.
1.4.6. To retain customers, consider linking payments to consumption.
1.4.7. Consider separating payments from benefits—if the payments are completed before the benefits end.
1.4.8. State that the price can be prepaid if it might reduce uncertainty for customers or enhance anticipation.
1.4.9. Use high costs to justify high prices.
1.4.10. When quality is high, do not emphasize price.
1.4.11. Use high prices to connote high quality.
1.4.12. For inexpensive products, state price discounts as percentage saved; for expensive products, state price discounts as money saved—or present both.
1.4.13. Minimize price information for new products.
1.4.14. Consider bundling prices of features or complementary products or services if they are desirable to nearly all customers.
1.4.15. Advertise multi-unit purchases for frequently purchased low-involvement products if it is also in the consumers' interest.

1.5.   Distribution
1.5.1. Include information on when, where, and how to buy a product.
1.5.2. Feature a sales channel when it is impressive.
1.5.3. Use the package to enhance the product.
1.5.4. If a product is desirable, specify delivery dates rather than waiting times.
1.5.5. Tell customers they can achieve benefits over a long time period if you want to reduce the use of an offer—and vice versa.

2. Influence

This section examines strategies that advertisers can employ to influence others to take action. To a great extent they deal with how to present information. The framework draws upon Cialdini (2009). The influence principles sometimes go beyond common sense. As a result, they often get overlooked in the development of advertising campaigns. They are organized as follows:

2.1. Reasons

In 1904 Albert Lasker, head of the Lord & Thomas Agency, received a message from John E. Kennedy, a copywriter. The message said: "I am in the saloon downstairs and I can tell you what real advertising is. I know that you don't know .... If you wish to know what advertising is, send the word 'Yes' down by messenger." Lasker replied "Yes," and Kennedy told him that advertising was salesmanship in print and it depended on "reason-why" copy. Kennedy converted Lasker, who later described this conversation as "the most remarkable thing in my lifetime." His agency went on to challenge the idea that advertising means simply attracting attention. It ran copywriting classes that used the reason-why approach. One student said this revolution was "an appeal to reason rather than the time-honored assumption that the public was a mass of dumb, driven sheep, who could be swayed with mere pictures and catch-words" (Pope 1983, Fox 1997). Sadly, almost a century later, dot.com companies wasted billions vying for attention.

Reasons are often persuasive. For example, an advertising campaign explained that in contrast to then-current beliefs, harp seals seldom eat codfish. Because this had been the reason for a policy allowing the clubbing of baby seals to control the seal population, the ad was instrumental in leading the Canadian government to change its policy. This campaign saved the lives of an estimated 500,000 harp seals and won an IPA award for effectiveness (Baker 1993).

Reason-why ads are especially relevant for experience goods (in which the product's success in meeting advertised claims is evident when someone uses it). However, they can also be used for credence goods (when consumers use the product based on faith).[1]

The reason-why approach is persuasive for utilitarian and high-involvement products. It is especially persuasive when the product has a comparative advantage and the arguments are new to the target market. On the other hand, reasons do not work well when they relate to issues about which people hold strong beliefs.

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1 Remember that the conditions are also described in the Glossary.

Examples include: Does the minimum wage law help poor people? Do low taxes aid economic growth? Do right-to-carry gun laws make people safer? Does having an MBA make a person a better manager?

2.1.1. Provide a reason

Ads that give the viewer a reason are more persuasive. And why not? We like to know why we should buy a given product. Bose Wave radio ads provide a reason why Bose radios sound good—"patented acoustic waveguide speaker technology."

In general, the reasons provided should be relevant and logical. However, in the case of convenience goods or small donations, even an odd or illogical reason could be persuasive. For example, in the early 1900s, Quaker implied that its Puffed Rice product was good because it was "Shot from guns." Odd though it is, the reason is true, and it apparently worked.

In the late 1990s, Waitrose, a U.K. supermarket chain, was perceived as expensive. In surveys, customers said, "You always end up spending more there." In actuality, Waitrose matched prices on items sold in other stores. Rather than making this claim, it decided to advertise reasons why some of its items were more expensive. For example, it aired a TV commercial showing a cod-boat fishing in rough seas. The voice-over said, "We will never ever buy fish unless it achieves at least eight out of ten on the Torry Institute scales of freshness and quality. Waitrose. Quality food, honestly priced." Statistical analyses showed that the campaign was a huge success and it was an IPA award winner (Rimini 2003).

Frank Perdue used this principle effectively in his ad:

> My chickens eat better than you do. The problem with you is that you're allowed to eat whatever you want. My chickens eat what I give them. And I only give them the best. Their diet consists mainly of pure yellow corn, soybean meal, marigold petals—you'd call it health food. ... If you want to start eating as good as my chickens, take a tip from me. Eat my chickens.

This principle is in agreement with courteous behavior in everyday interactions—and with received wisdom among advertisers. Furthermore, it is common practice in advertising to provide reasons. For example, our *WAPB* analysis found that of the 480 full-page print ads, 71 percent provided reasons.

Evidence on the effects of reasons

In a field experiment in the 1980s, a research collaborator approached a person who had just put a page on a copy machine but had not yet deposited money. Three questions were asked (randomly assigned to people):

1. "Excuse me, I have five pages. May I use the Xerox machine?"
2. "Excuse me, I have five pages. May I use the Xerox machine, because I'm in a rush?"
3. "Excuse me, I have five pages. May I use the Xerox machine, because I have to make copies?"

When no reason was given (number 1 above), 60 percent agreed to let the person go ahead. When the reason was given about being in a rush (number 2), 94 percent said to go ahead, and when the silly reason was given (number 3), 93 percent said to go ahead. Why so high for the silly reason? For low-involvement decisions such as this, the subjects did not think carefully about the reason (Langer, Blank, and Chanowitz 1988).

In another experiment, subjects were given a choice between two Emerson television sets. The price of the standard set was $229, while the bargain set was $129. When no reason was given, people were uncertain why the bargain price was so much lower, so only 24 percent chose the cheaper set. But when other randomly selected subjects were given the same choice along with a reason, "You immediately notice that there is a long scratch on the side (decorative) panel," they chose the less expensive TV set 53 percent of the time. The reason eliminated uncertainty (Simonson, Carmon, and O'Curry 1994).

Our analysis of quasi-experimental data found that reason-why ads aid recall:

Print ads with a "reason why" had better recall. Our *WAPB* analysis found 37 pairs of print ads in which one ad offered a relevant reason to buy the product while the other ad offered no reason. For example, a Polaroid camera ad claiming that the camera's "tiny flatter flash helps prevent a harsh flash look," had much better recall than another Polaroid ad that did not provide a reason. Recall for ads with reasons was 1.29 times better.

As the next principle shows, however, when dealing with high-involvement products, a reason per se is not sufficient; the reason must be a good one.

2.1.2. For high-involvement products, the reasons should be strong

If there are strong reasons, use them in any case. But this is especially important for high-involvement products. This principle is common practice in advertising. For example, of the 321 high-involvement print ads that contained reasons in our *WAPB* analysis, we rated 71 percent of them as strong.

Evidence about strong reasons

The previous principle described an experiment involving a request to jump ahead in a Xerox line with a small request—"only five pages." Now let's look at what happens when the request is larger—the experimenter asked, "Excuse me, I have 20 pages. May I use the Xerox machine?" In this case, the people being asked thought about the request. Therefore, the silly reason ("because I have to make copies") was no more persuasive than providing "no reason," for which only 24 percent complied with the request. In contrast, when given the good reason ("I'm in a rush"), 42 percent complied (Langer et al. 1998).

In a lab experiment, 145 students listened to audiotapes of arguments on whether students should be required to take a comprehensive exam to graduate. Some heard strong arguments, while others heard weak arguments. Some were in a high-involvement situation because the change would affect them; others were in a low-involvement situation. Strong arguments were much more effective

than weak arguments for changing attitudes for the high-involvement situation, but not for low-involvement (Petty, Cacioppo, and Goldman 1981).

Our analysis of quasi-experimental data supported this principle:

Print ads with stronger reasons had better recall. Our *WAPB* analysis found 25 pairs of high-involvement print ads in which one ad had stronger reasons than the other. For example, an ad for Isuzu cars that stated, "the new Isuzu comes in many attractive colors … a powerful new 24-valve, V6 engine and a price tag you can actually afford," was compared with another Isuzu ad that was coded as having weaker reasons. Recall for ads with stronger reasons was 1.48 times better. In combination with the *WAPB* results for the preceding principle, this implies that an ad with strong reasons is about twice as effective in generating recall as an ad that does not include any reasons.

2.2. Social proof

Men nearly always follow the tracks made by others, and proceed in their own affairs by imitation.
Machiavelli, 1514

Social proof can be used in an ad by showing someone who is similar to the person viewing the ad on some key dimension (such as educational background, age, clothing, or political viewpoint). If a similar person likes the product, perhaps you will also.

In the 1800s, Yankee peddlers successfully used this technique: they would sell to Mrs. Smith by telling her that her neighbor, Mrs. Jones, had bought their product. Walter Dill Scott popularized this advertising approach in the early 1900s. He used the term "suggestion" to represent that when people see people they perceive as similar to them behaving in a certain way, they tend to mimic that behavior with little conscious thought.

Social proof also affects animals. For example, the mating process of the sage grouse is a competitive affair in which the males puff their chests and strut. Over 90 percent of the mating is done by 10 percent of the males. How do the females choose? Experiments showed that females chose the male who was surrounded by the most females. In these experiments, males who were surrounded by fake females (decoys) were more likely to mate (Levine 2003, p. 62).

Social proof affects our decision-making. In Asch's (1956) study, subjects seated in a group were asked to identify the longest of three lines that were presented to them. The other "subjects" were confederates who were told to select a shorter line, and these confederates all answered before the subject was asked. Although it was obvious which line was longest, many of the real subjects agreed with the confederates' judgment.

The wide use of a product, particularly an experience good, indicates its value. Nevertheless, this belief is sometimes unfounded and can lead people astray. In 1844, George Geddens convinced the town of Salinas, New York, to build wood plank roads. His promoters claimed "The new roads would end rural isolation, speed commerce, improve wives and daughters, increase church attendance, bring wealth

to investors." Shortly thereafter, 289 companies were formed in New York to build plank roads, and the plank-road mania spread throughout the country. However, the roads proved to have a much shorter life span than expected and bankruptcies ensued (Klein and Majewski 1994).

Social proof has a strong influence on behavior. Goethe's 1774 novel, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, affected some readers strongly. Many of them dressed and acted as Werther did. And some committed suicide, as Werther had done. Because of the copycat deaths, some European countries banned the novel. Scientific studies of this "Werther effect" began around 1840. In 1910, the Viennese Psychoanalytical Association examined whether newspaper reports on suicide caused school children to commit suicide. A year later, a commission of the American Medical Association addressed the same issue. As of the late 1980s, there were approximately 90 studies; they showed that the Werther effect is strong (Schmidtke and Häfner 1988).

In a six-episode television series, *Death of a Student*, a suicide victim jumped in front of a train. Following its 1981 and 1982 showings, suicides rose, especially of people who were similar in age and sex to the victim in the series. For the most similar group, suicides nearly doubled during the 70 days after each showing. Suicides that involved trains increased substantially (Schmidtke and Häfner 1988).

When suicides are sensationalized in the media and shown as a way that people solved problems (e.g., financial losses), they are like ads for suicides. In 1993, the World Health Organization listed "toning down reports in the press" as one of the basic steps for suicide prevention. The implementation of this recommendation was shown to substantially reduce suicides on the Vienna subway, for example (Schmidtke and Schaller 1998).

Social proof can have powerful effects on a wide range of behavior. It is an explanation for the success of Ponzi schemes.

The U.S. National Park service posted signs to reduce the theft of petrified wood: "Your heritage is being vandalized everyday by theft losses of petrified wood of 14 tons a year mostly a small piece at a time." It then facilitated an experiment on the extent to which the sign reduced theft. Place your bet: ___ no change; ___small reduction; ___ large reduction.

2.2.1. Show that the product is widely used

> *Their intrinsic worth is not sufficient ... most go with the*
> *crowd, and go because they see others go.*
> *Baltasar Gracián, 1637*

An early 1900s advertising book illustrated the effect of widespread behavior: "One man stands in the street gazing up at the top of a high building. A crowd collects with each man craning his neck. The power seemed to increase with the size of the crowd" (Tipper et al. 1921). This was tested many years later by having collaborators stand on a sidewalk in New York City and look up at a sixth-floor window for 60 seconds. The authors observed the behavior of 1,424 passers-by. When only one confederate looked up, 4 percent of the passersby stopped; when five

confederates looked up, 15 percent stopped; and when 15 confederates looked up, 40 percent stopped (Milgram, Bickman, and Berkowitz 1969).

In 1995, Michael Tracey and Fred Wiersema arranged to have some buyers purchase 30,000 copies of their book, *The Discipline of Market Leaders*, from stores that monitor the *New York Times* bestseller list. Once on the list, the book continued to sell well, despite mediocre reviews. By 2005, however, used copies of the book had been priced as low as $0.01 on Amazon.

Social proof is especially effective when the possession or use of the product is visible to those in one's peer group. It is also persuasive for credence products—products about which consumers cannot judge efficacy and must take product performance solely on faith. And there is some rationality when doing so for high-involvement utilitarian products. With so many users, surely people would report on problems if the product does not live up to promise.

Advertisers have long used social proof. Consider this ad from the early 1900s claiming wide use among the target market:

> The Quaker Oats Company canvassed hundreds of homes … and here is what they found …. Among the homes of the ignorant in our largest cities, not one home in twelve serves oats…. In the homes of the educated, the prosperous, the competent, seven out of eight regularly serve oatmeal.

Some advertisers inadvertently make it seem like their product is not widely accepted. Consider the following print ad for a computer company that appeared in the 1980s in the *Wall Street Journal*: "Contrary to what you've heard, Digital is open for business." If consumers believed that Digital was going out of business, it would make sense to avoid doing business with them. (Digital Equipment ceased to exist as of 1998.) Similarly, companies should exercise caution when it comes to advertising their success in solving complaints about their products because this implies that complaints are common.

Evidence on the effects of telling customers that a product is widely used

Let's go back to the lead-in question. The message about petrified wood could be taken as showing that theft is common, so visitors might think, "Let's get ours now before it is all gone." This is the prediction from social proof. A field experiment was conducted to test the effect of using the sign. Marked pieces of petrified wood were left in specific locations. When the park service sign was in place, the theft rate was 7.9 percent; when the sign was eliminated, the theft rate dropped to 2.9 percent (Cialdini 2006).

The following lab experiments also support this commonly used principle on following the crowd:

> **Charity donations were higher when potential donors believed that many other people had already contributed.** Five related experiments were conducted. In all, there were 630 subjects. Subjects were asked if they would make donations to a specific charity (the Heart Association in four of the experiments, and blood donations in one). Those subjects who were shown a list of donors gave more money (or blood) than the control groups. When

subjects were also shown how much the previous donors had given, they donated more—provided that the previous-donor amounts seemed reasonable to the target market (students in three studies and residents of a middle-class residential areas in two studies). They also donated more when the list of donors was longer (e.g., 12 names rather than four). Under ideal conditions, this use of social proof increased donations by a factor of four (Reingen 1982).

Additional support was provided by our analysis of a small sample of quasi-experimental data:

Print ads with evidence about wide usage had better recall. Our *WAPB* analysis found ten pairs of ads in which one ad provided evidence that the product was widely used while the other did not. Recall for these ads was 1.30 times better than for the other ads.

2.2.2. Focus on individuals similar to the target market

Birds of a feather flock together.

This principle was anticipated long ago by Adam Smith when he stated that it is easier for people to identify with specific individuals than with large groups.

In a 1991 Spanish TV commercial, *Gymnasium*, a principal finds a condom during a high school gym class. A whistle blows for the students to assemble: "I found this in your dressing room. Whose is it?" demands the principal. When no one admits to it, he grows sterner: "I said whose is this?" After a delay, a good-looking boy stands up and says, "It's mine." Then another boy stands and says, "It's mine." A girl stands and says, "It's mine." Young people identified with these students. The slogan, "It's mine," became popular among young people, appeared on T-shirts, and was incorporated into pop music. This commercial for condoms provides a good application of the use of social proof.

Social proof can be elicited by showing a similar person who is engaged in the behavior that is being advertised. These similarities can be expressed in many ways, such as by beliefs, looks, dress, voice, or setting. This principle tries to establish an emotional connection.

This principle is most effective when the association is new to those in the target market. That is, they were not previously aware that people similar to them used the product. For example, I thought that there would be little reason for me to become an organ donor because of my age. When renewing my automobile driver's license one year, I saw an ad that profiled a donor of approximately my age. Social proof worked—I signed up.

The identification can go amiss if the person in the ad does not match the target market. For example, a TV campaign in the late 1960s showed people from different ethnic groups enjoying Rheingold beer at celebrations. In one ad, the copy asked, "Why do more Chinese-Americans drink Rheingold than any other beer? We don't know. But we must be doing something right." The ad led to many unprintable letters and threats: "I wouldn't drink the same beer as those */%#!"

Uninformative pictures of "typical customers" are likely to distract from an ad's

message. For example, when universities show pictures of students, they provide no information because the target market already knows what typical students look like. In July 2006, an examination of the websites of the *US News and World Report*'s 120 top-ranked universities revealed that 56 percent showed pictures of typical students—similar, yes, but not informative.

Reebok misused social proof in its 1988 "Reeboks let U.B.U." commercial, which showed teenage oddballs wearing Reebok sneakers. In one example, the voice-over said, "Whoso would be a man, must be a non-conformist," "Insist on yourself, never imitate." Few teenagers want to be considered as oddballs.

Stewart and Furse (1986) found that most TV commercials used similar people—but many violated the principle. In addition, they found that 27 percent of TV commercials from major advertisers contained background characters that were incidental to the message. Similar findings were obtained by Stewart and Koslow (1989) and Stanton and Burke (1998).

Evidence on the effects of claiming use of the product by similar people

Three experiments on donations tested the importance of using a "similar individual" in an appeal to donate to life-saving efforts. The 672 subjects (Israeli students) were informed about either a group that was similar to them (in terms of nationality or skin color) or one that was dissimilar. The donations were immensely higher when the group was similar. The researchers then looked at the effect of focusing on a similar individual from the group (e.g., by showing a picture of an individual victim rather than a group shot of seven identified victims). The thought was that the focus on an individual would heighten the identification and lead to an emotional attachment. Donations to a similar individual were immensely higher than donations to a group of similar people. In contrast, focusing on a dissimilar individual did not lead to an attachment; in fact, it produced lower donations than did information about a group of victims. Thus, when the group was dissimilar, it was more effective to provide little information about the characteristics of the group (Kogut and Ritov 2007).

Over 600 households participated in a nine-week experiment involving La Verne, California's curbside recycling program. The first week, all groups received a door hanger asking them to "Please try to recycle as much as possible." Here is what happened during the intervention weeks. The:

- "plea plus information" group also received facts about recycling
- "household feedback" group received feedback about their own recycling behavior
- "neighborhood feedback" group received feedback about recycling in their residential area.

There was a significant increase in the frequency and amount of recycling by the household feedback group, and even more for the neighborhood-feedback group (Schultz 1998).

Field experiments demonstrated the importance of identification. They examined how signs affect the reuse of towels during their hotel stay. The standard sign, which

asked people to participate in the reuse program to "help save the environment," led to a 37 percent reuse rate. A second sign added a message that "In fall of 2003, 75 percent of the guests participated by reusing their towels at least once," and increased the reuse to 44 percent. Another sign reporting on the reuse rate of guests in the particular room—"75 percent of the guests who stayed in this room"—increased the reuse rate to 49 percent (Goldstein, Cialdini and Griskevivius 2008).

A similar series of experiments used a sign stating that most guests accepted the conservation norm and that many similar people at the hotel had recycled their towels. This led to a 25 percent reduction in the hotel's laundry bill in comparison with the older message requesting reuse for energy conservation (Schultz, Khazian, and Zaleski 2008).

Our analysis of quasi-experimental data provided additional support:

Print ads that showed products being used by people similar to a distinctive target market had better recall. Our *WAPB* analysis found 26 pairs of print ads in which one ad showed the products being used by people with distinctive features that were similar to the target market while the other ad did not. Recall for ads showing a distinctive target market was 1.21 times better than for the other ads.

Turning to non-experimental data, TV commercials rated above the median on being "for people like you," had 16 percent better recall and 21 percent higher persuasion than did those below the median (Walker 2008).

TV commercials with background characters were substantially less persuasive, had lower recall, and poorer comprehension than those without background characters (Stewart and Furse 1986).

2.3. Scarcity

In 1934, B. Altman department store ran a print ad with the headline, "We believe that there are at least 500 men in New York who love their wives ... and want to give them flowers for Easter." It sold 500 bouquets of flowers in three hours, and the ad was selected as the best retail ad of that year (Watkins 1959).

If people perceive that a product is restricted or in short supply, they often value it more. This is partly due to a desire to impress people by having something others do not have. In that sense, it seems to conflict with "social proof." However, scarcity sometimes serves as a signal of social proof in that "everyone wants this."

Scarcity plays a role when it is perceived as a loss of freedom of choice. In 1985, Coca-Cola found that in blind taste tests, people preferred the taste of "New Coke" to the old formula. However, when the company removed the old formula from the market, customers reacted as if their freedom had been violated and demanded its return.

Much legal research supports these anecdotes on loss of freedom. For example, in a simulated jury trial involving an accident, when jurors were not told that the defendant had accident insurance, they awarded a damage claim of $33,000. When told that he did have insurance, the award rose to $37,000. However, when told that he had insurance and the judge instructed them to ignore that information, the

award rose to $46,000 (Broeder 1959). Similarly, another lab experiment found that when weak information on guilt was ruled admissible in a law case, 26 percent of the subjects found the defendant guilty, and that the percentage rose to 35 percent when the same evidence was presented and then ruled inadmissible (Sue, Smith, and Caldwell 1973).

Still another experiment found that a judge's instructions to ignore information led jurors to give more consideration to that information. But this applied only when judges admonished juries to ignore information; it did not occur when judges stated simply that the information was inadmissible. In short, it occurred when juries thought that their freedom was being restricted (Wolf and Montgomery 1977).

2.3.1. State that an attractive product is scarce when it is true

> *All rush after the unusual, which is more appetizing both for the taste and for the intelligence.*
> *Baltasar Gracián, 1637*

When Unilever introduced the butter substitute, "I Can't Believe It's Not Butter™" (ICBINB) to the United Kingdom in October 1991, the Butter Council threatened legal action because of the use of the word "butter." In response, Unilever ran ads showing the storyboard for the "banned" TV commercial along with a story claiming that the butter interests were trying to remove ICBINB from the market. Within a month the company had trouble keeping up with the demand for ICBINB. The ad campaign won an IPA Advertising Effectiveness award (Duckworth 1997).

The scarcity principle is most applicable when a desirable product (e.g., artwork) is expensive, is bought for pleasure, and can be displayed to others. The condition "when it is true" is important for developing good long-term relationships with customers.

Explaining the reason for a shortage adds credibility. However, customers could become annoyed if an appeal lacks credibility. Consider this time-share condominium marketing line: "If you purchase now, I can give you the 'today-only price.'"

Avoid discussing utility when using scarcity appeals. For example, when advertising antique cars, do not emphasize gas mileage, safety, or speed. If utility is advertised, customers might then consider alternative products rather than thinking about the uniqueness of this item. Certainly this is the case for scarce products that are very expensive. For example, a defective Swedish stamp, printed in 1855 and used in 1857, sold for the equivalent of one dollar in 1883. In October 1996, this useless "treskilling yellow" stamp sold for $2.3 million, making it perhaps the world's most valuable item by weight.

J. S. G. Boggs is an artist who makes drawings of money and uses them to pay for his purchases. For example, he would go to a restaurant, have a meal, and present his realistic drawing, say of a $50 bill. His drawings were valuable and their worth was unrelated to the denomination that he drew. People who thought of them in terms of utility passed up an opportunity to acquire artwork that was sought by collectors and prized for its scarcity.

When Nabisco's Snackwells™ was in its early phase, demand was so strong that

consumers swept Snackwells boxes off the shelves. This led to the development of an effective multi-year campaign that included the tag line, "so good, can we ever make enough?"

Evidence on the effects of scarcity

Experiments have shown that people's desire for a product increases when high demand causes a shortage. In one experiment, 134 subjects were placed in rooms with a jar containing either two or ten cookies. A second experimenter entered the room to say that his subjects had eaten more of the cookies than expected; he asked for the jar with the ten cookies and replaced it with one that had two cookies. In another variation, the second experimenter also changed jars but said that he had accidentally taken the first experimenter's jar. Subjects who believed that the cookies were scarce because of demand thought of them as more desirable than did those who believed that the cookie supply was accidentally diminished (Worchel, Lee, and Adewole 1975). Further support was provided in an experiment on the choice of recipe books. Subjects had higher preferences when scarcity resulted from market conditions rather than from an accidental shortage (Verhallen and Robben 1994).

Experiments found that scarcity only led to higher demand when the product was already attractive. Otherwise, subjects showed altruistic behavior, leaving the scarce product for someone who wanted it more (Verhallen 1982).

Scarcity effects due to a loss of freedom were found in a "natural experiment" in 1972. Because of environmental concerns, the Miami, Florida government prohibited the sale, possession, or use of laundry detergent that contained phosphates. After the ban was implemented, interviews were conducted with housewives in Miami and in Tampa (which had no such law) who had used phosphate laundry detergents during the previous six months. The 76 Miami respondents rated phosphates more highly than the 45 Tampa respondents for each of seven characteristics, such as whiteness and stain removal (Mazis 1975).

In a representative study, 200 subjects were told that the study concerned "your perception of and attitude toward the art print," and were asked "How expensive do you think art prints generally are?" The subjects then examined photocopies of two art prints identified as "The London Bootblack" and "The Print Collector." They were told that one was available only from the French museum that owned the original painting, while the other was available from that museum and from "most stores that carry art prints." Those who believed that the print was scarce rated it as more expensive and more desirable (Lynn 1989).

Mentioning prices in ads could influence perceived quality and thus affect claims of scarcity. In a lab experiment, 171 subjects were given brochures describing a fictitious white wine made from a strain of "Seyval grapes that grow only in the Chateau Pierre vineyards" and claimed to regularly win the "French National Gold Medal for Exquisite Wines." Half of the brochures in each of the groups stated that the wine was scarce; others said it was abundant. The no-price condition read, "This wine can be purchased at an attractive price." The price condition read, "This wine can be purchased at the attractive price of $20 per bottle" (a high price for wine at the time.) The subjects rated a wine "more desirable" when scarce and when price was not mentioned (Lynn 1989).

Advertisers can enhance the perception of scarcity by giving some customers inside (scarce) information. In a field experiment, some customers of a beef-importing company were given a standard sales presentation. A second group was told that the supply of beef was likely to be scarce in the coming months, and they ordered twice as much as those in the standard-presentation group. A third group was given the same information about beef scarcity, but was also told that this information was not generally available—that is, the information was scarce because it came from exclusive contacts that the company had; they ordered six times as much as did the standard group (Cialdini 2009).

2.3.2. Restrict sales of a product

Hopkins (1923) claimed that, "An offer limited to a certain class of people is far more effective than a general offer." Mark Twain realized this in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885): "Ladies and children not admitted. 'There,' says he, 'if that line don't fetch them, I don't know Arkansaw!'"

A variety of restrictions can be used. They could be related to the time during which the product might be purchased, the type of customer, or to quantity. For example, in the mid-1800s, P. T. Barnum's circus ads used time scarcity, "This week only."

The effects are stronger if there are good reasons for the restrictions—such as high demand—especially for high-involvement products.

Evidence on the effects of restricting supply

To examine restrictions on the type of customer, a lab experiment provided 64 subjects with statements that were allegedly taken from a pornographic book cover. Half received an additional statement that the book was restricted "to those 21 and over." The age restriction substantially increased the desire to read the book (Zellinger et al. 1975).

Time restrictions were examined in three experiments involving 37 university students, 67 telephone operators, and 305 fast-food customers in natural settings. The time-limit restrictions were only successful if good reasons were provided (Brannon and Brock 2001).

An analysis of non-experimental data and three lab experiments, one of which was conducted in Hong Kong, provided further support. Subjects exposed to scarcity appeals based on purchase quantity limits, time limits, or purchase pre-conditions ("Only available with a minimum purchase of $25") had higher purchase intentions, but only if the price reductions were substantial. The scarcity conditions apparently led to an evaluation of the offer (Inman, Peter, and Raghubir 1997).

There is less need to provide good reasons for scarcity of low-involvement products. In a lab experiment, 145 subjects were shown ads for 2-liter bottles of soda. Some ads advertised no limit on the soda, some a limit of two bottles, and others a limit of four. Intended purchasing behavior was substantially higher when the limit was four than when it was two or had no limit. This is only profitable if the restriction is set a bit higher than the number that consumers would normally plan to purchase (Lessne and Notarantonio 1988).

2.4. Attribution

it is generally an inducement to profess to supply only to connoisseurs, for all think
of themselves as such, and, if not, the sense of want arouses the desire.
Baltasar Gracián, 1649

In 1968, Jane Elliott demonstrated the power of attribution by her "blue eye versus brown eye" demonstration with third graders in the Riceville Elementary School in Iowa. She began by telling the students that "brown-eyed people have more [melanin] in their eyes—so brown-eyed people are better than those with blue eyes." The resulting behavior in the children was remarkable. Brown-eyed children did better than blue-eyed children on tests that same day. The next day, she said that she had made a mistake and that science actually showed that blue-eyed children were better. This led to a reversal of behavior; blue-eyed children did better that day. The blue-eye versus brown-eye demonstration was repeated in classrooms across the country. The demonstration created a rift between Elliott and the school board that lasted for decades. However, the children remembered the exercise long after as an important learning experience.

The attribution principle been called the Pygmalion principle (after George Bernard Shaw's play, later adapted as *My Fair Lady*). Academics sometimes refer to it as "labeling."

2.4.1. Attribute favorable behavior or traits to the target market

In the early 1990s, *The Economist* ran a campaign praising its readers. One ad said: "A poster should contain no more than eight words, which is the maximum the average reader can take in at a single glance. This, however, is a poster for *Economist* readers." A billboard ad said, "If you're already a reader, ask your chauffeur to hoot as you pass this poster." A third ad said, "'I never read the *Economist*'"— attributed to a "Management trainee, age 42."

The idea behind attribution is to compliment potential customers as having traits that would lead to a certain type of behavior. Attribution tends to bring favorable responses if people are flattered and made to feel confident. People seem willing to accept nearly any reason to explain why they have certain good traits.

Attribution is expected to be more effective if it is not viewed as manipulative. Thus, it would be most effective for social causes, such as requests for charity donations.

Advertisers have long used attribution. In the 1880s, the John Wanamaker department store ran the following ad: "Rhinestones have their place, just as diamonds have their place. Ladies who use both know very well how to draw the line between them." In 1903, the inventor of Shredded Wheat advertised that it "sells chiefly to the best classes. The man with the dinner pail doesn't eat it." A 1950 Bell Telephone print ad read, "Your cooperation is always a big help in maintaining good telephone service and we want you to know how much we appreciate it."

Attribution lies behind what is probably the most famous TV commercial of all time—Apple's *1984*. It ran nationally only once, during the U.S. Super Bowl in 1984. In it, bald, hollow-eyed people march towards an assembly hall, where Big Brother

then addresses them on a huge video screen. A woman, pursued by guards, runs up and throws a sledgehammer through the screen. The viewers were told that on January 24, Apple will introduce Macintosh and people will see why 1984 will not be like *1984*. The sales response to this commercial was so enormous that Apple could not keep up with demand. The ad's implication is that IBM is for people who cannot think on their own, while Apple is for creative people like the viewers.[2]

Evidence on the effects of attribution

Grammar-school students in an "attribution group" were told that they were neat and tidy, and members of a "lecture group" that they *should be* neat and tidy; a "control group" was told nothing. Attribution was nearly twice as effective as the lecture in an immediate evaluation of tidiness. In a longer-term evaluation, the attribution group was even tidier than they had been on the immediate evaluation, while the lecture group was slightly less tidy than the control group. The authors speculated that the lecture method failed because it involved a negative attribution; it implied that the students were not tidy. Similar results were obtained in an experiment in four second-grade classrooms where some students were told that they had either the ability or the motivation to do well in math while others were not (Miller, Brickman, and Bolin 1975).

In a lab experiment, 318 subjects received ads requesting donations for the American Heart Association. Half received an ad that was designed for "helpful people" like themselves, Their intentions to donate were 2.8 percent higher than those not so labeled (Moore, Bearden, and Teal 1985, Table 1).

A review cited an additional five studies related to this principle and all provided support Furthermore, another field experiment involved mailing requests for Vermont Heart Fund donations to 1,450 residents of a small Vermont village. Positive and relevant label treatments said that they, "like other residents of their town were concerned about other people." This led to a 3.6 percent increase in total donations over the control-group treatment, which received the same request but with no labeling (DeJong and Oopik 1992).

A review described evidence showing that people believe that general-purpose positive descriptions of personalities are tailored to them (Snyder 1978). Further support was provided by a small-scale experiment involving 41 subjects who used a computer game. When the computer provided flattery (e.g., "You seem to have an uncommon ability to structure data logically"), subjects had higher ratings for the interaction, the computer, and their own performance than when the computer did not give flattery. Insincere flattery (where subjects had been told beforehand that the flattery was not based on their performance) was about as effective as seemingly performance-based flattery (Fogg and Nass 1997).

2.5. Liking

Have you shopped for a car recently? You might have noticed that salespeople want you to like them. They might show you an album with pictures of their family

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2   This commercial is available on YouTube.

as if to say, "Look, we are real people!" Then they confide that they like you and will try to get you a good deal from the nasty manager who will try to close the deal.

Tupperware, which makes plastic food-storage containers, has a "sales staff" consisting largely of women who host parties in their homes. The Tupperware concept is twofold: to sell the product and to recruit others to host such parties. People attend these parties because their friends, who serve as hostesses, invite them. They frequently purchase products because they want to maintain a good relationship with their friend, the hostess.

These strategies are designed to persuade purchasers to like the features associated with the product. A balance theory diagram can illustrate this. The lines represent relationships. A plus sign indicates a positive (liking) relationship; a minus sign indicates a negative relationship. For example, an attractive spokesperson who appeals to the target market and clearly likes the product is a positive stimulus.
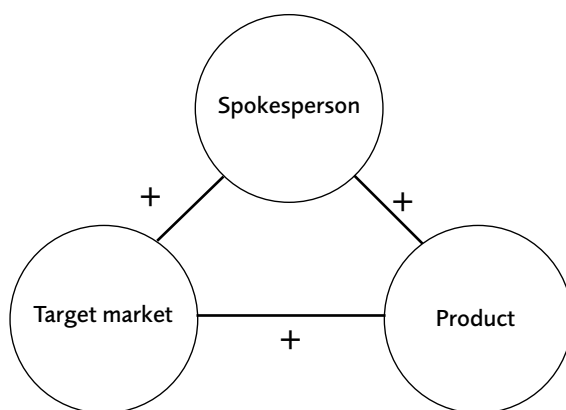
When the signs of the relationships are multiplied and the result is positive—as above—people will feel comfortable. But when the product of the signs is negative, people will feel uncomfortable and seek to bring things into balance. This notion, sometimes referred to as "balance theory," dates back at least to the early 1900s.

Consider an advertiser who is introducing a new car, the Cheetah, to the market. Perhaps it shares a desirable feature with a well-respected competitive product, such as BMW: "The Cheetah uses the same braking system as a BMW." Assuming that the target market already has a positive view toward BMW, the ad introduces a positive link between the Cheetah and BMW. To keep things in harmony, the target market would be more likely to have a positive impression of the Cheetah.

People tend to hold on to prior viewpoints when they encounter something new. In 1928, students in a German school were put into two groups, one containing those who were uniformly liked by the classmates, and one with students who were uniformly disliked. The experimenter trained the liked group to make deliberate mistakes, and drilled the disliked students so that they

performed perfectly. The students then performed in front of their other class-mates. Classmates viewed the liked group as performing well and the disliked group as making mistakes (Krech, Crutchfield, and Ballachey 1962, pp. 27–8).

2.5.1. Associate products with things that are favorable and relevant to the product.

> *In pleasure our minds expand. We become extremely suggestible*
> *and are likely to see everything in a favorable light.*
> *Walter Dill Scott, 1908*

A 2003 Kodak commercial featured a young boy in a store where a friendly Kodak representative is helping him to use Kodak's imaging technology to enlarge a picture. He enhances the picture, enlarges it to the size he wants, and prints it. We do not see the picture until the end of the ad, when the boy gives his grandmother a photo of her as a young girl playing baseball.

Consider associating the product with favorable things. This principle is expected to be most applicable for low-involvement products.

Advertisers should be cautious lest *irrelevant* favorable things overwhelm the message. That is, pets, babies, attractive models, beautiful scenery and so on—if not relevant—might distract customers from strong arguments.

Taster's Choice coffee ran a series of 13 commercials from 1990 to 1997. They started with a woman borrowing Taster's Choice from her male neighbor. Romance gradually blossomed, based on a shared interest in the product. While each ad had a beginning, middle, and end, the series assumed that the viewer had followed the previous ads. This led people who missed an ad to ask others what happened. Each commercial showed a new situation and ended leaving the viewer waiting for the next event. The campaign was said to have increased sales of Taster's Choice by 10 percent.

In June 2000, sales were poor at Sainsbury's supermarket chain in the United Kingdom. Research showed that its image was, "too elitist, too up-market, and a little too arrogant." To counteract this, Sainsbury's ran a series of TV commercials featuring Jamie Oliver, a likable 24-year-old chef who was passionate about food. After 41 commercials featuring Jamie, people felt a closer link with Sainsbury's. The Jamie campaign led to a substantial increase in sales for Sainsbury's and it won an IPA Effectiveness Award (Rimini 2003).

A 1983 study in the United Kingdom showed that everyone knew about the *Yellow Pages*, but many associated it with unpleasant aspects of life (e.g., the need to fix a leaking roof). To address this, *Yellow Pages* produced a TV commercial that opened in a secondhand bookstore as an elderly man asks for a copy of *Fly Fishing* by J. R. Hartley. The book is not available so he goes to another store, but the result is the same. He returns home and his daughter brings him a cup of tea—and the *Yellow Pages*. On the phone, he locates a copy and asks the store to hold it for him. They agree and ask for his name. He replies, "J. R. Hartley." He then sits back with a twinkle in his eye. This commercial ran for 12 years. It had a recall rate of over 80 percent, and many people could recite every detail about it. It was so popular that in 1991 *Yellow Pages* sponsored the writing of a book, *Fly*

Fishing by J. R. Hartley; it was a best-selling book in the United Kingdom that Christmas.[3]

The converse also applies. If you want to discourage behavior, associate it with unfavorable things. Thus, to convince people to avoid smoking, littering, or pollution, an unfavorable association can be effective.

It is risky for advertisers to associate their products with unfavorable things. For example, Coca-Cola has built its advertising around the association of Coke with favorable images. However, two of its ads in the early 2000s broke this pattern. In a TV commercial, actress Penelope Cruz guzzled a Coke and then belched. And in the "101-year old Grandma" commercial, the scene opened with an emotional setting for a family reunion; however, when grandma learns that there is no Coke, she goes berserk and disrupts the gathering.

A common-enemy approach might help when choice is limited. Find something that the target market does not like and show that your product is dissimilar. The most appropriate situations for this are political campaigns or public interest advertising. I do not recommend it for commercial advertising.

Oslo Sporveier, the public transport system in Oslo, Norway, used the common-enemy approach. Its TV commercial showed a middle-aged man's hat blowing off. As he runs for the hat, a young punk who is driving by in a convertible deliberately swerves to run over the hat. Shortly after, the middle-aged man is riding the tram, and the punk's car is parked too close to the tracks. The tram smashes past the car to the delight of the man. Employees and customers enjoyed defeating a common enemy, people who park on the tram tracks.

Again, the common-enemy approach is dangerous for commercial products. In 1985, Burger King ran a TV campaign featuring Herb the Nerd, a character who was so odd that he could not even find Burger King. The campaign's message was that you, the viewer, are not like Herb; thus, you will like Burger King. This campaign attracted much attention. However, Kanner (2004) summarized critics' responses as, "the most elaborate advertising flop of the decade."

Evidence on the effects of favorable and relevant images

Our analysis of quasi-experimental data suggested that the effects of this principle are weak. Furthermore, we only found evidence for low-involvement products:

> **Low-involvement print ads with favorable associations had better recall.** Our *WAPB* analysis found 17 pairs of low-involvement print ads in which one ad associated the product with favorable and relevant images, while the other ad did not attempt to link the product with an image. Recall for the favorable ads was 1.04 times better than for the other ads.

In an analysis of the non-experimental data in *WAPB*, we found that in comparison with the industry norms for each ad, the average persuasion score for the 42 ads using favorable associations for low-involvement products was 5 percent higher than the comparable score for the 46 ads without favorable associations.

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3   This commercial is available on YouTube.

2.6. Authority

In a series of lab experiments, a researcher asked subjects to send an electric shock to a victim if he answered incorrectly to a question in a "learning test." (This victim was actually a part of the experimental team and was not receiving real shocks.) The subjects could not see the victim, but they could hear his screams. If the subjects questioned whether they should continue, the experimenter said, "It is essential that you continue." Two-thirds of the subjects obeyed instructions to send increasingly strong shocks to the victim until it reached the maximum of 450-volt shocks. Many of these subjects thought that their subjects died from the shocks because the screams had stopped. While the subjects were upset at this outcome, they continued because they were following instructions from an authority (Milgram 1974). People greatly underestimated the percentage of people who would be fully obedient in this experiment (Blass 1999).

This shows the power of authority by looking at extreme—and negative effects. Authority can also, of course, be used in a positive way.

2.6.1. To enhance believability, consider using support from an authority

The authority principle is persuasive, especially for credence goods—that is, goods whose quality or performance is a matter of faith. If customers cannot judge the quality of a product, they often rely on an authority.

Believability is high if a respected person or institution supports the message. For example, selected British merchants have long advertised products that were made for a queen (or king): "By appointment of her Majesty."

The spokesperson should look, dress, act, and sound authoritative. The writing, font, layout, and illustration should look authoritative.

This principle seems so obvious that we might wonder what research could add. What the research has shown is not so much that authority is persuasive —but that it has such enormous power to persuade.

Evidence on the effects of authority

Follow-up research supported Milgram's findings on the power of authority (Blass 1991, 1999). In addition, I conducted an extension in which subjects played the roles of seven board members of the Upjohn drug company. They were presented with evidence from a panel of scientists showing that their drug, Panalba, was responsible for the deaths of 20 people per year, deaths that would not have occurred had patients used a substitute drug that provided the same benefits. None of the 57 groups who role-played the situation facing the Upjohn board of directors removed Panalba from the market (Armstrong 1977).

The power of authority was also shown in a field experiment in which 21 of 22 nurses administered a drug to a patient although the medicine was unauthorized and the dosage was twice the maximum dosage stated on the bottle. This happened although the doctor gave the order by phone (a violation of hospital policy), and the nurse did not know the doctor. In another sample of 33 nurses, 31 said they would not follow such an order. They did not realize

the extent to which they could be influenced by an authority figure (Hofling et al. 1966).

2.7. Commitment

People generally strive to behave in a way that is consistent with what they say and with how they have acted in the past. Consequently, most people honor commitments they make. This allows them to view themselves as reliable, trustworthy, and rational. Thus, commitment is especially applicable for actions related to the common good.

2.7.1. Ask customers to make explicit promises

Commitments work in many situations, but they are more persuasive for high-involvement products. They can help reduce a customer's perceived risk by allowing these customers to take a step at a time. They are especially persuasive when the commitment relates to socially desirable behavior. For example, to conserve the use of electricity, an electric bill could include an insert that would ask the customer to set a goal for the next month.

Evidence on explicit promises

When homeowners were asked to make a private commitment to save energy, they used about 4 percent less energy over the next month in comparison with a control group (Pallak and Cummings 1976).

Six experiments asked undergraduates to volunteer for either a university committee or an AIDS awareness project. In some conditions, subjects could volunteer actively by checking the "yes" box (active yes), or skip answering if they did not want to volunteer (passive no). In other conditions, they were asked to check "no" if they did not want to volunteer (active no), and skip this if they did (passive yes). Those who made an active choice were more likely to act on their decision: 47 percent of active volunteers came to pick up orientation materials over the next three days versus only 17 percent of passive volunteers (Cioffi and Garner 1996).

Assume that you are walking down a street and someone asks you to complete a short survey on what you think of the Heart Association. Whether you decide to complete the survey or refuse, the person asks you to make a donation to the Heart Association. Would the fact that you were asked to complete a survey make you more likely to donate?

2.7.2. Ask customers to take a relevant small step, then follow quickly with a directly related second request

One way to gain commitment is known as the "foot in the door" (FITD). It posits that people are more likely to commit to something if they have previously made a related smaller commitment, such as requesting information about a product. The initial step should be freely chosen. The FITD does not work when people are paid to comply with an initial request.

The greater the similarity between the initial request and the latter one, the more effective the FITD techniques (Freedman and Fraser 1966). For example, to enhance the likelihood of people volunteering to work at a hospital, they might first be asked to complete a questionnaire on ways that the hospital could provide better service. The hospital could then thank them for completing the questionnaire and request that they volunteer.

Advertisers have long used the FITD method for a variety of commercial products. In particular, when a product or service involves a large investment of a customer's time or money, it would seem useful to gain that customer's agreement to a small first step. An ad can ask for commitment, such as "call this toll-free number for information," or "put your name on our mailing list."

Evidence on the effects of the foot in the door

Now about that question posed about the Heart Association above. It is based on an experiment in which subjects who had been asked to complete the survey donated more money than those not asked about the survey (34 percent versus 19 percent) They also donated a little more per person; as a result, the total amount donated was more than twice as much as for people who had not been asked to respond to a survey (Reingen 1978).

One of the most influential papers on the FITD involved two experiments. In the first, as a prelude to asking whether a survey team of five or six men could come into the house to classify the household products that were being used, housewives were assigned to either a control group or one of three groups to receive one of the following phone calls:

- simply introducing the research project, with no request
- asking whether they would be willing to answer some questions
- asking eight easy questions about soaps they used.

Three days later, the researchers telephoned with another—and larger—request for a visit by the survey team. In the no-prior-contact control condition, 22 percent of the housewives agreed to allow the team to inspect the household goods. The introductory call helped slightly (28 percent agreement), agreeing to fill out the questionnaire helped a little more (33 percent), while the strongest effect came from answering the eight easy questions (53 percent). In their second experiment, the researchers randomly assigned 112 subjects to four experimental treatments and a no-contact control group. One treatment asked them to accept and display a three-inch square sign that said, "Be a safe driver," a request to which all participants agreed. Two weeks later, all participants were asked to put a 6 ft by 3 ft sign in their front yards that said "Drive carefully." Of the no-contact control group, 17 percent agreed to this billboard request. Of those asked to post the small window sign about safe driving (the relevant first step in this experiment), 76 percent agreed to the billboard request (Freedman and Fraser 1966).

In a field experiment, 88 heads of households in Toronto were asked to donate to the Cancer Society. The researchers asked one group to wear a plastic daffodil pin to publicize the drive, and all those who were asked to take this small step agreed to

do so. They made no prior requests to a control group. On the evening following the request, another researcher, who was unaware of the initial conditions, rang each doorbell and gave a standard speech to the person who answered the door: "Hello, my name is _____, and I am canvassing for the Cancer Society. Would you like to make a contribution?" In the no-prior-request control group 46 percent made donations as compared with 77 percent of the two prior-request groups. In addition, the prior-request groups gave more, with the result that the prior-request groups donated 2.7 times as much as the no-request group (Pliner et al. 1974).

In a meta-analysis of 120 experimental comparisons, the effects of FITD on persuasion were positive but modest. Many of the studies produced small effects, sometimes in the wrong direction. But when the analysis was limited to studies with an explicit, directly related second request, the FITD strategy was persuasive (Beaman et al. 1983).

Perhaps the most important insight into the use of the FITD principle was established by a review of three meta-analyses covering 43 experimental studies. It showed that the effect was much stronger for requests involving social responsibility (Dillard 1991). For example, FITD increased human organ donations (Carducci et al. 1989).

2.8. Reciprocation

> *There is no duty more indispensable than that of returning a*
> *kindness .... All men distrust one forgetful of a benefit.*
> *Cicero, 53 BC*

In the late 1800s, the Pears Soap Company sent a small bar of soap along with leaflets on baby care to those babies whose birth was announced in *The Times* in England (Twitchell 2000). Pears was building upon a social norm found in nearly all societies: people feel obliged to reciprocate when someone does something nice for them. In the 1880s, Quaker Oats gave out calendars, cookbooks, blotters, church fans, and free samples of cereal. In the late 1990s, America Online built its business by sending free Internet time as part of its direct mail ads.

2.8.1. Give something to specific individuals when they can reciprocate easily

A gift invokes the principle of reciprocation. It is not so, however, for *promises* of a gift. To be effective, an advertiser must put a gift into the customers' hands first—with no strings attached.

A gift loses value if it is contingent on something, such as sitting through a long, high-pressure sales pitch. In such a situation, people feel that they have earned their gift by listening to the pitch and have no further obligation. Interestingly, some vacation home time-sharing marketers lose sight of how to properly use gifts to create a feeling of obligation, and instead, aggravate their potential customers by enforcing attendance at long hard-sell presentations.

Evidence on gifts to those who can reciprocate

When a mailing to CEOs of small and medium-size businesses included a promise

of $50 upon receipt of a completed survey, it gained a 23 percent response rate after three follow-up mailings. That was about the same as for the control group, which received no incentive. But a survey mailed with $5.00 (cash or check) yielded a 49 percent response rate (James and Bolstein 1992).

Two small field experiments found that providing candy with the bill increased restaurant waiters' tips by 16 percent (Strohmetz et al. 2002).

A mailing that requested donations for the American Disabled Veterans received an 18 percent response rate. However, when the mailing included a gift, address labels, 35 percent responded (Smolowe 1990).

Checklist 2 summarizes the influence principles. Keep in mind that a campaign can incorporate a number of these principles. An award-winning TV campaign for Waste Management, "Helping the world to dispose of its problems," used six of these principles.

Checklist 2 Influence

2.1. Reasons 2.1.1. Provide a reason. 2.1.2. For high-involvement products, the reasons should be strong.	**2.5. Liking** 2.5.1 Associate products with things that are favorable and relevant to the product.
2.2. Social proof 2.2.1. Show that the product is widely used. 2.2.2. Focus on individuals similar to the target market.	**2.6. Authority** 2.6.1 To enhance believability, consider using support from an authority.
2.3. Scarcity 2.3.1. State that an attractive product is scarce when it is true. 2.3.2. Restrict sales of a product.	**2.7. Commitment** 2.7.1. Ask customers to make explicit promises. 2.7.2. Ask customers to take a relevant small step, then follow quickly with a directly related second request.
2.4. Attribution 2.4.1. Attribute favorable behavior or traits to the target market.	**2.8. Reciprocation** 2.8.1. Give something to specific individuals when they can reciprocate easily.

3. Emotion

The Philip Morris Marlboro "Mild as May" cigarette campaign, which began in 1924, targeted "respectable women." By the early 1950s, Marlboro's market share was 0.25 percent. In December 1954, the Leo Burnett agency decided to change the product's image from a woman's cigarette to a man's cigarette. It selected a masculine figure—a cowboy hailing from the fictitious "Marlboro Country." In the following 20 years, Marlboro went on to become the world's most popular brand. Its market share increased to 25 percent—that is, 100 times larger (Twitchell 2000). The effectiveness of the advertising was clear given that it was the only thing that changed. Marlboro successfully tapped into the emotions of its target customers.

Advertisements with emotional elements can affect consumer expectations, which in turn can affect the satisfaction experienced from using the brand. For example, the more people expect a product to make them feel relaxed, the more relaxed they will become.

Once people have become familiar with a brand, advertisers can shift the emphasis from information toward emotion. This was supported by an analysis of customer responses to ads for a toll-free medical referral service. The same ads were used in 23 markets ranging from new markets (8 months old on average) to mature markets (144 months old). Over time, the effects of arguments on "expected referrals" got weaker, while the effects of emotion became stronger (Chandy et al. 2001).

Emotional appeals are often used in motion media. Stewart and Furse (1986) found that 37 percent of their sample of TV commercials used emotional appeals. Emotional appeals are more relevant for hedonic than utilitarian products.

The principles on emotions are organized as follows:

3.1. Emotional focus

Within any given ad, a combination of rational and emotional content will probably not work. That said, a *campaign* might consist of some ads with rational approaches and some with emotional appeals.

3.1.1. Do not mix rational and emotional appeals in an ad

While many advertising experts have suggested that an emotional component would strengthen almost any ad, the evidence suggests the opposite.

Rational and emotional appeals can interfere with each other. If you build a mood, don't spoil it with a rational argument. Imagine that you and your sweetheart are watching a glorious sunset. Now consider how the mood would change

if you explained the combination of atmospheric conditions and dust that produced the sunset.

Conversely, if you have good arguments, do not distract people with emotion.

A key issue involves which emotion to emphasize. That depends on consumer knowledge about the product. Scott (1912) offered general advice when he said that advertisers should gradually build upon the target market's previous experiences: "Nothing is regarded worthy of our consideration which does not relate itself to our previous experience."

Evidence on the effects of mixing rational and emotional appeals

In an experiment involving donations to "Save the Children," a narrative description of a victim's plight led to higher donations than when the description also included statistics about how the donations would help. Apparently, the latter information damped the emotional effect and led people to think about how their efforts would help; unfortunately, it also led them to determine that their contributions would be negligible (Small, Loewenstein, and Slovic 2006).

> **Print ads that did not mix rational and emotional appeals had better recall.** Our *WAPB* analysis found 50 pairs of print ads in which one ad had either rational or emotional appeal while the other ad used both rational and emotional appeals. Recall for ads that did not mix the appeals was 1.24 times better than the ads that mixed them.

Turning to non-experimental data, an analysis of 80 automobile ads found that recall for ads using either a rational or emotional appeal yielded better recall than did ads that used both types of appeals (Mehta and Purvis 2006).

Eye-tracking studies of 190 subjects as they watched Dutch TV commercials found that people were overwhelmed when both emotion and information were present, and were more likely to fast-forward through such ads (Elpers, Wedel, and Pieters 2003).

TV commercials containing "a balance of rational and emotional appeals" were lower on comprehension and much below average with respect to persuasion in comparison with commercials that did not contain such a balance (Stewart and Furse 1986).

3.2. Trust

The best ways for an advertiser to gain trust are to tell the truth and to honor promises. This is especially important when a firm is seeking long-term relationships with customers. There is nothing new about this. Adam Smith said:

> The success of most people ... depends upon ... the opinion of their neighbors and equals: and without a tolerably regular conduct these can very seldom be obtained. The good old proverb, therefore, that honesty is always the best policy [is] almost always perfectly true.

3.2.1. Sign an ethical standards statement for each ad

> *"If you want to sell product, you should tell the truth about the product*
> *... stick to the truth, and that means rectifying whatever's wrong with the*
> *merchant's business. If the truth isn't tellable, fix it so it is."*
> *John E. Powers, Wanamaker copywriter, 1880*

Volvo showed in a 1990 TV commercial how its cars could withstand the force of being run over by a monster truck, while other cars were crushed. The slogan was "Volvo, a car you can believe in." When it became public knowledge that the Volvo car had been fitted with reinforcement beams for the filming of the ad, Volvo's credibility was damaged. The agency that created the ad resigned from the account, the U.S. Federal Trade Commission fined Volvo, and Volvo took out full-page ads in national newspapers to apologize.

Truth and honesty are vital for advertising, especially for organizations that desire continuing relationships. Most advertisers agree. Still, we know that some lying occurs, so the key issue is how to reduce the likelihood of dishonest advertising. Moreover, it is important to avoid even the appearance that advertisers lie.

Harvard Business Review subscribers were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement, "In general, advertisements do *not* present a true picture of the product advertised." Half agreed that it was accurate (Greyser and Diamond 1974). A series of Roper Organization surveys for the period from 1973 through 1983 found consistent answers to the question of whether we can be confident we are getting the truth in most advertising—about half were "Not at all confident." A 2005 U.S. Gallup poll asked people to rate the honesty and ethical standards of people engaged in 20 occupations; advertisers ranked next to last.

In the early days of advertising, truth was often ignored. For example, soon after tobacco was introduced to England in the middle of the 16th century by Sir John Hawkins, it was recommended as a treatment for toothaches, worms, bad breath, and cancer. Tobacco sellers continued to advertise health benefits up through the 1950s.

False statements are now more likely to be caught more quickly, thanks to the Internet.

Even small lies can be costly. Qantas Airways advertised travel to Australia by showing an airline seat resting on a lovely beach, "You'll feel like you're in Australia as soon as you're on Qantas." Actually, the ad showed the Lanikai beach in Hawaii. The *Sydney Telegraph Mirror* wrote, "If Qantas' advertising agency can't raise the energy to come to Australia, why should anyone else bother?" Given the complaints, Qantas pulled the ad.

One solution is to ask each person involved in the content in an advertising campaign to sign an ethical statement. Preferably it should be one that is endorsed by the agency.

Evidence on the effects of standards on ethical behavior

When dealing with everyday problems, we sometimes forget to reflect on our

standards. Thus, many people steal from their employer and students often cheat. So what happens when people think about their ethical standards? In one experiment, 229 subjects were given an opportunity to falsify a report on how well they did on a task involving answering a series of questions. Most of those in the control groups cheated, not a whole lot, but to some extent. However, some subjects had been asked to write as many of the Ten Commandments as they could just prior to taking the test. How many of them cheated? None. This occurred even though some students could only remember one or two commandments. Interestingly, when another group of students was asked to predict the outcome of this experiment, they expected cheating in the control group but they did not think that the Ten Commandments task would have an effect. In another study using the same type of task, cheating did not occur for those subjects who were first asked to sign a statement on the answer sheet that "I understand that this study falls under the MIT [Yale] honor system." As it happens, neither MIT nor Yale has an honor code (Mazar, Amir, and Ariely 2008).

3.3. Self-expression

When everyone is somebody, then no one's anybody.
Gilbert and Sullivan, The Gondoliers

In contrast to social proof, prestige is the desire to be special. Yogi Berra echoed this in his description of Toots Shor's nightclub, a former hangout for celebrities: "No one goes there any more. It's too crowded."

We purchase some products primarily to impress others. A prominently displayed brand name or label can be the major difference between a $2,000 Prada handbag and a similar $20 no-name bag. By paying much more for a brand name, we make a statement to others and to ourselves about who we are. We express ourselves through clothing, jewelry, art, music, and educational degrees. It is typical practice for advertisers to tap into customers' need for self-expression.

One of the more famous examples of self-expression advertising is a 1923 automobile print ad. While car companies usually focused on advertising their product's features, the Jordan Playboy car used emotion. The story goes that the owner of the Jordan Motor Car Company conceived the ad as he looked out of a train window, saw a woman on a horse chasing the train, and asked a friend, "Where are we?" The answer was, "West of Laramie." The ad then went into poetic detail in describing this "bronco-busting steer-roping girl" who "loves the cross of the wild and the tame," and concludes that the Jordan Playboy was built for her. Ogilvy thought this ad was absurd because it did not give the reader a single fact. However, because the Jordan Playboy car had no comparative advantage, an emotional appeal might have been a the best they could do.[1]

Self-expression themes became important in the U.S. advertising in the 20th century (Pope 1983). A 1928 ad by a steamship line illustrates this principle: "Crossing in the Aquitania carries as much prestige as twenty letters of introduction...!"

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1   The text of this ad is available on a Google search for "West of Laramie."

3.3.1. Show how the product allows customers to express their personalities

Because personalities differ and people see themselves as unique, the use of self-expression involves tailoring ads to subgroups. For example, when soccer star David Beckham adopted a clothing or hairstyle, young people all over the world copied it. In 1997 Brylcreem™, a hair product associated with an older audience, paid Beckham to be a model in its ads so that their hair cream would appeal to young people.

Bill Bernbach advertised Chivas Regal scotch in an ad headlined "Tsk, tsk" using the text: "After a party, the host is often faced with several almost empty Scotch bottles. And there's a natural tendency to consolidate the leftovers into a single bottle. Guess whose."

Ads designed for products that show one's good taste should be subtle. Some advertisers, however, choose to flaunt their "status appeal," as illustrated by a Mercedes-Benz ad in the April 17, 2005 edition of the *Wall Street Journal:* "More horses. Bigger engine. Increased envy."

This principle is based on received wisdom. I was unable to find evidence. It seems worthy of study.

3.4. Guilt

Guilt can arise from doing something that violates one's standards (e.g., breaking a contract) or by failing to take proper action (e.g., failing to help someone in need). Guilt can be resolved by taking actions that compensate for the guilt.

Guilt has strong effects and it applies under many conditions It applies whether the guilt arose from a transgression that is accidental or on purpose; whether there is a direct request for help or merely an opportunity; whether the request for help is from the victim or someone else; and whether the help benefits the victim or not.

3.4.1. Lead people to think about their standards

The New Haven Railroad used guilt to get people to accept crowded trains during World War II. When troops were being sent to war, the journey was often by train. A 1942 print ad, *The Kid in Upper 4*, said:

> It's 3:42 on a troop train. Men, wrapped in blankets, are breathing heavily. Two in every berth. One in every upper .... Next time you are on the train, *remember the kid in Upper 4*. If you have to stand—it is so that he may have a seat. If there is no berth for you—*it is that he may sleep.*

This was intended to make customers feel ashamed to complain about poor service. The ad was a big success. Thousands of people wrote to the New Haven Railroad office requesting copies (Watkins 1959).

Another application: "Saturday mornings—you can spend your time catching up on your sleep or catching up with your kids over Bisquick pancakes."

Guilt is especially useful for ads dealing with altruistic behavior, such as fundraising for charities. And indeed, guilt is relatively more common in ads for charities or public service announcements than in ads for commercial products (Huhmann and Brotherton 1997). Customers are wary of attempts to use guilt for commercial gain.

One way to induce guilt through an ad is to use words that support ethical standards. Another is to encourage people to think about their standards.

Ads employing guilt should avoid scolding the target market. Guilt should be raised in a gentle and tactful manner; otherwise, feelings of anger and annoyance might replace guilt. A 1926 print ad for Prudential Insurance failed the test. It showed a small boy explaining to a woman in an orphanage, "They said father didn't keep his life insurance paid up."

Evidence on the effects of attempts to induce guilt

A meta-analysis of 14 experimental comparisons found that explicit guilt appeals provoke strong feelings of guilt. Five of these studies examined the relationship of explicit guilt to persuasion, and all of them were more persuasive than less explicit guilt messages. This meta-analysis also supported many of the conditions for this principle (O'Keefe 2000).

A small-scale, non-experimental study involving 63 subjects who viewed two ads found that guilt appeals were less effective, and perhaps damaging, when the subjects perceived a manipulative intent by the advertiser (Cotte, Coulter, and Moore 2005).

The following is an example of a study on guilt that relies on people thinking about their standards:

A lab experiment showed how to use guilt to save water: An experiment on water conservation involved 80 members of the female swimming team at the University of California at Santa Cruz. Following a practice, experimenter #1 asked the swimmers, as they were on their way to the showers, whether they were in favor of water conservation. If a subject said "yes," the experimenter used a randomization chart for one of three treatments. In the "control group," there was no intervention. Here are the three treatment groups:

"**Mindful:**" The subjects were asked extreme questions about water conservation (e.g., "Do you always turn off the water while soaping up or shampooing?") to remind them that they sometimes wasted water.

"**Commitment-only:**" The subjects were asked to print their names on a flyer that read, "Please conserve water. Take shorter showers. Turn showers off while soaping up. *If I can do it, so can you!*"

"**Hypocrisy:**" The subjects received both the mindful and commitment treatments.

In all cases, the university had posted a large sign in the shower room that said, "Take shorter showers. Turn the water off while soaping up." If the subject said she was going to the showers and agreed to participate in the water-conservation project, Experimenter #1 signaled to another experimenter by casually scratching her knee, whereupon female Experimenter #2, who had been sunbathing by the pool, would go to the showers wearing a waterproof stopwatch to time the swimmer's shower.

Each of the three treatment groups was more likely to turn off the shower while soaping up than was the control group. The hypocrisy group showers were 27 percent shorter than those in the control group (Dickerson et al. 1992).

In a lab experiment, subjects were given ten one-dollar coins and were asked to decide how the coins should be split with an unknown subject. Control subjects, on average, left $1.84 for the unknown subjects. Members of an experimental group, before being asked how they'd split the coins, were given a task of unscrambling sentences; in doing so, they encountered words such as God, spirit, divine, sacred, and prophet. These "primed subjects" were much more generous; they left an average of $4.22. Similar results were obtained when a separate experimental group encountered non-religious words invoking fairness: civic, jury, court, police, and contract (Shariff and Norenzayan 2007).

You are in a supermarket and see an advertising display for margarine. The display is on a mirror used as a countertop so that you can see yourself. You are offered samples of fat-free and regular margarine. Would the presence of the mirror affect how much you eat of either type of margarine?

3.4.2. Evoke self-awareness

Another way to use guilt to change behavior is to increase people's self-awareness. This is an indirect way to encourage people think about their standards.

Self-awareness can be evoked in a number of ways, such as giving the impression that others are looking at you, or by looking at yourself in a mirror as you make a decision.

Evidence on evoking self-awareness

Consider the margarine problem mentioned above. The presence of a mirror was expected to get people to think about their internal standards for being healthy. In a field experiment, some shoppers passed a margarine taste-testing table that had a mirror as a countertop, while there was no mirror for other shoppers. The mirror led to a 20 percent reduction in the consumption of the full-fat margarine samples. These results are consistent with mirror studies that date back to the 1970s (Sentyrz and Bushman 1998).

In a lab experiment, subjects were asked to assign tasks to themselves and another subject. One task was interesting; the other was boring. In the first experiment, subjects gave themselves the best task approximately 90 percent of the time. To emphasize standards, in a second experiment, subjects were given a coin and asked to decide who would be assigned the interesting task. This had little effect. Reasoning that the subjects might be misinterpreting the results of the coin flip ("Let's see, I think it was heads that gave me the good task"), in a third experiment the coin was clearly labeled as to who should get the task. Again, there was little effect: 83 percent of the coin flippers gave themselves the best task. In the fourth experiment, subjects sat in front of a mirror; of these, only half of the ten coin-tossers gave themselves the best task. A small sample study to be sure, yet the pattern of the evidence is consistent with other studies (Batson et al. 1999).

In a ten-week field experiment, images of a pair of eyes (a new pair during each of five weeks) nearly tripled the contributions to an honesty box for drinks in a university lounge (Bateson, Nettle, and Roberts 2006). Given the success of this

experiment, I encouraged two museums to put eyes near their donation boxes and to keep track of the results. The Cape Cod Museum of Art in Dennis, Massachusetts, ran a test from July 15 through September 8, 2008. The treatments were alternated each week. The control weeks had only the donation box. In the experimental weeks, a Richard Perry "relief sculpture" of a woman was placed above the donation box. It is a remarkable illusion in which the eyes would look at people no matter where they were standing. The tests ran for 48 days. Donations were more than doubled on the Perry sculpture days.

A similar field experiment was run at the Southwest School of Art and Craft in San Antonio, Texas, by the director of exhibitions (my daughter, Kathy Armstrong). A photograph of eyes (my grandson, Peter's) was placed above the donation box during alternate weeks over a nine-week span. Donations were 13 percent higher with Peter's eyes.

What type of advertising campaign would lead people to use seat belts in the back seats of automobiles?

3.4.3. Encourage people to anticipate their guilt if they ignore reasonable advice

To raise feelings of "anticipatory guilt," ask people to think about the consequences that might result if they do not follow advice. For example, get them consider their guilt if their lack of action were to harm others. For example, in the early 1700s, advertisements for the Anodyne Necklace (which promised to ward off diseases) said that a mother would never forgive herself if her infant should perish without the necklace.

Let's go back to the question posed in the lead-in to this principle. In the late 1990s, only 48 percent of the people in the back seats of cars in the United Kingdom used seat belts. Approximately a hundred people died each year when back-seat passengers were propelled into front-seat passengers during crashes. Prior advertising urging rear-seat passengers to use seat belts had provided evidence on the importance of doing so to save their lives, yet it had little impact. In 1997, a TV ad campaign was developed to show how the failure of back-seat passengers to buckle up might harm others. One ad showed a mother driving her son who was sitting behind her. The voice-over said, "Like most victims, Julie knew her killer … it was her son," as the car crashed and her son was propelled forward. The words on the screen said, "Belt up in the back. For everyone's sake." The campaign, an IPA Advertising Effectiveness Award winner, increased the usage of rear seat belts from 48 percent to 59 percent, and was estimated to have saved 18 lives per year. Based on the injuries and deaths that the ad prevented, estimated savings were almost 100 times the cost of the advertising campaign (Broadbent 2000).

Some advertising tries to reduce guilt rather than encourage it. For example, advertisements for low-fat products might relieve people of their responsibility for their weight problems; they rationalize that they are doing their part by following the advice to eat low-fat foods. Three lab experiments involving the consumption of regular or low-fat M&Ms found that when foods were labeled as low fat, consumers,

especially overweight consumers, ate up to 50 percent more (Wansink and Chandon 2006). Thus, advertising for "low fat" foods would be expected to increase obesity.

3.4.4. Focus on victims similar to the target market

To combat drunk-driving accidents in Ireland, in March 2001, the McCann-Erickson Belfast agency ran a "shame" campaign. A TV commercial showed a little boy playing soccer in his front yard. He scored a goal and ran around punching air to celebrate. The ad then showed a young man as he scored a goal in a soccer game with his friends; he also punched air in celebration. Later, he was shown having a pint of beer with his mates. We then saw him driving home. He lost his concentration; his car hit the curb, rolled over into a garden, and crushed the little boy. The voice-over and on-screen print said, "Never drink and drive—could YOU live with the shame?" The ad had the highest recall of any ad at that time in Northern Ireland. Drunk-driving deaths dropped by 44 percent in the year following the start of the campaign. This campaign was an IPA award winner for effectiveness (Rimini 2003).

To enhance identification, the victim should be similar to those in the target market. The key is to try to establish an emotional connection with a victim. Thus, use actual people rather than actors. This advice is consistent with evidence showing that real customer testimonials are more persuasive than are actors playing customers.

The Humane Society of New Zealand faced the problem of finding homes for pets. It posted a billboard labeled "Death Row," which put dogs at risk in four cages with the text, "They have just 7 days to live. Call 0800-Humane to foster them." Showing the potential victims seemed an effective approach, rather than using a general appeal to save pets.

Evidence related to the focus on similar victims

In a field experiment, subjects were asked to complete a survey for which they received $5. This was to ensure that they had five one-dollar bills. They were then asked to read an unrelated request for a donation to Habitat for Humanity. It described four families who had applied for help in building and purchasing a home. Half of the instructions said, "The family that Habitat chose ..." while the other half said "the family that Habitat will choose ..." The donations given to the already-determined family were twice those given to the undetermined family (Small and Loewenstein 2003). Three extensions of this study obtained similar results (Kogut and Ritov 2005a, 2005b).

However, the effect applies only to similar individuals. The importance of similarity was shown in three laboratory experiments conducted with Israeli subjects. For example, in one experiment, 235 subjects were told about efforts to help tsunami victims in Southeast Asia. They were asked to help the victims, who were either Israeli or Indian. Some subjects were given the names of seven victims (either all Israeli or all Indian) while others were given the names of one victim, and still others received no names of individuals. Donations were enormously higher for similar individuals than for dissimilar groups. The focus on an individual was

persuasive only when the individual was similar to the person viewing the ad. In fact, the results tended to be opposite for the dissimilar victims (Kogut and Ritov 2007).

A lab experiment found higher intentions to donate to an organization trying to reduce drunk driving when a print ad showed real victims rather than actors playing victims. The use of actors to portray victims must be clearly disclosed in the United States, otherwise the advertiser risks a lawsuit (Shanahan and Hopkins 2007).

3.5. Fear

Warnings and threats have been used for centuries by preachers, teachers, politicians, and advertisers. For example, Doyle, Dane, Bernbach's 60-second television commercial, "Daisy," used in the 1964 U.S. presidential election, showed a young girl in a field, plucking petals from a daisy. A voice counted down from ten to zero. The camera zoomed into the girl's eye. At zero, her pupil showed an image of an exploding mushroom cloud. In a voice-over, President Johnson pleaded: "These are the stakes: to make a world in which all of God's children can live or to go into the dark. We must either love each other or we must die." "Vote for President Johnson on November 3" was then shown on the screen. Although this ad ran only once, two months before election day, it received widespread news coverage, including the cover of *Time* magazine. Johnson beat Goldwater by 23 percent in the popular vote.

3.5.1. Consider using a threat related to likely or severe consequences that can be avoided

> *Fear sets man deliberating—but no one deliberates about things that are hopeless.*
> *Aristotle*

In the United Kingdom, it was common for university students to violate the TV licensing law by getting the signal without paying for the required license. To address this, in 2005, TV Licensing, the agency responsible for the collection of the television fees in the United Kingdom, devised a campaign with a threat followed by a way to avoid the consequences. Its "Work it out for yourself" campaign refuted some myths among students, such as, "You don't need a licence because your parent's licence covers you," "There are no real consequences," "They don't let law officers on campus," and "The TV detector vans don't work." The campaign achieved 94 percent awareness among the target audience in the first month following its launch; students understood the message clearly. Revenue generated from the increased sales of TV licenses was 12 times the campaign cost. This was an IPA award winner (Green 2007).

As long as they are able to take sensible actions against a threat, the more fear people have, the more likely they are to take action.

Let customers know about threats in terms that make the threat seem likely to occur to them. People have difficulty understanding losses associated with low-probability events; to address this, find a time period that makes the loss easier to

understand. For example, in a safety campaign for automobile seat belts, the message might be, "Seatbelts can reduce people's chances of dying in an automobile crash by 45 percent over their lifetime."

Once an ad has established a threat as serious and probable, it should quickly show how a product or action could solve the problem. Some ads promote fear without a way to resolve it. For example, in recent years the U.S. government has periodically issued warnings about the threats of terrorist attacks, but without specifying actions that people can take to reduce the danger to them.

Stories can provide an effective way to transmit fear. An anti-smoking TV commercial in New Zealand showed a man in despair as he was dying of lung cancer. All he had to look forward to was a visit from his daughter. The ad closed by saying that he died before she arrived.

In the early 2000s, there were approximately 10,000 illegal minicabs in London. Unfortunately, some of the drivers were sexual predators. While their percentage was tiny, their existence resulted in serious harm to victims and widespread fear. To solve the problem, the Mayor of London's Office arranged for more bus routes at night, regulated minicab operators, and set up a special police unit to arrest illegal drivers and register their DNA. These steps had no appreciable effect on the number of rapes. The Mayor's Office then used an advertising campaign based on fear: "Know what you are getting into." The fear was in the statement, "Last year over 200 women were sexually assaulted in illegal minicabs." The ads then described how to reduce risk: "Check that the minicab driver knows your name and desti-nation before you get in. Always sit in the back and carry a mobile phone." Rapes dropped by 22 percent in the first 12 months of the campaign. This campaign won an IPA award for effectiveness (Hoad 2005).

Evidence on the effect of threats

A meta-analysis examined 98 experimental and non-experimental studies on the effects of fear on persuasion. Their findings suggest that fear principles are most persuasive for experience goods—those in which people learn from their use of the product. They were also more persuasive for people who have high self-esteem, perhaps because these people believe that they can handle the situations (Witte and Allen 2000).

Fear is high when severe consequences are possible, even when the risks have a low probability of actually occurring. For example, the consequences of the 9/11 plane crashes into the World Trade Center towers were so horrific that fear caused some people to avoid flying. However, they turned to a more dangerous alternative— automobiles. The diversion of traffic from the air to the road the year following 9/11 led to an increase in the highway death rate, such that the loss of life was estimated to be six times greater than the number of passengers who lost their lives in all four of the 9/11 plane crashes (Gigerenzer 2006).

Here is a representative study on fear. Two 60-second videos were prepared by editing an actual television infomercial for a stun gun. The first showed two policemen advocating the use of a stun gun for stopping assaults. The second showed the same police testimonies followed by these words written on the screen: "The following is an actual 911 call to police from a suburban neighborhood. The police

were too late. The woman was viciously assaulted and raped." Then viewers heard a voice-over of a 911 call from a woman alone in her house with an assailant breaking in. Her words, written on the screen, became more desperate as the assailant broke down her bedroom door. Her last hysterical words prior to her telephone going dead were, "Why are you here?! Why?! Why?! ..." The researchers showed each tape to about 150 women. The high-fear version evoked greater insecurity and led to higher intentions to purchase a stun gun (LaTour and Rotfeld 1997).

"Experimental data overwhelmingly suggest that all other things being equal, the more frightened a person is by a communication, the more likely he or she is to take positive preventative action," according to a review of the literature (Pratkanis and Aronson 2000, p. 210).

3.6. Provocation

Provocation, when used properly, can gain attention and lead customers to think about a solution. Consider this headline for a magazine ad that appeared below a picture of a knife: "Why you should think more seriously about killing yourself." In this case, provocation was used to gain the attention of those considering suicide and to let them know that the Samaritans can help.

3.6.1. Provoke customers only when it attracts attention to a selling point

Barnardo's, a British charity that is dedicated to helping vulnerable children, developed a "Giving children back their future" campaign. The ads showed shocking pictures: a four-year-old robs a bank; a six-year-old solicits as a prostitute; an infant injects heroin; a young boy is put in prison. The campaign won an IPA award for effectiveness (Rimini 2003).

Shocking images and controversial ideas can provoke viewers and listeners. They are likely to dominate people's attention, thus, they should be related to a simple and clear selling point. Furthermore, the selling point should help to resolve the viewer's feelings, otherwise, provocation might lead to negative thoughts about the advertiser's product.

Another example of provocation: To draw attention to what they viewed as racist policies, in 2003 a student group held a bake sale on the UCLA campus. It involved selling items at higher prices to white students than to minorities. The message was that such a practice is analogous to the affirmative action scholarship plans used by universities to treat some people better than others simply because of their race. The university administrators called the bake sale racist and discriminatory, and tried to ban the students. As a result, the bake sale gained national media attention over the issue of whether racial discrimination by universities is proper.

Provocation can lead to negative associations for a brand. For example, a TV ad for Reebok's "pump" sneakers showed, in slow motion, two bungee jumpers plunging off a bridge. When the lines contracted, the jumper wearing Reeboks is the only one left; next to him we see only his friend's empty Nike shoes. After complaints (presumably from Nike, bungee operators, and customers), Reebok withdrew the ads.

Another danger is that provocation can overwhelm the message. Consider the ad that showed a person who had doused himself with gasoline and then set himself on fire with the caption "Why kill time when you can kill yourself?" The ad was for a watch (Pricken 2002).

This principle is based primarily on received wisdom. Use with care.

Checklist 3 summarizes the principles related to emotions.

Checklist 3 Emotion

3.1.	**Emotional focus**	3.4.2.	Evoke self-awareness.
3.1.1.	Do not mix rational and emotional appeals in an ad.	3.4.3.	Encourage people to anticipate their guilt if they ignore reasonable advice.
3.2.	**Trust**	3.4.4.	Focus on victims similar to the target market.
3.2.1.	Sign an ethical standards statement for each ad.	**3.5.**	**Fear**
3.3.	**Self-expression**	3.5.1.	Consider using a threat related to likely or severe consequences that can be avoided.
3.3.1.	Show how the product allows customers to express their personalities.	**3.6.**	**Provocation**
3.4.	**Guilt**	3.6.1.	Provoke customers only when it attracts attention to a selling point.
3.4.1.	Lead people to think about their standards.		

4. Mere exposure

What if an ad provided a brand name but gave you no information about the brand? Would that make you more likely to purchase it? This section deals with exposure of the brand name or product, with no explicit message. Researchers refer to this as "mere exposure." The practice goes back hundreds of years in advertising. Companies pay to put their brand names on events, clothing, stadiums, and buildings, with the expectation that the exposure will create positive feelings about the product.

Mere exposure is primarily useful as a reminder. It is difficult to believe that it could be cost-effective for unknown products—unless the unknown product is competing in a low-involvement area in which people know little about the competing products. The September 27, 1976 issue of *Newsweek* magazine described such a situation: John Adams, an unknown politician with the same name as an early U.S. president, announced his candidacy for the Republican nomination in New Hampshire's congressional election. Adams, an unemployed taxi driver, made no speeches, issued no press releases, and spent no money. "I did absolutely no campaigning," he said. "With a name like mine I didn't figure I had to." He won the primary. The New Hampshire Republican party chairman said, "When people went to the polls, they saw four names they didn't recognize. I guess they picked the one that sounded familiar."

Is it worthwhile to spend money on mere exposure? A review found 233 studies on corporate sponsorship, only one of which examined how sponsorship affected behavior. The relationship was weak (Walliser 2003).

When considering mere exposure, prepare a forecast of the return on the investment. This advice may have been overlooked by the United States Postal Service (USPS) in their $40 million campaign to sponsor Lance Armstrong's cycling team between 1996 and 2002. The Inspector General of USPS conducted a retrospective estimate of the value of this sponsorship. The sponsorship brought in only $700,000 of revenues (and much less in profits). In other words, the expenditure on Lance Armstrong represented a loss to USPS of over $39 million (*Wall Street Journal*, July 23, 2004).

4.1. Brand name

When the brand name carries information and emotion, it may be cost-effective to advertise only the brand name to remind people of the product.

4.1.1. When there is no need for information, consider advertising the brand name

> *If the merchant can make his name or brand to be the habitual, recent, and vivid associate with his class of goods ... his success seems assured.*
> *Walter Dill Scott, 1912*

Here is the complete text of an ad used in the 1890s: "Coca-Cola."

After reviewing research starting as far back as 1876, Zajonc (1968) concluded that "repeated exposure of the individual to a stimulus is a sufficient condition for the enhancement of his attitude toward it."

Advertisements that include only the brand name can serve to remind people about the product and its benefits. An obvious application is to put brand names on clothing. In purchasing and wearing a branded item, customers willingly pay to advertise the product.

Advertisers who have no good arguments for their brand might resort to using mere exposure to avoid counter-arguments. This might be appropriate for low-involvement products.

Interestingly, customers are unaware that mere exposure affects their attitudes. They believe that they respond only to a product's attributes (Bornstein 1989).

In the late 1800s, Thomas S. Barratt purchased a quarter of a million French 10 centime pieces (accepted as English pennies) and stamped "Pears" on them. He then put the coins in circulation as pennies, to increase sales of Pears soap. The campaign was successful until the authorities told him that the tactic was illegal.

Evidence on the effects of advertising only the brand name

A meta-analysis of 208 experiments concluded that repeated exposure led to increased liking. These studies examined such things as music, people, scents, photographs, and words. One advantage of mere exposure is that since this type of ad does not present arguments, it reduces the possibility that people will develop counter-arguments. The hope of advertisers is that the brand name will spring to mind when one thinks about purchasing a product (Bornstein 1989).

Three lab experiments found that mere exposure is especially relevant for publicly consumed products that reflect on the social awareness of the user (Rindfleisch and Inman 1998).

In most commercial situations in which some competing products are already known, a campaign using mere exposure for a previously unknown product makes little sense. Two lab experiments support this. When involvement was low, mere exposure had effects regardless of quality differences. But for high-involvement situations, mere exposure could not overcome quality differences. When subjects were told that, based on tests by *Consumer Reports*, toothpaste and motor oil brands differed in quality, repetition of the brand names had a little effect on the subjects' brand choices. In other words, for high-involvement products, repetition had an effect only when there were no quality differences (Baker 1999).

4.2. Product placements

Product placements—or "brand placements"—can appear in a wide variety of entertainment vehicles, such as movies, novels, plays, and songs.

The use of product placements has a long history. In 1908, Cracker Jack managed to have its brand name included in the lyrics of "Take me out to the ballgame." In the early days of radio, products were frequently mentioned during

radio programs. MGM Studios has maintained a product-placements office since the 1930s. The practice has been grown over the years, and anecdotal stories claim great success, such as the use of Hershey's "Reese's Pieces™" in the film *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial*

4.2.1. Link the product to familiar and positive situations

> *Having the simple name constantly forced before one's indirect vision is*
> *enough to make many people react sufficiently to get the article.*
> Harlow Gale, 1900

In 2005, Tiger Woods was playing an important golf tournament. He hit a chip shot on the 16th hole; the ball rolled to the lip of the hole and then seemed to hang there with part of the Nike logo visible on the ball. As the ball rolled in, the Nike logo on it showed clearly.

Advertisers hope that when people see a product or brand in a familiar and positive situation, such as at a music or sporting event, they will associate that product with the good feelings engendered by the situation.

A survey of 28 marketing experts suggested that product placements in movies were most effective under the following conditions, using a scale of 1 to 7, where 7 means "extremely important" (Karrh, McKee, and Pardun 2003):

When product placements are effective in movies

Criterion	Rating
Brand has a very recognizable package or design	6.7
Brand is supported with other promotion and advertising	6.3
Brand has its own unique "personality"	6.2
Brand is already well known	6.0
Brand has a number of strong competitors	5.9
Brand is new to the market	5.8
Most viewers already use the brand	5.6

The same experts gave the following advice for movie product placement (7 means extremely important):

How to use product placement in movies

Criterion	Rating
Brand portrayed in a favorable light	6.9
Brand shown in use	6.0
Brand name mentioned in the dialogue	5.9
Brand is shown for a long period of time	5.8
Competing brands are not shown in the film	5.7
Lead actor associated with the brand	5.3
Brand shown in familiar situations	5.2
Placement repeats themes from the brand's advertising	5.0
Brand used or shown in a new or novel way	4.8

Subtle product placements such as visual-only or background placements might

be useful for avoiding counter-arguments. They are also less expensive than prominent placements.

Evidence on the effects of product placements

A lab experiment, comprising of 108 subjects, examined the effects of using a well-known fast-food outlet (McDonald's) as a product placement in two movie clips. When there was no repetition, the subtle placements (visual only) were just as effective as the prominent placements (audiovisual) with respect to brand attitude. When there were three repetitions, prominent placements were distracting to the subjects, with the result that brand attitude was higher for subtle than prominent placements (4.7 versus 3.5 on a nine-point scale). A second lab experiment used the same design with 155 subjects using Dell notebook computers for the product placement in a different movie clip. The findings closely matched those in the first experiment (Homer 2009).

In a small-scale lab experiment, 111 subjects watched one of two *Seinfeld* TV shows, supposedly to rate how well they liked the show. The shows contained 13 product placements in total, some of which were prominently displayed and others that were in the background. Afterwards, the subjects were asked if they would be willing to be involved in what was a different experiment in which they were to suggest items for a friend moving to a new apartment. They selected from a list that included products that had been placements on the *Seinfeld* shows. The subjects' brand choice changes (versus seeing no product placement) were higher for the products in the background display of the *Seinfeld* show (9.0 percent) than those prominently displayed (5.8 percent) (Law and Braun 2000).

A lab experiment using 107 subjects who watched versions of the TV show *Friends* found that "Product placements that were merely placed in the visual background were as persuasive as audio placements that were highly connected to the plot" (Russell 2002).

Checklist 4 summarizes the principles related to mere exposure.

Checklist 4 Mere exposure

4.1.	Brand name	4.2.	Product placements
4.1.1.	When there is no need for information, consider advertising the brand name.	4.2.1.	Link the product to familiar and positive situations.

General tactics

Tactics are more detailed than the strategies. They relate to reducing resistance, gaining acceptance, crafting the message, and attracting attention:

Resistance: How can advertisers overcome resistance to change? Much advertising seeks some type of behavioral change, so the section on reducing resistance is often relevant.

Acceptance: Principles for gaining acceptance should be considered for all ad campaigns.

Message: The principles related to crafting the message are broadly applicable. They are especially relevant to high-involvement products with strong arguments.

Attention: It might seem odd that the section on gaining attention comes last. After all, an ad must first gain attention if it is to have any impact. However, attracting attention should not drive the design of the ad. It is only after crafting a persuasive message that advertisers should turn to the issue of gaining attention.

5. Resistance

If people don't want to go to the picture, nobody can stop them.
Samuel Goldwyn, movie producer, 1940s

I had long thought that advertising was employed primarily to help people do what they already wanted to do. However, there has been growing research on how advertising can bring about change when the message runs contrary to existing attitudes and behavior.

There are two main sources for resistance to persuasion. First, a person might already have a strong belief on an issue and thus be unwilling to consider other viewpoints. And second, a person might be averse to rational arguments about a particular topic. I discuss each of these here.

Resistance based on prior beliefs

People often come to their beliefs after much consideration. New arguments represent a threat if the arguments challenge those beliefs. The arguments imply that a person with a different view has made a mistake. Naturally, then, they would want to defend their current position.

If people have strong attitudes on a topic (such as smoking, gun control, taxes, birth control, political parties, drugs, or war), the rational approach to changing these attitudes is likely to be unsuccessful, especially in the short term. Moreover, it would likely cause resistance and counter-arguments, and lead people to become even more rooted in existing beliefs. This phenomenon is strong; you can see it easily— just provide conflicting evidence to someone about a cherished belief. People tend to avoid challenges to their beliefs and instead seek confirmation of them.

Tolstoy expressed it well:

> I know that most men, including those at ease with problems of the greatest complexity, can seldom accept even the simplest and obvious truth if it be such as would oblige them to admit the falsity of conclusions which they have delighted in explaining to colleagues, which they have proudly taught to others, and which they have woven, thread by thread, into the fabric of their lives.

Resistance begins as soon as a person adopts an expectation. A series of lab experiments used a problem that was free of emotional content. Subjects were given a set of three numbers, 2–4–6, and asked to identify the rule used to generate these numbers. They could obtain information about the rule by experimenting; that is, they would generate their own sets of three numbers (e.g., 8–10–12), and then ask whether or not each new set conformed to the rule. Logic would tell us that to test a hypothesis, you must generate some experiments that could disprove the hypothesis. So a person who thought that the rule was to "add 2 to each number," could violate that rule (e.g., "add 1 to each number") to test this belief. However,

most subjects selected numbers to try to confirm hypotheses, not to try to disprove them (Wason 1960, 1968). A further study of the 2–4–6 problem found that most subjects believed feedback when it supported their hypotheses, but disregarded it when it didn't (Mahoney and DeMonbreun 1977).

When people, even those trained in the scientific method, encounter evidence that contradicts their beliefs, they are likely to challenge the evidence. In a field experiment, 75 researchers were asked to review a paper for the *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*. Some received a paper with results that confirmed the dominant hypothesis held by scientists in that field. Other referees received the identical paper, but with the results reversed such that they disconfirmed the dominant hypothesis. The findings? Referees were much more likely to reject the study with disconfirming evidence and to rate it much poorer on "relevance" and "methodology," although both versions of the study were identical in these respects (Mahoney 1977).

Leon Festinger devoted much of his career to research on cognitive dissonance and how it leads to resistance. Here are his conclusions:

> A man with a conviction is a hard man to change. Tell him you disagree and he turns away. Show him facts or figures and he questions your sources. Appeal to logic and he fails to see your point. We have all experienced the futility of trying to change a strong conviction, especially if the convinced person has some investment in his belief. We are familiar with the variety of ingenious defenses with which people protect their convictions, managing to keep them unscathed through the most devastating attacks. But man's resourcefulness goes beyond simply protecting a belief. Suppose an individual believes something with his whole heart; suppose further that he has a commitment to this belief, that he has taken irrevocable actions because of it; finally, suppose that he is presented with evidence, unequivocal and undeniable evidence, that his belief is wrong: what will happen? The individual will frequently emerge, not only unshaken, but even more convinced of the truth of his beliefs than ever before. Indeed, he may even show a new fervor about convincing and converting other people to his view.
>
> (Festinger, Riecken, and Schachter 1956, pp. 27–8)

Consider what happens when people are presented with evidence that comes from a trusted source, but contradicts one of their important beliefs. A group of researchers met with a church youth group. They (falsely) explained that more scrolls had been found near the Dead Sea. They went on to say that scientific tests established that the scrolls were authentic and that they contained correspondence among the apostles shortly after Jesus Christ had been crucified. This correspondence revealed that Christ was not God. The members of the youth group were told that the *New York Times*, under pressure from the World Council of Churches, was withholding the story. The group was led to believe that the reactions of various people were being studied to see what would happen if and when the *New York Times* released the story. What do you think happened to the beliefs of those who initially believed that Christ was God, and who also believed that the evidence was authentic? Did they increase or decrease their belief that Christ was God?

When evidence shows that a person is wrong about an important belief, that person is likely to fight to retain the prior belief, and as a result, will become even more convinced of its truth. Thus, the subjects increased their belief that Christ was God (Batson 1975).

The implication of the above findings is that if an ad presents good evidence to challenge an important belief, it might backfire. An experiment to test U.S. Surgeon General warnings on bottles and cans of alcoholic beverages found that those exposed to the warnings reported higher drinking intentions than those not exposed to warnings (Snyder and Blood 1992).

In another lab experiment, descriptions of films were provided to 60 men and women. Some of the descriptions included warnings by the U.S. Surgeon General about violent programs. The subjects who received the warnings reported a higher interest in watching violent programs (Bushman and Stack 1996).

Resistance to rational thinking

I refer to "rational thinking" as an economist would define it—cost/benefit thinking. There are a number of alternatives to rational thinking, such as to use values—that is, to consider such things as a person's opinion as to whether something is fair, ethical, or humane.

Larrick, Nisbett, and Morgan (1993) conducted two lab experiments to compare those who use economic rationality and those who do not. First, subjects were classified as using rationality based on their responses to questions such as: "Imagine that you are watching a bad movie for which you have paid $5. If the movie had been free, you probably would leave. What would an economist recommend that you do?" The four possible responses ranged from: "Stay, although the movie is bad, because you have already spent $5 on it. Otherwise, you are wasting your money," to "Leave because the movie is bad and the $5 does not matter now." This question relates to the sunk-cost fallacy. The answers were organized from 1 to 4 with "4" as being the most rational.

Here is another question used in the Larrick team's assessment of rationality:

As you may know, there are continuing problems with assuring that blood supplies for patients are free of all viruses. A suggestion has recently been made to purchase blood from Asians for use in the West, on the grounds that most dangerous viruses, including AIDS, are less common there. Many citizens of relatively poor Asian countries would be happy to have the extra cash; however, some have argued that such a practice would be an inappropriate form of exploitation. Do you tend to ...?

The five responses ranged from "Oppose the idea strongly" to "Favour the idea strongly".

Target markets are likely to include a mix of people at either extreme, and also people who focus on rational thinking in some situations and not in others. It is not always easy to target ads to each subgroup. However, prior research, summarized by Larrick, found that males and younger subjects tended to have a preference for rational thinking. In addition, rationality is related to intelligence and success.

Thus, for example, ads in the *Wall Street Journal* might assume that rational arguments are likely to be persuasive, whereas they would be less so for the *National Enquirer*.

The resistance principles are discussed in this section under the following headings:

5.1. Distraction

Advertising is "the science of arresting human intelligence long enough to get money from it."
Stephen B. Leacock, early 1900s

When there are no meaningful comparative benefits for a product, advertisers might decide to distract the audience. This allows them to remind customers that they are still around, and perhaps do it in a way to delight viewers. Distraction also avoids counter-arguing.

In the movie *The French Connection*, detective Popeye Doyle questioned a suspect. When the suspect said that he was from Poughkeepsie, Popeye said, "You still picking your feet in Poughkeepsie?" This nonsensical question was intended to disrupt the suspect's thinking so that he would be off guard when Popeye asked a question relevant to the crime.

5.1.1. For products that have neither advantages nor disadvantages, consider using distraction

If you can't dazzle them with brilliance, baffle them with nonsense.
Old adage

Distraction can be used to lead customers to focus on aspects other than the benefits of the product. For example, a Budweiser campaign had frogs croaking "Bud—wis—er." It was a pleasant distraction and it focused attention on the brand name.

Distraction is often used for advertising low-involvement products. As long as the product has no disadvantages for customers, distraction is unlikely to harm long-term relationships. Moreover, if it leads to pleasant associations, it can enhance purchasing and consumption experiences. In such cases, then, distraction can be beneficial to both buyers and sellers.

The following example seems appropriate: A print advertisement for Dove lotion had the following copy: "Skin Fact No. 21: The smoke from burning giraffe skin is used to treat nosebleeds among some tribes in Africa. These tribes always travel with a spare giraffe and a box of matches, in case they bump into a tree. (Not

really: I made the last bit up.)" The ad then showed a picture of Dove lotion and closed with: "Dove is all you need to know about skincare."

Distraction principles are questionable if they lead customers to make poor decisions that have serious consequences. The following examples were not well suited to distraction. In the first, Jaguar used distraction techniques in 2005 when it published a 16-page "gorgeous" ad in the *Wall Street Journal*. The ad consisted of pictures to appeal to wealthy people, nearly unreadable text, and no information about the car. The second example is based on an ad campaign begun in 2008 by Microsoft for its problem-plagued Vista operating system. One ad featured Jerry Seinfeld flexing his shoes and Bill Gates adjusting his shorts. There was with no mention of Vista in this distraction ad. Advertising experts were not impressed and the ad was quickly dropped.

When an advertiser decides to use distraction, most of the other principles in this book become irrelevant.

5.1.2. For products offering clear benefits, consider distraction only if the message will be understood

For important decisions, distraction should be limited to ads for products that are obviously in the customers' best interests. For example, it can be beneficial in promoting messages that conflict with harmful attitudes or behavior, such as in ads promoting smoking cessation. In this situation, ensure that the message is clear.

When people have a misperception about a product, distraction could be used to disarm people and thus to avoid counter-arguments. For example, many people have poor perceptions of soy as a food. Distraction might be used so they do not think about these perceptions.

Evidence on the effects of distraction for high-involvement products

College fraternity members were shown a 12-minute film in which a college professor argued that fraternities encourage cheating, dishonesty, social snobbishness, and racial discrimination, and therefore should be abolished. A second film used the same soundtrack superimposed on an entertaining short film about a different topic. Which film was more effective in changing attitudes of the fraternity members, the straight film or the distracting film?

By showing the subjects something that was irrelevant to the message, the second film disrupted counter-arguing. This led to a higher rate of attitude changes among the fraternity members who watched the distracting film (Festinger and Maccoby 1964).

Attempts to replicate this study led to five failures. In these failed replications, the distraction had interfered with the comprehension of the primary message. However, in four studies where the subjects understood the message, the replications were successful (Osterhouse and Brock 1970).

What is the best strategy for a panhandler (a street beggar) to use: to ask for "a quarter or loose change" or to ask for either "17 cents" or "37 cents"?

5.1.3. When customers might resist traditional appeals, surprise them with an unusual approach

An Ogilvy ad showed a man with an eye patch wearing Hathaway shirts. Why the eye patch? It might distract customers and reduce counter-arguments such as, "That shirt is too expensive."

By surprising the customer, an ad might encourage people to think about an offer they would have otherwise ignored. The surprise might also distract customers from thinking about objections.

Instead of a traditional appeal about safety, a Volvo car ad said: "It does 60 to 0 in four seconds flat."

Evidence on the effects of a surprising approach

Back to the panhandler question: In a field experiment, panhandlers made either typical requests (e.g., for a quarter or loose change) or strange requests (e.g., for 17 cents or 37 cents) of 289 passers-by. With the strange request, the total panhandler revenues were 19 percent higher (Santos, Leve, and Pratkanis 1994).

Which ad will sell more?
  A. *"For a package of eight note cards, the price is $3. It's a bargain."*
  B. *"For a package of eight note cards, the price is 300 pennies. That's $3. It's a bargain."*

5.1.4. For low-involvement goods that are for immediate sale, consider disruption then reframing of an offer

Davis and Knowles (1999) observed that people often respond to sales pitches in a mindless fashion, not attending to the specifics of an offer, but making decisions based on pre-existing attitudes. These researchers explored ways to disrupt a customer's mindlessness, and then give them new information, a technique they called the "reframe." They found that an unusual or unexpected phrase or wording made the next sentence in a pitch much more persuasive. It was not the disruption by itself that increased persuasiveness; the disruption made the next sentence more persuasive. This is called the disrupt-then-reframe (DTR) technique.

DTR has been traced back to Erickson (1964). Erickson practised hypnotism, and although his fame led people to seek him out for hypnosis, he realized that their unconscious mental resistance hindered their ability to be hypnotized. He sometimes used distraction techniques, such as speaking in a strange manner, looking up and to the left when people counter-argued, shaking hands too long, or interrupting a handshake, to disrupt the resistance; thus, people were distracted from arguing when asked to go into a trance.

Advertisers can use DTR for small, immediate purchases, such as for point-of-purchase, TV shopping channel, cell phone, or Internet ads. An objective of the DTR technique is to reduce counter-arguing; therefore, it is appropriate only for low-involvement or weak-argument products.

Evidence on the effects of disruption and reframing

Consider the question posed in the lead-in to this principle. In a field experiment, an odd phrase was added to a sales pitch for note cards. When a salesperson said, "They're three dollars. It's a bargain," 35 percent purchased. However, when she said, "This package of cards sells for 300 pennies," paused for two seconds, and reframed her sales presentation as, "That's $3. It's a bargain," 70 percent purchased. The increased sales occurred only when the offer was reframed (e.g., "It's a bargain" or "They taste good") after the distraction. Two additional experiments showed the effectiveness of distraction techniques when trying to convince people to sign a petition. In these, distraction more than doubled the compliance rates. Similar results were obtained selling "half cakes" instead of "cupcakes," and by asking for "money some" for a charity rather than "some money" (Davis and Knowles 1999).

Another field experiment invited subjects to participate in a lottery, then provided a subtle disruption ("350 pennies"), followed by a reframing of the offer ("$3.50"). The distraction/reframing version achieved participation by 43 percent of the subjects whereas the control version achieved participation by only 25 percent (Fennis, Das, and Pruyn 2004).

In field experiments conducted in a European retail store, shoppers were presented with an offer to purchase candy. The DTR subjects were told that "The price is now 100 eurocents ... [pause] that's one euro. It's a bargain." The control subjects were told, "The price is now one euro. It's a bargain." When the DTR technique was used, 65 percent of the shoppers made a purchase, while only 44 percent of the control-technique shoppers purchased. A second field experiment showed the importance of reframing the offer (Kardes et al. 2007).

Why do you get those mailings that look like they come from the tax authorities?

5.1.5. Create an unrelated problem, then remove it

Some advertisers use a strategy in which they create a problem on an unrelated topic, and then remove it prior to making a request. For example, a person receives direct mail that seems to be an audit request from tax authorities, but upon opening it finds that it is an advertisement. The advertiser hopes that the person, while distracted by the problem, will make a decision. However, some people might be annoyed with the advertiser.

While this principle is frequently used in an unethical manner, its purpose is sometimes laudable. For example, putting an ad that looks like a parking ticket on cars located near taverns would be a good way to advertise a taxi service to those who might have had too much to drink.

Evidence on the effects of unrelated problems

In a field experiment, flyers were either tucked under a windshield wiper (looking like a parking ticket) or taped to a door handle (looking like an ad). Two flyers were used, one for a fictitious medication for hair growth and the other an appeal for

blood donations. After the subjects read the flyer, an experimenter asked them to complete an unrelated questionnaire. The subjects, 100 in each group, were more likely to comply with the request to complete the questionnaire when the flyer had been placed to look like a parking ticket (62 percent) than when placed to look like an ad 37 percent (Dolinski and Nawrat 1998).

5.2. Perspectives

> Monk 1: "I asked the Abbot if I could smoke while I prayed, and he said no."
> Monk 2: "That's odd. I asked him if I could pray while I smoked, and he said yes."

Perspective refers to the way in which a product or offer is viewed. It involves considering different ways to say the same thing. A glass of water can be described as being half-empty or half-full. The research literature refers to this concept as "framing."

Perspectives can be done with words or with illustrations. They are especially effective if tied to people's common ways of thinking, as shown by the illustration. The background leads you to develop a story, say of a large angry monster with an angry facial expression chasing a small frightened animal. As you can tell from close inspection the size and facial expressions of the two animals are identical in this Monster Chase.[1]

There are many ways to present a product in a way that enhances it.

5.2.1. Present an offer from a new perspective

A 1964 Volkswagen print ad by Bernbach showed a picture of a car with the headline, "$1.02 a pound." The copy said: "A new Volkswagen costs $1,595. But that isn't as cheap as it sounds. Pound for pound, a VW costs more than practically any car you can name." The copy described all of the steps involved to justify the high cost per pound. It closed with,

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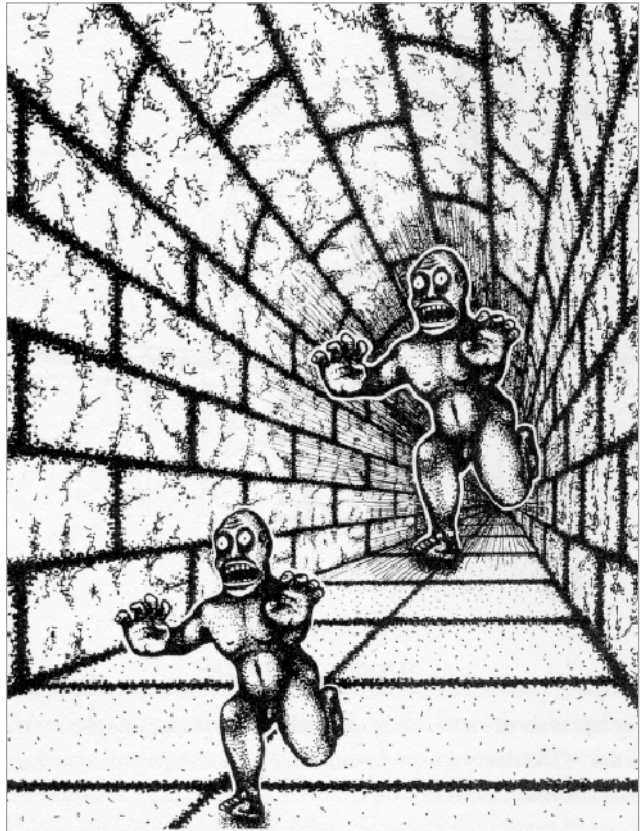
1   Illustration of running monsters from *Mind Sights* by Roger N. Shepard. Copyright © by Roger N. Shepard. Reprinted by arrangement with Henry Holt and Company, LLC.

"It's something to think about. Particularly if you haven't bought a Volkswagen because you thought they didn't cost enough."

When an offer is presented, it might look similar to an offer that many customers have rejected in the past. So an automatic response takes over. By presenting the offer in a new manner, however, an ad might be able to bypass the automatic rejection. Convincing customers to look at a product from a new perspective can be persuasive.

Ricoh applied a new perspective when it ran a two-page ad for a duplicating machine: The first page read "Would you tolerate an employee who's anti-social, temperamental, abuses power, wastes office supplies, antagonizes other employees, requires professional help, and makes a habit of taking unscheduled vacations?" The next page read, "Then fire your copy machine."

In 1996, Kellogg proposed to introduce Nutri-Grain™ as a healthy alternative to candy snacks. Its advertising agency had a better idea, and suggested launching Nutri-Grain as "breakfast on the go." This strategy avoided associating Nutri-Grain with unhealthy snack foods, while reminding people that it was unhealthy to skip breakfast. This reframing of Nutri-Grain from "snack" to "breakfast" was successful, and Kellogg won an IPA Advertising Effectiveness award (Broadbent 2000).

The Save the Children Fund in the United Kingdom used a new perspective when it developed the "Skip a lunch and save a life" campaign in 1991. By skipping a lunch and donating the money, someone could feed a family in Africa for a week. The investment of $300,000 for the campaign produced donations of almost $10 million, and won an IPA effectiveness award (Baker 1993).

People often become accustomed to paying a certain amount for a product. For example, let's say people are used to paying about $30 for books. There are many ways to frame this transaction. A customer purchasing a book might state, "I want a book for entertainment," "for my job," or "for a gift." This indicates which features and benefits the customer might use to evaluate the alternatives at the moment. A seller may attempt to draw different features into the customer's frame of reference. For example, when a buyer searches for a book related to their career, a seller might frame the price of the book as more complete in its coverage or easier to use, and thus more cost-effective in the long run. The book you are reading now, for example, contains 194 advertising principles. The price will appear as a bargain if the customer thinks about the price per principle, each of which can yield substantial returns.

Evidence on the effects of new perspectives

An analysis of non-experimental data found that TV commercials above the median for ratings of "makes you think about the brand in a new way" had 4 percent better recall and 21 percent higher persuasion scores than commercials below the median (Walker 2008).

5.2.2. Focus on benefits or features rather than choices

Once people have made a product choice, they become resistant to alternatives. For example, if they have purchased a particular brand of vodka in the past, they

may be resistant to suggestions that they should purchase a different brand. This resistance to change can be strong even if their initial selection is not optimal for their current needs.

An attempt to get people to change their choice (e.g., away from a currently used brand) could lead them to defend that current choice—otherwise, they might look irrational. Instead of asking customers to make a choice, ask them to first think about the benefits or features they desire, and then consider how the available options meet their criteria. Thus, they will look rational by picking the choice that is consistent with their criteria.

For example, an ad could ask people if they would prefer to control some of their investments or have politicians make all investment decisions for them. Then ask them to consider how they would like their country's social security system to work.

This principle is based on received wisdom. It deserves to be tested.

5.3. Stories

> *A well-told story of one starving child will get more reaction than*
> *the account of one hundred thousand famine victims.*
> *Poffenberger (1925)*

When arguing, people often use stories—well-described examples—to support their positions. This is not logical as an argument. However, when it comes to persuasion, the practice has merit.

5.3.1. When the target market has an opposing viewpoint, consider using a story

To combat the commonly held viewpoint that fast food is fattening, Subway told how Jared Fogle lost 245 pounds by eating Subway sandwiches, dieting, and exercising. It was regarded as a highly successful TV campaign, and it had the highest recall of any U.S. commercial during the 2004 Christmas holidays ("#1 Subway," *Advertising Age* 76(2) (2005), p. 16).

Here is another effective story: The Wells Rich Green agency used a story in an ad to discourage people from driving after drinking. It showed a home video of a child and concluded with the printed message: "Alex Bishop, killed by a drunk driver on November 8, 1992, on Kent-Kangley Road, in Kent, Washington." The agency could have used statistics about the thousands of deaths that drunk driving causes each year; however, this single, vivid example probably had more impact.

There are a number of reasons why stories are effective when the consumer has an opposing view. First, they can convey powerful emotional images that are easy to remember. Second, they can put facts into a context that aids recall. Third, they lead people to think about the example, not the evidence. Fourth, and probably most important, because they do not directly attack a person's beliefs, they are less likely to induce counter-arguing.

Recall can be enhanced by telling a story so that it can easily be reconstructed. This suggests that a logical chronological order should be used.

To further discourage counter-arguing, use "drama." That is, tell the story directly, without a narrator; that way there is no source to challenge.

Evidence on the effects of stories

In a lab experiment, 53 subjects received messages about the perils of drinking alcohol. The messages challenged their beliefs. Some messages included arguments dealing with health risks, economic and career harm, or drunk driving, supported by statistical evidence. Other messages, randomly assigned, contained a story about "Mark, a roommate of a friend of mine," and his problem with alcoholism. The story was successful in changing opinions, whereas statistical evidence was not (Slater and Rouner 1996).

In a non-experimental study, 1,215 subjects viewed one of 40 prime-time national TV commercials. Commercials using drama had less counter-arguing than commercials that used only arguments (Deighton, Romer and McQueen 1989).

5.4. Barriers

It is common when advertising a product to emphasize the reasons why someone should purchase it. Another approach is to look at the reasons why people do not purchase, and to explain why these are not important or how they can be overcome.

Barriers to be removed might involve issues such as technical support following a computer purchase, finding parking spaces near a restaurant, or arranging delivery of heavy products. Or it might be something as simple as a product with an ambiguous name. A 1924 ad for Chrysler automobiles explained, "pronounced as though spelled 'Cry-sler,'" to help people who might be embarrassed if they mispronounced it.

Advertisers have long advertised that they can overcome barriers to customer satisfaction. An ad on a wall in Pompeii said: "The troops of gladiators of the Aedil will fight on the 31st of May. There will be ... an awning to keep off the sun."

In an effort to overcome the negative perceptions about features of dry dog food, Bakers marketed its Bakers Complete as "moist looking." The campaign won an IPA Award for Effectiveness (Binet 2006).

5.4.1. Offer credit for currently owned products

> *[Sewing] machines of other makers taken in exchange at their market value.*
> *Ad for the Wilcox & Gibbs Silent Sewing Machine, 1869*

Suppose that you are selling men's suits. Your advertising agency proposes two possibilities for print advertising, each with the same price. Which would you choose?

A) Clip this coupon and we will give you $100 off any suit in the store.
B) Bring in your old suit and we will give you $100 for it when you purchase any suit in the store.

An economist would note that alternative A is the better deal. It is easier to clip the coupon and take it to the store than to take an old suit. More importantly, using the coupon would enable you to buy the new suit and keep the old suit. Hal Arkes (personal correspondence) conducted this unpublished experiment in a menswear store in Washington, D.C. The result? The advertisement that offered money for an old suit was much more effective than coupons in generating sales, because the purchase seemed wasteful—why buy a suit when I already have a suit that is still presentable?

This perception of "waste" can occur when customers already possess similar items. Advertisers can overcome this by offering credit for the owned item, as they commonly do via automobile trade-ins.

This problem of waste is related to the sunk-cost fallacy. Once people make an investment, they are reluctant to ignore what they have already spent when making decisions about the future.

Many firms use this principle. For example, in 2007, when Apple wanted to encourage people to purchase music albums on iTunes™, it realized that people would be less likely to purchase an album if they already owned one of the songs on the album. Therefore, it advertised that people would receive credit for the songs that they had previously purchased.

The objective of this principle is to help customers overcome the perception of "wasteful" behavior for the mutual benefit of both buyer and seller. One way to overcome this irrational behavior—and to enhance the purchasing experience—is to make a trade-in on the currently owned product a larger proportion of the transaction.

Evidence on the effects of offering credit for currently owned substitutes

In a lab experiment on a new-car purchase where two deals were financially equivalent, customers preferred the one where they were paid more on the trade-in—and, of course, more for the new car (Purohit 1995).

In a field experiment, people who approached the Ohio University Theater ticket booth to purchase season tickets were assigned randomly to pay $8, $13, or $15 per ticket. Those who paid lower prices (i.e., those with a lower sunk cost), attended fewer plays over the next six months. The rational rule, of course, is to ignore sunk costs and focus only on the costs that vary with the decision. Interestingly, experiments have shown that young children (and animals) act rationally and ignore sunk costs, while most adults do not (Arkes and Ayton 1999).

Assume that you are advertising a three-day conference to busy people. How should you advertise to increase the likelihood of attendance?

5.4.2. Seek early commitment for time-consuming activities

I was sitting in a meeting counting the hours until I could leave. From my perspective, nothing useful was occurring. People in the group kept talking about how busy they were this year. Near the end of the meeting someone said, "Why don't we have a meeting like this next year?" I was the lone protestor. Why did

everyone else agree? Perhaps they imagined they would not be so busy next year.

When asked to do something in the near future, people are more aware of the constraints and more likely to focus on the negatives. But if asked to participate in something in the distant future, they are more likely to focus on the positive aspects and be optimistic about having the time or resources.

When resistance is expected, it is more persuasive to seek a time commitment well in advance. This principle strikes me as common sense.

Assume that you are trying to raise money for a charity using a direct mail campaign. Which approach would produce the largest amount of donations: a request for "$5 or $10 or $25" or for "$50 or $100 or $250"?

5.4.3. Consider making small requests

The American Cancer Society faced this donation question. One approach is to think in terms of possible objections that donors might make. An obvious objection is that they have limited money for charitable donations and have not budgeted to make another. To overcome this objection, make a small request. This principle is relevant mainly for social causes.

Evidence on effects of small requests

Four pairs of college students went door-to-door seeking donations for the American Cancer Society from 84 adult residents of a middle-income suburban housing area. In the control condition, the solicitors delivered a standard plea: "Would you be willing to help by giving a donation?" Half the time, they added the phrase, "Even a penny will help" to overcome people's objections that they have limited funds for charities. Of those who were told that "even a penny will help," almost twice as many donated. The contribution per person was the same for each group: thus, the technique doubled the amount donated (Cialdini and Schroeder 1976).

Back to the question on the charity. Experimenters sent 6,000 mail advertisements for American Cancer Society: for one-third, a control group, no specific amount was requested; one-third were asked for small donations ($5, $10, or $25); and one-third were asked for large donations ($50, $100, or $250). In comparison with the large requests, about 2.5 times as many people who received a request for small amounts donated, and, on average, individuals in each group gave approximately the same amount. Thus, asking for small donations brought in 2.5 times more money than asking for large donations (Weyant and Smith 1987).

This principle runs counter to the practices that many advertisers use. That said, the principle does not always provide better results, so more research is needed on the conditions.

5.5. Brand or company emphasis

Long ago, customers traded with local shopkeepers whom they knew and trusted.

What replaces trust when sellers became large and impersonal? One answer is brands. A recognizable brand (or company name) says, "You can trust us; we will be around for a long time."

From 1894 through 1925, a total of 1,500 companies produced branded automobiles. But by the end of 1926, only 44 were still in business (Goodrum and Dalrymple 1990). Imagine the difficulty that car purchasers of that period faced. Which company should they trust?

In 1921, Raymond Rubicam was given an assignment to create print ads for E. R. Squibb's over-the-counter pharmaceutical products. After developing many possible headlines, he decided on: "The priceless ingredient of every product is the honor and integrity of its makers." In 1954, when *Printer's Ink* surveyed its readers for the greatest ads of all time, this was one of two runners-up (Fox 1997).

An emphasis on company or brand is especially useful for a credence product. Because consumers cannot judge from their experience, they want to buy from a seller they trust. Thus, do not emphasize the brand for a company that is not well respected—a situation some accounting firms in the United States have faced.

5.5.1. Make the brand or company name prominent if it conveys a good image

In the successful Bose Wave Radio print ad, "Why you should pay $349 for this radio," Bose was mentioned ten times.

A grapefruit ad presented a series of statements, including, "You can tell a melon's perfect by squeezing it, you can tell a pear's perfect by sniffing it, and you can tell a banana's perfect by peeling it." Then, under a photo of a grapefruit with "Jaffa" stamped on it, it stated, "You can tell a grapefruit's perfect just by reading it."

A focus on brand name is especially important when the brand enjoys a well-known and favorable image among the target market. Firms expend enormous sums to enhance their brand and company names to elicit favorable feelings in their target market—it's like seeing an old friend.

The brand name should typically be placed at the beginning and end of an ad, and in logical places in the text, such as in illustrations and captions. Space the repetitions throughout the ad so that they are subtle. When feasible, ads should include clear visual and audio identification of the brand.

To show that a company will be there for customers in the future, emphasize that the company is large and successful, has been in business for many years, and is growing. This is especially important for a high-involvement product. For example, Mayflower, a household moving company, emphasizes that it was founded in 1927.

If the firm is small and not well known, provide a street address, rather than a post-office box number, to show that it can be located.

The condition "if it conveys a good image" is important. "Mystery ads," those that conceal the brand and the seller until very late in an ad—or not at all—should only be used where the advertiser does not have a good reputation.

If a strong argument exists and the brand and company image is not favorable to the target market, mystery ads are appropriate. A mystery ad with a strong argument might draw customers into the ad, whereas the company or brand image might lead people to skip the ad. For example, an ad from a Republican candidate

might immediately turn off a potential Democrat voter even if the message would be useful to that voter.

Nokia, a well-known and respected company, used mystery ads in a 2004–08 campaign. Its large ads, which appeared in the *Wall Street Journal* and other media, never mentioned the brand, product, or company. One contained the picture of a man jumping into a swimming pool with the caption, "splashed at 2:14." I asked people what they thought was being advertised and hardly anyone knew. Finally, I found a version of the ad with text describing Nokia cell phones. Later ads also ran with no clues.

In the late 1990s, several well-known companies used mystery ads. Foot Locker, Oldsmobile, Reebok, Sony's promotion of a movie (*Godzilla*), and Lee Jeans were called leaders in this movement (Neuborne 1998). Given that they are all well-respected companies, it seems odd that they would use mystery ads. And in retrospect, these examples do not provide good endorsements for mystery ads: Foot Locker's stock price dropped sharply right after this campaign, Oldsmobile went defunct in 2004, Reebok was acquired by Adidas in 2005, Sony's *Godzilla* was a judged an economic failure, and Lee Jeans suffered a sharp stock decline soon after the ads were run.

The principle of keeping the name prominent is widely used. On average, brand names were repeated almost four times in a sample of mostly 30-second TV commercials by leading advertisers. In addition, 95 percent of the commercials used visual brand sign-offs, and 71 percent used auditory sign-offs (Stewart and Furse 1986).

Our *WAPB* analysis found that, of the 480 print ads covered (almost all from well-known brands), 93 percent repeated brand names. In addition, 89 percent of them mentioned the brand name near the beginning of the ads.

Evidence on the effects of prominent mention of brand names

Our analysis of quasi-experimental data supports this principle:

> **Print ads that displayed brand names prominently had better recall.** Our analysis of *WAPB* found 18 pairs of print ads in which one ad displayed the brand name in prominent manner (with at least three repetitions) while it was not prominent in the other ad. The ads with the prominent display were recalled 1.44 times better than the ads that did not display the brand name as prominently.

In a small-scale experiment, 21 TV commercials for high-involvement products, such as cars, computers, and automobile tires, were shown to 228 subjects. As part of this experiment, the researchers tested recall for four unknown products. Brand recall was better for each of the unknown brands when the brands were mentioned only at the end of the ads, thus supporting the use of mystery-ads for unknown brands (Fazio, Herr, and Powell 1992)

Our analyses suggest that mystery ads performed poorly with print ads for well-known brands, even when readers could jump to the end to see the brand:

> **Ads with only late brand identification had lower recall and persuasion.** Our *WAPB* analysis found 22 pairs of ads for well-known brands in which one mentioned the brand early and the other mentioned it only at the end. Recall for the "mystery ads" was only 0.69 times that of the other ads.

Analyses of non-experimental data on TV commercials are relevant as this principle is not highly dependent on the conditions.

Recall for an analysis of 30-second TV commercials was 6 percent below average when there was no mention of the brand, 4 percent below for one oral mention, 1 percent below for two, and 4 percent above for three or more mentions. Persuasion was 7 percent below average for no oral mentions and 2 percent above for three or more. A brand audio sign-off improved both recall and persuasion by 10 percent (Walker 2008).

An analysis of TV commercials (90 percent of which were 30 seconds in length) found that the number of times the brand name was mentioned and the number of times the brand name and logo were shown on the screen were positively related to recall (Stewart and Furse 1986). Stanton and Burke (1998) added support, especially for short (15-second) commercials. In an analysis of 832 radio commercials covering 31 product categories, those with more brand name repetitions had better recall (Sewall and Sarel 1986). TV commercials with a brand auditory sign-off (mentioning the brand in the last three seconds) were rated as more persuasive than those that did not include such a sign-off (Stewart and Koslow 1989).

For the non-experimental data in *WAPB*, in comparison with the industry norms for each ad, the average persuasion score for the 192 ads that led with the brand was 8 percent higher than the comparable score for the 14 mystery ads.

A survey of website users added support: The most important in a list of 30 possible factors that lead to high credibility was, "The site represents an organization that you respect." And the second most important was that the "site lists the organization's physical address" (Fogg 2003, p. 154).

5.5.2. Include brand and company names (double-branding)

W. K. Kellogg's invention of corn flakes in the early 1900s was so successful that by 1911 there were 108 brands of corn flakes being sold in Kellogg's hometown, Battle Creek, Michigan. Kellogg, who wrote his own ads, had always been careful to pair his company name, Kellogg's, with corn flakes. When the courts ruled that "corn flakes" was merely descriptive of a product and anyone could use the term, Kellogg did not suffer much because most customers did not think "corn flakes," they thought "Kellogg's Corn Flakes™" (Goodrum and Dalrymple 1990).

Persuasion is enhanced when an ad includes both the brand and company name—as long as both are familiar and well liked, such as P&G's Tide.

Given that "double branding" is commonly applied and inexpensive to implement, it is surprising that more advertisers do not use it. Only 32 percent of TV commercials from major firms used double branding (Stewart and Furse 1986). The situation was better in our *WAPB* analysis of 480 print ads by leading firms, as 82 percent used double branding.

Evidence on the effects of double branding

Our analysis of quasi-experimental data for double branding provided strong support:

Print ads with double branding had much better recall. Our *WAPB* analysis found 21 pairs of print ads in which one ad included both the brand and company name while the other did not. For example, a Tilt Wheel steering ad that stated "Tilt-Wheel steering from Saginaw" generated much better recall than did a Tilt-Wheel ad that did not mention Saginaw. Recall for the double-branded ads was 1.71 times better than for ads that did not include double branding.

Non-experimental data provides further support. TV commercials with double branding had better comprehension and persuasion than those that did not (Stewart and Furse 1986). A related analysis found double-branded TV commercials were more persuasive (Stanton and Burke 1998.)

While familiar brand and company names provide assurance to customers, they might lack a personal touch. The next principle addresses this issue.

UKTV G2 is a TV channel in the United Kingdom that is aimed at young males. It focuses on shows with witty banter. Viewership is low. An ad agency suggested that the producers should personalize the brand. How might you do that?

5.5.3. Personalize the brand

While brands cannot replace the connection that a customer might have with a local retailer, there are ways to give a brand a personal touch. This can be done with a mascot, animal, cartoon character, name, real person, or fictitious person

In 1877, Ferdinand Schumaker looked through an encyclopedia for a trustworthy image to personalize his oat cereal. He decided to use a picture of a Quaker and called the product Quaker Oat Berries because Quakers are known as trustworthy people.

General Mills personalized its brand through the fictitious Betty Crocker. She has changed over time to look like a typical consumer of the day.

In 1972, the Singapore Girl became the focus of a campaign for touting service on Singapore Airlines. This long-running campaign has been judged to be successful, and in 1994 she became the first commercial figure in Madame Tussaud's Museum in London.

By now, you may have anticipated how to resolve the issue for that TV channel, mentioned in the lead-in. Remember the name of the channel? Probably not—it had an impersonal name. The ad agency suggested naming it "Dave." No UK channel had ever used a first name prior to this. Dave was also informative about the target market and the personality of the channel. Dave's slogan was "the home of witty banter." People had no trouble remembering that name, and spontaneous awareness jumped from 2 percent to 32 percent in about six months. The ad campaign was shown to be highly successful in gaining viewers, and it won an IPA award (Dawson 2009). Now, have you ever thought about how much easier it is to remember Fox than ABC, NBC and CBS?

Evidence on the effects of personalizing the brand

Personalization rests primarily on received wisdom. It is supported by non-experimental data. TV commercials that used a character to personalize the

brand had 25 percent better recall, and persuasion was 8 percent higher (Walker 2008).

5.6. Spokespersons

> *The character of the speaker is the most potent of all the means to persuasion.*
> *Aristotle*

A spokesperson or presenter can provide a face and personality for a product, allowing the customer to identify with more than just the product or service. A spokesperson seems to be most effective when credibility needs to be established.

The practice has a long history. At least 2,000 years ago, merchants in Europe used barkers (or town criers).

5.6.1. Use a spokesperson who is similar to the customer on relevant traits

Customers are more likely to imagine themselves as users of a product and thus be persuaded if the spokesperson is similar to them. This principle is especially important when sensitive issues are involved.

Here is an example using a sensitive issue: A 1991 ad had the headline, "I has a dream," and the tagline, "Speak out against Ebonics." The message was from a source that was similar to the target market: "Brought to you by Atlanta's Black Professionals."

Now for an example of a poor match: In 1997, the UK's Inland Revenue used a buffoonish-looking cartoon character, "Hector the Inspector," to motivate taxpayers to complete their own tax forms. The campaign failed (Binet 2006).

The similarity principle is often violated. For example, men narrated approximately 90 percent of TV commercials aired in the United States during the period 1971–85, according to a review of 11 studies (Bretl and Cantor 1988). Given that women bought most of the products advertised in the commercials, the matching principle would have called for a higher proportion of women narrators.

Evidence on the effects of matching the spokesperson to the target market

In a field experiment, a saleswoman in a music store asked customers who had just purchased audiotapes to purchase a tape-cleaning kit. She portrayed herself as either similar or dissimilar to the customer by saying whether or not the customers' tapes were ones she had in her own personal collection. There were 60 customers in each group. When she portrayed herself as similar to them, 66 percent purchased the cleaning kit; when portrayed as dissimilar, only 22 percent purchased it (Woodside and Davenport 1974).

Another field experiment involved 88 customers at a paint store. When the salesperson was similar to the customer, the customers changed their selection to conform to the salesperson's recommendation for either a more expensive or less expensive paint 64 percent of the time, versus 39 percent when they were not similar (Brock 1965).

Turning to non-experimental data, Stewart and Koslow (1989) analyzed TV

commercials that were directed primarily at women-dominated audiences. The ads with women as the principal characters were judged as more persuasive than those with men.

5.6.2. Use a spokesperson whose appearance is consistent with the objectives, product, and target market

In *The Republic*, Plato stated, "Imagine ... a ship in which there is a captain who is taller and stronger than any of the crew, but he is a little deaf and has a similar infirmity in sight, and his knowledge of navigation is not much better." Plato argued that the crew would not select a competent captain because they would be misled by appearances. Might a spokesperson in an ad also beguile the audience?

Customers judge spokespersons by their looks. This includes their facial features and expression, body type, dress, and mannerisms.

Consider a smiling face. When people smile, they are judged as nicer and more intelligent. This would be relevant for many products, and not for others. For example, it would not be wise for funeral directors to smile in their ads.

This matching principle leans heavily on expert judgments about the product and culture of the target market. It is difficult to provide guidelines for what is appropriate, but "you'll probably know it when you see it."

Evidence on the effects of matching appearance

Subjects were shown photographs of salesmen who called on health care and convenience stores. Compared with those in casual dress, salesmen in traditional business attire were judged having greater product knowledge, representing a more ethical company with higher-quality products, and providing better service (Stuart and Fuller 1991).

In a lab experiment, 90 subjects viewed 15 photographs in which an individual wore no glasses, traditional eyeglasses, or sunglasses. Compared with no glasses, traditional glasses enhanced an individual's perceived authority while sunglasses lowered it. Women wearing glasses were viewed as the most honest (Bartolini et al. 1988). Another lab experiment found that people who wore eyeglasses were perceived to be more industrious, dependable, and honest (Thornton 1944).

Indirect evidence was provided by studies on political candidates. In many cases, the candidate is the spokesperson as well as the product. In one study, 31 subjects saw pictures of candidates just prior to the 2004 U.S. Senate race. Based on one-second exposures, the subjects rated each candidate's competence (subjects who recognized a candidate were excluded). The most competent-looking candidates won 69 percent of the 32 races. Similar results were obtained in studies of candidates for the 2004 U.S. House of Representatives elections, and for the 2000 and 2002 U.S. House and Senate elections (Todorov et al. 2005).

Subjects in Switzerland were asked to rate 57 pairs of black and white photos of faces of candidates in the 2002 French parliamentary election (none of the subjects recognized the candidates). In their first experiment, each of 684 university students rated 12 of the pairs of candidates for competency; the candidates with the highest average competency ratings won in 72 percent of the elections.

In their second experiment, the researchers tested Plato's observation by presenting 2,814 subjects with a pair of photos for a computer-simulated trip from Troy to Ithaca. The photos were those candidates from the French election. Their selections of "captains" matched the winners 72 percent of the time. The findings were the same for adults as for children (Antonakis and Dalgas 2009).

Here is further evidence on facial appearance. Ratings of facial competency were obtained for 11 Democratic and 13 Republican candidates for the 2008 U.S. presidential election about 15 months prior to the election. The ratings were snap judgments by people who scanned photos of all of the candidates. Young subjects from New Zealand and Australia were used to help ensure that they did not recognize the candidates. The number of raters varied from 139 (Hillary Clinton was widely recognized) to 348 (Tom Tancredo was not recognized). Their average judgments were used to forecast the winners of the popular vote. Clinton was judged to be the most competent Democrat (slightly ahead of Obama), and by some counts she won the popular vote. McCain was judged most competent of the Republicans, and at the time of the facial ratings, the political polls had him at 15 percent—substantially behind Giuliani and Thompson, who were rated low on facial competency. Thus, these early ratings provided much better forecasts than the polls and the prediction markets. Finally, Obama was judged to be substantially more competent looking than McCain (Armstrong et al. 2010).

About smiling: An experiment using Chinese subjects found that people in photographs were judged as warmer and more intelligent when they were smiling than when they were not (Lau 1982). In another study, subjects were more cooperative with strangers when, prior to a brief interaction, they saw a photo of the stranger smiling than when they saw a photo in which the stranger had a more serious expression (Scharlemann et al. 2001).

Our analysis of quasi-experimental data supports this principle with respect to facial expressions:

Print ads with satisfied facial expressions produced better recall. In our *WAPB* analysis, we found 14 pairs of ads in which one ad had a spokesperson or endorser with a satisfied expression, while the facial expression in the other ad was not looking as satisfied. Recall of ads with satisfied facial expressions was 1.21 times better than for the other ads.

5.6.3. Use a trustworthy and credible spokesperson

A little rebellion now and then … is a medicine necessary for the sound health of government.
Vladimir Lenin

This quote on "rebellion" could be easily dismissed-given the source's lack of credibility. However, if people are told that that the author was Thomas Jefferson (which it was), the quote seems credible.

The spokesperson should be trustworthy and credible in the opinion of those in the target market, especially when there is a need to overcome resistance to change. For example, if the advertisement is seeking a substantial change in behavior, a trustworthy source is especially effective.

In 1995, the Massachusetts Department of Health used Janet Sackman for an anti-smoking ad. In 1959, at age 17, she had been the Lucky Strike Girl in a high-profile advertising campaign for cigarettes. Because of her job, she began to smoke. Thirty-four years later, her voice box was removed because of cancer. This ad was apparently successful in persuading some people to reduce smoking.

Evidence on the effects of credibility and trust

Six experiments showed that high credibility is important when an advertisement calls for a substantial change in behavior. In contrast, there was little need for high credibility when an ad supports current beliefs (O'Keefe 2002a, pp. 194–5).

Baby-faced spokespersons engender a feeling of trust. However, they are perceived as less knowledgeable, as was shown in a study of TV commercials (Brownlow and Zebowitz 1990).

5.6.4. Use a physically attractive spokesperson for products that enhance beauty

> *Personal beauty is a greater recommendation than any letter of reference.*
> *Aristotle*

Advertisers with strong arguments should be cautious in the use of beauty because it is likely to distract attention from strong arguments. Buyers should be cautious when beauty is used for high-involvement purchases.

Evidence on physical attractiveness

An analysis of 53 journal articles and 23 dissertations obtained substantial support that beauty aids persuasion in areas related to "social competence," somewhat so for "intellectual competence," and not at all for "integrity and concern for others" (Eagly et al. 1991).

The bias towards beauty shows up early in life. Studies of the reactions of infants found that the infants were more involved with attractive strangers and attractive dolls than with unattractive ones (Langlois, Roggman, and Reiser-Danner 1990).

5.7. Forewarning

> *Forewarned is forearmed.*
> *Anonymous*

There are two types of forewarning. One type deals with the intent to persuade ("I have a deal you can't refuse!"); the other addresses message content ("Wouldn't you rather have a Buick?"). The former can lead to resistance during the receipt of the message. The latter leads customers to develop counter-arguments prior to hearing or reading the arguments.

Bose forewarned customers about its intent to persuade in a print ad for its computer music monitor by using this heading: "Beware this is the manufacturer talking." Was that wise?

5.7.1. Forewarn about persuasion attempts for low-involvement goods

Forewarning is persuasive for low-involvement products, especially those sold by credible sources. It poses a problem for high-involvement products as it invites counter-arguments. In the above example, Bose meets the condition of being a credible source, but it seems likely to lead to counter-arguments during the receipt of the message.

Evidence on the effects of forewarning

Wood and Quinn (2003) reviewed 35 papers with 46 separate studies on forewarning. In some, the forewarning indicated that there would be an attempt to persuade; in others, the forewarning specified only the topic.

For high-involvement decisions, warnings generated resistance—especially if there was a time delay between the warning and the actual message. This would argue against the using the Bose ad mentioned above. However, this finding was based on only three experiments.

For low-involvement goods, Wood and Quinn found that forewarnings generated agreement before the message was delivered. The explanation was that the warning threatens people's self-images and makes them feel vulnerable. Therefore, they shifted their attitude prior to seeing the argument to minimize its apparent effect, as if they are saying "I already knew that."

Wood and Quinn also found that persuasion was higher when subjects were forewarned that the message would be from a credible source. This is probably an effort by customers to protect their self-esteem.

5.8. Two-sided arguments

> *Men wanted for hazardous journey. Small wages, bitter cold, long months of darkness,*
> *constant danger, safe return doubtful. Honor and recognition in case of success.*

This ad, which ran in the personal columns of the London *Times* in 1913, drew 5,000 applications for a crew of 27 on Shackleton's trip to the Antarctic.

Aristotle advocated two-sided arguments—tell the bad points as well as the good points. Advertising experts have agreed. Bill Bernbach said, "A small admission gains a large acceptance." However, they overlooked the key condition that it is necessary to refute the negative arguments.

5.8.1. Use two-sided arguments that refute strong opposing arguments

A Bernbach ad for the Volkswagen Beetle raised an important opposing argument with the headline, "Do you think the Volkswagen is homely?" then refuted it: "A Briton called it a marvelous economy of design." An American owner put it differently: "It's funny," he said, "how she grows on you. At first you think it is the homeliest thing you ever saw. But pretty soon you get to love her shape. And after a while, no other car looks right."

The opposing argument should be one of some importance. It is especially

helpful when the negative argument supports the main selling point, as it did in Shackleton's advertisement for his Antarctic voyage. At the same time, the opposing side should be less important than the primary benefit being offered. By using a two-sided approach, an advertiser can frame opposing arguments so that they are favorable to its view.

Two-sided arguments are especially applicable for high-involvement products; consumers will devote more attention to the quality of the arguments and think more carefully about counter-arguments. They are useful in situations where believability is an issue. The credibility of advertisers is enhanced by showing that they have nothing to hide.

A two-sided argument is unnecessary when the members of the target audience agree with the position that the ad advocates. Worse, it might lead them to re-examine their beliefs.

When people do not need much information, such as when low-involvement goods are concerned, little would be gained from a two-sided argument.

Here is a good application of the principle: Despite awards for good engineering and high quality, Skoda, the Czechoslovakian car, was the target of ridicule in the United Kingdom. Direct attempts to emphasize quality did not work. In 1999, Skoda used a campaign that examined problem areas and then rebutted them. The ads showed a buffoonish diplomat on a factory tour, a know-it-all motor-show supervisor, and a moronic car-park attendant. While each was shown evidence of good Skoda quality and design, none could understand it. But the viewers did. This campaign increased sales and won an IPA Effectiveness Award (Rimini 2003).

Some advertisements violate this principle. A 1967 Volvo ad listed five reasons that might keep you from buying a Volvo, but did not refute any of them.

Evidence on the effects of two-sided arguments

A meta-analysis was conducted of experimental studies that compared two-sided arguments versus one-sided (supporting only). When opposing arguments were raised then refuted in two-sided messages (which was the design for 43 experiments), the two-sided messages were more persuasive than when the message presented only favorable arguments. However, when the opposing arguments were raised but were not refuted (as was done in 26 experiments), the two-sided arguments were less persuasive than the ads that included only supporting arguments (Allen 1991).

O'Keefe's (1999) meta-analysis examined comparisons for many aspects of two-sided versus one-sided arguments. His analysis of four experiments found that when people already agreed with a position prior to receiving a message, a two-sided approach harmed persuasion. In an analysis of 45 comparisons, he found that a two-sided approach helped to immunize people should they encounter the opposing arguments later, say from a competitor. These findings also applied when the analysis was based only on experiments in advertising.

Here is a representative experiment. Print ads for a new (fictitious) brand of ice cream were randomly assigned to 240 subjects. Some ads were two-sided, others one-sided. Richness of taste was the primary argument in both ads. One two-sided

ad mentioned an important opposing argument, the high number of calories; it was viewed as more honest, and the desirable attribute (richer taste) of the product was considered more important than the undesirable attribute (high calories). The subjects who saw the two-sided ad gave higher brand evaluations. When a trivial opposing argument was used (the number of different container sizes) instead of mentioning calories, the two-sided ad did not lead to higher brand evaluations (Pechmann 1992).

Legal experts refer to the two-sided approach as "stealing thunder." In a lab experiment, 257 subjects read a transcript of a fictional criminal trial or heard an audiotape of the trial. Subjects were less likely to think the defendant guilty if the defendant's attorney raised damaging evidence and then refuted it, than if the prosecutor first raised the damaging evidence. Another experiment used a transcript from an actual courtroom trial and obtained similar results (Williams, Bourgeois, and Croyle 1993).

What should go first in an ad, the good news or the bad news?

5.8.2. Put supporting arguments before opposing arguments, or begin with the supporting ones and interweave them

Put supporting arguments first, especially if the opposing ones are strong (e.g., "use of this product can cause disfigurement"). Seeing strong opposing arguments at the beginning of an ad could cause consumers to react negatively to the product, convince them to discard the ad, or distract them from thinking about the supporting arguments. Putting supporting arguments first seems to be typical practice in pharmaceutical advertising, for example.

Evidence on the effects of the order of supporting and opposing arguments

A meta-analysis obtained 31 experimental comparisons of refutational two-sided arguments where the order of presentation differed. The persuasive advantage between one-sided and two-sided messages was largest when the supporting and opposing points were interwoven. The next largest differences were when the supporting arguments were presented before opposing arguments. (O'Keefe 1999, table 6.3).

5.9. Indirect versus direct conclusions

An indirect (implicit, open-ended) approach provides the information needed to reach a conclusion, whereas a direct (explicit, closed-ended) approach provides the information, and then explicitly states the conclusion. The push from a direct conclusion can cause resistance, especially when an immediate response is expected. Common wisdom suggests that when people are thinking about the offer in an ad, a nudge (soft sell) is more effective than a push (hard sell).

I was an expert witness in an arbitration case. One of our lawyers possessed e-mail messages indicating that Larry, a person on the opposing side, had lied

in his earlier testimony. In his arguments to the arbitrator, our lawyer read the messages, but he did not draw a conclusion; he merely paused and prepared to go on to the next issue. Everyone was on the edge of their seats thinking, "Larry was lying." After the pause, the arbitrator broke in and said, "So this means that Larry was lying, right?" The indirect approach was persuasive in this high-involvement situation where resistance was expected.

5.9.1. If resistance is not expected, use direct conclusions

Direct conclusions are relevant where resistance would not be expected. This applies for well-known products that the customer likes already or for low-involvement products where the customer has no strong opinions.

Evidence on direct conclusions

A meta-analysis showed that in 11 of 14 experimental comparisons, messages with explicit overall conclusions were more persuasive than those where the conclusion was implicit. Unfortunately, these experiments were not classified according to whether resistance was expected (O'Keefe 1997).

5.9.2. If resistance is expected, use indirect conclusions when the arguments are strong and obvious

> *Too much zeal offends when indirection works.*
> *Euripides, Greek playwright, 480-406 BC*

In the United Kingdom, Unilever's Surf was a detergent that provided good cleansing at a low price; nonetheless, its sales were low. In August 1994, a new campaign featured Pauline and Linda, stars from a popular U.K. television series. In each TV commercial, Pauline would demonstrate that Surf was a smarter choice than Linda's expensive detergent, and Linda would raise questions about that. Follow-up analyses showed that the campaign more than doubled sales from August 1994 to November 1997. This ad was an IPA award winner for effective advertising (Broadbent 2000).

The direct approach may cause people to feel a loss of freedom when the customer is not already favorable to the product, especially for high-involvement products. In his advertising textbook, Poffenberger (1925) said: "The suggestion [in an ad] should be indirect. No one wants to feel that he is under the control of another; everybody clings to the notion that he is a free being." Stated another way, advertisements should not club a resistant audience over the head with a conclusion.

There are a variety of indirect approaches. One is simply to present the arguments and then let the customer decide what to do. For example, an advertisement by Saab presented performance attributes for a Saab and a BMW. It then invited customers to "compare the value you will get," followed by "and then you make the decision."

Another indirect approach is to allow the reader or viewer to observe others arguing each side of an issue. This should reduce counter-arguing, because

someone else is doing the counter-arguing. Galileo used this approach in his 1632 book, *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems*, in which the Copernican position was argued by "Sagredo" while the other side was argued by "Simplicio" (which angered the Inquisition because of its similarity to "simpleton.") This can be done in advertising by showing someone who is being persuaded.

The indirect approach is more suitable when the source is regarded as biased and when the message is directed at an intelligent audience.

Evidence on effects of indirect conclusions when resistance is expected

A review of research, including over 40 studies, found that attempts to restrict people's freedom by providing direct conclusions often led them to reassert their beliefs (Clee and Wicklund 1980).

Other research reviews suggest that indirect conclusions are most persuasive when the communicator is perceived as biased, presumably because customers would otherwise be more likely to counter-argue—and, of course, commercial advertisers are viewed as biased. Indirect conclusions are also more appropriate when the members of the target market are intelligent because they would be more likely to understand the conclusions on their own, and self-persuasion is convincing (Chebat, Charlebois, and Gélinas-Chebat 2001). Finally, there is little need for direct conclusions when exposure to the campaign will be frequent, because the audience reaction might be "Hey, I heard you already!"

In a lab experiment, booklets were shown to 211 subjects. They contained ads with either an open-ended conclusion (e.g., "Now that you know the difference, decide for yourself which disposable razor you should buy") or a closed-ended conclusion ("Now that you know the difference, shave with Edge, the disposable razor that is best for you"). Purchase intentions were higher for the open-ended ads. Similar results were obtained with an ad for compact disk players (Ahearne, Gruen, and Saxton 2000).

In a small-scale lab experiment, 24 Japanese subjects saw online ads for 15 products (e.g., movies). Near the end of each ad, the subjects saw one of two scenes: a life-like agent looking at the viewer or two life-like agents looking at each other and conversing. In each case, the persuader agent used the same words, such as, "You have to watch this movie; it's very interesting." Purchase intentions for the indirect approach—the overheard conversation—were 31 percent higher (Suzuki and Yamada 2004).

In another lab experiment, in which 261 students viewed cellphone ads, indirect conclusions were relatively more effective when there were strong arguments for the brand (Martin, Lang, and Wong 2003/4).

Print ads for CD players were shown to 192 subjects. The ads contained either explicit or implicit conclusions. Highly involved subjects were more likely to infer omitted conclusions, and when they did, they reported more favorable brand attitudes (Kardes 1988).

In an experimental study of reactions to 16 advertising slogans, subjects were more likely to question direct claims. As a result, they had less confidence in the direct claims than indirect claims (Harris et al. 1989).

5.10. Innuendoes

Innuendoes involve raising questions or possibilities that suggest relationships. The idea is to present an idea in such a way that the recipient does not counter-argue.

I was presenting testimony as an expert witness for the plaintiff. A lawyer for the defendant was cross-examining me: "Professor Armstrong, how much were you paid by the client to date?" A: "Over $60,000." He paused for effect, then went to a different issue. He was, of course, using an innuendo to suggest that I will say whatever the client pays me to say. But he cannot actually say this because I am waiting with my counter-arguments, such as to explain all of the care that went into designing and running our experiments and the need to be involved with all aspects of the research. Lawyers quickly learn the value of innuendoes.

Innuendoes can also be presented visually. Visual innuendoes can convey ideas that would be inappropriate to describe in words. It might be inappropriate to say that a product will help consumers gain power, status, or sex appeal, but visuals can imply this. As Earnest Calkins, an ad agency president in the early 1900s, stated: "A picture can say things that no advertiser could say in words and retain his self-respect."

Innuendoes are especially effective when the credibility of the source is high.

5.10.1. Use positive innuendoes when there is some basis

A direct claim such as, "Nike shoes help Michael Jordan to jump high," might lead to counter-arguing. Also, it might not be true. Nike's actual ad used an innuendo. It showed Michael Jordan wearing Nike shoes and defying gravity while dunking a basketball with the headline, "Michael Jordan 1, Isaac Newton 0."

Positive innuendoes can be used to express seller's aspirations and their high view of themselves. Because innuendoes do not explicitly make arguments, customers are less likely to make counter-arguments when a positive innuendo is used.

A 1963 Bernbach TV commercial for Volkswagen allowed viewers to draw their own conclusions about the product:

> Early on a cold winter morning, a man leaves his house, and trudges through the snow. The headlights go on, an engine starts, and his Volkswagen Beetle navigates through the snow. A male voice-over asks, "Have you ever wondered how the man who drives the snowplow drives to the snowplow? This one drives a Volkswagen. So now you can stop wondering."

In 2002, Pfizer ran a TV ad campaign for Viagra showing a confident-looking man who was praised by his friends for various changes (e.g., "new haircut, Bob?"). The ad implied a benefit, but never overtly stated it (*Slate*, August 12, 2002). Also, by using an innuendo to imply a benefit, Pfizer was able to avoid the U.S. federal requirement that side-effects be stated when benefits are mentioned.

In September 2006, I received a free sample of Dove's "Calming Night" Soap, which was provided "in partnership with the National Sleep Foundation." It gave advice on how to get a good night's sleep, such as, "Relax with a warm evening shower," but it did not suggest using the Dove soap. All was innuendo. I see nothing

harmful about this. It might even be beneficial through the placebo effect. It was similar to this excellent use of innuendo in a 1910 P&G ad:

> Children frequently suffer from headaches. Headaches cause wakefulness. Next time your youngster is afflicted with wakefulness, bathe his feet in hot water, using Ivory Soap. By no possible chance will harm follow; it is almost a certainty that good will. But please remember one thing. It is the hot water that soothes the child's nerves. Ivory Soap adds no medicinal value. No soap does.

Use of witty innuendoes implies competence in your audience and can gain involvement. Example: "Chivas Regal is always twelve years old. Rarely 13."

Positive innuendoes generally provide a safe way to make claims. However, it is important to have a basis for the implied claim. Consider the widely examined Listerine case. In one ad, two mothers were talking and first one said that her children had colds. The other asked, "What do you do?" The first replied that she made sure they got lots of rest and had a good diet. Then she had them gargle twice a day with Listerine. An announcer said that for fewer colds and milder colds, "more people gargle with Listerine than any other oral antiseptic." Although there were no false statements in this ad, the U.S. Federal Trade Commission ruled that it was deceptive. Warner-Lambert had to run corrective advertising from 1962 to 1972, explaining that Listerine is not effective against colds. It was difficult to see the benefit of this expensive solution. It might even reduce the placebo effect and that is hardly in the consumers' interest.[2]

While the legal standard of proof for innuendoes is not as high as for statements, advertisers that are interested in developing long-term relationships with customers should avoid innuendoes that are likely to lead to incorrect inferences, as this 1960 Volvo ad illustrates: "How long can you expect a Volvo to last? We're not sure yet how long a Volvo will last in the U.S. In Sweden, Volvos are driven an average of eleven years." This created a perception that Volvos were dependable. However, this life span was about the same as for American cars. U.S. governmental pressure led Volvo to stop running these ads (*Advertising Age*, Oct. 23, 1978, p. 66).

Advertisers have long used innuendoes. In a famous 1893 poster ad for the Divan Japonais nightclub in Paris, Toulouse-Lautrec showed the black gloves of an unidentified person. The gloves were the trademark of a famous singer, Yvette Guilbert. She no longer sang there, but that is not what people would infer from the ad.

Innuendoes are still widely used. For example, our *WAPB* analysis found that of the 480 full-page print ads by leading U.S. firms, 80 percent used positive innuendos.

Evidence on positive innuendos

The following lab experiments show that innuendos affect opinions:

Implied claims were almost as believable as direct claims. Four lab experiments were conducted. In the first, 49 subjects heard ads for 20 familiar products, including ten ads with implied claims and ten with direct claims. For example, both ads started with: "If that lively social life isn't quite as lively as

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2 The text of this ad is available on the Internet.

it used to be, maybe it's your mouthwash." The direct claim added: "If you use Scope, the truly different mouthwash, it will keep your friends from avoiding you." The indirect claim added: "If even your best friends are avoiding you, use Scope, the truly different mouthwash." Subjects rated the implied claims as being almost as true as the direct claims, 3.8 vs. 4.0 on a 1 to 5 scale. The other three studies used different subjects, different ads, and different media (TV and radio). While the superiority of direct claims persisted across studies, the differences were small (Harris et al. 1980).

Our analysis of quasi-experimental data showed that positive innuendos had a modest effect on persuasion:

Print ads using positive innuendoes had better recall. In our *WAPB* analysis, we found 45 pairs of print ads in which one ad used positive innuendoes while the other ad did not. On average, recall for the positive-innuendo ads was 1.14 times better than that of the other ads.

5.10.2. Negative innuendoes are effective when there is one major competitor and total demand is of little interest

Negative innuendoes are less prone to counter-arguing than direct statements, but they can lead to negative associations about the product category, and thus harm overall demand.

The ideal application of negative innuendoes is politics, where the concern is market share—that is, the percentage of votes. Unsurprisingly, then, innuendoes are often used to challenge competitors in political campaigns. An ad might ask whether it is true that the opponent is an alcoholic. A particularly sly approach is, "I do not believe that Senator Smith has abused his wife."

Another approach is to raise a hypothetical question such as, "Would you vote for Governor Jones if you learned that he embezzled funds?"

Evidence on the effects of negative innuendos

A lab experiment on newspaper headlines during an election period found that innuendoes framed as questions were as persuasive as those framed as statements. In addition, both were persuasive compared with neutral headlines (Wegner et al. 1981).

Lab experiments involving over 600 subjects found that the use of negative hypothetical questions affected voters' choices of political candidates. Similar findings were obtained for customers' choices of products (Fitzsimons and Shiv 2001).

5.11. Customer involvement

When baiting a trap with cheese, always leave room for the mouse.
Howard Gossage, noted advertiser, 1960s

Ads that involve the customer can help persuade, especially when the arguments

for the product are strong. Advertisers with weak arguments are likely to have little use for the principles in this section.

Involvement can build on the commitment principle: "If I am doing this, I must be interested in the product." Consider this study on involvement: Under the guise of testing headphones, some subjects were asked to hold their heads steady at all times, others to shake them back and forth at all times, and still others to shake them up and down as they listened to messages about increasing (or reducing) tuition. Subjects who were shaking their head up and down were more likely to agree with the message than those not shaking their head, and were much more likely to agree than those shaking their head horizontally (Wells and Petty 1980).

Can you give one good reason why people should buy Persuasive Advertising*?*

5.11.1. If good reasons can easily be generated, ask customers to provide a few reasons for accepting an offer

> *We are usually convinced more easily by reasons we have found*
> *ourselves than by those which have occurred to others.*
> *Pascal, mid-1600s*

In 2002, to encourage active involvement, the *Manchester Evening News* in the United Kingdom developed a campaign claiming that its "want ads" could provide people with better jobs. Its black-and yellow ads posted around the city each depicted a day in the life of an unsatisfied office worker. The ads contained yellow blanks to encourage people to think about what text they would insert into an ad. Many people scrawled their interpretations on the posters. People's perception of the "Jobs section" improved and sales of the *Evening News* rose. The campaign won an IPA Effectiveness Award (Rimini 2003).

An ad might ask questions that encourage customers to convince themselves that purchasing a product is a good idea. The reasons they generate will be based on their own motivations and interests. This technique is designed for situations in which it is easy to think of answers. It is effective even when customers do not explicitly provide reasons; they can be convinced just by imagining how easy it would be to come up with reasons.

This principle of involving customers could also be used for negative advertising. For example, "Can you think of one reason why you should not vote for Jones?"

First Direct, a U.K. Internet bank, misused this principle in ads in which it tried to convince people to leave their current bank and switch to First Direct. They challenged customers at other banks to "Tell me one good thing about your bank." Customers should find it easy to think of one good feature of their bank. First Direct would have been more successful by asking, "Can you think of a good reason to leave your bank?" or, "Can you think of ten reasons for staying with your bank?"

Evidence on the effects of asking customers to generate reasons to buy

This lab experiment supports the value of asking for easy-to-think-of reasons to take the action suggested in an ad:

Subjects who were asked to provide easy reasons for buying gave higher product ratings. Each of 160 male subjects saw one of four print ads, each headlined, "BMW or Mercedes?" Some ads asked subjects to develop either one or ten reasons for buying a BMW. Other ads asked subjects to develop either one or ten reasons not to buy a BMW. For the easy task (generate one reason), 49 percent of the subjects attempted the task, while only 30 percent did so for the difficult task. Even when subjects did not develop an entire list, they saw that the task was either easy (developing one reason) or difficult (developing ten reasons). In the easy task, their evaluations of BMWs were more favorable than when they were given the difficult task (5.8 versus 4.2 on a seven-point scale). When asked for reasons against buying, their ratings for BMWs were less favorable for the easy task at 4.5 than for the difficult task at 5.7 (Wänke, Bohner, and Jurkowitsch 1997).

When people create their own reasons, they find them to be more convincing than the reasons generated by others. There is much research to support this conclusion (e.g., Greenwald and Albert 1968).

5.11.2. Consider asking customers to imagine their satisfaction with a product

This principle might be useful for high-involvement products; otherwise, people are unlikely to devote much effort to the suggestion. In addition, it is best suited for products that are new to the target market.

Rather than asking customers to think about making a choice, encourage them to first think about their potential satisfaction with a product, such as how happy they will be in their time-share condominium in Barbados.

It is common for people to be overly optimistic about how much they will enjoy a new product. For example, when thinking about purchasing a sailboat, most people will be optimistic about the number of days they will use it.

If customers have difficulty imagining how the product would lead to a satisfying experience, and many do, the request to imagine can have a negative effect on product preferences. The solution would seem to be to make it easy to imagine the product experience—and test your ad to ensure that this is so. In addition, I suspect that the product should be new or different, so people have not previously thought much about this experience.

Evidence on the effects of imagining satisfaction

Consider this study on what was, at the time, a new product. Field experiments provided stories about cable TV with residents of two middle-class neighborhoods. This appeal included:

> Take a moment and think of how, instead of spending money on the babysitter and gas, and then having to put up with the hassles of "going out," you will be able to spend your time at home, with your family, alone, or with your friends.

Compared with the control group (who were not asked anything), those asked to imagine future situations were twice as likely to sign up for cable TV service (Gregory, Cialdini, and Carpenter 1982).

Here is another high-involvement decision that is new to the subjects:

Imagine that you have just graduated and are moving to the city where you have accepted a job. You would like to rent an apartment and are considering the following: A: Rent: $490 per month; view: poor—back of another building; atmosphere: a bit dark and dreary, or B: Rent: $810 per month; view: excellent—cityscape and river; atmosphere: bright and sunny.

When people made a choice quickly, they picked alternative B about half the time. However, when encouraged to think about their satisfaction, their optimism took over and they selected alternative B about 86 percent of the time (Shiv and Huber 2000).

Now look what happens for products that are relatively well known. Three experiments presented alternative ads to 632 university students, two involving imagining vacations and one a restaurant. Visualizing instructions in a print ad ("Visualize yourself here" for the vacation) led those who did well at visualizing the experience to have higher purchase intentions than an ad that did not ask people to visualize themselves. But the results were reversed for those who did not do well at visualizing the product experience (Petrova and Cialdini 2005).

In another experiment for a well-known product, instructions to imagine were given to 377 subjects (e.g., "Just imagine yourself behind the wheel of the 1992 Integra"). They led to slightly lower intentions to purchase (Burns, Biswas, and Babin 1993).

The next principle extends imagining satisfaction from thinking about *satisfaction prior* to a choice to encouraging people to think about *satisfaction as they use a product.*

A British Airways advertising campaign invited people to try its business class. Consumers who were not satisfied would receive free coach tickets for another trip. Was that a good idea?

5.11.3. Do not invite customers to evaluate their satisfaction while using a product

When consumers expect to report about their satisfaction with a product or service, they adopt a critical attitude. They search for things that are wrong. This leads them to have a less enjoyable experience. It also leads to less satisfaction for the producers. Thus, the British Air ad would be expected to harm customer satisfaction and reduce the morale of the service providers.

Given the evidence to date, the use of pre-announced satisfaction surveys is detrimental. In addition to harming the satisfaction of sellers and buyers, they discourage the collection of useful diagnostic information.

So why are they used? The primary reason is social proof. Organizations use them because other organizations use them. Furthermore, experience does not enable people to tell whether they help or hurt. Experimental evidence, however, shows that pre-announced or expected satisfaction surveys are harmful.

This principle is widely violated by hotels, automobile dealerships, telephone companies, stock brokers, and other firms that routinely use preannounced

satisfaction surveys. Universities have long used them in an attempt to assess student satisfaction. However they reduce student and teacher satisfaction, harm learning, and increase administrative costs (Armstrong 2004).

A sensible approach is to ask people to think about positive experiences as they use a product or service, as was done, for example, by the Comfort Suites hotel chain in 2009. In its "be a dazzle detective" campaign, it encouraged visitors to report on cases of staff members "doing something right." Imagine how this would affect the behavior of employees.

Evidence on the effects of preannounced satisfaction surveys

> **Five field experiments showed that preannounced (or expected) satisfaction surveys harmed satisfaction.** Experiments were conducted with a computer company, an electric utility, a supermarket, a drug store, a magazine, and an electronic equipment company. Some customers, randomly assigned, were told that they would be asked later about their satisfaction with the service, while others were not informed about the satisfaction survey. In a follow-up satisfaction survey, those in the pre-announced survey group were much less satisfied than those who had not expected to receive a satisfaction survey. People in the pre-announced group were looking for reasons to be dissatisfied— and they found them (Ofir and Simonson 2001).

> **A lab experiment demonstrated that preannounced (or expected) satisfaction surveys harmed satisfaction and reduced useful feedback.** A role-playing experiment of a banking service was used to evaluate responses to a negative situation (rude behavior by a bank teller). The subjects in a preannounced survey group gave a substantially poorer rating of service quality than did those who were not told there would be a satisfaction survey. They also reported themselves as being more likely to switch banks. In addition, they were less likely to complain because they had already rated their dissatisfaction on the survey—thus, the bank would not have learned why they were dissatisfied (Lane and Keaveney 2005).

The next principle seems similar, but it involves encouraging customers to think about their own behavior, not about the behavior of sellers.

5.11.4. Encourage customers to make predictions about their behavior

The U.K. police force had been suffering from declining applicants and low respect for its officers. Starting in 2000, it ran an "I couldn't. Could you?" campaign which showed celebrities facing actual police problems. One ad showed Lennox Lewis, the boxer, as he struggled to restrain himself from punching a wife beater. The celebrities' admissions led many people to agree that being a cop was difficult, so that they decided not to apply for police jobs. Others decided they could. For example, one applicant said, "Lennox Lewis, for all his fame, talent, and money, couldn't do that job, whereas I reckon I could." The campaign led to a 50 percent increase in the number of applicants, and to an increase in the

quality of recruits. It also improved police morale and public perceptions of the police. The campaign won an IPA effectiveness award (Rimini 2003).

As indicated by the above example, advertisers sometimes use vignettes as a means of encouraging people to imagine how they would act in given situations.

Self-predictions (also referred to as self-prophecies) are especially effective in situations involving ethical or socially approved behavior (such as healthful behavior). This effect occurs when people are requested to make a self-prophecy even without requiring a direct answer.

People become upset when they do not live up to their promises to others or fulfill their own standards. They feel guilty.

The question for you is, "Will you apply principles for persuasive advertising on your next campaign?"

Evidence on the effects of asking people to predict their behavior

Self-predictions can lead people to adopt health-related behaviors (e.g., "Ask yourself: Will you work out at the Student Recreation Center?"). A meta-analysis found consistent results in seven experiments: Self-predictions increased success in performing the desired behavior from 37 percent without self-predictions to 63 percent with them. In addition, subjects "systematically over-estimated the likelihood of performing socially desirable actions, as compared to those in the absence of self-prediction" (Sprott et al. 2006).

Another meta-analysis, this one with 15 studies, found that self-prophecy of behavior led to behavioral changes in a socially desirable direction (e.g., increased voting) in all studies. For example, when undergraduates were asked to predict their behavior with respect to cheating, the majority said that they would resist the temptation to cheat. In a follow-up experiment in which they were presented with an opportunity to cheat, two-thirds of the students in control group cheated; in contrast, half of the students in the self-prediction group cheated (Spangenberg and Greenwald 1999).

The following experiments are representative of the research that supports this principle:

Ads calling for self-prophecies increased compliance. Spangenberg et al. (2003) conducted a series of experiments. In a field experiment on recycling, an electronic reader board, flyers, and wooden stop signs were placed at the entrance of a university classroom building. They said, "Ask yourself ... will you recycle?" The percentage of cans recycled (of those sold in the building) was 16 percent prior to the campaign; it was 28 percent during the campaign and in the four weeks after the campaign ended.

The same researchers also conducted a study on charitable donations. The control condition ad said, "Support the American Cancer Society," while the self-prophecy study said: "Ask yourself. Will you support the American Cancer Society?" The ads were presented to subjects through a website; the criterion was whether people would contribute their time to complete a questionnaire. Of those in the self-prophecy group, 52 percent completed the questionnaire, whereas only 31 percent of the control group did so.

Hey, what was that principle you just read?

5.11.5. Ask customers to remember the brand name or key arguments

Ask customers to remember the brand name and arguments, especially when customers' actions are likely to occur much later. The ad might also ask customers to put it on their calendar.

Evidence related to asking people to remember key information

Two radio ads about a fictitious new camera, the Optimax 35mm, were randomly assigned to 225 subjects. One version repeated the name of the product five times; the other ad repeated it four times and then asked, "Hey, what was the name of that new camera again?" Recall was better when the subjects were given the second version; this effect was stronger for those who were more familiar with the product category (Reardon and Moore 1996).

In a related study, 62 subjects were presented with two 80-second radio ads for a fictitious soft drink. Two days after the experimental exposure, the subjects were given a list of 13 brand names, which included seven of the brand names heard on the radio ad. Those given ads that asked them to remember the brand name were substantially more likely to remember it (Moore, Hausknecht, and Thomodaran 1986).

5.11.6. Consider omitting or delaying key information

Teaser campaigns were popular in England in the mid-1800s. In 1915, R. J. Reynolds used teaser ads in newspapers for its forthcoming cigarette: a picture of a camel with the copy, "The camels are coming." The idea was to get people to think about what might be missing.

An ad that omits or delays some information can lead the viewer to expend energy to complete the message. If it were to say "frozen water is called ...", you would think "ice." You will remember this statement more effectively than had you been presented with the sentence: "Frozen water is called 'ice.'"

Note that if the ad is to be successful, the customer must be familiar with the product. For example, if a thirsty athlete holds a product such that the brand name is partially obscured, or if a line of verse is left out of a popular radio advertisement, the audience should be able to supply the brand name or omitted verse.

Evidence on the effects of omitting key information

This principle of omitting information is based on the Zeigarnik effect. It states that because people feel a need to complete a task that they started, incomplete tasks are remembered better than completed tasks. Originally published in 1928, the Zeigarnik effect has been supported by many studies.

A 30-minute TV program with embedded ads for cigarettes and soft drinks was shown to 60 subjects. Half viewed complete ads, while the other half viewed ads with the last five or six seconds deleted. Immediately following the program, recall about the product, brand, and content was better for the ad with the

omission. In a second experiment, subjects heard six audiotapes of the sound portion of a TV program that contained test commercials for cigarettes, chewing gum, mouthwash, and a headache remedy. The tapes were played to 90 subjects, with each one being played to 15 subjects. Recall measures were taken immediately after, two days after, and two weeks after. Omitting information near the end of ads resulted in better recall, especially over the longer period (Heimbach and Jacoby 1972).

5.12. Free trials and samples

In 1141 in Berry, France, twelve town criers obtained a charter from King Louis VII for exclusive rights to tell people about various products. Five of them represented taverns. In addition to extolling the virtues of the tavern, each carried free samples of wine. Usage of free trials and samples has continued though the centuries.

It is often helpful to try to change behavior before trying to change attitudes. Free trials and samples are useful in this way.

5.12.1. Consider advertising a free trial or sample for products new to the target market

In 1869 an English magazine, *Golden Hours*, published the following ad: "Trial before Purchase. The Wilcox & Gibbs Silent Sewing Machine sent for a free month's trial, free and carriage paid to any station in the Kingdom."

When facing resistance, say because someone is currently loyal to another brand, it may be more effective to try to change behavior directly, rather than by trying to first change attitudes. This can be done through free trials or samples. Once people are using a new product, advertising—such as package inserts in the free trial or follow-up advertising—can be used to support the behavior.

Hopkins (1923) said that it was of limited value to offer a product to people with a money-back guarantee. What works, he said, is to send the products to customers and say, "Use them for a week, then do as you wish."

Free trials are especially persuasive for new experience goods with strong arguments. The trial can help customers to learn about the product. It will help to reduce uncertainty about whether the product will do what the ad states. If consumers find that the product works well, they are less likely to go out of their way to consider other options. It can also help to establish the norm of reciprocity. Finally, simply possessing a product leads people to value that product more highly; this is known as the endowment effect. Even the possession of a coupon for the product can create the endowment effect.

As an alternative to a free trial, use point-of-purchase advertising to encourage people to touch the product. This is especially important where the feel of the product is important, such as the weight, size, smoothness, and contours of a cell phone. Touching also leads to the endowment effect.

For low-involvement goods, such as a new candy bar, it is common to provide free samples. Example: In 1886, Coca-Cola distributed cards saying, "Good for a Coca-Cola for you and your friend."

Free trials are often used for expensive products. An ad for the Bose Wave stated, "We don't expect you to take our word for how good the Bose Wave radio sounds." It then offered a free trial.

When introducing its cars to the United Kingdom in 1996, Daewoo advertised that it was looking for 200 "test drivers" to drive the cars for a year for free. "If you'd like to be one of our test drivers, call and tell us why we should pick you." This was part of a successful campaign, which received an IPA award for advertising effectiveness (Duckworth 1997).

Evidence on the effects of free trials or samples

Reb and Connolly (2007) described five studies that supported the endowment effect. They then conducted two lab experiments. In one experiment, some subjects were given a chocolate bar, while others were not. Those with physical possession of the chocolate bar were then allowed to sell the bar to those who did not receive one. They valued it 27 percent higher than did the subjects who had not been given a chocolate bar. Reb and Connolly extended the study by using coffee mugs from the subjects' university and by varying the time of possession. The possessors valued the mugs 28 percent more than did the non-possessors. Furthermore, subjects who possessed the object longer valued it even more.

A series of four lab experiments involving ballpoint pens, headbands, key chains, pillowcases, and washcloths, consistently supported results from four prior studies showing that customers valued products more after touching them. This finding was attributed to the fact that the customers gained relevant information (Grohmann, Spangenberg, and Sprott 2007).

However, there is another explanation for the value of touching a product. People start to feel a sense of ownership (the endowment theory again). This was tested in a lab experiment where 14 groups, with six participants each, bid on a coffee mug (available for $4.49 at the campus bookstore). The subjects were assigned to either a 10-second evaluation group or a 30-second evaluation group. The latter was judged from prior research to be sufficient to allow someone to start to feel a sense of ownership. Apparently it did. Those who held the mug for 30 seconds placed bids that were about 60 percent higher on average than the 10-second subjects. The researchers replicated the study with a different type of auction and again found that the 30-second subjects placed a higher value on the mugs—37 percent higher in this case (Wolf, Arkes, and Muhanna 2008). Additional evidence was provided in four experiments by Peck and Shu (2009).

Coupons can also build on the endowment theory. In two experiments, 136 subjects were asked to make choices among restaurants given that they had received coupons for some of the restaurants. They tended to overvalue those restaurants for which they had coupons (Sen and Johnson 1997).

In a small-scale field experiment, of those customers randomly selected to receive a free chocolate sample when visiting a candy store, 84 percent purchased candy of some type. The corresponding purchase rate for those who received no candy was 59 percent (Lammers 1991).

5.13. Causes

Causes might help an advertiser to establish a link with customers who might otherwise resist their appeals. Causes can be of a general nature, such as donations to charities, or they can show how the product purchases contribute to the social good. Cause-related marketing has been growing rapidly.

5.13.1. Support popular causes

Some customers will go out of their way to buy from firms that support worthwhile causes. Hence, a company could both increase profits and be a source of pride to its employees—not to mention helping the cause.

When true, ads could inform people that the firm supports popular causes, such as, "This ad was printed on recycled bio-degradable paper." In 2005, Honda advertised that: "Every car company is concerned about the people inside its cars. But what about the people outside?" The ad showed how the Honda design protects pedestrians.

To show their support for causes, phrases such as "Fair trade certified," "Fairly traded," "Certifiable sustainable," and "Local" are used by sellers. Sometimes these terms are supported by a third party, such as "Rainforest Alliance Certified." The causes appeal to customers even when they do not understand the benefits. For example, at one time, "cage-free eggs" sold for three times the price of regular eggs. They taste the same as regular eggs, and some reports claim that raising cage-free chickens is no more humane because they are twice as likely to die either from disease or by pecking each other to death (McLaughlin, 2005).

What might appear to be a good cause to one set of customers might be irrelevant, or even negative, to another. For example, few firms would want to support groups that either favor or oppose abortion rights, because either position would offend many people.

Do not violate popular causes. For example, avoid advertising that creates litter, and encourage people to properly dispose of used flyers.

Judging from anecdotes, cause-related advertising is effective. For example, Whole Foods in Boston was able to charge high prices for coffee with labels saying, "purchased in accordance with fair-trade standards," and Sainsbury's, the British supermarket, sold "fair-trade bananas" at four times the price of conventional bananas (McLaughlin, 2004).

Evidence on the effects of cause-related advertising

Results from five studies showed that ecological appeals increase consumer willingness to pay for various types of foods. In addition, 285 apple buyers were asked about their willingness to pay for eco-labeled apples. On average, respondents were willing to pay an additional 5 percent (Loureiro, McCluskey, and Mittelhammer 2002).

Surveys found that 83 percent of U.S. respondents would have a more positive image of a company if it supported a cause that they respect, and that 86 percent of U.K. respondents said they would be more likely to purchase from a company associated with a cause (Ellen, Mohr, and Webb 2000). Other surveys indicate

that about half of customers are favorably influenced by cause-related marketing (Pracejus, Olsen, and Brown 2003).

5.13.2. Tie purchases to popular causes

In 1983, an American Express ad campaign stated that it would donate a penny to the renovation of the Statue of Liberty for each use of its credit card, and a dollar for each new card it issued in the United States. Compared with the same period in the prior year, it claimed a 28 percent increase in credit card usage, a huge increase for such a small offer.

Donations for charity are more persuasive for hedonic (enjoyment) products, than for utilitarian products. One possible explanation is that donations allow people to justify guilty pleasures.

To develop long-term relationships with customers, inform them about the amount that is being donated. While this might sound like obvious advice, only 4 percent of charitable donation offers state clearly how much they donate, as this example does so well: "Paul Newman, as sole owner of Newman's Own, donates all his profits and royalties after taxes for educational and charitable purposes." Another 26 percent of claims can be estimated. The remaining 70 percent of cause-related marketing claims are vague, such as the claim by Nike that "A portion of your purchase supports youth community programs around the world" (Pracejus, Olsen, and Brown 2003).

There are ethical and legal considerations for clearly stating the amounts being donated. Attorneys General in 19 U.S. states prepared a "Draft report on cause marketing in 1999" which stated, "Advertising arising from all corporate non-profit arrangements shall not mislead, deceive, or confuse the public about the effect of consumer purchasing decisions on charitable contributions."

Evidence on tying profits to causes

The conclusion that cause-related marketing is more effective for hedonic than for utilitarian products was supported in a series of lab experiments (Strahilevitz and Myers 1998; Strahilevitz 1999).

It is difficult to clearly inform customers about the amount being donated. In a lab experiment, 500 students were shown an advertisement for an ink-jet printer priced at $149.96. Half of the subjects were told "As part of our continuing commitment to the community, 5 percent of the retail price will be donated to a local charity," while the other half was given the same ad, but the words, "retail price," were replaced by "profit from the sale of this item." There was much confusion when the donation amount was expressed as a percentage of profits; nearly all subjects over-estimated the amount being donated. Their median donation estimate was $7.50 (which assumes that profits are 100 percent of sales revenues). Estimates by subjects with formal accounting training were little better. Olsen et al. tested possible solutions. The only practical solution they found was to word the ad "profit is defined as the sales price minus the cost paid by Office Warehouse for each printer." However, even with this description, only about 30 percent of the subjects made reasonable estimates (Olsen, Pracejus, and Brown 2003).

Checklist 5 Resistance

5.1.   Distraction
5.1.1.   For products that have neither advantages nor disadvantages, consider using distraction.
5.1.2.   For products offering clear benefits, consider distraction only if the message will be understood.
5.1.3.   When customers might resist traditional appeals, surprise them with an unusual approach.
5.1.4.   For low-involvement goods that are for immediate sale, consider disruption then reframing of an offer.
5.1.5.   Create an unrelated problem, then remove it.

5.2.   Perspectives
5.2.1.   Present an offer from a new perspective.
5.2.2.   Focus on benefits or features rather than choices.

5.3.   Stories
5.3.1.   When the target market has an opposing viewpoint, consider using a story.

5.4.   Barriers
5.4.1.   Offer credit for currently owned products.
5.4.2.   Seek early commitment for time-consuming activities.
5.4.3.   Consider making small requests.

5.5.   Brand or company emphasis
5.5.1.   Make the brand or company name prominent if it conveys a good image.
5.5.2.   Include brand and company names.
5.5.3.   Personalize the brand.

5.6.   Spokespersons
5.6.1.   Use a spokesperson who is similar to the customer on relevant traits.
5.6.2.   Use a spokesperson whose appearance is consistent with the objectives, product, and target market.
5.6.3.   Use a trustworthy and credible spokesperson.
5.6.4.   Use a physically attractive spokesperson for products that enhance beauty.

5.7.   Forewarning
5.7.1.   Forewarn about persuasion attempts for low-involvement goods.

5.8.   Two-sided arguments
5.8.1.   Use two-sided arguments that refute strong opposing arguments.
5.8.2.   Put supporting arguments before opposing, or begin with a supporting one and interweave them.

5.9.   Indirect versus direct conclusions
5.9.1.   If resistance is not expected, use direct conclusions.
5.9.2.   If resistance is expected, use indirect conclusions when the arguments are strong and obvious.

5.10.   Innuendoes
5.10.1. Use positive innuendoes when there is some basis.
5.10.2. Negative innuendoes are effective when there is one major competitor and total demand is of little interest.

5.11.   Customer involvement
5.11.1.   If good reasons can easily be generated, ask customers to provide a few reasons for accepting an offer.
5.11.2. Consider asking customers to imagine their satisfaction with a product.
5.11.3. Do not invite customers to evaluate their satisfaction while using a product.
5.11.4. Encourage customers to make predictions about their behavior.
5.11.5. Ask customers to remember the brand name or key arguments.
5.11.6. Consider omitting or delaying key information.

5.12.   Free trials and samples
5.12.1   Consider advertising a free trial or sample for products new to the target market.

5.13.   Causes
5.13.1.   Support popular causes.
5.13.2. Tie purchases to popular causes.

6. Acceptance

Once the audience is in a receptive mode, the advertisement should seek acceptance of the message. The principles for acceptance are discussed under the following headings:

6.1. Problem/solution

If customers are unaware of a problem, it might help to describe it, and then show how the product solves it.

Problem/solution principles are especially useful for high-involvement utilitarian products because customers are likely to think about the solution.

6.1.1. Describe a problem and show how the product solves it

This principle is most effective when the problem is not evident to the target market, or if it is, the solution is not known.

Lever Brothers initially advertised its Lifebuoy soap as protection against epidemics. When epidemics became less prevalent in the 1920s, the company created the term "B.O." According to some experts, body odor had not previously been regarded as a source of embarrassment. Lever Brothers created a problem, offered Lifebuoy as the solution, and thus produced a best-selling bath soap.

Our friend Lars, from Sweden, came to visit us in Philadelphia. He is a perceptive chap and during the week that he spent with us, he pointed out a number of items around the house that did not work well, and suggested solutions. His suggestions made me aware of problems and motivated me to make some improvements. In a similar manner, advertisements can help make people aware of problems—and how to solve them.

The problem/solution approach "is less successful when people are already aware of the problem and solution. The famous early-1970s Alka-Seltzer ad—"I can't believe I ate the whole thing"—dwelled on the discomfort people feel the morning after having eaten too much, a problem familiar to most people. While the campaign was hugely popular, it was unsuccessful in selling the product; Alka-Seltzer switched ad agencies.

Do not dwell on the negatives when you state the problem to customers. They might associate those negative feelings with your product. State the problem quickly;

then move to the solution. A 1985 TV ad for Alaska Airlines violated this. Almost 80 percent of the dialogue between two purchasing agents explained how other airlines cut corners by serving bland food. The positive part consisted only of, "At Alaska Airlines, we spend a little more on food, and you can taste the difference."

A 2000–04 campaign used the problem/solution approach to reduce automobile thefts in England. The theme behind the campaign was, "It's easy to outsmart the vehicle criminal." It showed how vehicle thieves justify their actions: "It's all insured anyway," or "Why should they have all of this when I have nothing?" It portrayed thieves as marginal people who capitalize on mistakes by others. The solution involved taking preventive actions, such as hiding valuables and always locking cars, even when buying gas. The campaign was associated with a 37 percent reduction in vehicle crimes between 1999 and 2005. The savings were estimated to be almost 30 times the cost of the campaign. The campaign won an IPA Effectiveness Award (Green 2007).

Evidence on the effects of advertising a new problem or solution

This principle is based primarily on received wisdom. Our small-scale analysis of quasi-experimental data found that the problem/solution approach was only useful when the problem or solution was new to the target market, in which case it was very effective:

> **Print ads describing a new problem/solution approach had better recall.** Our *WAPB* analysis found 12 pairs of print ads in which one ad described a new problem/solution, while the other ad did not. Recall for the problem/solution ads was 1.78 times better than for the other ads.

It is difficult to assess the effectiveness of the problem/solution approach by using non-experimental data, especially when we do not know if either the problem or solution was new. That said, the problem/solution format was the most persuasive of the 160 features of TV commercials that Stewart and Koslow (1988) analyzed. However, other analyses of non-experimental data have not found it to be persuasive.

6.2. Demonstration

It is 1893 and you have just developed a new product that you call an automobile. How do you advertise it? The Duryea brothers of Springfield, Massachusetts, put their money into car racing. Newspapers provided objective coverage of the cars' performances in these races. Manufacturers used the same formula to introduce airplanes. When you have news about important features or benefits, especially those that are difficult to believe, it often helps to create public demonstrations and let the mass media tell your story. If the product is good, the mass media can tell it in a way that is more objective than if the claims come from an advertiser.

6.2.1. Demonstrate product benefits

In a 1961 TV commercial by the Haloid Corporation, a little girl came into her father's office, took paper from him, went to a machine, and made copies. The ad

ran only once because competitors suspected a hoax and went to the U.S. Federal Trade Commission to report this "false advertising." George Lois, who created the ad, then reproduced it under the eye of the Federal Trade Commission; this time he used a chimpanzee instead of a little girl. (Historical note: Haloid renamed itself as Xerox shortly after that.)

Demonstrations seem most effective when the product is new to the customer and the claim stretches believability. Demonstrations can relate to the use of the product or to its benefits. There are two primary types of demonstrations: comparison to a known standard, and illustration of a product function—that is, how the product works.

TV lends itself well to demonstrations, partly because "seeing is believing." Demonstrations have been used in print advertising by showing a series of pictures. However, the Internet is most useful for demonstrations because it can allow customers to control the size, angle, sound level, and pace of demonstrations, to view it whenever it is convenient, and to pass it along to others.

A 1969 TV commercial by Doyle, Dane, Bernbach provides an excellent application. It showed a gorilla trying unsuccessfully to destroy an American Tourister suitcase; the voiceover said: "Dear clumsy bellboys, brutal cabdrivers, careless doormen, ruthless porters, savage baggage masters, and all butter-fingered luggage handlers all over the world, have we got a suitcase for you."

Araldite glue needed to establish believability: In a French TV commercial for the product, a man mixed two substances with a spatula. A hand brought two pieces of a broken hammer into view. A man spread the glue on each piece, pressing them together. Next a hand brought a broken nail into view, and glued the pieces back together. "Five minutes later," a hand picked up the hammer and drove the nail into a wooden tabletop. The ad concluded: "Araldite glues everything—one time does it." In another Araldite ad, a car was glued to the girders of a new building and left to hang for ten days. Other glue companies then adopted similar approaches; Super Glue-3 was applied to an announcer's shoes and he was stuck upside down on the ceiling as he made his sales pitch.

Demonstrations are widely used in advertising. Stewart and Furse (1986) found that 60 percent of TV commercials demonstrated product use and 24 percent demonstrated benefits. Our *WAPB* analysis found that of the 480 full-page print ads, 35 percent demonstrated benefits.

Evidence on the effects of demonstrations

Our analysis of quasi-experimental data on print ads supports the benefits of demonstrations:

> **Print ads with benefit demonstrations improved recall.** Our *WAPB* analysis found 73 pairs of print ads in which one ad demonstrated benefits, while the other did not. Recall for ads with demonstrations was 1.15 times better than for the other ads.

Analyses of non-experimental data typically found that TV commercials had much higher persuasion scores than average (e.g., Phillips and Stanton 2004; Stewart and Furse 1986; Stanton and Burke 1998). For example, Stewart and

Koslow (1989) found that commercials with product demonstrations were 1.42 times more persuasive than the typical ad in their sample.

6.3. Evidence

It is not enough to make claims for a product. Ads should also report on evidence that supports the claims. Evidence is especially effective for high-involvement, utilitarian products, and for intelligent target markets.

6.3.1. Provide quantitative evidence

> *Actual facts go incomparably farther than superlative exaggeration*
> *toward convincing anyone of the truthfulness of a proposition.*
> *Daniel Starch, 1914*

Evidence is persuasive as long as people do not have strong beliefs to the contrary. If they do, examples and stories are more persuasive as was discussed in the section on "Resistance". When advertisers expect that an audience might be composed of people for and against a certain viewpoint, they can play safe by using a campaign with examples *and* evidence.

When presenting evidence, be precise—assuming that this can be done truthfully.

Evidence on the effects of providing customers with quantitative support

A meta-analysis with 15 empirical comparisons found that statistical evidence was more persuasive than examples. For an issue on which people are split 50–50, statistical evidence would convince 22 percent more people than would examples (Allen and Preiss 1997).

Another meta-analysis of experiments on persuasion found nine studies on quantification with almost 2,700 participants. Quantification improved persuasiveness in eight of the nine studies. In addition, it improved credibility in three of the four studies reported (O'Keefe 1998).

A qualitative review, which included approximately one hundred papers, concluded that evidence had a strong effect on attitude change (Reinard 1988). Another review yielded a similar conclusion (Reynolds and Reynolds 2002).

In a lab study on preciseness, subjects were asked how much confidence they would have in three informants who answered the following question about Iceland: "Owing to various price regulation measures, this year's inflation rate was down to 5 percent. Was it higher last year?" The three responses to choose from were: Olafur said "Yes, it was;" Larus said "Yes, it was about 7 percent;" and Jon said "Yes, it was between 5 and 9 percent." Olafur gave the most general response and Larus gave the most precise one. In general, the subjects were most confident in Larus, and least confident in Olafur. This defies logic because if Larus is right, so too are Olafur and Jon. On the other hand, Olafur could be right, while Larus and Jon are wrong (if inflation were to be 14 percent, for example). Teigen (1990), who conducted this study, refers to the findings as the "preciseness paradox."

6.3.2. Offer verifiable evidence

If you make a claim based on facts, you should be able to support the facts. Go beyond providing evidence to show the source of the evidence. People should be able to verify that the evidence is correct. When facts are verifiable, people become more confident even if they do not bother to do any verification.

Verifiable evidence is persuasive when an ad has strong arguments for high-involvement products. In particular, it is important when there is news about the product.

Ads should provide the source of evidence so that those in the target market can check it. Supporting evidence can often be made available on the Internet, thus providing interested customers with a low-cost way to check claims.

In a survey of subscribers to the *Harvard Business Review*, 96 percent of the respondents agreed that "advertisers should be forced to substantiate their claims" (Greyser and Diamond 1974). That is an old survey, but I doubt that these attitudes are much different today.

Advertising agencies should ask companies to support their claims. This support can help protect sellers as well as advertisers. Remember that competitors or consumers might test the claims if the advertiser fails to do so. For example, on March 28, 2008, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that two New Zealand high-school students, working on a science project, found that GlaxoSmithKline's blackcurrant drink, Ribena, contained no detectable vitamin C, contrary to the claim in its advertising. The company admitted to 15 charges of misleading advertising in the ensuing legal case. It was fined and ordered to run corrective advertising.

Interestingly, few advertisers follow this principle. A meta-analysis of 60 published empirical studies on information in advertising found that only 4 percent of ads in all media provided either independent or company research (Abernathy and Franke 1996). Thus, by using verifiable evidence to support claims, an advertiser, by being atypical, can increase believability and attention.

In describing an agency's work for Subaru of America, Rothenberg (1994, p. 335) told how one copywriter claimed that the Subaru SVA had 63 safety features. When asked about the source of that statistic, he said, "I made it up."

In one study, 58 companies were asked explain the basis for their claims. For example, Bristol-Myers was asked for details about "a study of hospital patients showed ... Excedrin is more effective in the relief of pain than twice as many aspirin," and Ralston-Purina was asked about its claim that Meat Plus is "so good dogs chose it six to one in a recent test over the leading competitive variety." Sixteen companies did not respond, and of these that did, none were able to substantiate their claims (Cowan and Nader 1969).

In 1971, the U.S. Federal Trade Commission required advertisers to substantiate claims in their ads. In a 1974 survey, students writing as consumers requested substantiation for claims made in advertisements. They received substantiation for only 7 percent of their 373 requests (Woodside 1977).

A more recent study showed some improvement as substantiation was obtained from about 20 percent of the companies surveyed, while about 30 percent did not reply (Coney and Patti 1979). Similar findings were obtained by Anderson (1986).

Evidence on the effects of providing customers with verifiable evidence

Verifiable evidence is persuasive. A meta-analysis of studies in which some arguments provided sources and others did not, found that the inclusion of sources led to higher persuasion in 17 of the 23 comparisons, and it increased perceived credibility in 7 of 11 comparisons (O'Keefe 1998).

A lab experiment on print advertising found that subjects were more skeptical of claims that they could not check prior to purchase, such as "this carpet will last eight years" or of those that they could never check, such as "our soups are made with the finest ingredients" (Ford, Smith, and Swasy 1990).

Our *WAPB* analysis of quasi-experimental data found eight pairs of ads in which one ad provided a verifiable source for the evidence, and the other did not. Recall for verifiable ads was 1.23 times better than the other ads.

6.4. Data presentation

Consider an exchange on National Public Radio on June 13, 2000: "In 1999," said Judith Applebaum of the Women's Law Center, "3,800 cases were filed before the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission regarding wage discrimination." In response, Diana Furchtgott-Roth from the American Enterprise Institute said, "But there are 60 million women in the workforce—that's 0.006 percent, or to look at it another way, one in 15,000 women."

Another example of data presentation: Assume that a sudden outbreak of a rare disease has threatened the lives of 20 of the 40 residents of a village in Vermont. Would you donate to a fund for a treatment that could save all these people? Alternatively, would you donate to a fund that would save the 20 people across the United States suffering from this same disease? Donations are expected to be higher in the former because the proportion of lives saved is higher (Fetherstonhaugh et al. 1997).

The principles in this section are most relevant for strong arguments that are presented in long print ads or on the Internet.

6.4.1. To aid understanding, use absolute numbers for small values and frequency rates for large values

Percentages are difficult for some people to understand. A survey of 1,000 Germans asked what "40 percent" means. Some respondents said "one-quarter," some "4 out of 10," and others "every 40th person." About one-third of the respondents provided an incorrect answer (Gigerenzer 2002).

To communicate clearly, avoid relative rates. I was planning to run my first marathon when my wife read about a study claiming that this would double my chances of dying, as contrasted to sitting at home that day. However, all I needed to know was that my chances of dying while running a marathon was only 1 in 50,000, and I could tolerate those odds. But my wife is persuasive.

Relative rates are often used in advertising. Consider this claim: Hip fractures because of osteoporosis are expected to rise from 0.03 percent to 0.07 percent of the U.S. population over the next 50 years. Does that seem serious to you? To gain

attention for the problem in 1999, the World Health Organization claimed that "The number of hip fractures worldwide due to osteoporosis is expected to rise threefold by the middle of the next century."

Another example: An ad was headlined, "In patients with type 2 diabetes, Lipitor reduces risk of stroke by 48 percent.*" To their credit, the asterisk in this ad explained that the rate of strokes was 2.8 percent for a placebo versus 1.5 percent for Lipitor (*Wall Street Journal*, April 2, 2007).

Evidence on the effects of using percentages and frequencies

One paper reported on four experiments on the ability of people to understand statistical statements. They were asked about the ease of understanding of various formats, such as, "It is estimated that by the year 2020, (a) any given American will have a probability of 0.01 of having ... (b) 1 of every 100 Americans will have ... (c) 1 percent of all Americans will have ... or (d) 2.7 million Americans will have ... been exposed to Flu strain X." Simple frequencies (one in every hundred) and percentages were easier to understand. Supplementing this with absolute frequencies improved understanding when the numbers were not large. People had difficulty understanding probabilities or absolute frequencies involving large numbers (Brase 2002).

6.4.2. Use simple tables or graphs if you have substantial amounts of data

Tables or graphs can help to display data when you have a large amount of data. This is most relevant for still media with long copy, such as brochures or Internet sites.

Data should be organized so that the conclusion is immediately obvious. Do not expect readers to ponder its meaning. Consider the following summary: "Nearly 65 percent of the users of our brand gave us an 'excellent rating' versus 25 percent for Brand B, 45 percent for Brand C, and 37 percent for Brand D."
Now organize it as a table:

User ratings on excellence

Our brand	65%
Brand B	25%
Brand C	45%
Brand D	37%

Better yet, order the table rows by the key measure (the percentages in this case) to make the conclusion obvious. Do not put redundant or irrelevant information in graphs or tables. For example, do not repeat "%" when you can use % as a column heading.

User ratings on excellence

Brand	%
Ours	65
C	45
D	37
B	25

If the conclusions are not obvious from the data, use descriptive titles for exhibits. Titles and labels in exhibits and tables are especially helpful for low-involvement products because people may not invest the energy to draw conclusions. The same applies for fast-exposure ads because people do not have time to think about the ad. Descriptive titles for exhibits also serve as subheadings, and aid readers who are scanning for information.

Websites are ideal when there is substantial evidence to support claims. They can also allow customers to search for and organize the data. For example, Amazon.com allows users to rank books within categories by sales or by customer reviews, and airlines allow customers to organize their search in various ways, such as by price or by number of stops.

If using graphs, start from zero for ratio-scaled data; otherwise, the scale is distorted and could be misleading. Use pie charts only when obviously necessary; in other words, they should hardly ever be used. Line graphs are generally more effective than bar charts.

To help customers make comparisons, right-justify the numbers and align decimals. Tables are more attractive if they do not use lines to separate columns. Barring a need for high precision, use no more than two or three significant digits. Avoid leading zeros.

Provide a verbal summary of the graph's important information. This helps make the information more memorable.

Evidence on the effects of graphs

This principle is based heavily on received wisdom. There is some empirical evidence on the use of graphs, and in general they offered little advantage over tables—and sometimes graphs reduced understanding (DeSanctis 1984). However, graphs can help to show trends or patterns in data (Jarvenpaa and Dickson 1988).

6.5. Customer endorsements

Endorsements have a long history in advertising. For example, in an 1884 ad for Dr. Scott's Electric Hair Brush, a customer said, "My hair was falling out and I was rapidly becoming bald, but since using the brush, a thick growth of hair has made its appearance."

6.5.1. Consider endorsements by customers

In a print ad, a smiling, attractive, middle-aged woman is pictured, with her name and address and the headline, "I stopped using aspirin the day the hospital gave me Tylenol."

To help customers identify with a "typical customer," use only one customer endorsement in an ad. Show a picture of a customer who looks similar to the target market. Identify the person so that viewers could check to ensure that the testimonial is real. In the 1980s, four TV ads by New Zealand's Ansett Airlines provided names and addresses of people who gave testimonials about outstanding examples of service they had received from Ansett. Because the names would be easy to

verify in a telephone book, those watching the ads could accept that the events were true. These ads were widely discussed in New Zealand and the campaign won advertising awards.

Customers are skeptical of testimonials because they suspect that the endorsers were given a script. One way to address this problem is to use unrehearsed testimonials in TV commercials. In other words, use no script and only one take. For print ads, use the customer's wording.

The hidden camera technique can help communicate that the testimonial is unrehearsed. No retakes are allowed because it is unethical to portray a scene using a hidden camera if the person giving the testimonial had been given a script.

There are legal risks for endorsements. According to the U.S. Federal Trade Commission, the person who endorses a product must be representative of the target market, use the product before being approached for the ad, and use the product as long as the campaign runs.

Payments of any kind to the endorser must be disclosed. Actors cannot be used to portray consumers unless this is clearly disclosed in the advertisement. False claims cannot be made by presenting them merely as opinions of customers.

Evidence on the effects of endorsements by customers

A review of six published studies concluded that blemishes, such as vocal pauses ("uh"), slips of the tongue, and unnecessary repetition, do not detract from trustworthiness although they do detract from expertise (O'Keefe 2002a, p 185). For example, an experiment using newscasters found that although competency was lower, trustworthiness and recall did not suffer when a speaker stumbled over words occasionally (Engstrom 1994).

To test the value of the hidden-camera approach, 150 subjects were shown scenes from a mock TV commercial for a clock radio. Some saw a spokesperson described as a typical purchaser in the process of buying a clock radio, while others heard a typical purchaser who had been filmed by a hidden camera. Those who viewed the hidden-camera ad gave better ratings to the sound quality, accuracy, and reliability of the clock radio (Hunt, Domzal, and Kernan 1981).

Turning to non-experimental data, TV commercials with typical-person endorsers had better than average recall and comprehension than did the other ads in that sample (Laskey, Fox, and Crask 1994).

Walker (2008) found that TV commercials with real consumers as endorsers had 20 percent better recall and 10 percent higher persuasion, relative to the typical ad in these data. Similar results were obtained by Stanton and Burke (1998).

6.6. Celebrity endorsements

Celebrity endorsements would seem to be most appropriate for hedonic products because they might help consumers to imagine the pleasure of using the same products that celebrities choose to use.

Ogilvy had little regard for the use of celebrities. He stopped using them because, he claimed, people "remembered the celebrity but forgot the product." He also

claimed that celebrity testimonials are below average in their ability to change brand preference. However, as shown below, under certain condition, celebrities can play a role.

6.6.1. When an ad contains strong arguments, avoid the use of celebrities

If you have nothing to say, have a celebrity say it.
Old adage

When an ad has good arguments for a product, a celebrity's attention-getting power might distract from those arguments. This is consistent with other principles in this book—nothing should distract from a strong argument.

Celebrities can generate attention for unknown products. The issue, however, is whether this attention gets translated into profitability.

Evidence on the effects of celebrities when an ad has strong arguments

Kaikati's (1987) review of nine studies found mixed results for the use of celebrities. For example, two small-scale experiments found that the use of celebrities in ads enhanced the taste of wine. Two of three non-experimental studies showed negative results for ads with celebrities. In addition, Kaikati referred to Gallup & Robinson studies showing that TV commercials without celebrities successfully communicated 2.4 selling points to viewers, whereas those with celebrities communicated only 1.4 selling points (but I was unable to find the original source for this).

In a lab experiment, identical messages were delivered by either a well-known actress or an unknown professional announcer. Subjects who received the celebrity ads focused on the celebrity, whereas the other subjects focused on the brand (Mehta 1994).

Non-experimental evidence: TV commercials in which celebrities played principal characters were lower than average for persuasion (Stewart and Furse 1986). Commercials with celebrities were 21 percent lower in product-preference changes than the average for all commercials in their sample (Ogilvy and Raphaelson 1982). Commercials with celebrity endorsers were no more persuasive than the typical ad in another sample (Laskey et al. 1994).

6.6.2. Consider celebrity endorsements for gaining attention

The primary advantage of using celebrities in ads is to attract attention. Attention is needed especially for little-known products and services, or where the seller is not well known. For example, many years ago I saw a print ad asking for donations to the City Team Rescue Mission in Philadelphia. The ad requested that money be sent to a post office box. I was skeptical because I had never heard of the organization. However, the ad contained an appeal by Reggie White, who was a Philadelphia Eagles football player, a minister, and a leading citizen in Philadelphia. He gave credibility to the appeal.

The use of celebrities carries risks for the advertiser. In 1998, Dennis Rodman was second in name recognition to his teammate, Michael Jordan. However,

Rodman engaged in inappropriate behavior which was widely reported by the press, so advertisers stopped using him. In 2009, there was the Tiger Woods incident (it was alleged that knowledge of his affairs led to his wife attacking him and his car), and some advertisers decided to not to use him any longer.

Provide an escape clause should the celebrity do anything that reflects poorly on the brand. Celebrities might have run-ins with the law. They might run into difficulties, such as James Garner's heart surgery when he was a spokesperson for the beef industry. They may make inappropriate statements, such as movie star Macaulay Culkin allegedly stating about a product he was endorsing: "I'm not crazy about the stuff, but money is money."

Celebrities are also exposed to risks when they endorse products. The U.S. Federal Trade Commission said that it would hold celebrities personally responsible for false claims they make. Advertisers should inform celebrities of these risks. Kertz and Ohanian (1992) reviewed relevant law cases and advised that claims of product performance should be substantiated by all parties making claims.

The use of celebrities also poses another risk. A consumer poll found that 85 percent of the respondents "avoid buying products associated with well-known people because they feel that celebrity salaries add significantly to the cost of items" (Cooper 1984). New Balance shoes tries to capitalize on this belief. Since their beginning in 1972, they have advertised that their sneakers are "Endorsed by no one™." From all indications, they seem to be doing well.

Advertisers can avoid some problems by using dead celebrities. Apple Computers used Albert Einstein, Mahatma Gandhi, Pablo Picasso, and Jackie Robinson in its "Think different™" campaign. In 2000, a South African ad for Dunlop Tires used a digitally aged James Dean (the film star who died in 1955).

Before deciding to use a celebrity, make a formal estimate of the potential return on investment (ROI), then compare this ROI with that of alternatives, such as using typical consumers as endorsers. Despite their value, such analyses are seldom conducted. When Erdogan, Baker, and Tagg (2001) surveyed 80 advertising agencies in the United Kingdom, obtaining responses from 131 respondents, they found that "none of the advertising agencies had any written documentation regarding celebrity endorsements strategy."

Celebrities seem to be common in ads because their use is concentrated on high-circulation media. Of the 56 ads in the 1994 Super Bowl TV broadcast, 77 percent used celebrities (Kanner 2004, p. 48). In contrast, our analysis of 480 print ads from *WAPB* found that only 6 percent used a celebrity.

Evidence on the effects of using of celebrities to gain attention

Lab experiments show that even monkeys will "pay" to see images of high-status monkeys. In one study, they traded juice for views of other monkeys (Deaner, Khera, and Platt 2005).

In a lab experiment, 283 subjects viewed B&W print ads featuring a picture of Pierre Varnay, a fictional French Olympic cyclist, and Avenix, a new brand of bicycle. Subjects then received three magazine articles, one of which said that Varnay had engaged in steroid use and that he had multiple drunk-driving infractions. This information led to lower ratings for Avenix bicycles (Till and Shimp 1998).

Our analysis of quasi-experimental data supports the use of celebrities as a way of gaining attention:

> **Print ads with celebrity endorsements had better recall.** Our *WAPB* analysis found ten pairs of print ads in which one ad featured a celebrity, while the other ad did not. Recall for ads with celebrities was 1.65 times better than for the other ads.

On the issue of negative information about celebrities, an analysis was conducted of 42 news events in which a celebrity spokesperson was blamed for doing something wrong, such as wife-beating. The value of the firms' stock prices typically decreased in the days following the publicity (Louie, Kulik, and Jacobson 2000).

6.6.3. When using celebrities, make sure they are relevant and credible

Celebrities should be relevant both to the product and the target market. This principle seems obvious.

A famous actress, Lillie Langtry, endorsed Pears Soap in England in the late 1800s, saying, "I have much pleasure in stating that I have used your soap for some time and prefer it to any other." Langtry was seen as a relevant endorser for soap because of her good-looking skin. In another example, in 1914, the Italian tenor, Enrico Caruso said, "Tuxedo [pipe tobacco] does not irritate my throat."

In a survey of 80 advertising agencies in the United Kingdom, the 131 respondents rated the importance of factors involved in the selection of celebrities. The most important factors were the celebrity's match with the target market and with the product. Here is their recommended list of factors to use for selecting celebrities along with their importance ratings (Erdogan et al. 2001):

Criteria for selection of a celebrity	Rating by experts*
Celebrity–product/brand match	4.6
Celebrity–target audience match	4.6
Overall image of the celebrity	4.6
Cost	4.3
Trustworthiness	4.3
Likelihood of acquiring the celebrity	4.2
Risk of controversy	4.1
Celebrity familiarity	4.1
Prior endorsements	4.1
Likeability	4.0
Risk of celebrity overshadowing brands	3.9
Stage of celebrity life cycle	3.6
Expertise	3.3
Physical attractiveness	3.1

* 5 = very important; 1 = least important.

Avoid celebrities who endorse other products. Some celebrities are so popular that many advertisers want to use them. For example, in the 1985 Super Bowl broadcast, the football player Joe Montana endorsed soft drinks, cars, sporting goods, and razors.

Unfortunately, celebrities often lack credibility. To improve trustworthiness of a celebrity, consider having them use a two-sided argument.

Evidence on the effects of a relevant match of celebrity and product

A lab experiment used irrelevant endorsers, such as Michael Dell of Dell Computers endorsing ski jackets. Compared with ads having no endorser, an irrelevant endorser substantially reduced purchase intentions for the three products tested (Rossiter and Bellman 2005, p. 178).

In two lab experiments, subjects who received a print ad where a relevant celebrity, a track athlete, endorsed a new brand of athletic shoe had higher purchase intentions than did subjects who received the same ad with an irrelevant endorser (Goldsmith, Lafferty, and Newell 2000).

On the issue of avoiding celebrities who advertise other products, 20 print ads were shown to 461 subjects in a lab experiment. Actors Dustin Hoffman and Matthew Broderick were used as endorsers for Visa credit cards, Kodak film, Colgate toothpaste, and Certs mints. Using an experimental design, variations were made in the number of products endorsed by each celebrity. As the number of products endorsed increased from one to two to four to eight, the credibility of the endorser went down—as did purchase intentions (Tripp, Jensen, and Carlson 1994).

6.7. Expert endorsements

In the 1870s, Henry Parson Crowell, founder of the Quaker Oats Company, was one of the first to use expert endorsements in ads.

6.7.1. Consider support from an expert unless the target market already agrees with the message.

This principle is more effective for high-involvement products because people will be more likely to consider experts' opinions. Expert endorsements are expected to be most effective when the target market lacks awareness of the brand or firm.

When the advertiser's intent is to support current attitudes and behavior, expertise is unnecessary. Interestingly, in this situation the use of expertise is likely to be harmful to persuasion, perhaps because it leads the people to rethink their belief. When the intent is to reinforce existing opinions, use other approaches, such as customer testimonials.

When using credible experts, introduce them early in the ad. That helps to establish the credibility of the claims that follow. Conversely, if the source lacks credibility, put it at the end, so that people focus on the message, not the source.

The effect of expertise drops over time because people forget about the source. Thus, high expertise is more important when the advertiser expects a quick response.

The expert source in an ad should be someone that the target market recognizes. In 1955, P&G introduced Crest toothpaste with stannous fluoride. On August 1, 1960, the American Dental Association (ADA), a well-respected source, endorsed

Crest's claim that the fluoride in its toothpaste prevented tooth decay. Crest had been advertising this benefit prior to the ADA announcement, but with only modest success. Following the endorsement, Crest's market share rose sharply in a little over two years.

The expert should be independent of the advertiser and easy to locate, as the Crest example illustrates. However, this is not always the case. For example, in 1935, Fleishmann's Yeast showed pictures of medical doctors in various countries and provided their statements on the health benefits of Fleischmann's. It was never determined whether these were real doctors, or whether they even existed.

The mass media have reported that endorsements by experts have substantial effects on sales. For example, in 1989, sales of Buick's LeSabre automobile allegedly rose 62 percent after it advertised that J.D. Power, a consumer satisfaction survey company, had rated it as the most trouble-free American car.

Evidence on the effects of expert endorsements

A meta-analysis of 114 field and lab experiments found that expertise had a much stronger effect on persuasion than any of the other four elements that were examined: credibility, trustworthiness, similarity, and physical attractiveness (Wilson and Sherell 1993). However, in five studies with ten experimental comparisons, the use of credible sources *harmed persuasion when people already had a strong favorable opinion* (O'Keefe 1987).

In lab experiments, 466 subjects were shown B&W print ads for computers and auto insurance. TV newscaster Tom Brokaw endorsed the computer, and racecar driver Mario Andretti endorsed the auto insurance. For each product, endorsements from an expert source (*Consumers Digest*) resulted in better-perceived product quality than did celebrity endorsements (Dean and Biswas 2001).

Consider the impact of expert reviews of Broadway plays. Selecting which play to attend is a high-involvement decision. The target market relies on the reviews of critics from the *New York Times* and other media in making this decision. Plays that received good reviews enjoyed higher ticket sales than those with poor reviews (e.g., Reddy, Swaminathan, and Motley 1998).

Three lab experiments found that messages from low-credibility sources are more persuasive if the sources are identified as the end of the messages (Greenberg and Miller 1966).

6.8. Comparative advertising

Comparative ads have been traced back to the 1700s in England. However, for a long time they were rarely used because they were considered to be ineffective and unethical—as well as being illegal in some countries. In 1759, Samuel Johnson said, "In an advertisement, it is allowed to every man to speak well of himself, but I know not why he should assume the privilege of censuring his neighbor." In 1894, a famous advertiser, George P. Roswell, said "Mention the name of a competitor and you advertise him; slander him and you do yourself no end of harm." As you will see below, the lawmakers and the experts were wrong.

In 1932, the Getchell agency, given the task of introducing a new Chrysler Plymouth model when Ford and Chevrolet were dominating the market, came up with the headline, "Look at all three, and may the best car win!" Chrysler executives were not impressed with the idea of giving attention to competitors. One said, "Why would I want to sell Ford and Chevrolet?" But Walter Chrysler, the owner, overruled them and ran the ad—which challenged the informal ban on comparative advertising. Plymouth's share of the low-priced automobile market rose from 16 percent in 1932 to 24 percent in 1933 (Fox 1997).

Prior to 1970, the U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC) discouraged comparative advertising. After 1970, the FTC changed its position and began to encourage it. In a 1979 policy statement it said, "Comparative advertising is a source of important information to consumers and assists them in making rational purchase decisions" among alternative brands.

In 1993, the European Common Market lifted restrictions that member countries had placed on comparative advertising and stated:

> comparative advertising shall be allowed provided that it objectively compares the material, relevant, verifiable, and fairly chosen features of competing goods or services and that it: (a) does not mislead; (b) does not cause confusion, … and (c) does not discredit, denigrate, or bring contempt on a competitor.

Comparative advertising grew rapidly once free of government restraints. This is not surprising given its effectiveness for buyers and sellers. In 1973, only about 7 percent of U.S. TV commercials used comparative ads. This jumped to 14 percent in 1980, 23 percent in 1982, to 35 percent in 1984, and to 80 percent in the late 1980s (Pechmann and Stewart 1990). An examination of 949 full-page ads for 12 U.S. magazines, estimated that 20 percent were comparative (Chou, Franke, and Wilcox 1987).

6.8.1. Use comparative advertising for brands that have clear comparative benefits and a small market share.

Comparative advertising is powerful for products with a low market share— such as a new product—and an important comparative advantage that is easy to communicate. This implies that comparative advertising is most effective for high-involvement utilitarian products

In 2007, Apple Inc. had ideal conditions for comparative ads for its computer operating system. It had a small market share for a utilitarian product with important comparative benefits that were easy to communicate—ease of use, service, reliability, and freedom from viruses. Its advertising involved direct comparisons with Microsoft Windows, which had by far the dominant market share. The comparisons in each commercial were simple, and they related to benefits that were important to customers. Apple achieved rapid gains in market share during this campaign. Surprisingly, Microsoft replied with comparative ads directed against Apple despite the fact that it was the market leader and had no important comparative advantages.

Make the comparisons clear and easy. For example, base comparisons on a single dimension, such as the unit price of the product or in "twice the speed." This helps

customers make quick comparisons. This is less important for high-involvement products where people are often willing to mull over difficult comparisons.

To make it easy for customers, compare the brands on attributes that they typically use to make their selections. For example, Apple often advertises that its computers are easier to use than its competitors'.

The featured brand should dominate in comparative ads. It should generally be presented early and late, and both visually and verbally—with little attention to the competitor's brand. There should be no doubt which brand is being advertised. Here is an example that violated these prescriptions: Pepsi, in a TV commercial, showed a young boy in a poor country putting coins in a dispenser to purchase two Cokes. He then stands on the two Coke cans so he can reach the button for the Pepsi. Once he has purchased the Pepsi, he walks off leaving the two Cokes. This ad, which had no facts, showed the Coca-Cola cans near both the beginning and end of the ad. They were on the screen for over 40 percent of the time, while Pepsi was shown for less than 20 percent.

Comparative advertising helps customers because it typically provides more useful information than non-comparative advertising.

Evidence on the effects of comparative advertising and when it works

A meta-analysis found 77 empirical studies on comparative advertising from 1975–96. (The References section of this book includes five additional studies, all supportive, listed under Grewal et al. 1997.) In general, comparative advertising increased purchase intentions by 22 percent. Comparative ads had a greater effect on increasing purchase intentions for new and established products than for leading products, based on 55 studies, and it was especially effective in improving the attitude toward new brands (Grewal et al. 1997, table 2).

A study of consumer durable ads from four magazines found that non-comparative ads provided about 1.7 pieces of information versus 2.2 for implied-comparison ads, and 3.6 for strict-comparison ads (Harmon, Razzouk, and Stern 1983). Similar findings were obtained in a study of 949 full-page magazine ads; the non-comparative ads had 1.4 pieces of information on average, versus 2.0 for ads with implied comparisons, and 2.5 for strict-comparison ads (Chou et al. 1987).

Indirect evidence on the importance of easy comparisons was provided by lab experiments in which subjects were asked to predict which of two students would have better grades in college. When a quantitative feature was common to both alternatives, the subjects gave more weight to it. For example, they used grade point averages (GPAs) in their decisions, even when they had stated earlier that GPAs were unimportant (Slovic and MacPhillamy 1974).

The value of using easy (alignable) comparisons was shown in a review of eight prior studies, and on a lab experiment on ads for vacuum cleaners and popcorn. Easy comparisons provided a more memorable and persuasive approach than did difficult comparisons. Recall of the easy comparisons was especially useful when the subjects saw these ads and ads for competitive products. The advice to use easy comparisons conflicts with conventional wisdom, whereby many firms often advertise unique features for their brands (Lee and Lee 2007).

Lab experiments showed that highly involved people can make rational choices even when presented with difficult comparisons (Zhang and Markman 2001).

Although comparative advertising is beneficial for buyers and sellers, people's attitudes towards such ads do not reflect this. They find them less believable and less likeable (Shimp and Dyer 1978; Swinyard 1981; Wilson and Mederrisoglu 1979).

6.8.2. Compare the product with market leaders

It is more effective to compare your brand with the market leader than to compare it with other established brands. The determination of the market leader should be based on criteria such as the brand's prestige and market share. For example, in the ancient Roman Empire, bathing establishments in provincial towns would claim that their "warm, sea and fresh-water baths" were patterned after baths in the city of Rome. Duracell batteries, with a very large market share, got this backwards when it used comparative ads against Kodak batteries, because Kodak had only 3 percent of the market at the time (Levy 1987).

When it is difficult to make comparisons with the leading brand, or where it is not clear which is the leading brand, some advertisers use piecemeal comparisons. The idea behind piecemeal comparisons is to show that the featured brand is better than Brand B on attribute X, than Brand C on attribute Y, and so on.

Evidence on the effects of making comparisons with other brands

A meta-analysis found 38 studies in which the comparison was against the market leader and 15 studies in which the product was compared with an established product other than the market leader. Purchase intentions were 2.4 times higher when the comparison was against the market leader (Grewal et al. 1997, table 2).

To test piecewise comparisons, 120 subjects were shown print ads for automobiles. Some received a non-comparative ad, others a single-comparison ad, and the rest a piecemeal-comparison ad. The latter ad claimed that a fictitious Ambassador automobile was superior to Suzuki, Mazda, Mitsubishi, and Nissan in terms of safety, roominess, power, and gas mileage. It did this by claiming that the Ambassador was superior to the worst-ranking brand among those being compared on each feature. The piecemeal format was rated as more believable and persuasive than an ad providing comparisons with a single competitor's product. Both were more persuasive than a non-comparative ad (Muthukrishnan, Warlop, and Alba 2001).

6.8.3. When making a comparative claim, provide objective support and offer it gently

> *There's nothing stronger than gentleness.*
> *Abraham Lincoln*

Premier Foods in the United Kingdom had been making HP baked beans under license from Danone when it learned that the HP brand had been sold to Heinz, which already had the largest market share. Premier decided to launch its own beans under a new brand name, Branston. Believing that it had a superior product, it launched the Greater British Bean Poll campaign. As part of the campaign,

Premier hired a firm to do blind taste tests in supermarkets across Britain. Of the 750,000 people who voted in this Bean Poll, 76 percent favored Branston over Heinz. The poll generated much media coverage. Statistical analyses showed that the campaign led to large and rapid gains in sales, and it won an IPA effectiveness award (Green 2007).

As Abraham Lincoln advised, be gentle. Focus on the positive by describing the product's advantage rather than the competitor's disadvantages. Present comparisons in a positive manner with an attitude such as, "Our competitors have wonderful products, bless them, but compare them with our brand." Let the evidence do the talking. A gentle and positive approach seems to be more objective and less likely to arouse counter-arguments by customers or legal challenges from competitors.

When making comparisons, use well-supported, objective evidence. In addition to helping consumers, this also can ward off legal challenges by competitors. Google AdWords imposes the restriction on advertisers that when making comparative claims, "support for this claim must be displayed on the leading page of your AdWords ad."

Many advertisers overlook the need for factual support. For example, the Pepsi 60-second TV commercial "Diner" shows Pepsi and Coke truck drivers meeting at a diner and exchanging pleasantries about the winter holidays. The Coke driver offers the Pepsi driver a sip of Coke; in turn, the Pepsi driver offers a sip of Pepsi. When the Coke driver refuses to return the Pepsi, a fight ensues. It was good entertainment, but there were no facts.

The FTC does *not* call for higher standards of proof for comparative advertising than for non-comparative advertising. In fact, its 1979 policy statement wrote, "industry codes and interpretations that impose a higher standard of substantiation for comparative claims than for unilateral claims are inappropriate." Nevertheless, the level of vigilance will be higher for comparative ads; competitors that fare poorly might take legal action if the comparisons cannot be supported.

Departures from fact-based comparative ads also entail legal risks, as these examples show. In 2004, Johnson & Johnson, makers of dental floss, successfully sued Pfizer for advertising that mouthwash was as effective as flossing. When Grey Goose vodka continued to claim that its vodka was rated by customers as "best-tasting," although more recent tests had shown that the claim was no longer true, one of its competitors sued for false advertising.

The American Association of Advertising Agencies states that "The intent and connotation of the ad should be to inform and never to discredit or unfairly attack competitors, competing products, or services." The key word here is "unfairly."

Consider two-sided arguments in the comparisons. A product does not need to be better on all features. Tell the good and the bad. This will add to believability and contribute to a sense of fairness.

Evidence on the effects of comparative claims

Comparative advertising needs objective support. It had no effect on purchase intentions in five experiments in which the comparisons lacked factual evidence (Grewal et al. 1997).

To test the value of being gentle and positive, an experiment used print ads that promoted one of two fictional brands of jeans. Replies were obtained from 201 customers at a shopping mall, each of whom saw one of four ads. Those who saw a positive ad rated it as much more believable, had a more positive attitude toward the brand, and reported a higher purchase intention (3.9 versus 3.4 on a 1 to 9 scale). Extensions of this experiment using 11 actual ads, all for high-involvement products, added support. Negative comparisons led to lower believability, more perceived bias, more counter-arguments, and lower brand ratings than positive comparisons (Jain and Posavac 2004).

6.9. Negative advertising

Negative advertising differs from comparative advertising in that it provides no information about the product being advertised. It simply discusses the bad aspects of a competitor's product. The aim is to harm the competitor's product.

6.9.1. Consider negative advertising when there is only one major alternative to your brand and it has serious shortcomings

In talking about his opponent Catilina, Cicero asked how anyone could be a friend of someone "who has murdered many citizens." The president of Yale University said that if Thomas Jefferson were elected, "the Bible will be burned … and we may see our wives and daughters the victims of legal prostitution." Lincoln was attacked as a "liar, thief and buffoon."

The conditions for negative advertising are often met with respect to political advertising. Negative advertising has long been common in political advertising. For example, more than half of the advertisements for the 1986 U.S. House and Senate races were negative (Johnson-Cartee and Copeland 1989). Negative advertising is most appropriate for political advertising when the race has narrowed to two candidates. It is useful to voters as it leads to a consideration of important shortcomings of the candidates.

By saying detrimental things about a competitor, it might be possible to reduce peoples' interest in that competitor. This would be of little benefit unless the target market would switch to the advertiser's product. Such situations are not common in commercial advertising. Furthermore, negative advertising runs the risk of harming total demand for the product category, and it might also engender ill will toward the advertiser.

Negative advertising is rarely used for commercial products, but there are exceptions. Apple's "trust me" campaign where it criticized Microsoft's Vista operating system is an example of an application that meets the conditions. In contrast, a KFC ad did not seem to meet the condition. It opened with a Ronald McDonald clown surrogate being interrogated by a Senate subcommittee. Allegations were raised about the defendant's lack of expertise in providing quality chicken. When pressed about how he expected to sell chicken, "Ronald" responded, "Toys, lots of toys." Ronald's "legal counsel" then buried his head in his hands.

Negative advertising is upsetting to the brands being attacked, and they might

respond in kind. This can lead to an expensive series of attacks and responses. In short, leave negative advertising to the politicians.

Evidence on the effects of negative advertising

A qualitative review of the literature led to the conclusion that negative information about choices carries more weight than positive information (Jasperson and Fan 2002). Properly used then, negative advertising can have strong effects.

A survey by 150 political consultants found strong agreement that, "Negative ads can exert a powerful impact on voters' attitudes toward a candidate." The political consultants also believed that negative ads are more powerful than positive ads, and that people remember negative information better than positive information (Perloff and Kinsey 1992).

During the 2004 campaign for the U.S. presidency, the Guardian *newspaper in England portrayed George W. Bush as a semiliterate ape and tried to persuade voters in Ohio to vote for John Kerry. Was that an effective strategy?*

6.9.2. Attack ads should employ objective information, not emotion

In the "Lemmings" ad for Apple, shown at the 1985 Super Bowl, a line of well-dressed blindfolded men and women (implying unimaginative employees from IBM) marched up a hill. When they reached the top, they followed the leader off the edge of a cliff. This ad was said by some to be one of the reasons that Chiat/Day lost the Apple account the next year.

Attack ads seldom change those with strong beliefs. So they should aim at the undecided people. And when people are undecided, they are more likely to be persuaded by objective information than by emotion. To persuade these people, the attacker should adopt an objective and helpful stance, avoiding harsh language, personal attacks, or insults.

Evidence on the effects of using objective information, not emotion

Laboratory experiments were used to examine the effects of insults in a political campaign. Some subjects heard the messages with insults and some without. Three insults were used in one experiment: "a) I can't believe anyone could make such dumb proposals. My opponent's policies are like a menace to society; b) I don't know what's worse, deceit or ignorance, but my opponent has got both covered; c) My opponent's record as a public servant is like a 'how to' book on bungling, botching, and screwing up." The insults had an enormous impact on character ratings and voting intentions. In one experiment, the insults reduced the vote share for the *source* from 58 percent to 42 percent, with a corresponding gain for the opponent who was attacked. Character ratings dropped for the attacker and improved for the opponent who was attacked. Similar results were obtained in a second experiment on voting, and also in an experiment regarding French language rights in Canada (Roese and Sande 1993).

In another lab experiment, 54 subjects were given an actual TV commercial

for a U.S. Senate seat in Montana in 1982. TV attack ads from the opponent ("Paid for by the Williams for Senate Committee") were shown to 54 subjects saw, while 58 saw ads from an independent source ("Paid for by the National Conservative Political Action Committee. Not authorized by any candidate or candidate's committee.") The independent source was more successful in lowering votes for the target (the opponent) and raising it for the source, Williams (Garramone 1985).

In still another lab experiment, 274 undergraduates saw six 30-second commercials for two fictional political candidates. Ads that focused on issues were more effective than emotional ads at reducing those who said they would vote for the target of the ads. Also, in contrast to the emotional ad, the issue ad caused negligible damage to the attacker (Roddy and Garramone 1988).

6.10. Refutation

Refutation is appropriate when an organization has made a mistake. It is also needed when false accusations are made.

Well-respected brands risk extortion from false accusations. People can claim bizarre things about a brand, then offer to "settle." If the brand does not settle, they threaten to go public, as one woman did in 2005 when claiming to find a human finger in a bowl of Wendy's chili. In the Wendy's situation, publicity about the case led to reduced sales and layoffs. In such cases, firms need contingency plans and Wendy's seemed to have one. It issued statements about how its staff were investigating the situation, and offered a $100,000 reward for information on the origin of the finger. Wendy's also filed a successful criminal complaint, which led to a jail sentence for the woman who had claimed to find the finger, but who had in fact planted it.

6.10.1. Respond to negative claims that are likely to become widely known

Avis Rental Cars began its "We try harder™" campaign in 1962. The implication was that Hertz takes its customers for granted and does not provide good service. Avis's market share went from 10 percent to 35 percent over the next few years. Hertz was slow to respond; however, in 1966, it managed to blunt the "We try harder" campaign with a campaign using ads such as:

> For years, Avis has been telling you Hertz is No. 1. Now we're going to tell you why. If you were in the car rental business and you were No. 2 and you had only half as many cars to offer and half as many locations at which to order them, and fewer people to handle everything, what would you say in your advertising? Right—your ashtrays are cleaner.

Another ad used the headline, "No. 2 says he tries harder. Than who?" Hertz then described its benefits without mentioning Avis.

It may be appropriate to challenge the credibility of sources, especially when the source is low-status. People tend to forget the source; therefore, damaging statements from unreliable sources could have an increased impact over time. It

might help, then, to remind people that the source was unreliable, as shown in a political-advertising experiment.

Respond to negative claims with well-supported arguments, and ensure that your arguments are clear to others. When addressing false claims about a product, focus on solutions and do not dwell on the claim. McDonald's was rumored to be using red worm meat in its hamburgers. It was a strange rumor because, at the time, red worms cost five times as much per pound as beef. In response, McDonald's simply advertised "100 percent beef" (Tybout, Calder, and Sternthal, 1981, describe this and other rumors involving companies).

Preemptive replies are useful for high-involvement products because they help to inoculate people against arguments that might come up in the future. Raise the negative issues and say what you will do about them before an attack is made. In Iraq, when the U.S. military uncovered cases of prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad, one officer advised going public immediately and telling how the problem was being resolved. Her advice is consistent with the evidence. In addition to gaining credibility, this approach could help prepare people for detrimental news that would be published by other sources. She was overruled.

If an attack threatens the credibility of an organization, consider delegating oversight authority. The voluntary delegation of responsibility to an impartial third party engenders more trust than if the same authority were imposed on an organization. Tropical Fantasy is a fruit-flavored drink produced by a small New York City firm. In 1991, flyers alleged that the Ku Klux Klan owned Tropical Fantasy and that the drink made black men sterile. One flier claimed (falsely) that this information was based on a TV news story. Vendors dropped the product, delivery vehicles were attacked, and sales plummeted. The Tropical Fantasy company responded in an effective manner: it had the drink tested by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (an independent authority), and got New York City Mayor David Dinkins (an African American and an authority figure) to drink a bottle on TV.

Evidence on the effects of refutation

Politicians who defended themselves by directly refuting attack ads suffered a smaller drop in voter intentions than those who did not defend. This finding was obtained in a lab experiment involving 274 subjects. Direct refutation also lowered intentions to vote for the candidate who launched the initial attack (Roddy and Garramone 1988).

With respect to the value of delegating authority to an impartial third party, three lab experiments showed that the voluntary delegation of authority led to more trust than when oversight was imposed on the organization (Nakayachi and Watabe 2005).

A lab experiment used ads from a 1982 campaign for a U.S. Senate seat in Montana. TV attack ads with no rebuttal were shown to 112 subjects, while 59 saw the same ads followed by rebuttals. The latter subjects were less likely than the former to vote for the candidate who had launched the attack (Garramone 1985).

A survey of 150 political consultants found agreement that political candidates should respond to negative ads by opponents (Perloff and Kinsey 1992).

6.11. Puffery

Promise, large promise, is the soul of an advertisement.
Samuel Johnson, mid-1700s

Puffery is an exaggerated claim that is presented without support. Many restaurants claim to serve the "best food in town," Bayer sells "the world's best aspirin," Hush Puppies are "the earth's most comfortable shoes." "Shop here and your life will be a joy forever," according to a sign over Bésame Mucho, a gift shop in Key West, Florida.

Ads can be viewed as promises or claims for a product; therefore, it is important to phrase puffery claims carefully. For example, say, "some graduates of our business school program have started at over $200,000 per year," rather than, "you will earn over $200,000 per year after taking our program." In making such claims, advertisers must ensure that the puffery is not misleading in important ways.

Companies sometimes challenge the use of puffery by their competitors. For example, in the late 1990s, Pizza Hut sued Papa John's for claiming "better ingredients, better pizza." The case went to the U.S. Supreme Court, which refused to overturn the judgment that favored Papa John's. Although Papa John's prevailed, lawsuits can be expensive.

Consumers have not been very successful in suing for puffery. For example, a consumer tried to sue American Honda Motors because, contrary to its claim, he did not meet the nicest people while driving around in his Honda Civic automobile.

A mid-1990's revision to the U.S. Uniform Commercial Code helped advertisers by switching the burden of proof to consumers when they take advertising puffery as promises (Ross 1996). Still, in 2007, an individual sued a dry cleaner in Washington, D.C. for $54 million because he was not satisfied with the $10.50 alteration of his suit pants, claiming he did not get his original pants back. The sign said "Satisfaction guaranteed" and he was not satisfied. (The $54 million was based on a government formula for computing damages.) The Chungs, owners of the dry cleaners, won this "pants-suit," but went out of business as a result of the legal costs.

Puffery has been a staple of advertising. It was widely used in the early 1800s in advertisements for patent medicines. P.T. Barnum used it for theatrical productions in the mid-1800s. It continues to be widely used. For example, Stewart and Furse (1986) found that 58 percent of TV commercials by leading firms used puffery.

6.11.1. Consider mild puffery

Mild puffery can be persuasive when advertising for low-involvement, credence, or hedonic products.

Mild puffery is often beneficial for customers. They might get more enjoyment because the puffery can create the anticipation of a good experience. It is also good that suppliers are enthusiastic about their brand because this might lead them to try harder.

Evidence on the effects of puffery

In an experiment on the effect of exaggeration, 220 subjects were shown a full-page B&W magazine ad for a ballpoint pen. Two levels of exaggeration were used, after which the subjects sampled the pens. Greatly exaggerated claims led to lower intentions to purchase than did mild puffery (Marks and Kamins 1988).

In a non-experimental study, five TV commercials for national brands were shown to a sample of 100 subjects. They contained a total of 13 claims, such as "Ponds Cold Cream keeps skin soft and young." On average, the subjects believed half of the puffery claims (Rotfeld and Rotzoll 1980).

6.12. Questions

I was sitting in a lecture and struggling to stay awake. Then the lecturer asked a question. It jolted me awake. The lecturer then went on to answer his own question. According to Zillman and Cantor (1973), my experience was not unusual. Their experiment involved providing the same lecture content in two different ways; some subjects heard statements while others heard rhetorical questions. The rhetorical questions led to more involvement and learning when subjects were tired, bored or distracted.

Questions come in four forms, according to Areni (2003). Using an advertisement for Glidden paints, he illustrated them:

- *Rhetorical*: A rhetorical question is phrased such that no answer is expected: "Isn't it obvious that Glidden offers better service than any other company?"
- *Directives* are implied orders phrased as questions: "Why don't you carry Glidden in your stores?"
- *Concessions* begin with an interrogatory word and suggest that any other option than the one mentioned is foolish: "Why would you carry any other brand?"
- *Tag questions* are declarative statements followed by a short phrase: "Glidden offers better customer service than any other company, doesn't it?"

The type of question is important, yet we have little evidence on how to use each most effectively. An analysis of over 2,500 TV commercials found that 31 percent contained questions (Howard 1990).

6.12.1. Use product-related questions only if you have good answers

When questions are used, they should be related to the product. In addition, they should only be used when there are answers that support the ad's message. The idea is to get people to think about the benefits of the product. Without good answers, questions are expected to be of little value.

Evidence on the effects of product-related rhetorical questions

In a lab experiment, 160 University of Missouri undergraduates, working individually, evaluated radio commercials that dealt with a proposal stating that

comprehensive examinations should be required for graduation. In the low-involvement condition, the message was of little interest to the students because it related to a different college and it would take place ten years in the future. In the high-involvement group, the changes would take place next year at the University of Missouri; thus, it would affect them:

	Changes in agreement given strong arguments	
Involvement	Statement	Rhetorical question
Low	0.04	0.**61**
High	**0.75**	0.05

The bold font in the above table shows the best strategies depended on the level of involvement. For low-involvement decisions, rhetorical questions lead people to think about the strong arguments. For high-involvement products, statements were more effective. Apparently, if consumers are already highly involved, and the arguments are strong, they will already be inclined to think about the information. Thus, according to this study, use questions when people are not thinking much, and when answers are good (Petty, Cacioppo, and Heesacker 1981).

To obtain additional information on these issues, we analyzed quasi-experimental data on print ads:

Print ads with product-related questions and good answers had better recall. Our *WAPB* analysis found 13 pairs of ads in which one ad posed product-related questions with good answers while the other did not. Recall for ads with product-related questions and good answers was 1.44 times better than for the other ads.

6.13. Repetition

I have said it thrice: What I tell you three times is true.
Lewis Carroll, The Hunting of the Snark

If an ad keeps repeating a fact that is not true, will you start to believe it? According to Lenin, "A lie told often enough becomes the truth." The Nazis used repetition to sell their philosophy. In a diary entry dated January 29, 1942, Joseph Goebbels, the German Nazi propaganda minister, wrote, "In the long run only he will achieve basic results in influencing public opinion who is able to reduce problems to the simplest terms and who has the courage to keep forever repeating them." However, like Lenin, Goebbels overlooked conditions; repetition for high-involvement products should only be used when the arguments are strong because repetition eventually increases counter-arguments.

Repetition typically increases liking. Duracell repeated the Energizer Bunny for years, and people grew to love the bunny: So much so that when an ad by BMW showed that one of its automobiles had run over the bunny, there was a public outcry.

6.13.1. Space repeated claims

> *Oft-repeated advertisements ... almost become friends which many readers like to see.*
> *Daniel Starch, 1914*

Repetition should be spaced out within an ad. It should also be spaced across time in a campaign.

Advertising experts Sutherland and Sylvester (2000) recommend that repetition should be spaced within an ad. This helps to keep a calm tone, especially if a high-involvement product is involved. Close repetition sounds aggressive. For example, in the mid-1800s, London advertisers used repetition widely. Messages such as "USE PETER'S SOAP" were repeated a hundred times in a newspaper column. Google AdWords prohibits immediate repetition, such as "low low prices."

Repetition spaced across time is especially persuasive because people tend to forget that the messages are coming from a single source.

Repetition is effective for most advertising, as it keeps the product in mind. It is especially effective for products that are not familiar to the target market. Since the information is new, the target market might not hear it correctly the first time. In addition, repetition will make consumers feel more comfortable with the advertisement.

Repetition helps to ensure that the message is heard, comprehended, and remembered. This is especially important for ads aimed at an elderly market.

Repetition is expected to be especially persuasive for low-involvement products because people do not have their defenses up. It can do the same for credence products as the claims cannot be easily evaluated.

Repetition has long been used by advertisers. In the 1870s, Royal began advertising "Royal Baking Powder—absolutely pure," and repeated it for decades. Repetition was used so much in advertising that it drew the ire of the public. For example, in1886, the London *Times* wrote: "The incessant witless repetition of advertisers' moron-fodder has become so much a part of life that if we are not careful, we forget to be insulted by it."

Evidence on the effects of repetition

A small-scale lab experiment used different levels of repetition for 30-second TV commercials for three high-involvement and three low-involvement products. The arguments did not appear to be strong. Repetition increased purchase intentions for the low-involvement products, but not for high-involvement ones (Batra and Ray 1986).

A lab experiment examined ad recall for 157 subjects, aged 21 to 88 (all of whom had passed a hearing test). The subjects listened to radio commercials about a bank cash card, a business-pages phone book, and a car jump-starter. Recall of claims was significantly lower for adults over 65. Three exposures led to twice the recall that was achieved with a single exposure; while for the older subjects, average age 74, it was only about half of the recall for one exposure for younger adults, average age 40 (Cole, Castellano, and Schum 1995).

Subjects were asked to rate the truthfulness of 60 statements on topics such as politics, sports, and the arts. Each subject gave ratings on three occasions at two-week intervals. The average truth ratings for the repeated statements increased as much for false statements as for true ones (Hasher, Goldstein, and Toppino 1977). Similar results were obtained in two experiments in which there was a few days delay between repetitions (Bacon 1979).

Another study reported on three experiments in which repetition occurred after a one-week delay. As with five prior studies that were cited, repetition of statements involving "facts" (e.g., Bolivia borders on the Pacific Ocean) led to increased belief in their truthfulness. The increase in believability was as strong for false statements. In addition, repetition led to increased belief in opinions where it is difficult to assess truth, such as "The MX missile system is an unnecessary escalation of the arms race" (Arkes, Hackett, and Boehm 1989).

In another lab experiment, 423 subjects were shown 40 statements (e.g., "Leonardo da Vinci had two wives at the same time"). Twenty of the statements were repeated after delays of one, three, or five weeks. Repetition led to an increase in perceived truth, partly because of familiarity and partly because the statements were thought to be coming from different sources (Arkes, Boehm, and Xu 1991).

In three lab experiments, repeated statements were seen as more familiar and more valid, regardless of whether the statement was initially believed to be true, false, or neutral (Boehm 1994).

6.13.2. Consider cosmetic variations rather than exact repetition

When traveling in Spain in 2006, I was checking in for a flight. The agent had a strong accent, it was early morning, and I was a weary traveler. In checking to see whether I could obtain a better seat assignment, I was startled when the agent asked, "Do you like American cheese?" Seeing that I was perplexed, she repeated the exact same words; I gave up and said "yes." Now, the truth is that while I do like American cheese, I could not understand why it was relevant. As it turned out, she was asking if I liked "emergency seats." Fortunately, I also like emergency seats, but a variation in the wording would have helped me.

In the early 1900s, P&G was said to have had a long-running policy to never repeat an ad after it had been run. To ensure that it did not interfere with the consistency of the message, it made only slight changes.

Cosmetic changes involve small changes in background, illustrations, wording, testimonials, and so on, while the basic strategy remains constant. The ads retain a consistent look and feel.

Cosmetic variations can aid reception of the message. Slight variations in the repeated message help people to understand it. This is especially helpful for older customers or when the customer might not be familiar with an accent.

Cosmetic variations help to get the message ingrained in memory. Absolut Vodka did this effectively. As of the year 2000, it had produced over 600 versions of its ads, which consisted primarily of its name shown on a picture of its bottle. With the help of this campaign, Absolut increased sales by a factor of 140 times in a period of 15 years for a product that is odorless, tasteless, and colorless.

Some people believe that the alarm that people will cause the world to warm dangerously is an example of the repetition of false claims. It led to a high level of public belief in the alarm during the 1980s and up to about 2007, when it was a low-involvement issue for most people. But belief in the alarm declined when it became a high-involvement issue; because of the high costs of proposed policies, people learned more about the issue. By 2009, only 37 percent of Americans believed that humankind was causing dangerous global warming, and over 32,000 climate scientists signed the "Robinson Petition," which rejected the claim that there is scientific evidence that humankind is causing dangerous global warming.

Evidence on the effects of cosmetic repetition

Research in this area started long ago. One lab experiment compared ads in which the repetition was identical with ads in which slight changes had been made. The 67 subjects were asked to recall what they had seen after exposure for a fraction of a second. Recall was much better when the ads were varied (Adams 1916).

A packet of black-and-white print ads for Clinic, a fictitious brand of dandruff shampoo, was presented to 151 subjects. They received one of the following: 1) a single ad for Clinic in which an embarrassed woman with dandruff is talking to her boss; 2) two identical ads for Clinic; or 3) the previous ad, and an ad featuring a football player disgusted by his date's dandruff. In general, repetition nearly doubled recall. Brand and message recall were highest for the subjects who saw the varied ads (i.e., #3). Variation was especially helpful when the subjects saw the ads along with competitors' ads; in other words, consider cosmetic variations when ads appear in the midst of other ads. These findings were supported in another study the researchers did with 178 subjects who saw print ads for shoes (Unnava and Sirdeshmukh 1994).

6.13.3. Use substantive variations when arguments are strong

When there are strong arguments, substantive variations in ads are more likely to persuade than are ads that employ only cosmetic variations. This is especially important for high-involvement goods, as repetition is likely to lead people to think about the validity of the arguments. If the arguments are weak, more careful consideration is likely to harm persuasion.

Evidence on the effects of substantive variations

In two lab experiments, storyboards of TV ads for Omega 3, a fictitious brand of writing pen, were shown to 494 subjects. When the subjects were involved—because they had to make a decision about the pens—substantive variations were more effective in improving attitudes toward the product than were cosmetic variations (Schumann, Petty, and Clemons 1990). An extension of this experiment used two lab experiments with the Omega 3 pen and related tasks. When there were strong arguments, substantive variations led subjects to think more about the ad's claims than did cosmetic variations. As a result, these subjects were more resistant to attacks. In addition, they had higher recall. However, with

weak arguments, repetition with substantive variations invited more counter-arguments (Haugtvedt et al. 1994).

Further support was provided by a lab experiment in which 102 subjects evaluated audiotaped arguments about whether a comprehensive exam should be required for graduation. Subjects heard either eight strong or eight weak arguments supporting this recommendation, and the message was repeated either one or three times. When the strong arguments were repeated three times, the subjects' agreement increased, while their counter-arguments decreased slightly. In contrast, the repetition of weak arguments substantially increased the number of counter-arguments among the subjects (Cacioppo and Petty 1989).

6.14. Subliminal messages

The concept behind subliminal messages is that attitudes can be changed without making customers conscious of the message. If they are unaware that a message is being delivered, they will not think of counter-arguments.

Three public opinion surveys found that about half of the respondents believed that subliminal advertising was used "Always" or "Often," while only 9 percent thought it was used "Seldom" or "Never" (Rogers and Smith 1993). In fact, advertisers rarely use subliminal advertising. In an anonymous survey of advertising practitioners and their clients, only one of the 256 respondents was aware of a use of subliminal advertising (Rogers and Seiler 1994).

6.14.1. Use subliminal messages only if the customer is warned

In 1957, subliminal advertising got a big boost when James Vicary conducted his infamous "Drink Coca-Cola" and "Eat Popcorn" studies at a New Jersey movie theater. He claimed that Coca-Cola sales went up by 18 percent and popcorn sales increased by 58 percent when those words were projected at 1/24 of a second once every five seconds. As a result of this study, Vicary gained much attention and consulting. However, studies by others failed to replicate his findings. After one of these failed replications, Vicary admitted that he had fabricated the findings.

If readers are informed that an ad contains a subliminal message, it is ethical. A warning can lead to more involvement, as customers try to find the hidden message. An ad in 2005 in an issue of the *New York Times Magazine* said: "Dear Ketel One drinker, can you find the subliminal message in this advertisement?"

Evidence on the effects of subliminal messages

Research interest in the use of subliminal messages began around 1900. Following reports that subliminal perception led to persuasion, studies in 1907 and 1908 were unable to replicate the findings.

A meta-analysis of the effects of subliminal messages yielded 23 studies. It led to the conclusion that "subliminal advertising has little influence on the consumer's decision to select between alternatives" (Trappey 1996).

6.15. Memory devices

Mnemonics are verbal, auditory, or visual memory aids. Memory devices are commonly used. For example, telephone numbers in radio ads often use letters based on the name of the company or brand.

6.15.1. Use mnemonics when consumers will be purchasing at a later time

Mnemonics are more effective when the product is low-involvement, because consumers are less likely to expend energy to remember a name.

Mnemonics can help customers remember brand names or benefits when the purchase will not be made immediately. They seem to be especially useful for auditory media and for elderly customers.

Evidence on the effects of mnemonics

This principle is based on received wisdom, supported by non-experimental analyses.

Stewart and Furse (1986) found that mnemonic devices in TV commercials were positively—and strongly—related to recall of brands. They were also associated positively with comprehension and persuasion.

Walker (2008) found that when verbal mnemonics were used in TV commercials, recall was 3 percent better than it was for the typical ads in this sample, and persuasion was 8 percent higher.

6.16. Word of mouth

People often make purchase decisions based on recommendations from friends and acquaintances. As a result, many advertisers aim their ads at opinion leaders. The objective is to provide ads with interesting and memorable information so that customers will pass along the message.

6.16.1. Encourage customers to tell (or ask) others about the product

One of the primary advantages of this principle is that in passing along the message, people *convince themselves* about the product's benefits.

When messages are passed along by word of mouth, they often lose details and some points may be exaggerated or changed. The solution lies in developing ads that are clear and simple—as well as interesting. The ad should have a single point that can be passed along orally.

To assess simplicity and clarity, employ copy testing with potential customers. One possible test is similar to the "whisper down the lane" game in which, after seeing an ad briefly, one person tells another about the ad, that person tells someone else, and so on. Is the primary message transmitted accurately? If not, revise it until it is.

The Internet has the advantage that people can send a message along with the click of a mouse with no loss or distortion of information. This has been called "word of mouse."

In the early 2000s, some advertisers paid people to endorse their product by word of mouth. For example, these "customers" might go to bars, buy a new alcoholic beverage for other people, and praise the drinks among their new "friends"—without revealing that they were working as advertisers. Some people believe this approach to be unethical. Interestingly, some of these word-of-mouth advertisers did not collect their pay, perhaps because they felt that their behavior was deceptive.

This principle has a long history. For example, a 1925 ad for Packard automobiles said: "Ask the man who owns one."

Evidence on the effects of telling others about a message

In four lab experiments, over 500 subjects read an essay about using leisure time more purposefully. One-third were asked to prepare to tell others about the message; another one-third were asked to prepare to receive more information regarding the topic; the rest were merely asked to read the essay. Subjects who expected to tell others changed their attitudes more frequently; furthermore, the change was still apparent when measured 8 to 20 weeks later (Boninger et al. 1990).

6.17. Call for action

The use of action steps was frowned upon in the late 1800s. However, in the early 1900s, Walter Dill Scott claimed that people are more likely to respond to a specific command than a vague one; therefore, he recommended the use of direct-response forms. He said, "The command relieves the one commanded from the trouble of making up his mind. It makes up his mind for him, and so makes action easy." An early field experiment showed that the use of a response form in a print ad doubled returns when compared with a print ad that contained the same information but no response form (Starch 1914).

Some advertisers resist action steps. In its 1992 campaign proposal for Subaru cars, the Wieden & Kennedy ad agency did not include a call for action. Members of the agency's creative team believed that they were abandoning their art when they reluctantly gave in to the client and agreed to include a toll-free telephone number, which they regarded as one of those gimmicks used by the "big boring agencies in New York" (Rothenberg 1994, p. 339).

The call for action is especially important for high-involvement products. Advertisements for low-involvement goods often do not have a strong need for an action step because the subsequent action step is obvious.

The action step is important, yet many large corporations use action steps that infuriate me—and perhaps others. Here is an example. In February 2005, I received a mail offer for a low monthly rate from a wireless telephone company. The offer included an invitation to call about this new rate, so I decided to do so. Here was the process I encountered:

1. Small font (8-point) was used to list a number of exceptions to the offer.
2. No telephone number was provided, but I finally found one.
3. When I called, I was put into an infuriating voice mail system.

4. While I waited, a quiet recorded voice told me how much the company valued my business and how it never stopped working for me. It also blared out annoying ads.
5. I turned down the volume of the ads on the phone. A long wait ensued. Then silence. NO! It was the quiet voice of an agent, and I almost lost my chance to ask about the offer for the lower price. However, because I was one of the company's "valued customers," I was not eligible; it was only for new customers.

Our *WAPB* analysis found that of 480 print ads, only 24 percent provided action steps.

6.17.1. Ensure action steps are clear and specific

The call for action should be clear and specific, though not necessarily strong.

When customers see an ad, they should know what action is desired. In many situations, that action will be obvious. However, advertisers should not assume that customers will figure this out. Thus, it is often desirable for an ad to suggest a clear and specific action step. This apparently worked for Coke in its "Drink Coca-Cola" ads that ran from 1917 to 1951.

The action step should attract attention. This is especially important for low-involvement products. For example, in a still ad, the action step could be placed within a box or in reverse print, or a marker could be placed in the margin. In a radio or TV ad, a spokesperson could alert listeners by changing voice modulation, pausing before and after the action step, or repeating it.

Evidence on the effects of clear and specific action steps

In a field experiment, customers were given a handbill when entering a store. When given an ad with a general action step, "Please don't litter," 9 percent disposed of the paper properly. When given an ad with a specific step, "Please don't litter. Dispose for recycling in the green trash can located in aisle one," 30 percent complied (Geller, Witmer, and Tuso 1977).

A meta-analysis provided evidence for this principle. Specific overall conclusions, such as how and when to get a flu shot, were more persuasive than general action steps such as "get a flu shot" in 15 of 18 experimental comparisons (O'Keefe 1997).

6.17.2. Use a gentle call for action for high-involvement products

He who agrees against his will is of the same opinion still.
Samuel Butler, late 1800s

A quiet, reasonable voice will receive greater respect than a shouting voice, as the following example from a print ad illustrated: "If you smoke, please try Carlton."

Avoid a demanding call for action when a consumer is thinking about the offer because such a request might seem pushy. A demanding call might also lead to regret, such that a customer might cancel the sale later. When customers are expected to be resistant to the call for action, a demanding call might raise their defenses. However, when people are receptive, the call for action can be more direct.

Customers should believe that they are acting on their own free will, as noted in Scott's (1912) book on advertising, "We are perfectly willing to obey as long as we are unconscious of the fact."

One way to make an action step less demanding is to involve the customers in the details of the order. They become more committed to it—and thus less likely to believe that they were pushed into a sale. Amway Corporation found that cancellations were reduced when people filled out an order form, rather than when a salesperson completed it by asking the customer for information (Cialdini 2009). The Internet is well suited for such involvement. Dell Computer followed this principle when it allowed customers to design computers that meet their own specifications.

The hard sell approach is seldom used by reputable advertisers. For example, Stewart and Furse (1986) found that only 3 percent of the TV commercials from leading advertisers used the hard sell.

Evidence on the effects of a gentle call for action

In a field experiment, 83 messages were sent to secretaries at the City University of New York. The secretaries knew the senders. In some cases a demand was made (e.g., "This paper is to be returned immediately to Room 238 through interoffice mail"), whereas in others there was a request ("I would appreciate it if you would return this paper immediately to Room 238 through interoffice mail"). Requests led to 80 percent compliance, while demands led to only 55 percent (Langer, Blank, and Chanowitz 1988).

In a small-scale unpublished study, subjects rated several crystal glassware patterns. A "hard sell" was then used to convince the subject to chose a brand other than the one originally selected: "This shows good taste; it is truly a classic design, not at all like Pattern X." In the soft sell, the subject was told, "This particular style has a charm all its own." Fifteen subjects were used in each condition. Only two of 15 subjects who were given the hard sell changed their selection to the "pushed" pattern. In contrast, 11 of 15 of the soft-sell subjects changed their choice (described in Clee and Wicklund 1980).

In a field experiment, as a car was leaving a parking space, another car—driven by one of the experimental team members—was waiting for the space. When the waiting car honked (as it did on 240 randomly assigned trials), the cars took 39 percent longer to leave the space than when the waiting car did not honk (Ruback and Juieng 1997).

6.17.3. When using an explicit action step, make it immediate, easy, and low risk

The longer the delay, the less likely it is that an individual will act. Avoid customer procrastination by making the action step easy and low-risk.

Poffenberger (1925) gave detailed advice to advertisers on how to make forms easy to fill out, and emphasized that they should be easy to return. Still, the idea met resistance from advertisers. When Phoenix Mutual Insurance Company proposed the use of fill-in order coupons in 1924, advertising agencies

discouraged them; however, Phoenix went ahead and was successful (Watkins 1959).

Reduce the effort needed to compete and return order forms by providing several ordering options. Bose, in its Wave Radio ads, allows customers to purchase by mail, fax, toll-free-800 phone call, and email.

To make things easy for Internet customers, do not require that they register before using a shopping cart. When a customer puts an item into a shopping cart, provide feedback that this has been done, but do not force the viewing of the cart. Place a "remove" button near each item in the cart rather than asking the customer to select a "0" in the quantity area.

Reduce the number of clicks needed to take action and the amount of mouse movements required. Here are some estimates for times in seconds to:

prepare mentally	1.2
point the cursor to a position on a display	1.1
move hand from keyboard to mouse	0.4
click a mouse button	0.3
tap a key	0.2

Note that by automatically positioning the cursor on the order form, you can save up to 1.5 seconds for a customer (estimates from Raskin 2000, p. 73; Hoque and Lohse 1999).

Avoid computer response times of more than 0.25 seconds. Provide a progress bar for long response times. And, my favorite, allow the user to go back to check a previous page without deleting all the input on the order form.

When selling high-involvement goods on the Internet, provide contact information allowing the customer to easily contact a knowledgeable salesperson. Some websites of large organizations infuriate customers by blocking contact with a real person.

Some consumers might feel uneasy about calling an organization; therefore, make the experience more human. An action step for *Communications Arts* magazine said, "Mary, our subscription whiz, stands ready at 415-326-6040."

Reduce the customer's perception of risk when making a call for action, especially for high-involvement products. Customers should be able to cancel an action step at any stage without obligation. For example, rental car companies allow customers to reserve with assurance that they will not be charged in advance. To reduce risk, firms can allow customers to return a product if not satisfied.

If customers are concerned about risk for Internet purchases, address this issue. Many Internet sites do this. For example, Land's End has long made the following statement at the beginning of its security page: "Since LandsEnd.com went live in 1995, there has never been a confirmed use of fraud reported by our customers as a result of a credit card purchase made with us." In addition, it is important to reduce risk early in the purchase process. For example, use "add to cart" rather than "buy" in order to place an item in the shopping cart; when a customer adds an item, provide feedback that it has been added to the cart; do not ask for shipping, billing, and payment details until the purchaser can see all costs.

Pretest the action steps and order forms. As a customer, I have found some order

forms to be ambiguous. I frequently put these aside until later—which often turns out to be never.

Here is an interesting possibility. Consider taking the first step for the customer. Thus, they can see that they are already on the path and have an investment to protect.

In our *WAPB* analysis, of the 480 print ads, 23 percent provided an easy action step for customers via a toll free phone, fax, mailing, or e-mail address.

Evidence on the effects of immediate, easy, and low-risk action steps

In the following field experiments, the seller got things going by taking the first step for the customer. The experiments involved customer loyalty programs for a car wash, restaurant, and liquor store. For the car wash, half of the subjects, randomly selected, were given a loyalty card that would be stamped after each car wash, and after eight stamps, the customer would receive a free car wash. The other half received a card requiring ten stamps; however, the first two visits were already stamped as part of a "special promotion." Thus, in each treatment, the customer needed eight stamps to get the free car wash. A record of the redemption rate was kept for the next nine months. The addition of the free stamps was expected to show progress toward the goal and to represent an investment. It worked. Those provided with the two "free" stamps redeemed 34 percent of the cards, while those without free stamps redeemed only 19 percent (Nunes and Drèze 2006).

Our analysis of quasi-experimental data provided additional support:

> **Print ads with easy action steps produced better recall.** Our *WAPB* analysis found 43 pairs of print ads in which one ad provided an action step, while the other did not. Recall for the action-step ads was 1.19 times better than for the other ads. Of course, this principle is expected to have its biggest effect on persuasion, not recall.

An analysis of non-experimental data on 211 entries for the Direct Marketing Association's Echo Awards found that the inclusion of a postage-paid form with an envelope produced a much higher customer response rate. The availability of credit card payment also led to a higher response rate (Woodside, Beretich, and Lauricella 1993).

For the non-experimental data in *WAPB*, in comparison with the industry norms for each ad, the average persuasion score for the 44 ads with easy action steps was 19 percent higher than the comparable score for the 173 ads that did not provide any action steps.

6.17.4. Consider a bonus to a good offer when customers can respond quickly

Get the customer to think about a good offer without asking for a response. Then make the offer even more attractive. You could use a phrase like, "And that's not all!" although a softer approach may be better. Many advertisers use this principle when they add an offer of an additional feature—"We'll also send you a free cutting board and sharpener to go along with your new knife set."

While the research shows this principle to be powerful, it seems to apply

primarily to situations where the customer is expected to reply quickly, such as in point-of-purchase, TV shopping channel, or Internet ads. Of course, a lot of people would buy anyway, so the issue is whether the additional sales exceed the cost of the bonus.

Bonuses seem to be more useful for low-involvement products.

Evidence on the effects of a bonus

Seven related field experiments involved selling cupcakes on a college campus, at an art fair, and in front of a grocery store. Here is one of the studies: Those in the control condition were given an offer of a cupcake and two cookies for $0.75. In the "That's not all" (TNA) treatment, customers were each told that the cupcakes were $0.75. At this moment, a second experimenter tapped the first one on the shoulder, and the latter held up his hand and said "wait a second," at which point the two experimenters had a brief exchange. The first experimenter then said that the price also included two cookies, and he produced a bag with the cookies. Those in the TNA condition were much more likely to make a purchase than those in the control condition, 73 percent versus 40 percent (Burger 1986).

In another field experiment, TNA increased sales for a small, inexpensive box of chocolates, but not for a larger, much more expensive box. Customers thought about the offer for the expensive chocolates and were not persuaded by the bonus (Pollock et al. 1988).

Four experiments identified the important limitation that the original offer must be attractive. If not, TNA does not help (Burger et al. 1999).

Checklist 6 summarizes principles for gaining acceptance.

Checklist 6 Acceptance

6.1. **Problem/solution**
6.1.1. Describe a problem and show how the product solves it.

6.2. **Demonstration**
6.2.1. Demonstrate product benefits.

6.3. **Evidence**
6.3.1. Provide quantitative evidence.
6.3.2. Offer verifiable evidence.

6.4. **Data presentation**
6.4.1. To aid understanding, use absolute numbers for small values and frequency rates for large values.
6.4.2. Use simple tables or graphs if you have substantial amounts of data.

6.5. **Customer endorsements**
6.5.1. Consider endorsements by customers.

6.6. **Celebrity endorsements**
6.6.1. When an ad contains strong arguments, avoid the use of celebrities.
6.6.2. Consider celebrity endorsements for gaining attention.
6.6.3. When using celebrities, make sure they are relevant and credible.

6.7. **Expert endorsements**
6.7.1. Consider support from an expert unless the target market already agrees with the message.

6.8. **Comparative advertising**
6.8.1. Use comparative advertising for brands that have clear comparative benefits and a small market share
6.8.2. Compare the product with market leaders.
6.8.3. When making a comparative claim, provide objective support and offer it gently.

6.9. **Negative advertising**
6.9.1. Consider negative advertising when there is only one major alternative to your brand, and it has serious shortcomings.
6.9.2. Attack ads should employ objective information, not emotion.

6.10. **Refutation**
6.10.1. Respond to negative claims that are likely to become widely known.

6.11. **Puffery**
6.11.1. Consider mild puffery.

6.12. **Questions**
6.12.1. Use product-related questions only if you have good answers.

6.13. **Repetition**
6.13.1 Space repeated claims.
6.13.2. Consider cosmetic variations rather than exact repetition.
6.13.3. Use substantive variations when arguments are strong.

6.14. **Subliminal messages**
6.14.1. Use subliminal messages only if the customer is warned.

6.15. **Memory devices**
6.15.1. Use mnemonics when consumers will be purchasing at a later time.

6.16. **Word of mouth**
6.16.1. Encourage customers to tell (or ask) others about the product.

6.17. **Call for action**
6.17.1. Ensure action steps are clear and specific.
6.17.2. Use a gentle call for action for high-involvement products.
6.17.3. When using an explicit action step, make it immediate, easy, and low risk.
6.17.4. Consider a bonus to a good offer when customers can respond quickly.

7. Message

This section deals with the crafting of messages to communicate information through words, pictures, sounds, and color. The principles sections are arranged as follows:

7.1. Arguments

Aristotle recommended the use of rational arguments when trying to persuade others. However, a meta-analysis of 30 studies found that, in general, the average correlation between the rationality of arguments and attitude change was modest (Stiff 1986). Why only modest? As discussed in Section 5, arguments are not very effective when people have strong prior beliefs. In addition, many people do not think rationally (that is, in terms of examining costs and benefits); for example, they might rely on their values to decide what seems fair or proper in a given situation. However, arguments are persuasive for high-involvement products if resistance is not a key issue. This section discusses what arguments to use, how many, and how to express them.

7.1.1. Use only strong arguments for high-involvement products

When people are presented with arguments, they often *average the strength* of a set of arguments rather than sum them. Thus, one strong argument is more persuasive than one strong argument plus one weak argument. The following ad would not be advisable: "Luxurious hotel suites. Free coffee provided."

In contrast, when involvement is low, increasing the number of arguments tends to increase persuasion regardless of the quality of the arguments. Viewers are likely to conclude that a greater number of favorable arguments implies more support.

Evidence on the effects of arguments

One study described six experiments on the effects of arguments, and all supported the conclusion that customers make evaluations by averaging the quality of the arguments. It then presented two lab experiments by giving information about types of diapers and infant car seats to expectant parents (thus, high involvement came into play). Judgments were more favorable when these product descriptions avoided weak arguments (Troutman and Shanteau 1976).

Further support was provided in six lab experiments using choices related to pairs of automobiles, cameras, bicycles, and stores. When subjects lacked the ability, opportunity, or motivation to understand the information, they were more likely to be persuaded by ads with many favorable arguments than by those with few favorable arguments (Alba and Marmorstein 1987).

In another lab experiment, students were asked to listen to audiotapes offering arguments on whether students should be required to take a comprehensive exam in order to graduate. Under high involvement (where the exam would affect the students), the addition of weak arguments into an otherwise strong message led to counter-arguing, unfavorable thoughts, and an overall loss in persuasiveness (Friedrich et al. 1996).

7.1.2. Use positive arguments

> *The human intellect ... is more moved and excited by affirmatives than by negatives.*
> *Francis Bacon, 1621*

As early as the 1890s, advertising experts praised advertisers who highlighted the pleasures of using products and avoided talking negatively. In 1921, Harry Tipper, an advertising expert, advised against Postum's then-current slogan, "Don't drink coffee," and suggested the more positive approach, "Drink Postum." Hopkins (1923) advocated the use of positive arguments. He said: "In advertising a dentifrice, show pretty teeth, not bad teeth."

Many issues can be put in a positive light. Consider the Smith family. Its members hired a writer to write their family history. But they had a concern. While their ancestors included famous scientists, artists, and industrialists, it also included great-uncle George, the black sheep, who was executed in the electric chair. The writer assured the Smiths that he would handle that section of the history with tact. When the book appeared, the family turned to the part about Uncle George and read: "George Smith occupied a chair of applied electronics at an important government institution and was attached to his position by the strongest of ties. His premature death came as a shock."

In the 1960s, unlike other automobile manufacturers, Volkswagen did not improve its designs each year. They treated this "negative" as an advantage in its "It doesn't go in one year and out the other" campaign.

Positive arguments offer many possibilities. For example, it would not be politically acceptable to charge obese people more to fly on airplanes. However, the public might positively view a policy whereby airline discounts were given to passengers based on how much their weight requirements (i.e., passenger plus luggage) fell below a specified maximum, such as 400 pounds per seat.

Sometimes this principle is obvious. In a *New Yorker* cartoon, a restaurant posted a sign that said "20% penalty for dinners ordered after 7:00 PM." This would obviously annoy people. Instead, restaurants advertise an "early bird" special with savings prior to 7:00 pm. Other times it is not obvious. For example, students are often penalized for turning work in late. Why not offer extra points for work turned in early? I tried this and it simplified my life as a professor.

This principle is widely accepted today. For example, our *WAPB* analysis of the

480 tested print ads from leading advertisers showed that 85 percent used positive arguments.

Evidence on the effects of positive arguments

Our analysis of quasi-experimental data supports the use of positive arguments:

> **Print ads with positive arguments had better recall.** Our *WAPB* analysis found 24 pairs of print ads in which one ad used positive arguments, while the other ad had a negative argument. For example, a Sony ad for a tape recorder with only positive claims ("performance enhanced by Sony's unique Laser Amorphous heads and advanced Dolby C noise reduction") had much better recall than that of another Sony ad for that product ("It doesn't stick, or jam, or cause inaccurate tape-head alignment"). Recall for ads with positive arguments was 1.60 times better than for the other ads.

7.1.3. Consider cultural values when formulating arguments

Almost all of the research that I present is this book is free of cultural differences. However, it would seem that cultural values might affect which arguments are most persuasive to a group. And it does help to tailor ads to cultural differences. But there are two problems. First, the effects are small, perhaps because diversity of values within groups is large. And second, it is difficult to tailor arguments to different cultural groups. To date, the most promising distinction has been that some people are more persuaded by arguments that focus on individualism (e.g., "make more money") while other people are more persuaded by arguments based on collectivism (e.g., "make this a better community"). In sum, principles are of little help in this area.

Evidence on tailoring arguments to different cultural values

A meta-analysis of 67 experimental studies found that ads that were adapted to cultural values were more persuasive than those not so adapted. However, the effect size was not large and the effects were due mostly to studies on individualism versus collectivism (Hornikx and O'Keefe 2009).

7.2. Clarity

> *[Advertising] … is the most exciting, the most arduous literary form of all, the most difficult to master, the most pregnant in curious possibilities.*
> *Aldous Huxley, 1927*

Advertising experts call for clear prose. But despite advertisers' efforts to write clearly, many people misunderstand ads.

One reason for miscomprehension is that people typically race through ads. This is satisfactory if they are already familiar with the content. However, fast exposure harms comprehension when the material is new or unexpected. This was shown in a study in which graduates of a speed-reading course were asked

to read materials in which alternate lines were taken from two unrelated sources. Upon completing their reading of this nonsensical document, many speed-readers failed to notice that they were reading two unrelated documents; they claimed they understood the material (Ehrlich 1963).

To assess the amount of miscomprehension on TV, an examination was made of 38 commercials and 22 program excerpts, all 30 seconds long, which was the full length of the commercials. Two segments were viewed by each of 2,700 people at 12 testing sites in the United States. After viewing, the subjects took six-item true–false tests to assess comprehension. Only 17 percent of the viewers were able to correctly answer all six questions about a communication. On average, the miscomprehension of program excerpts, at 32 percent, was a bit higher than the 28 percent for the commercials (Jacoby and Hoyer 1982). A reanalysis of these data corrected for guessing and concluded that, on average, viewers understood only about 46 percent of TV messages (Schmittlein and Morrison 1983).

To assess print ads, Beltramini and Brown (1994) combined findings from two of Jacoby's studies with those from another study, to obtain a comprehension rate of almost 80 percent. As with TV, print ads were easier to understand than the typical magazine article (Jacoby and Hoyer 1989).

7.2.1. Use simple prose for high-involvement products with strong arguments

When the arguments are strong, clear text in an ad can increase understanding and persuasiveness. This is especially important for high-involvement products. Otherwise, clear writing is not needed. In fact, it might harm persuasion. For example, if an ad has a weak argument, a clear explanation would make this apparent, especially for high-involvement products, because people will be paying attention to the arguments. Ads that are using distraction principles can also ignore this principle on clarity.

Short words, short sentences, and simple punctuation are easier to understand, especially for poor readers. Given the widespread belief that brevity is a key aspect of clarity, readability formulas have sometimes been used by advertisers. For example, the Gunning Fog Index (see the Glossary)—in which the score approximates the number of years of schooling needed to understand the prose—has been used to evaluate and improve readability.

On the other hand, complex prose can make a weak argument seem more authoritative. Consider this example that I encountered in my review of papers for this book: "Positivity and negativity are further posited as having partially separable neurophysiological substrates that have functional outputs best viewed with multidimensional bivariate space as opposed to a single bipolar continuum."

Complex prose leads readers to feel insecure about their ability to understand, and especially if their motivation is low, to assume that the arguments must be correct. Customers who lack expertise about a product category might defer to complex prose, especially if delivered by an expert. They might think, "Gee, he's an expert, so it must be right." This supports the old adage, "If you can't convince

them, confuse them." Nevertheless, this does not strike me as a good way to develop long-term relationships with customers.

Evidence on the effects of clarity

The following lab experiments support clarity for strong arguments:

> **Simple writing improved recall and brand attitudes in print ads for a breakfast cereal.** Three lab experiments were conducted on complex versus simple writing in ads for BRAN_NEW, a fictitious breakfast cereal. The ads included both strong claims (e.g., fat-free) and weak ones (lightweight packaging). In one of the experiments, 375 women viewed a TV commercial, some seeing a simple version and others a complex one. In the other two experiments, 94 subjects viewed print ads, again, some with simple prose and others complex. For each media, simpler prose aided recall and improved attitudes toward the brand only when an ad had strong arguments (Lowrey 1998).

> **High readability led to higher behavioral intent only with strong arguments.** In a lab experiment using print ads for face cosmetics, when strong arguments were present and readability was high, behavioral intent was also high; however, poor readability cancelled the benefits of strong arguments. When the arguments were weak, the findings were reversed: better readability was associated with lower intentions (Chebat et al. 2003).

A review of almost 50 studies on readability scores found only a weak relationship to comprehension. Furthermore, using readability formulas to revise prose did little to improve readers' comprehension (Anderson and Davison 1988). However, I suspect that the weak findings were due to the failure to consider whether there were strong arguments and whether the readers were involved.

The following experiments show that the use of complex prose can enhance the credibility of high-status sources. In one experiment, weak arguments about the benefits of plea bargains in criminal cases had no effect on attitudes when delivered in *simple* terms by either a low-status or high-statues communicator. When delivered in *complex* terms, they were persuasive only when the source was high-status (Hafer, Reynolds, and Obertynski 1996).

In another lab experiment, 54 mock jurors watched a videotaped trial in which two scientists provided evidence on whether a chemical, PCB, could have caused a plaintiff's illness. When the testimony was not complex, jurors relied on the content of the testimony: the expert's credentials had only a small influence because the jurors felt that they could understand the information. However, when the testimony was complex, they relied more heavily on the expert's credentials when making their decisions (Cooper, Bennett, and Sukel 1996).

Here is an experiment on the use of complex language to enhance authority. My extension of the so-called "Dr. Fox study" found that complex language in academic papers led subjects to give higher rating to the competency of the authors than was given by subjects who rated a simpler version of the same content (Armstrong 1980).

7.2.2. Avoid negative words

Both sides in the abortion debate use positive terms to express their position: "pro-choice" and "pro-life." They do not do this, however, when referring to the other side's position. For another example, those who favor taxes on people when they die call it an "estate tax." Those who oppose it call it a "death tax."

Negative words have negative connotations. Consider this headline for a 1994 print ad by Oldsmobile, "If you expect to be hassled, hounded and haggled in our showroom, expect to be disappointed." (Oldsmobile produced automobiles up to 2004.)

Claims often sound more authoritative when negatives are used. Advertisers, lawyers, doctors, bureaucrats, and academics do this. Consider this statement from an academic journal: "Significantly fewer [advertisers] disagree humor is not effective at gaining yielding or gaining intention to purchase." However, they make the message more difficult to understand.

Negative words can be persuasive if used to announce that a common belief is wrong. To attract attention, this announcement should come early in an ad. For example, an ad for JFM 102.2 Radio in London said: "Annoy the neighbors. Turn it down." In this case, the negative approach might lead customers to think about the implications.

Negative words can gain attention if they surprise, as was the case for Bernbach's VW ad with the headline, "Lemon." Why would an automaker call one of its cars a lemon? As the ad explained, a team of inspectors caught this defective car before it left the factory.

Advertisers generally avoid negative words. In our *WAPB* analysis, of the 480 tested full-page print ads by leading U.S. firms, 84 percent avoided negative words in the headlines and 89 percent avoided them in the text. For example, in lieu of "contains no caffeine," use "caffeine-free." Good slogans also tend to avoid negative words. AdAge.com's "Top ten slogans of the century" includes only one with a negative word, Clairol's "Does she ... or doesn't she?"

Evidence on the effects of negative words

Our analyses of quasi-experimental data on print ads supported this principle. The first analysis refers to negative words in the headlines of an ad and the second to the text:

> **Print ads with negative words in the headlines harmed recall and persuasion, except when refuting common beliefs.** In our *WAPB* analysis there were 16 pairs of ads in which negative words were used in the headlines, but did not refute popular beliefs. The negatively worded headlines had only 0.65 times as much recall.
>
> There were six pairs in which one ad used negative words to refute common beliefs, and the other used only positive words. Here the headlines with negative words had 1.67 times *better* recall.
>
> **Print ads without negative words had better recall.** Our *WAPB* analysis found 26 pairs of ads in which one ad avoided negative words, while the other did not. For example, an ad for a Ford Extended Service Plan that included only positive

words had a recall score that was more than twice that of another ad for the same product that said, "How to buy a used car without kicking yourself later." Ads without negative words in the body text had 1.31 times better recall than the ads with negative words.

We analyzed non-experimental data from *WAPB*. In comparison with the industry norms for each ad, the average persuasion score for the 184 ads that avoided negative words in the text was 9 percent higher than the comparable score for the 37 ads with negative words.

7.3. Forceful text

Make definite assertions. Avoid tame, colorless, hesitating, non-committed language. Rule 12.
William Strunk, Jr., The Elements of Style*, 1918*

Forceful or powerful language connotes confidence. Powerless language invites counter-arguments. If the speaker does not seem to believe the message, why should the audience?

Forceful text, which is often useful in advertising, would seem most persuasive when customers are not confident of their knowledge.

7.3.1. Use specific words

Specifics sell. (Old adage)

In the late 1600s, John Houghton, one of the first advertisers to test ads, concluded that it pays to use specific (concrete) words. His early ads had included statements such as, "I know of several curious women that would wait on ladies to be house-keepers." However, by comparing different approaches, Houghton learned the value of being specific: "I have been to Mr. Firmin's workhouse in Little Britain, and have seen a great many of what seem to be excellent linens."

Hopkins (1923) noted that all beers were advertised as "pure." This claim had little effect. But one brewer's ad campaign showed a plate-glass room in which beer was cooled in filtered air, using a wood pulp filter. It explained the brewing process, including how bottles were washed four times by machinery and how the company went down 4,000 feet to draw water. Hopkins claimed that this campaign was a success.

This principle is widely accepted. For example, in our *WAPB* analysis, 61 percent of the 480 full-page magazine ads used specific words. We might wonder why usage is not higher, however, as this principle is inexpensive, easy to implement, and has no known limitations.

Evidence on effects of being specific

The following lab experiment found that specifics sell:

In a Yellow Pages experiment, subjects were more likely to select products from ads with specific information. In a mall-intercept study, 601 subjects

saw simulated *Yellow Pages* ads and then selected products. Some subjects were given ads with general product information, such as "Fresh flowers" with pictures of flowers, and others were given specific information, such as "Fresh roses" with pictures of roses. Subjects given ads with specific information were 1.8 times more likely to select products than those given general-information ads (Fernandez and Rosen 2000).

A lab study randomly assigned alternative versions of print ads for known and imaginary automobiles to 377 subjects. Ads with concrete words (ones that could elicit an image) led to 10 percent higher intentions to purchase than did ads with abstract words (Burns, Biswas, and Babin 1993).

Two versions of a print ad for the Movado Equinoxe watch were randomly assigned to 120 subjects. Each ad made the same points and emphasized the importance of water resistance. One version used concrete nouns, verbs, and expressions, and was specific about the actions, outcomes, and situational context. For example, it stated, "According to industry sources, 3 out of every 4 watch breakdowns are due to water or moisture getting into the case." The abstract version stated, "According to industry sources, many watch breakdowns are due to water getting into the case." The subjects who received the specific version had higher purchase intentions (MacKenzie 1986).

In three lab experiments, subjects found it easier to remember concrete words than abstract words for both written and spoken messages (Walker and Hulme 1999).

Our quasi-experimental analysis provided further support:

Print ads using concrete words and expressions had much better recall. Our *WAPB* analysis found 38 pairs of print ads in which one ad used specific concrete words and expressions, while the other did not. An ad for Kohler that claimed, "San Raphael toilets. Low profile styling conserves space. The efficient design uses less water—only three and one-half gallons" had a recall score twice that for another Kohler ad that stated, "Vanquish those dragons of the Age of Commonplace." Recall for the ads with specific words was 1.32 times better than for the other ads.

7.3.2. Use power words if they fit the product

Copywriters often recommend the use of power words, such as "free," "improved," "new," or "faster"—provided that they fit with the product. This principle can also be stated as avoidance of powerless words. Avoid hedges and waffling ("I think," "perhaps").

Power words can sometimes change the way people look at a product. In particular, this has been noted for the use of the word "free." Instead of thinking about costs and benefits, it leads people to think only about benefits.

It is important that the power words fit the product. For example, "improved" is not a good word to apply to beer, which relies on traditional tastes. A Bernbach ad for Utica Club said, "Our beer is 50 years behind the times (and we're proud of it)."

Power words might come across as being pushy. Thus, the use of power words

seems more relevant for low-involvement products and when audio is used, although the evidence on this point is sparse—note that I am hedging.

Evidence on the effects of power words

A meta-analysis found 16 studies on power words, drawn from legal cases. These involved mostly oral arguments in high-involvement situations. The studies compared arguments that used powerful words and expressions with those that used hedges and qualifiers. Hedges and qualifiers were less credible in 14 of the 15 comparisons with one tie, and less persuasive in four of the five comparisons with one tie (Burrell and Koper 1998).

Here is a lab experiment on the use of the word "free." A choice of a Lindt chocolate truffle at 15 cents or a Hershey's Kiss at 1 cent was offered to 398 subjects. Of those making a choice, 27 percent chose a Kiss. When the price of each was reduced by one cent, so that the Kiss was "free," 69 percent chose a Kiss (Shampanier, Mazar, and Ariely 2007). Talk about power.

A lab experiment used modified print ads for beer, airlines, and analgesics to include (1) no power words, (2) power words in the headline only, or (3) power words in the headline and text. Some power words were designed to fit the product; some were not. The ads were presented to 304 subjects. Ads with power words that fit the product and were not overused had substantially higher purchase intentions than ads without power words (Kover and James 1993).

Power words can be problematic for high-involvement products when the advertiser wants the customer to think about an offer. This was supported by a lab experiment that dealt with written communications (Gibbons, Busch, and Bradac 1991).

Our analysis of quasi-experimental data supports the use of power words for low-involvement products:

> **Power words increased recall for low-involvement products.** Our *WAPB* analyses found 20 pairs in which one ad used power words and the other did not. Recall for the ads with power words was 1.10 times better than for the other ads.

7.3.3. Use active rather than passive voice, unless the subject of the sentence is obvious

The advice to use active-voice sentences is so common that we might wonder why the passive voice exists. Passive voice often leads to less precise writing. For example, the passive form, "Research was conducted on the brand and it showed favorable results," does not tell who conducted the research. Active voice seems more likely to lead the writer to be clear about who did what, such as, "Ajax laboratories conducted research that showed favorable results."

Active voice often helps reduce the number of words and to produce more rhythmic copy. Consider these sentences in which the active voice has fewer words. *Passive:* "A larger size and great taste are two benefits Pepto-Bismol offers." *Active:* "Pepto-Bismol comes in a larger size and tastes great" (Antin 1993).

The active voice can aid emphasis to the subject of a sentence. For example, it

might be used to emphasize a brand name. On the other hand, passive voice can aid clarity if it can build upon previous text.

Evidence on effects of active versus passive voice

Based on their research review, Anderson and Davison (1988) concluded when earlier text has alerted the reader about what will follow, passive sentences require less time to read and are better understood than active sentences.

In a lab experiment, fictitious slogans for four product categories were shown to 96 subjects. Slogans with active voice had higher recall than those with the same content that used passive voice (Bradley and Meeds 2002).

7.4. Interesting text

It is not the purpose of the ad or commercial to make a
reader or listener say: "My, what a clever ad."
Morris Hite, advertiser

In the early 1900s, advertisers hired famous writers, such as Sherwood Anderson, Daniel Defoe, and Stephen Vincent Benét, to write ads. For example, F. Scott Fitzgerald composed an ad for a laundry in Muscatine, Iowa, "We keep you clean in Muscatine." However, Aldous Huxley raised a note of caution: "Any trace of literariness in advertising is fatal to its success. Advertisement writers cannot be lyrical or in any way obscure. They must be universally intelligible ... it must be immediately moving and directly comprehensible." Ogilvy agreed with this; he believed that great writers, such as Hemingway, Shaw, and Faulkner, were failures at writing ads.

7.4.1. Consider interesting writing

You could not use guidelines to produce an ad as interesting and relevant as this: "Sometimes it takes a family of four to stop a drunk driver." It appeared on a billboard along with a car that had been crushed in a drunk-driving accident.

Interesting writing can improve recall, tie into favorable connotations, and enhance the customers' expectations. It seems most relevant for hedonic products and where the customer has little need for information.

The situation with respect to high-involvement goods is not clear. Interesting writing has potential—and some risks. The writing should not attract attention to itself. You do not want the customer to think "My, what clever writing!" because this might divert attention from the message. The key point for high-involvement products with strong arguments is that interesting writing, if used, should reinforce the arguments as it does in the text from the following print ads.

This headline, in a Bill Bernbach ad, "abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz," was followed by "At your public library, they've got these arranged in ways that can make you cry, giggle, love, hate, wonder, ponder, and understand."

A Scottish travel ad: "When the lads are piping with all their hearts, you feel you're marching off to glory."

A 1961 ad by the Papert, Koenig, Lois agency: "If your Harvey Probber chair wobbles, straighten your floor." The text explained the effort that goes into each chair. It concluded with "The lovely chair above could be made with 14 less dowels, 2 yards less webbing, thinner wood, and so forth. You wouldn't know the difference, but Harvey Probber would. Of course, in a few years, you would know too."

Evidence on effects of interesting writing given low involvement

Consider the following sentence from a history textbook on the Vietnam War written for high-school students (a low-involvement situation): "In South Vietnam, communist forces (the Viet Cong) were aided by forces from communist North Vietnam in a struggle to overthrow the American-supported government."

This sample came from a 400-word passage that Graves and Slater (1986) used in a contest in which three teams of writers made revisions. The first team, two linguists, aimed to improve clarity. They added conjunctions to better show relationships, repeated key ideas, and revised the organization. For example, they concluded that the sentence above followed the rules for clarity, and they only added the phrase "in particular," by starting ""In South Vietnam in particular ...."

The second team, two college composition instructors, focused on "simplifying information, adding background information, supplying transitions, emphasizing key material, and keeping the passage smooth and readable."

The third team, a pair of veteran *Time/Life* editors, tried to make the passage interesting. They replaced weak verbs with more colorful verbs, added nuggets of information, and inserted vivid anecdotes and details that focused on people rather than events: "Aided by communist North Vietnam, the Viet Cong guerillas were eroding the ground beneath South Vietnam's American-backed government. Village by village, road by road, these jungle-wise rebels were waging a war of ambush and mining. They darted out of tunnels to head off patrols, buried exploding booby traps beneath the mud floors of huts, and hid razor-sharp bamboo sticks in holes."

Each of three groups of 100 11th-graders was divided such that half the students read the original version and half read one of the new versions. They then wrote down everything that they could remember. The students who read the text-linguist version comprehended 2 percent more than those who read the original version; those who read the version by the composition instructors comprehended 2 percent less. In contrast, those who read the interesting *Time/Life*-editor version comprehended 40 percent more.

7.5. Tone

Tone refers to the connotations of words and to the relationship that you wish to develop with the audience.

7.5.1. Use a calm tone for high-involvement products with strong arguments

You have to be noticed, but the art is getting noticed
naturally without screaming or without tricks.
Leo Burnet, 1950s

The use of a calm tone can be achieved in print by avoiding attention-getting devices such as exclamation marks, all capitals, bold fonts, and large fonts. For sound media, it is achieved by avoiding loud music or sounds, extreme variations in tone, fast talking, and many scene cuts. For all media, a calm tone calls for moderate language.

Shouting disrupts thinking; therefore, it should not be used for high-involvement brands with strong arguments. In addition, shouting can disrupt counter-arguing and could lead customers to make poor decisions. While shouting can gain attention, it might not capture the attention of those in the target market. Furthermore, it may detract from a quality image for the brand, and also from the media. For example, Google AdWords prohibits the use of capital letters and exclamation marks in headlines.

Evidence on effects of a calm tone

This principle is based primarily on received wisdom.

In a lab experiment using an ad for banking services, 221 subjects were randomly assigned to hear a calm tone or an intense tone. Some of the subjects were assigned to a high-involvement condition (student loan) while others were assigned to a low-involvement situation (ATM machine usage). Consistent with this principle, under high involvement, a calm (low-intensity) approach led to a better attitude toward the advertised service (Gèlinas-Chebat and Chebat 1996).

7.5.2. Do not violate tastes or standards

Never write an advertisement which you wouldn't want your own family to read.
David Ogilvy, 1963

A 1989 Chiat/Day ad showed two young men, one wearing Reebok sneakers and the other wearing Nike, doing a bungee jump off a bridge. After they have finished their leap, we see that the Reebok lad did fine. As for the other, we see the rope tied to an empty pair of sneakers. The ad closes with a voice-over about better-fitting sneakers; however, the shock of the ad overwhelms the message. Reebok stopped using the commercial after immediate complaints from viewers. I suspect that the ad also annoyed bungee operators and Nike.

Taste is a key concern when there is uncertainty about the sensitivities of the target market, and when people outside the target market will encounter the ad. Tastes differ greatly within a culture, across cultures, and across time. A 1919 Odorno under-arm deodorant ad, "Within the curve of a woman's arm, a frank discussion of a subject too often avoided," so outraged many subscribers to the *Ladies Home Journal* that they canceled their subscriptions.

Tastes and standards are often enforced by legal restrictions. For example, U.S.

First Amendment rights of free speech do not apply for commercial purposes. Thus, while you have the right to say, "Ice cream is good for you," the state can prohibit you from advertising that "Smith's ice cream is good for you." This has not always been the case. Free speech applied to advertising in the United States until 1942, when a court case ruled that freedom of speech does not apply when "commercial gain" is involved. However, since the mid-1970s, court cases have been restoring the rights of free speech: for example, allowing doctors and lawyers to advertise. Still, you must be mindful of legal issues when designing advertisements.

Ads should avoid political correctness issues, but these concerns should not be allowed to ruin the flow of the writing. For example, the politically correct version of "How many roads must a man walk down before you call him a man?" might read "How many roads must an individual walk down before you call him or her an adult?"

Awkward constructions such as "he/she" use more space, slow the reader, and sap the energy from the writing. As alternatives, ads can use plurals or gender-free nouns (e.g., "manager"), alternate between he and she, match the gender to the audience when appropriate, or create an imaginary person, such as in one ad, "This firefighter uses Sure deodorant."

Some advertisers violate taste standards to gain attention. It is a risky proposition because it may harm persuasion—especially when an advertiser has something important to say. Violations might also harm customers' attitudes towards the product.

Consider the following procedures early in the development of the ad, say at the storybook phase:

- Use an independent review board to evaluate whether ads violate good taste. These boards could be internal to the agency or include representatives of key interest groups, such as customers of the brand in question.
- Conduct copy-testing. This is likely to be less costly than producing the ad and spending money for placement, only to find that the ad offends people and generates bad publicity.
- List the interest groups that might be affected and try to anticipate their reactions. It is even more effective to ask people to take on the roles of those in key interest groups and express their opinions about the ad.
- Develop a code of ethics with respect to tastes and ask those who develop the ads to sign off on each ad.

Consider the following three actual ads. Would they have been used if one or more of the above procedures had been applied?

To introduce its redesigned Golf in France in 1993, Volkswagen used a photograph that simulated the Last Supper with the headline, "My friends, let us rejoice because a new Golf is born." In response, Catholic bishops sued VW and its advertising agency.

A Benetton ad that showed the blood-soaked uniform of a Croatian soldier created such a strong reaction in France that people tore down the ads. The French minister for humanitarian affairs urged French people not to buy

Benetton clothes, and "to pull them off people who are going to wear them." A Benetton ad based on interviews with convicted killers was seen as putting a positive spin on murderers; it led Sears to stop carrying Benetton clothes in early 2000. Retailers in Europe sued Benetton because the ads harmed sales (*Wall Street Journal*, March 4, 1994).

Abercrombie & Fitch's 2003 Christmas catalogue, aimed at selling clothes to teenagers, included nude models and tips for oral sex. This led to a consumer boycott (*USA Today*, December 5, 2003). Similarly, the French Connection United Kingdom thought it was good advertising to sell "F.C.U.K. Him" and "F.C.U.K. Her" fragrances with the message, "Scent to bed." It encountered resistance from retailers and customers.

If faced with a proposed ad that might violate tastes, generate alternative ads that don't violate tastes. It is usually possible to achieve a campaign's objectives without violating standards.

7.5.3. Be cautious about using a personal tone

An ad for diamonds said, "Three billion people in the world and she picked you. Your friends can't figure it out either." When I read the ad, I thought it was addressing me personally.

Many experts suggest that ads should use personal pronouns, especially in the headlines. For example, "You earned it!" and "I guarantee you …" or "What the huge national debt means for us."

Some copywriters advise writers to use a friendly conversational tone. This can be done by using sentence fragments, starting sentences with conjunctions, using one-sentence paragraphs, and using a proposition to end a sentence with.

Ogilvy suggested that the ad writer should pretend to be writing a personal letter on behalf of a client. He suggested that the ad should answer questions in a conversational tone by using the present tense or second person, as in this ad: "You can create more persuasive ads if you use *Persuasive Advertising*."

Advances in technology have enabled advertisers to also use the names of people in the target market. I was unable to find evidence that it is persuasive. When I receive phone calls and letters from people I don't know, I become resistant when they address me by my first name. I think it is unethical for them to pretend that we have a relationship. This level of personalization might not lead to good long-term relationships with customers.

Evidence on the effects of personal pronouns

A lab experiment used an ad for razor blades. When the ad had strong arguments, and used a personal pronoun—"You may remember feeling that razor technology can never be improved"—subjects had a more positive view of the product (5.6 vs. 3.7 on a 7-point scale) than did subjects who received an ad with an impersonal pronoun—"One might have felt that …" However, when the arguments were weak, a personal tone was less persuasive than the impersonal tone: 3.8 versus 4.5 (Burnkrant and Unnava 1989).

Our analysis of quasi-experimental data supports this principle:

Personal pronouns improved recall only for ads with strong arguments.
Our *WAPB* analysis found 37 pairs of print ads with strong arguments in which
one ad used a personal pronoun and the other did not. Recall for ads with
personal pronouns was 1.11 times better.

Nine pairs of ads contained personal pronouns but used weak arguments.
Recall for these ads was about half that of the other ads.

What about advertisements that use people's names? A survey of 231 college
students in the United States revealed that most were upset and uncomfortable by
use of their name in e-mails, regular mail, and especially telephone calls (Yu and
Cude 2009).

7.6. Word selection

Select words that support meaning or enhance the purchasing and consuming
experience.

Which car do you think would be larger and more powerful, a Bromley or a Brimley?

7.6.1. Use words with sounds that support the message

Tipper et al. (1921), in their advertising textbook, said that advertisers should use
words whose sounds support the message.

About that larger and more powerful car mentioned in the lead-in: The vast
majority of subjects said that the Bromley would be larger and more powerful. This
is because the name *sounds* large and powerful (Yorkston and Menon 2004).

The idea that sounds carry meanings has been around a long time. Plato said,
"The letter 'r' appears to me to be the general instrument expressing all motion."
In 1690, John Locke said the sound of words can connote color. Studies since then
have shown that red and blue are associated with the vowel *a*, white and yellow
with *e* and *i*, and blue, brown, and black with *o* and *u*.

Here are guidelines for the selection of proper sounds:

- Words such as "Brimley," spoken with the tongue high in the front of the
  mouth—as opposed to back-of-the-mouth sounds such as "Bromley"—are
  perceived as smaller, lighter (relative to darker), milder, thinner, softer, faster,
  colder, more bitter, more feminine, friendlier, weaker, lighter (relative to
  heavier), and prettier.
- Words containing fricatives—where there is not complete closure of the air
  stream from the mouth such as for f, s, v, and z—as opposed to stops (complete
  closure of air stream from mouth as in p, t, b, g, d, and k or hard c) are perceived
  as smaller, faster, lighter (relative to heavier), and more feminine.
- Words containing voiceless fricatives (f and s), as opposed to voiced fricatives
  (v and z) are perceived as smaller, lighter (relative to heavier), softer, and more
  feminine.
- Words with hard consonants (e.g., Kodak and Pepsi) are easier to recall.
- Words containing voiceless stops (p, t, and k) as opposed to voiced stops (b, d,

and g) are perceived as smaller, faster, lighter (relative to heavier), sharper, and more feminine.

These effects are subtle. Listeners (and readers) have little awareness that the sounds of words convey meanings in persuasive messages.

Evidence on the effects of sounds supporting meanings

The above guidelines for selecting sounds were developed by Klink (2001). It was based on his review of published evidence, and on a study in which he asked 265 subjects to evaluate fictitious brand names. In addition, I drew upon evidence from Yorkston and Menon (2004). In a series of four studies, they presented hundreds of subjects with a short paragraph about two brands of ice cream, Frish and Frosh, and then allowed them to sample the ice creams (which, in fact, were identical). Subjects rated Frosh higher than Frish on the key dimensions of creaminess, richness, and smoothness. They also reported higher purchase intentions for Frosh.

7.6.2. Use words that enhance the purchasing or consuming experience

In *Romeo and Juliet,* Shakespeare wrote, "That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet." Advertisers do not agree. They search for names that will excite customers.

Adjectives that describe products or benefits add interest and help to draw potential customers. They can also enhance the customer's experience with the transaction and product. Recently I chose a "hand-crafted beer" although I had no idea what that meant. Sometime later, I bought "cellar-cooled beer." I can guess what that means, but have no idea why that would make the beer better. However, I enjoyed them.

Adjectives can be used to imply that the claim is a fact. Thus, P&G did not say, "Pringles are fat free and taste as good as the original." Instead, they used "fat-free" as an adjective, "Fat-free Pringles. As good as the original taste." Because "fat-free" is a descriptor rather than an assertion, the reader's attention is directed only to the taste claim.

In 2004, Apple advertised its 17-inch laptop as 1 inch thin rather than 1 inch thick. You see drink ads for a "full quart" and for a "large 12-oz. serving."

The observation tower in Sydney, Australia, is an "astonishing" 350 meters tall. The travel industry appears to have an ongoing competition on which brochures can include the most adjectives and adverbs.

Foreign words can add interest and create favorable connotations and emotions. The language employed should be relevant to the product, as in the use of French terms in ads for food or wines.

Advertisers have long used favorable adjectives. In the 15th century, barkers around St. Paul's Cathedral in London used "elegant language and plenty of adjectives."

Evidence on using adjectives to enhance the customer experience

A six-week field experiment involving 140 customers in a faculty cafeteria was conducted at the University of Illinois. The cafeteria offered six entrées twice a

week. The menu, which was rotated each day, listed either two foods with little description (e.g., grilled chicken) or two with more descriptive labeling (e.g., tender grilled chicken), but the food was the same. Sales were 27 percent higher for the items with adjectives. The diners rated the meals with more descriptive adjectives as better quality and better value, and they reported that they would be more likely to order them in the future (Wansink, Painter, and van Ittersum 2001).

Two lab experiments added support. When asked for their preferences for paint colors, the 193 subjects showed a strong preference for fancy names (e.g., Dark coffee) versus generic names (e.g., Brown). The second experiment, with 32 subjects, found that purchase preferences for towels were substantially higher when they used adjectives in the names (Skorinko et al. 2006).

Headlines do not always lend themselves to adjectives. However, when used they are effective, as shown by our analysis of quasi-experimental data:

> **Print ads with adjectives in the headline had better recall.** Our *WAPB* analysis found 29 pairs of print ads in which one ad used adjectives in the headline, while the other did not. Recall for ads using adjectives in headlines was 1.10 times better than for the other ads.

The benefits of adjectives also showed up in non-experimental studies. An analysis of 73 full-page magazine ads, found that the number of adjectives in the headlines was positively related to the readership of the ads (Rossiter 1981). Similar results were obtained in an analysis of 168 ads from *Iron Age* and *Food Engineering*, in which the number of adjectives in the headline was positively related to the percentage of people who "started to read" the ad, and a higher percentage of people who kept reading (Soley and Reid 1983).

7.6.3. Use familiar words and phrases

> *The secret of all effective originality in advertising is not the creation of new and tricky words and pictures, but one of putting familiar words and pictures into new relationships.*
> *Leo Burnett, 1940s*

Starting in the 1950s, Wonder Bread used a tagline, "builds strong bodies eight ways." The phrase became part of U.S. culture. A 1960s Volkswagen ad by Bernbach played on that familiar phrase by referring to its eight models with the tagline, "Volkswagen builds strong bodies eight ways."

Simon (1974) discussed the importance of familiarity in recall. He said that when grandmasters in chess are shown a chessboard position from an actual game, they typically remember the exact position on each of the 20 to 25 pieces, whereas ordinary players can place only half a dozen. However, if the chess pieces are placed randomly, grandmasters are little better than amateurs at remembering positions.

Familiar words are quickly understood. They help sweep the reader along. In contrast, unfamiliar words and complex phrases cause readers to pause and to look backwards in the sentence. They focus on the words rather than on the message.

Familiarity also extends to grammar. Common-usage by the target market should generally take precedence over correct grammar, because the grammar should not call attention to itself. Thus, many people say, "It's me" rather than,

"It's I." While the latter is grammatically correct, it might seem odd to many people and thus distract from the attention paid to the message itself.

One way to determine whether the wording is familiar to the target market is by testing alternative copy versions using samples of potential customers. However, for little cost, you can get a rough idea of frequency of words by doing Google searches. For example, Jaguar automobiles built a campaign in 2006 around the word "gorgeous." My Google search found that "beautiful" was about six times more common than "gorgeous."

Evidence on effects of familiar words or sayings

Support for this principle is modest, primarily based on received wisdom and our quasi-experimental analysis:

> **Print ads with familiar words or sayings resulted in better recall and persuasion.** Our *WAPB* analysis found 14 pairs of print ads in which one ad used familiar words or sayings, while the other ad did not. For example, a Sony ad that said "it keeps delivering exceptional sound even when it's dripping wet" had a recall score thrice that of another Sony ad that stated that "Sony turns eensy into eensy-weensy." To judge familiarity, we used Google searches. For example, a search of 'exceptional sound' brought in about 26 times more results than 'eensy-weensy.' Recall for ads with familiar words and phrases was 1.32 times better than for the other ads.

We also analyzed non-experimental data in *WAPB*. In comparison with the industry norms for each ad, the average persuasion score for the 210 ads that used common words and phrases was 6 percent higher than the comparable score for the 68 ads without familiar words and phrases.

7.7. Wordplay

In 1955, the Bulova Watch Company attached a watch to a ball and sent it over the Niagara Falls. The announcer said, "Watch it; it's going over ... down into that raging torrent ... buffeted and jolted by the forces of that terrific current ... and here it is still ticking away!" You probably never heard about that ad. However, in 1962, Timex ran a TV ad in which Raul Garcia, high-diving champion of the world, dived from a cliff in Acapulco. After the dive, the announcer said, "Can we bring that watch up close, please? Well, there you are! It took a licking and kept on ticking." In a 1989 survey of 2,000 people, nearly all remembered the phrase, "It takes a licking and keeps on ticking" (Kanner 1999).

Wordplay can involve rhyme, rhythms, puns, double meanings, or jingles. Their use can help customers organize information, as well as create favorable connotations. Wordplay has long been used by advertisers. For example, jingles[1] have

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1 According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a jingle is: "The affected repetition of the same sound or of a similar series of sounds, as in alliteration, rhyme, or assonance; any arrangement of words intended to have a pleasing or striking sound ...; a catching array of words, whether in prose or verse." "A short verse or song in ... advertising."

been around since the Middle Ages. Printed jingles have been used at least since 1820 when Warren's Shoe Blacking used one in an ad in a London weekly.

It was common for advertisers in the mid-1800s to hire famous poets to write jingles. The popularity of jingles in the United States decreased in the late 1900s. However, they remain popular in some countries. For example, Berger (2001) reported that in Brazil, jingles are commonly sung by people in pubs. Jingles are also popular in India.

Puns and double meanings can attract attention, encourage thinking, aid recall, and reinforce a known aspect of a product, as this Church of England tagline shows: "Open Sundays for better values." However, for important messages and short exposure time, double meanings may reduce understanding.

7.7.1. Use wordplay if it is clearly related to the product

Wordplay slows readers, and this, it is hoped, will get them to think about the message. Thus, product-related wordplay is more persuasive when the ad has a strong argument. In contrast, irrelevant wordplay is likely to reduce the attention given to strong arguments.

Consider a rhythm that follows a "rise, pause, rise further, pause" structure. The rhythm and beat in spoken language helps listeners to pay attention to the more important information. Rhythm can also be used for print advertising. Some copywriters suggest reading an ad aloud a number of times to ensure that it flows nicely. It also helps to ask others to read it aloud. An early 1900s ad for the Lackawanna Railroad holds up well by this test: "Says Phoebe Snow about to go upon a trip to Buffalo, my gown stays white from morn 'til night upon the Road of Anthracite."

Also consider aphorisms (a terse statement of a "truth"). In O. J. Simpson's 1995 trial, his lawyer used an aphorism when he said, "If the glove does not fit, you must acquit."

In 1961, marketing researchers summarized their findings about Schaefer beer as the "one beer for heavy drinkers to consume when they are engaged in a substantive drinking experience." The advertisers for Schaefer showed how wordplay could enhance this message with their slogan, "Schaefer, the one beer to have when you are having more than one."

The Economist magazine has been using wordplay in advertising for many years. It used headlines such as, "Great minds like a think," and "If you buy it just for show, sooner or later it will." The campaign won an IPA award for effectiveness (Rimini 2003).

Here are other examples of what I believe to be effective wordplay:

- In 1932, Coca-Cola used "Thirst come, thirst served."
- Christian Aid, a coalition of U.K. churches that works to improve the lives of poor people in the Third World, ran a campaign based on the slogan, "We believe in life before death."
- Hanes Socks said, "Buy cheap socks and you'll pay through the toes."

Advertisers make good use of wordplay. For example, our *WAPB* analysis of

the 480 full-page print ads by leading advertisers found that 25 percent used wordplay that was linked to the primary message.

Evidence on the effects of wordplay

Our analyses of quasi-experimental data on print ads provided further support:

> **Print ads using wordplay that related to the main message had better recall and persuasion.** We found 24 pairs of ads from *WAPB* in which one ad used wordplay, while the other did not. For example, an ad for Jenn-Air cooktops that claimed, "Jenn-Air is starting a counter revolution," had a recall score almost three times that of a Kitchen Aid ad that did not use wordplay. Recall for ads with wordplay tied to the main message was 1.25 times better than for the other ads.

Now about irrelevant wordplay—our quasi-experimental analysis shows that damage can be severe:

> **High involvement print ads with irrelevant wordplay had much lower recall.** Our *WAPB* analysis found 23 pairs of high-involvement ads in which one ad used irrelevant wordplay, while the other ad either did not use wordplay or used it appropriately. Recall for the irrelevant wordplay ads was only two-thirds that of the other ads.

In a lab experiment, subjects rated the believability of 50 aphorisms that were previously unknown to them; they received either an original version such as "Woes unite foes" or a version without wordplay, which in this example, was "Words unite enemies." The aphorisms were rated as more believable (McGlone and Tofighbakhsh 2000).

Analyses of non-experimental data on over 1,500 TV commercials found that in comparison with the average ad in each sample, commercials with wordplay had better recall and persuasion. Also, jingles were 13 percent better than average on recall and 11 percent higher on persuasion (Walker 2008).

We analyzed non-experimental data in *WAPB*. In comparison with the industry norms for each print ad, the average persuasion score for the 39 ads that used relevant wordplay was 6 percent higher than the comparable score for the 181 ads without wordplay.

7.8. Metaphors and figures of speech

> *But the greatest thing is to be a master of metaphor … it is a sign of genius.*
> *Aristotle*

Metaphors and figures of speech are a type of wordplay that portrays the information in a familiar perspective which helps the audience to organize and remember the key points.[2] The material differs from the readers' expectations because

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2   *Webster's Dictionary* defines a metaphor as "a figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them (as in drowning in money)."

the meaning is implied rather than literal, such as in this ad for Mercury Sable automobiles, "It forced other car makers into the copier business."

Figures of speech can be used to make intangible products more tangible, such as when Travelers Insurance offers customers an umbrella and Prudential uses a rock as its symbol. Metaphors can make a mundane product, such as gasoline, more interesting—"Put a Tiger in your tank" (for Exxon).

7.8.1. Consider using novel and concrete metaphors that are related to a benefit

The Eurostar train developed the "Fly Eurostar to Paris," campaign for the United Kingdom in 2003. One ad showed the train "landing" in Paris with the caption, "The world's favorite trainline." This metaphor emphasizes speed.

One way to create a novel metaphor is to start with a familiar saying, then give it a novel twist. An ad for rechargeable batteries asked, "Why pay cash for your battery when you can charge it?" In doing so, ensure that the metaphor is understandable to the target audience. In particular, it can be difficult to find metaphors that are understood by international audiences.

Metaphors can be made more concrete by the choice of words or by adding a visual representation. Example with words: An ad for Clinique cream said: "exceptionally soothing cream for upset skin.™"

A visual metaphor occurs when a visual image deviates from expectations, yet the deviation makes sense. An example: "What a clockmaker in 18th-century England taught us about making quality personal printers" in which the printer was shown on a clockmaker's workbench. Visual metaphors are useful for attracting the attention of low-involvement subjects.

Metaphors are especially effective when delivered orally. They provide a framework for people to organize the information in an ad. The oral metaphors also provide less time for reflection and counter-arguing than do metaphors in still media.

It is best to limit the ad to a single metaphor. An extended metaphor adds effectiveness. As the saying goes, don't mix metaphors.

Metaphors and figures of speech are commonly used in advertising. McQuarrie and Mick (1992) found that 86 percent of 154 full-page magazine print ads used figures of speech in the headline or in a subheading.

However, the applications often overlook key aspects of the principle. Our *WAPB* analysis found that of the 480 tested full-page print ads by leading U.S. firms, only 22 percent used a novel metaphor, and only 32 percent used one related to a selling point. Overall, only 16 percent used a metaphor that was both novel and related to a benefit.

Evidence on the effects of metaphors

Sopory and Dillard (2002) found 29 empirical studies with 38 comparisons of literal statements versus metaphors. The researchers used diverse methods in these studies, which involved about 4,000 subjects. Metaphors were persuasive (a correlation of 0.07) with respect to attitude change. The authors provided

correlations for each of the relationships. (Correlations provide a poor way to communicate the strength of relationships, so think of them as a measure of relative importance of the relationships in the discussion that follows.) This meta-analysis showed that:

- Metaphors enhanced the credibility of low-credibility sources; as a result, they were more persuasive (a correlation of 0.12). Highly credible sources had little need for metaphors (a correlation of 0.02).
- Novel metaphors were much more persuasive than familiar ones (a correlation of 0.12 for the novel ones versus 0.01 for the familiar). Novel example: "Now the great cloud cat, darting out his lightning tongue, licks the creamy moonlight from the saucepan of the sky." Familiar example: "She has a heart of gold."
- Extended discussions of a metaphor were more persuasive than brief mentions (a correlation of 0.09 versus 0.05).
- Oral metaphors were more persuasive than written ones (an average correlation of 0.09 for audio experiments versus 0.06 written).
- Persuasiveness dropped off as the messages went from including one metaphor (a correlation of 0.08), to two through eight metaphors (a correlation of 0.06), to nine or more metaphors (a correlation of 0.02).

Sopory and Dillard also found that under ideal use—a single extended novel metaphor introduced early in the message—metaphors were especially persuasive.

In a lab experiment, 13 actual full-page magazine ads were shown to 103 subjects. The ads had metaphors with either concrete or abstract words. The concrete metaphors related the product to other objects through the five senses, while abstract metaphors used an intangible trait or concept. The subjects reported that the concrete metaphors were more understandable. In addition, the three ads that presented visual support for metaphors led to higher comprehension than the three that did not (Morgan and Reichert 1999).

In another lab experiment, 242 subjects viewed ads for eight products in a test magazine. There were two versions of each ad, one with metaphors, either though words or pictures, and the other ad without. For example, a flashlight ad said, "The gift idea that leaves everyone beaming," while another ad substituted "happy" for "beaming." Recall was twice as high for the ads with metaphors (McQuarrie and Mick 2003).

Our analysis of data on quasi-experimental data on print ads supported the value of concrete words in metaphors:

Print ads using metaphors with concrete words had better recall. Our *WAPB* analysis found 37 pairs of print ads in which one ad used concrete metaphors, while the other did not. For example, an ad for Panasonic that said, "Panasonic folding cordless. It's an open and shut case," had a much better recall score than that of a Panasonic ad that used no metaphor. Recall for ads with metaphors was 1.34 times better than for the other ads.

We also analyzed non-experimental data in *WAPB*. In comparison with the

industry norms for each print ad, the average persuasion score for the 42 ads with concrete metaphors was 8 percent higher than the comparable score for the 180 other ads.

7.9. Simplicity

Simplicity was a revolutionary advertising concept in the early 1900s when John E. Powers, advertising manager for John Wanamaker's department stores, began to use simple, unexaggerated prose. This became known as the "Powers style" (Pope 1983). It was revived in the 1960s, perhaps due to the influence of Bill Bernbach.

Ads should present only information that is absolutely necessary, and should do so in an organized and simple manner. For example, web design experts stress simplicity. Nielsen (2000, p. 22) said "go through all your design elements and remove them one at a time. If the design works just as well without a certain design element, kill it."

A lab experiment found that complex ways of presenting prices (e.g., "$469 plus 8 percent New York State sales tax) can take customers five times longer to process compared with being shown the total price (Estelami 2003). Tests using supermarket customers found that most of those who had a high-school education or less did not know how to compute the best buy for grocery products when given the prices and sizes of competing products (Capon and Kuhn 1982).

7.9.1. Use a single relevant theme—or two in some situations

A theme that is relevant to the product can help customers understand an ad. One example: focus on quality. A single theme is advisable, but creative approaches might allow for a second theme to be used in an ad. Similarly, you might consider a story to tie the ad together.

Cravendale introduced a filtered milk in the United Kingdom. Its milk tasted fresher because it was filtered rather than pasteurized. It also stayed fresh much longer. The company combined the two themes: "Cravendale milk tastes so good it is never around long enough to prove it can stay fresh longer." This was an IPA award-winning ad for demonstrated effectiveness (Hoad 2005).

"Serious fun," another IPA award winner, advertised that students should have a good time while engaged in learning at the University of Dundee. With this campaign, Dundee enjoyed the highest rate of increase in applications among eight Scottish universities (Hoad 2005).

If there are many strong arguments, consider a campaign that uses a series of simple themes. When the Korean automaker Daewoo introduced its cars in the United Kingdom in 1995, it identified 17 benefits that were new to the market (e.g., three years of free servicing and free courtesy cars). Daewoo created four themes, one for each commercial: "direct sales," "hassle free," "peace of mind," and "courtesy." This led to a TV campaign that won an IPA award for its demonstrated effectiveness (Duckworth 1997).

In our *WAPB* analysis, 82 percent of the 480 print ads used a single theme.

Evidence on the effects of a using one or two themes

Our analysis of quasi-experimental data provides support for simplicity:

> **Print ads with single relevant theme had better recall.** Our *WAPB* analysis found 30 pairs of ads in which one ad used a single theme related to the benefit or selling point, while the other did not. For example, an Anso Carpet ad that focused solely on the carpets' stain-resistant quality was recalled three times more than another Anso ad that also described other attributes, such as textures, colors, and static protection. Recall for the single-theme ads was 1.16 times higher than for the other ads.

In a small-scale lab experiment, subjects were shown travel brochures. When information about features was provided as part of a story, subjects had a more favorable view about the vacations than those who saw only a list of these features (Adaval and Wyer 1998).

Turning to non-experimental data, recall was about 6 percent better and persuasion 10 percent higher for TV commercials that used a continuous narrative than for those that used multiple vignettes or disjointed and unconnected narratives (Walker 2008).

7.9.2. Avoid irrelevant information if strong arguments exist

> *Do nothing to merely interest, amuse, or attract.*
> *Hopkins 1923*

Irrelevant information distracts. Eliminate non-essential words, phrases, sentences, and illustrations, especially when the ad contains strong arguments.

Evidence on effects of using irrelevant information

Experiments support this principle of avoiding irrelevant information:

> **Irrelevant information harmed believability in ads for a variety of products.** Subjects in ten lab experiments saw information for several products on computer screens. For example, in one experiment, participants received information about benefits for eight products (e.g. safe apartments, fast package-delivery service). When the ads contained obviously irrelevant information, customers had less confidence that the product would deliver the benefits promised. In one experiment, the ratings for "Belief in benefits" were higher for "strong arguments" in TV commercials than for "strong arguments and irrelevant information"—5.8 versus 5.2 on a nine-point scale (Meyvis and Janiszewski 2002).

7.9.3. When using fast-exposure media, keep the message short

Simplicity is important when people have only brief exposure to an ad. In London, in the 1850s, the "King of the Billposters" advised: "You can hardly put too little in a poster; what you want are two or three good catch lines for the eye to rest on—then leave it alone."

Experts on billboard advertising recommend using eight words or less. A sample of 252 billboards showed that national advertisers had an average of fewer than seven words and 1.2 pieces of information per billboard. Local advertisers, perhaps being less aware of the experts' advice, averaged about 13 words and 1.6 pieces of information (Blasko 1985).

Evidence on effects of fast-exposure media

In a non-experimental study, ten new billboard ads, all of approximately equal size, were placed on a 30-mile stretch between the suburb of an American city and a downtown motorway exit. They advertised local products and services, such as restaurants, banks, radio stations, and retail outlets. Four of the ten ads had seven or fewer words, while six ads had more than seven. About 50 days after the ads were placed, the researchers conducted telephone interviews with 142 adult residents who passed all ten outdoor ads on their commute to work. The respondents recalled 1.5 times as many of the ads with few words, compared with those with many words (Donthu, Cherian and Bhargava 1993).

7.10. Informative illustrations

The ... ideas to be expressed [in an advertising photo] must present themselves at first glance.
Harvey S. Lewis, eminent advertising photographer, 1905

Complex issues can sometimes be explained more clearly by using an illustration. For example, to support its claim that its copiers were less prone to malfunction, Ricoh used an illustration to show that the flow of paper through its copy machines was much simpler than that used by other copy machines. Explaining this paper-flow process by words alone would have been difficult.

The following principles are likely to be especially useful for utilitarian products: that is, for products that solve problems for consumers. In addition, they are useful for products that are new to the target market.

7.10.1. Illustrations should support the basic message

By making an illustration conform to the verbal content, you can more easily attract relevant customers and reduce miscomprehension.

In 1957, El Al Airlines put a "jet prop" airplane into service over the Atlantic. It avoided the need to refuel at Goose Bay, Labrador, or at Gander, Newfoundland, thus reducing travel time by 20 percent. Bill Bernbach showed the benefit in "Torn ocean." This full-page ad showed a photo of the ocean with about 20 percent torn off to reveal white space, with the headline, "Starting Dec. 23, the Atlantic Ocean will be 20 percent smaller." This ad ran only once. That was enough to be successful (Levenson 1987).

To show that Jeep automobiles are durable go-anywhere vehicles, the Bozell Worldwide agency created the TV commercial "Snow covered" for the 1994 Super Bowl. The ad showed something burrowing under the snow (actually a two-thirds-scale model jeep being towed by a cable attached to a tractor). As it pulls up to a

half-buried stop sign, viewers realize that it is actually a car buried under the snow. They see the glow of yellow turn signals, whereupon the car turns left and exits. The last frame contains the subtitle, "There's only one Jeep." No voice-over was used; therefore, the ad could be used in any country. Furthermore, because the Jeep was not actually shown, the ad could demonstrate the benefit year after year, as designs change.

A print ad for Dove soap used an illustration to support a benefit: "Now there's a Dove that smells like this." It was positioned at the top of a blank page, except for a small photo of Dove at the bottom with the caption, "Introducing unscented Dove."

Illustrations are especially useful for poor readers or multinational advertising. For example, they play a large role in advertising in South Africa because of its 11 languages and wide disparities in education and culture. A South African ad for Toastmasters Club (a public speaking club) showed only an empty text-box over the word "Toastmasters" and a phone number, thus making the ad applicable to all of South Africa (Shepard 1967).

If you cannot show the product or benefit, consider showing people associated with the product, such as satisfied users, helpful retailers, or competent employees. Or show settings that are related to use of the product.

Many companies feature employees in ads. In the late 1980s, Waste Management featured one of its drivers who had won an award for safe driving in a TV commercial. It concluded with, "That says a lot about him—and, we hope, something about us." In 2004, the Peninsula Hotel chain showed portraits of its employees taken by Annie Leibovitz, a famous photographer.

Consider the Institute for Justice, an organization that promotes ideas, such as protecting private property from government seizure on the behalf of private companies, allowing people to choose an occupation, and allowing children to choose a suitable school. The organization has an "I am IJ" campaign, which shows pictures of individuals who describe how they were helped.

Many advertisers support their messages with illustrations. For example, in our *WAPB* analysis, of the 480 print ads from leading advertisers, 72 percent of the illustrations supported the basic message.

Those who depend on direct response advertising learn quickly that they should use informative illustrations. Pick up any *Yellow Pages* book and you will see that irrelevant pictures are rare. The pictures usually show the product, supplier, typical customer, or location.

Evidence on the effects of illustrations

Evidence from lab experiments supports the use of product-relevant illustrations:

Purchase intentions were higher for ads with illustrations relevant to the product. Two experiments, comprising 170 subjects, used print ads for a fictitious soft drink, Sunburst. In a high-involvement condition, subjects made a choice among soft drinks, while low-involvement subjects selected from an unrelated product category. Some subjects saw ads with irrelevant illustrations (for example, in one experiment, the product was presented with iguanas) while

others saw relevant illustrations. Purchase intentions were higher when the illustrations were relevant to the product, especially under high-involvement conditions (Miniard et al. 1991).

In a small-scale lab experiment, 27 subjects were shown full-page color print ads advertising cars, calculators, or cameras. Some saw ads with pictures related to the brand, such as a camera without any mention of a brand, while others saw an unrelated picture. Thoughts about the brand were three times as high for those viewing a related picture as for those who saw an unrelated picture (Edell and Staelin 1983).

Another small-scale lab experiment used an actual eight-page B&W ad for an imported automobile, and then created a four-page version by eliminating uninformative pictures. Despite using twice as much space, the eight-page version did not lead to higher intentions to purchase, aid recall, or improve attitudes toward the brand (Singh et al. 2000).

Illustrations generally aid recall. A review of the evidence concluded that pictures are easily recalled (Lutz and Lutz 1977). For example, one study showed 2,560 illustrations to subjects at the rate of one every ten seconds. One hour after the last slide was shown, the subjects were presented with 280 pairs of pictures, one of which they had seen and one they had not. Subjects could accurately recall well over 80 percent; some subjects recalled 95 percent. They could even recall pictures from their mirror images (Haber 1970).

Our analysis of quasi-experimental data on print ads supports the use of informative illustrations:

> **Print ads with illustrations that supported the basic message had much better recall.** Our *WAPB* analysis found 43 pairs of print ads for utilitarian products in which one ad had illustrations reinforcing the basic message, while the other did not. For example, a Dodge ad that showed a picture of four doors alongside the claim, "New thinking. New solutions. And new doors. Four of them," had a much better recall score than that of another Dodge ad that did not have relevant illustrations. Recall for ads with supportive illustrations was 1.54 times better than for the other ads.

We also analyzed non-experimental data in *WAPB*. In comparison with the industry norms for each print ad, the average persuasion score for the 117 ads with illustrations that supported the message was 10 percent higher than the comparable score for the 43 ads where the pictures did not directly support the message.

Irrelevant "surrealistic visuals" and "graphic displays" in TV commercials harmed recall, comprehension, and persuasion. Ads with directly relevant settings were more persuasive than those with irrelevant settings (Stewart and Furse 1986). Similar findings were found in an extension on new commercials with respect to recall, comprehension, and persuasion (Stewart and Koslow 1989).

7.10.2. Show the product

A 1984 TV commercial for Sony Trinitron TV opened with an empty sofa with the back of a TV set in the foreground. Through a series of cuts, a man's life was shown

as he watched TV. First he was a baby, then a child, a young man, a father, a grand-father, and then an old man. Finally, all that was left were his pipe and shoes ... and the same TV. The superimposed words were, "Sony Trinitron. Designed to last."

Show the product in the illustration, if it is feasible to do so. Pictures of the product can help to show features such as size and color that are important to customers. Focus on the product within an illustration by its placement, ample surrounding white space, size, lighting, or spot color. An illustration of a packaged product may aid customers in finding the product on crowded shelves.

If possible, show the product in use, such as a wine ad showing people enjoying a dinner with friends.

This principle is sometimes violated. For example, when the Infiniti auto-mobile was introduced to the U.S. market, its ads did not show the car, but instead showed serene images, such as birds, rain, rocks, and trees. Infiniti car dealers were not pleased. Experts concluded that the ads did not sell cars. Comedian Jay Leno commented that "Nobody's buying the car, but rocks and trees were up 40 percent."

The use of relevant illustrations has grown over time. An analysis of ads in the top ten U.S. magazines for each of the first eight decades of the 1900s found that 53 percent of ads in the first decade of the 1900s showed the product. This jumped to 89 percent in the 1970s. Over the same time, the use of irrelevant pictures dropped from 18 percent to 4 percent (Pollay 1985).

In our *WAPB* analysis, we found that of the 480 tested full-page print ads by leading U.S. firms, 85 percent showed the product in the illustration.

With respect to the settings of ads, Stewart and Furse (1986) found that 65 percent of the settings in TV commercials were directly related to the product, such as showing a place where the product could be used.

Evidence on the effects of showing the product

Lab experiments support this principle on showing the product:

Inclusion of product/brand in the illustration led to better recall in an experiment on Yellow Pages ads. Twenty unfamiliar *Yellow Pages* ads were shown to 271 subjects. The ads had been professionally reconstructed to vary illustrations and backgrounds. Each subject saw each of the four ads for four seconds. In half the ads, randomly assigned, the illustration contained the product and brand name. Two days later, those who saw the illustrations with brand names recalled almost twice as many brand names. The effect was much stronger for low-involvement conditions where recall was 5.7 times better (Childers and Houston 1984).

Illustrations related to the brand name led to better recall in an experiment on Yellow Pages ads. An experiment used 48 ads from the *Yellow Pages* that contained illustrations along with the brand name. The 72 subjects were divided into experimental and control groups. Half of the subjects received ads in which the illustration contained the brand name; for example, "Rocket Messenger Service" showed an illustration of a messenger, package in hand, being propelled

by a rocket strapped to his back. Ads that contained an illustration expressing the brand name were recalled much more frequently (8.8 recall rate vs. 6.4) than ads containing illustrations not associated with the brand (Lutz and Lutz 1977).

Our analysis of quasi-experimental data also supports this principle:

> **Print ads with products in the illustration had better recall.** Our *WAPB* analysis found 17 pairs of print ads in which one ad showed the product in the illustration, while the other did not. For example, a General Motors ad for Tilt Wheel steering that showed the picture of a Tilt Wheel had much better recall than another Tilt Wheel ad where the illustration did not include the product. Recall was 1.52 times better for ads that illustrated products.

Turning to non-experimental data, commercials that showed the product were above average in their ability to change brand preferences (Ogilvy and Raphaelson 1982). TV commercials with a "setting related to product use" led to better recall and persuasion (Stewart and Koslow 1989).

7.10.3. Emphasize desirable features in illustrations

> *An advertising photograph has to translate a given idea into concrete form—clearly conveyed to the beholder ... to represent that which is to be sold in a manner calculated to enhance its appeal.*
> *Walter Nurnberg, famous commercial photographer, 1940*

Find good things about the product and emphasize them in illustrations. This can be done with size, lighting, angles, shapes, backgrounds, or artistic treatments.

Consider camera angles. For example, high-priced, status-oriented clothing ads are shot upwards, while clothing ads for the masses are shot at eye level. To connote "equality," say for a political candidate, shoot at eye level (Messaris 1997).

Kraft (1987) used prior studies to establish hypotheses on how camera angles influence a viewer's perceptions. He gained further support in three experiments. The review suggested that angles can lead to the following impressions about a product:

Impressions of a product if viewer is looking ...

up	at eye-level	down
aggressive	good	afraid
bold	passive	passive
strong	unafraid	short
tall		weak
unafraid		

Inferences vary depending on the situation; therefore, this table provides only rough guidelines. Kraft's research also showed that when camera angles were consistent with copy (e.g., looking up at a powerful truck), subjects' recall was better. Interestingly, when subjects were asked later about the ads, they were unaware of the angles.

Suppose that you wanted to advertise that a restaurant serves large drinks. How might you do that? It turns out that we are subject to the "elongation illusion."

For example, to emphasize large drinks at a restaurant, show them served in tall, narrow glasses rather than in short, wide glasses.

Call-outs (or "cut-aways") can also be used to emphasize many features at once. These are short explanations that are linked by lines to relevant parts of the illustration. In 2002, a full-page BMW ad in the *Wall Street Journal* used 68 call-outs to identify key attributes of the car, such as the "brake-wear display."

Evidence on the effects of emphasizing desirable features

In a lab experiment on the elongation illusion, 40 Hong Kong subjects estimated the sizes of 27 food containers. The taller containers were judged to be larger than shorter ones with the same volume. This bias persisted even for when involvement was increased by providing a reward for the most accurate estimates (Raghubir and Krishna 1999).

Subjects were randomly assigned either a short or tall glass (each of which held the same volume). They were permitted to refill it with as much juice as they wanted. Those given short, wide glasses, thinking they held less, poured and consumed about 20 percent more juice than those given tall, slender glasses (Wansink and van Ittersum 2003). Drinking establishments might want to use short glasses to increase revenue. Designated drivers might want to use tall glasses to reduce consumption. (Those on diets should use tall glasses.)

In a lab experiment on call-outs, 46 subjects saw a bicycle ad with eight claims. Half the subjects, randomly assigned, received a version with the claims as call-outs on the illustration, while the others received a list. Recall was 1.28 times higher with call-outs (Meyers-Levy and Perachio 1995).

7.10.4. When believability is an issue, use photographs/videos instead of drawings/cartoons

Artists might take creative license in representing a product. For example, a 1926 artwork ad for Studebaker showed tiny people admiring an enormous automobile.

Illustrations can easily lead one astray. Consider, for example, that you received an ad for furniture that had illustrations for the hallway and coffee tables shown overleaf. How much longer is the hallway table?[3]

I was surprised to learn that the length and width of each table are identical. But even after being told that, my brain refuses to agree because it interprets what it believes to be three-dimensional objects. (This example was adapted from Shepard 1990.)

It is, of course, possible to lie with photographs—they can be staged, altered, edited, mislabeled, or placed in an inappropriate context. For example, in the 1968 U.S. presidential campaign, an ad showed a photograph of Hubert Humphrey smiling beside pictures of U.S. troops under attack in Vietnam.

There are situations in which drawings or cartoons are appropriate. For example, exterminators, such as Terminex, often use animated bugs because people are squeamish about seeing pictures of real insects.

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3 Illustration of two tables from *Mind Sights* by Roger N. Shepard. Reprinted by arrangement with Henry Holt and Company, LLC.

Hallway table   Coffee table
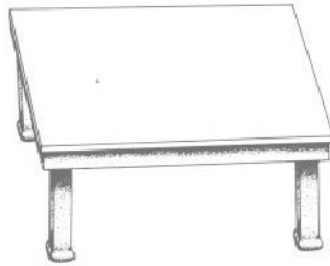
Sometimes illustrations can show what photography cannot easily portray. When Gillette introduced its two-blade shaving razor in 1972, a TV commercial demonstrated how the razor worked. This animated drawing showed the Gillette second blade catching hair that the first blade missed. It is hard to see how Gillette could have used photography to demonstrate this feature.

The earliest use of photography in advertising was traced to a real estate ad in Paris in 1854. However, it took nearly a century before photography had much impact on advertising, largely because of costs and technical issues (Sobieszek 1988).

An analysis of ads in the top ten magazines for each of the first eight decades of the 1900s showed that the use of photography in advertising soared from 18 percent of the ads in the first decade of the 1900s to 82 percent in the 1970s (Pollay 1985). The wide acceptance of photography is partly due to its people's belief that it provides an accurate portrayal of reality.

Evidence on the effects of photography

The following lab experiment supports the use of photographs:

Print ads with photographs led to more product choices than did line art. Quarter-page *Yellow Pages* ads for three product categories (e.g., computers, photo developing, and restaurants) were shown to 143 subjects. Those who received ads with photos of products gave higher ratings to the credibility of the ad and product quality than those who received ads with line drawings. These findings were the same for all three product categories. In a second experiment, which used eight product categories, 384 subjects received ads ranging from one-sixteenth to a half page. The subjects who received ads with photographs of products were more likely to select the products than those who received ads with line drawings (Lohse and Rosen 2001).

Seven non-experimental studies compared ads with photos against those with art. People paid more attention to photos in five of the studies, and the other two were equal (Finn 1988). For example, an analysis of 1,070 *Life* magazine ads found that photographs led to higher readership scores than did other types of illustrations (Diamond 1968).

An analysis of non-experimental data on 376 ads in a Japanese newspaper found that ads with photographs had much higher readership scores than those that used other illustrations (Yamanaka 1962).

7.11. Informative color

Colors are often key aspects of products, such as clothing and automobiles. Color can also provide information that enables customers to quickly recognize a product from the packaging. Kodak's use of yellow is a good example.

7.11.1. Use color to provide information

Informative colors are those that help to describe features of a product (e.g., the color of a suit or car), to identify the brand, or to support emotion. For example, warm colors (red, yellow, and orange) appear larger than cool colors (green, blue, and violet), enabling firms and advertisers to use colors to emphasize product size—such as a hotel room. Colors affect information and emotions, in ways that differ from culture to culture. For example, in the United States, the following meanings apply: Green—go, on, safe; Yellow—caution, warning, warm; Red—stop, hot, danger, loss, emergency; Blue—cold, off.

Advertisers have long used colors to add emotion. Color has physiological effects on people—and also on animals. For example, when mink were exposed to daylight filtered through a deep pink glass, they became aggressive and vicious. Their sex life was also affected; only 86 percent of the mink became pregnant after three attempts to mate. In contrast, when the daylight was filtered through a deep blue plastic, the minks became friendly and easy to handle and all females in the blue light became pregnant after the first mating (Ott 1974).

When humans are exposed to red light, they have higher blood pressure, faster respiration, more muscular activation, more frequent eye blinks, and more rapid brain waves. These reactions are similar across cultures. It seems that those in the "sex industry" knew what they were doing when they marketed their services in red-light districts. In case you need evidence on this, a series of five lab experiments found that men rated women pictured on a red background as more sexually attractive than those pictured on a white background (Elliot and Niesta 2008).

High chroma and brightness can increase liking and excitement. High chroma is shiny, vivid, and pure (which means that there is no white or black).

A summary of prior research concluded that in general, light colors are better remembered and more preferred than dark colors. They reached similar conclusions for bright versus dull colors, and for primary colors (e.g., red, yellow, blue) versus secondary colors (Skorinko et. al 2006).

Some advertisers use colors to imply that a product possesses certain qualities. In the United States, false implications drawn from color can cause problems for advertisers if the ad calls attention to the claim verbally. For example, in 1971, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) challenged two manufacturers of denture cleaners to provide documentation for their claim that "The green

shows speed as powerful cleaning bubbles scrub dentures fast." The manu-facturer could have avoided the problem by saying nothing about the green (Cohen 1972).

When involvement is high, the use of a number of colors might interfere with the customer's ability to think about the product, because people might seek the meaning of the colors or be influenced by irrelevant emotions.

Ads should avoid using color when it provides the only cue for interpretation. For example, do not tell people to "follow the safety directions in red." Consider that about 12 percent of men are color-blind. Also, people might make B&W copies of an ad, such as when printing a page from a website.

Evidence on the effects of informative color

Support for the use of color was provided in the following experiments involving the *Yellow Pages*:

> **Informative color led to a much higher likelihood of product selection than did attention-getting color in two *Yellow Pages* experiments.** In a mall-intercept study, 601 subjects saw six simulated *Yellow Pages* ads for florists or caterers. Products in ads with attention-getting color were 20 percent more likely to be a subject's first choice than were products in B&W with no color. However, products in ads with product-related color (e.g., flowers, colors of fabrics) were twice as likely to be selected as the first choice than products in ads in which color was merely used to gain attention (Fernandez and Rosen 2000).
>
> In another *Yellow Pages* experiment, subjects saw ads for eight product categories that they commonly used. When the products were shown with informative color, they were more likely to be selected than when the ad was in B&W (Lohse and Rosen 2001).

Our analysis of quasi-experimental data supported the use of color:

> **Print ads with informative colors had slightly better recall and persuasion.** Our *WAPB* analysis found 16 pairs of ads in which one ad used color to provide information, while the other did not. Recall for the informative color ads was 1.06 times better than the other ads.

An examination of 13 non-experimental studies comparing color illustrations with B&W ads found that color drew more attention in all studies. Color improved comprehension in three of the four studies in which it was assessed. Also, color led to more thought in five of ten studies, with five showing negligible differences (Finn 1988).

7.12. Ad consistency

The elements of an ad should reinforce one another. Consistency in the message, tone, format, and style makes it easier for customers to understand and recall ads. It is especially important for low-involvement products because the reinforcements help to clarify the message for people who are paying little attention. In addition,

consistency among the elements of an ad helps customers who encounter an ad that is not in their primary language.

7.12.1. Make elements of an ad reinforce one another

The headline, brand name, picture, camera angle, logo, tone, copy, font, word sounds, colors, and layout should be consistent with one another. This will reduce the likelihood that people will misperceive the message.

This principle is widely accepted in advertising. In our *WAPB* analysis, we found that of the 480 full-page print ads by leading U.S. firms, 97 percent had elements that were consistent with each other.

Evidence on the effects of having the elements reinforce one another

A small-scale lab experiment supported the principle. It used ads in which the consistency of picture, brand name, and copy were varied. A fully consistent print ad had a picture of a bottle of Icy Vodka of Iceland. The copy, imposed on the bottle, read "ICY … Vodka of Iceland." Some ads related two items, such as Budget auto rentals having low prices. In one experiment, ten male and ten female subjects saw 15 slides of fashion ads for eight seconds per slide. The ads said "_____ women. They all wear _____." Descriptive adjectives were placed in the first space and brand names in the second. Ads with relations among all three elements—picture, brand name, and copy—resulted in better (unaided) recall than those in which only two elements were related. Ads were especially effective when the picture was one of the consistent elements (Schmitt et al. 1993).

Our analysis of quasi-experimental data provides further support for consistency:

> **Ads with reinforcing elements had substantially better recall.** Our *WAPB* analysis found 12 pairs of ads in which one ad had elements that were consistent with each other, while the other did not. Recall for the ads with consistent elements was 1.42 times better than the other ads.

7.13. Disclaimers and corrective advertising

Disclaimers are used to tell customers what the product does not do, to identify risks, or to avoid misperceptions that might harm consumers. Corrective advertising is primarily intended to inform customers about inaccuracies in previous advertising. Disclaimers and corrective advertising may be required by the government or they can be voluntary.

7.13.1. Use disclaimers or corrective advertising only if they provide information customers need

Corrective advertising that provides information that is vital to consumers' decision-making is likely to improve customer decision-making. It can enhance believability because it represents a two-sided argument. If it provides a good response to the negative issue, it would be expected to be persuasive in

transmitting the original message. However, disclaimers and corrective adver-
tising should be used only to provide information that is relevant and important,
otherwise they are likely to distract customers—and lead them to make inferior
decisions.

When using a disclaimer, make every effort to state it in a positive manner. By
their nature, disclaimers often use negative words, and negative words are difficult
to understand.

Government-mandated corrective advertising and disclaimers typically fail to
meet their objectives. There are three key problems:

- lack of relevance to decision-making by customers
- difficulty in comprehension due to negative words
- misperceptions resulting from pairing two objects and saying they are *not*
  related; over time, people often remember them as *being related*.

Government-mandated corrective advertising and disclaimers are relatively new.
In the United States, they started in the early 1970s with a Campbell soup ad that
emphasized the vegetables in a photo by placing marbles under them. This
led to investigations, some of which lasted for years, with the findings based on
judgment rather than research.

Based on research to date, the net effect is that ads of this type harm customers'
decision-making. In addition, they increase media placement costs. Finally, they
interfere with commercial free speech and thus can lead to expensive legal proceed-
ings in which the government must show that the corrective ads or disclaimers are
required to protect consumers. A review of the early years of corrective ads and
disclaimers in the United States is provided by Wilkie, McNeill, and Mazis (1984).

Those who are concerned with aiding consumers should be wary of mandated
disclaimers and corrective advertising. They should only be used if they are
supported by empirical experiments in the given situation. Such experiments are
expensive to conduct.

Evidence on the effects of corrective advertising and disclaimers

Berlex Laboratories (part of Schering-Plough) was ordered to provide a disclaimer
stating that it had no relationship with another company, Schering AG. The
disclaimer stated that "Schering AG, West Germany, is not connected with
Schering-Plough Corporation or Schering Corporation, Kenilworth, New Jersey."
An ad making the disclaimer was compared with one making no disclaimer—and
also with one that had a "claimer" (the claimer said the companies were related).
The subjects were given as much time as they wanted, and they responded imme-
diately after they reviewed the brochures The disclaimer had a modest effect in
reducing the level of incorrect responses from 58 percent to 46 percent. Surpris-
ingly, however, the percentage of people who thought the companies were related
was *higher* for the disclaimer than for the claimer (Jacoby and Szybillo 1994).
Note that the information in this disclaimer did not have any obvious value to
customers.

Two lab experiments found that stating that a claim is false led the subjects

to identify it as false in the immediate future, but after three days, it led them to remember it as true, because the two things were connected in their mind. These memory problems were more pronounced for older adults (Skurnik et al. 2005).

From their experiment on disclaimers that a brand of clothing was not licensed by the National Football League, Jacoby and Raskopf (1986) concluded that:

> The results of this study suggest that disclaimer labels, especially those which rely upon brief negative words such as "no" or "not," will have little impact on the consumers' mental states relating to secondary meaning, confusion, purchase preference or the perception of quality.

Based on two lab experiments, Mason, Scammon, and Fang (2007) concluded, "In general, the government-mandated disclaimer did not impact consumers' beliefs about either the efficacy or the safety of dietary supplements."

I was involved with experiments on the effect of a statutory disclaimer in order to provide evidence for a court case. Using mall intercepts in Florida, we showed two mock *Yellow Pages* advertisements for implant dentistry to each of 317 subjects, and asked them to say which dentist they would recommend to a friend who needed dental implants. In all cases, one of the two dentists' advertisements included credentials from the American Academy of Implant Dentistry (AAID) and the other had no apparent qualifications specific to implant dentistry. Thus the latter dentist was, on the information available, not as qualified to perform implant dentistry. For half of the subjects, the AAID-credentialed dentist's ad was accompanied by a statutory disclaimer. Of the subjects who did not receive the disclaimer, 13 percent recommended the less-qualified dentist, compared with 21 percent of those who saw the disclaimer. Thus, 1.6 times as many subjects made inferior decisions when they saw the disclaimer. The disclaimer was especially likely to mislead women and those without a college education (Armstrong and Green, 2010).

The tendency for confusion was supported by a lab experiment where 64 subjects rated "original" and "corrective" ads for Firestone Tires, Listerine mouthwash, Freihoffer's bread, and Crown Petroleum. All of the materials were taken from U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC) proceedings. The statements judged as deceptive by the FTC were not relevant to the consumers' decision; as a result they had little impact. However, by stating the limitations, the corrective ad enhanced credibility (Glassman and Pieper 1980).

Findings from analyses of non-experimental data also show that corrective advertising tends to confuse rather than clarify. A study involving corrective advertising for a mouthwash (Listerine) found that only 29 percent of the 83 subjects understood the corrective message. The effects were the same whether the ads were written by the FTC or by the company (Mazis and Adkinson 1976). In another study on ten corrective ads, there was a median miscomprehension rate of 61 percent (Russo, Metcalf, and Stephens 1981). An examination of corrective advertising for Excedrin versus Bufferin that was written by the FTC found that only 24 percent of the 45 respondents understood the message, while 40 percent were confused, and 36 percent misunderstood (Jacoby, Nelson, and Hoyer 1982).

Checklist 7 summarizes principles for crafting the message. These principles require creativity, skill—and effort. Copywriter Adrian Holes gave this advice: "You've completed your 15th draft. You finally sit back and say to yourself, yup, that's good. Congratulations. Now tear it up and do it again. Only better. I told you this writing business was tough."

Checklist 7 Message

7.1.   Arguments
7.1.1. Use only strong arguments for high-involvement products.
7.1.2. Use positive arguments.
7.1.3. Consider cultural values when formulating arguments.

7.2.   Clarity
7.2.1. Use simple prose for high-involvement products with strong arguments.
7.2.2. Avoid negative words.

7.3.   Forceful text
7.3.1.   Use specific words.
7.3.2. Use power words if they fit the product.
7.3.3. Use active rather than passive voice, unless the subject of the sentence is obvious.

7.4.   Interesting text
7.4.1. Consider interesting writing.

7.5.   Tone
7.5.1. Use a calm tone for high-involvement products with strong arguments.
7.5.2. Do not violate taste or standards.
7.5.3. Be cautious about using a personal tone.

7.6.   Word selection
7.6.1.   Use words with sounds that support the message.
7.6.2. Use words that enhance the purchasing or consuming experience.
7.6.3. Use familiar words and phrases.

7.7.   Wordplay
7.7.1. Use wordplay if it is clearly related to the product.

7.8.   Metaphors and figures of speech
7.8.1. Consider using novel and concrete metaphors that are related to a benefit.

7.9.   Simplicity
7.9.1. Use a single theme——or two in some situations.
7.9.2. Avoid irrelevant information if strong arguments exist.
7.9.3. When using fast-exposure media, keep the message short.

7.10. Informative illustrations
7.10.1. Illustrations should support the basic message.
7.10.2. Show the product
7.10.3. Emphasize desirable features in illustrations.
7.10.4. When believability is an issue, use photographs/videos instead of drawings/cartoons.

7.11. Informative color
7.11.1. Use color to provide information.

7.12. Ad consistency
7.12.1. Make elements of an ad reinforce one another.

7.13. Disclaimers and corrective advertising
7.13.1. Use disclaimers or corrective advertising only if they provide information customers need.

8. Attention

You can have all the right things in an ad and if nobody is made to stop and listen to you, you've wasted it.
Bill Bernbach, 1960s

In the 1890s, many advertisers created poems and told stories. The characters in these ads, such as Sunny Jim and Phoebe Snow, became among the most recognized names in the country. "It is astonishing," said Charles Austin Bates, a well-known advertiser at that time, "how some of the things that we think the silliest will stick in our minds for years" (Fox 1997).

In the early 1900s, advertising expert Earnest Calkins said that the first duty of an advertiser was to get the reader's attention. This focus on attention turned out to be misguided. In contrast, Scott (1912) said, "I believe that there is no proof that … an open attempt to force the attention of the reader is advisable or successful." At the end of the 20th century, dot.com advertisers demonstrated this as they wasted huge sums of money in their efforts to attract attention. Nevertheless, the practice persists. For example, in 2006, AT&T placed full-page ads that contained no information in the *Wall Street Journal*.

Attention is especially important when the ad has a persuasive message. How strange then to see a movement toward "low-attention advertising" by some practitioners. This refers to advertising that is so subtle it does not look like advertising. Often, such advertising does not even mention the product or brand name. The idea is that by not obviously seeking attention, the advertiser can sneak the product into the customer's mind. I was unable to find empirical support for low-attention advertising. On the contrary, the evidence refutes it. One study examined 316 new-product ads that had been tested on 65,000 respondents. Viewers who remembered seeing an ad were seven times more likely to choose the advertised brand than were viewers who were exposed to the ad but could not remember it (Mundell, Hallward, and Walker 2006). A review of studies on unconscious processing yielded a similar conclusion (Pratkanis and Greenwald 1988).

The need for generating attention varies across different types of media. In TV advertising, a customer who views a TV ad is usually not seeking information. In contrast, a customer who searches the Internet is typically looking for information.

This section focuses on principles for gaining and keeping the attention of the target market. The principles are organized as follows:

8.1. Alert the target market
8.2. Campaign consistency
8.3. Campaign contrast
8.4. Slogans

8.5. Brand identifiers
8.6. Attractive visuals
8.7. Color for attention
8.8. Humor

8.9. Sex
8.10. Models
8.11. Technical quality

8.1. Alert the target market

Say the right things to the right people.
John E. Powers, late 1800s

Given that people are exposed to many, perhaps hundreds of advertising messages each day, it often helps if an ad alerts the target market.

8.1.1. Alert the target market early and prominently

An ad should make clear who might benefit from the product, especially when many of the viewers will not fall into the ad's target market. The ad can alert customers via illustrations, headlines, or opening lines ("Backache sufferers …"). It can show a benefit in the headline so those in the target market will realize that the ad is intended for them.

This principle of alerting the target market is based on long-standing practice. For example, in newspaper advertising in the 1860s, when the attention of women was desired, ads often began with, "To the ladies." In 1929, Phoenix Mutual Insurance changed an ad so that it alerted the target market using the headline, "To men who want to quit work some day …." Phoenix Mutual said that the ad quadrupled the sales volume (Watkins 1959).

To inform people about a solution, an ad was targeted for people who feel tired: "If you're too tired to read this, you're exactly the sort of person who should" (from an ad about the need for iron in the diet).

It is usually best to be direct about the target market. This was violated in a print ad for a Saab 9000 with the headline: "The sports sedan for people who inherited brains instead of wealth." What about people in the target market who might think they have brains and wealth?

Targeting can create some backlash, especially if the product involves a sensitive topic. When the U.K. police advertised for ethnic recruits, some ethnic minorities felt that being specifically targeted was racist. When the ads were changed to show people in situations in which the target market had relevant skills, applications from ethnic minorities increased (Rimini 2003).

Beware that an ad targeted to a specific market might be seen by other interest groups. For example, one evening when my wife and I were shopping for a restaurant on a country road in Pennsylvania, we saw a restaurant with a large "Cook wanted" ad in front. We decided to go elsewhere for dinner.

Evidence on the effects of early alerts to the target market

This principle rests largely on received wisdom. We also found support in our *WAPB* analysis of quasi-experimental data:

> **Print ads with early alerts resulted in higher recall and persuasion.**
> We found 24 pairs of *WAPB* print ads in which one ad alerted the target market in the headline or in the first line of the body text, while the other ad did not. Recall for ads with early alerts was 1.17 times higher than for the other ads.

8.2. Campaign consistency

By the 1920s, the military and political concept of a campaign had worked its way into advertising (Pope 1983). The idea was that the elements of the advertising campaign should be consistent and work together for a common objective.

A recognizable look and feel for a brand's advertisements helps to alert consumers to a company's ads. Furthermore, consistency aids recall, for example when consumers see products on display in a store.

8.2.1. Provide a consistent look to all aspects of a campaign

> *Successful advertising must …harmonize with every department of the business*
> *…. The coat on the office boy, the letterhead … store furniture, lights …*
> *N. C. Fowler, late 1880s*

Earlier, I presented evidence that an ad should be internally consistent. Here, I advise that all aspects of the ads *in a campaign* should be consistent. For example, magazine and direct mail ads for the Bose Wave Radio are easy to recognize because they use similar size, typeface, and layouts.

Campaign consistency can also reduce costs. Soundtrack elements from TV commercials can be used for radio. TV commercials and print ads can be adapted to the Internet. Shorter versions of ads, referred to as "advertising fragments," can be used to remind people of previous claims. Fragments allow for ads to be delivered in fast-exposure media, in situations in which the target market is distracted, such as at sporting events, and on the Internet as in banner ads.

Evidence on the effects of consistency across a campaign

Color, such as for packaging or advertising, should be consistent with the sound of the brand name. Five papers (dating from 1913 through 1997) showed, for example, that people associate lighter colors with high-frequency sounds. In addition, these elements should be consistent with the shape and color of the logo (Klink 2003).

8.2.2. Keep the advertising consistent across time

> *Given identical products, identical budgets and identical sales forces, I will let you have a*
> *brilliant campaign every six months, provided you change it every six months—and I'll take*
> *a less than brilliant campaign and beat your tail off with it because I'll run it ten years.*
> *Rosser Reeves, 1950s*

In August 2009, IKEA made a small change in the font for its 200 million catalogues. Or so the company thought. It changed from its traditional customized version of Futura, a font that it had used for half a century, to Verdana. Customers rose up and vented their anger on the Internet.[1]

Organizations make substantial investments to inform the target market what they stand for. If they have managed to develop a good relationship with the market, it is risky to change. Hopkins (1923) said, "In successful advertising,

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1 Lisa Abend, *Time*, August 28, 2009; Edward Rothstein, *New York Times*, September 15, 2009.

great pains are taken to never change our tone. That which won so many people is probably the best way to win others ... people come to know us."

Many advertisers have used this principle. Henry Roleigh, a well-known artist, did Maxwell House Coffee ads for 40 years. Watkins (1959) notes that B. F. Goodrich ran the "First in rubber" campaign successfully for 15 years with the same layout, same typeface, and same kind of copy. Campbell Soup, Ivory Soap, Esso, Pillsbury, and Guinness Stout have had consistent campaigns over time. Bakers Complete dog food, a U.K. product, has used the same campaign since 1994, and won an IPA award for its effectiveness (Binet 2006).

Advertising managers and agencies come and go. When they are new to an assignment, they often feel pressure to change basic elements of the advertising program. I agree with the leading advertising experts who advise that firms should only change course when the evidence is overwhelmingly in favor of such a change. For example, consider changing the identity and tone when people do not like the brand or where the brand has been associated with unsavory behavior.

In particular, when sales are lagging, management often believes that it must do "something," and that something often involves changing its advertising. For example, in the late 1990s, Whiskas cat food experienced a downturn in its U.K. sales. To address this, the company made frequent major changes in its campaigns throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s, such as using dancing animated mice, advertising a charity appeal for cats who are fed canned food, and showing a purring cat in a family home. The changes did not halt the slide in sales. In contrast, during that period, Felix used a consistent campaign based on Felix, a scruffy black-and-white animated cat whose antics, according to market researchers, reminded people of their own cats. Felix had a crisis when sales dipped in 2001. However, management fought off the temptation to change the campaign. Felix continued to gain sales, and by 2005, it was the largest selling cat food in the United Kingdom. The Felix campaign, lauded for its consistency, was an IPA award winner for its effectiveness (Green 2007).

In another example of a lack of consistency, Oxo, a large U.K. retailer founded in 1847, developed a family image of traditional values. In 1957, it introduced an upper-middle-class family in its ads; in 1983, it followed by introducing an English suburban family. Then, in September 1999, in an effort to appeal to a new way of living, Oxo launched ads that showed men sharing a flat. Protests from consumers led Oxo to return to using a traditional family in 2002 (O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy 2004).

In 2006, Citigroup abandoned its 136-year-old umbrella logo. Other companies that changed their logos in the early 2000s included Kodak, Continental Airlines, and Xerox. In 2003, Timex hired a new chief marketing officer, changed advertising agencies, and replaced one of the most effective, familiar, and enduring taglines in history—one the company had used for four decades—"It takes a licking and keeps on ticking,™" with "Life is ticking.™" Such changes are contrary to the consistency principle. Were they justified by analyses of the campaigns' return on investment?

Evidence on the effects of being consistent over time

Analyses of 30-second TV commercials found that recall was 11 percent higher and persuasion 3 percent higher when ads were consistent over time in their use of characters, music, taglines, or slogans, than when the use of these elements was not fully consistent. Further support was provided with respect to maintaining a consistent tone: When 614 of the TV commercials were judged by customers on whether they "fit with the way that you feel about (the brand)," the ads above the median on this score were 17 percent higher on recall and 14 percent higher on persuasion (Walker 2008).

8.3. Campaign contrast

Contrast means that an ad diverges from what is expected. It might contrast with expectations for the brand, product, layout, or media, or it might involve different arguments, sizes, font types, shapes, colors, visuals, copy, or layouts. Or it might be just odd; for example, some advertisers have sought contrast by printing their ads upside down.

8.3.1. When strong arguments exist, consider using ads that contrast with competitors' ads

By using an approach that differs substantially from other ads in a category, an ad might draw attention. It can also lead people to think more about the product.

Evidence on the effects of contrast

In a field experiment, U.S. subjects were shown one of two print ads for a camera phone. The ads were identical except for the offers: Half said, "Get 20 percent off the regular price," while the other half stated, "Pay 80 percent of the regular price." Because the "Pay 80 percent" version contrasts with tradition and it communicated a strong argument with the substantial price reduction, the researchers hypothesized that intentions to purchase would be higher for it. They were correct—it was 28 percent higher than the "Save 20 percent" version. As a further test, they conducted the same study in Hong Kong where ads typically state how much the consumer pays. Thus, in Hong Kong, because the "Save 20 percent" version was unusual, it led to purchase intentions that were 33 percent higher than the "Pay 80 percent" ad (Kim and Kramer 2006).

8.4. Slogans

The word "slogan" comes from a Gaelic word meaning "war cry." A slogan or tagline—I use the terms as synonyms—is a short statement or summary about the brand. It offers the opportunity to memorably describe a key selling point for a brand or organization.[2]

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2 *Webster's Dictionary* also uses the term "tagline" as a synonym for "slogan."

Slogans were common by the late 1800s. They became even more popular when mass marketing of products began in the early 1900s. For example, "Say it with flowers" appeared in 1917 in a national campaign. By 1928, advertisers had registered more than 6,000 slogans with *Printer's Ink.*

An analysis of 724 TV food commercials from 1999 to 2003 from the Ipsos ASI data-base found that 89 percent had slogans.

A copywriter, Frances Gerety, described the difficulty of coming up with a slogan. In April 1947, she was asked to think of a slogan related to springtime scenes or honeymoon spots for jewelry company DeBeers. She finally came up with "A diamond is forever." Her efforts ultimately paid off as this slogan worked in 29 languages (Twitchell 2000).

Slogans can be useful for advertisers seeking long-term relationships with customers. Given the difficulty of creating good slogans, and the dangers of disrupting customers from strong arguments, they should only be used when a strong case can be made. This implies that many slogans should be tested before deciding that one might work.

Can you identify the companies or products that used each of these slogans?
A.   We do it all for you
B.   The world's favourite airline
C.   Have you had your break today?
D.   You're in good hands with Allstate
E.   We love to see you smile
F.   Where's the beef?
G.   I'm loving it
H.   The ultimate driving machine

8.4.1. Consider a short memorable slogan with the brand name and benefit

Slogans should express the brand's benefit in a short and catchy phrase—such as in slogans B, D, F and H in the box above. Those slogans came from the "Hall of Fame" at adslogans.com.

Raymond Rubicam implied a benefit in 1921 with his slogan for Steinway pianos: "The instrument of the Immortals." The advertising executives at Steinway were skeptical but ran it anyway. Sales rose by 70 percent, and Steinway used this slogan for decades (Watkins 1959; Fox 1997). Other slogans that captured the benefit include *Yellow Pages* with "Let your fingers do the walking," Greyhound Bus with "Sit back and leave the driving to us," and Wal-Mart's "Always low prices. Always.™"

If possible, include benefits in slogans. Many advertisers do this. In August 2005, I examined the 29 English-language Hall of Fame slogans on adslogans.com. Over half referred to a benefit.

Ideally, slogans should refer to a unique selling proposition (USP). This is difficult to do, yet example H does it. This slogan, initiated in 1992, focuses on the skills and joys involved in driving a BMW.

Notice example D. When the brand name is in the slogan it leaves no doubt as

to the brand. Other examples: "If anyone can, Canon can." "I'd walk a mile for a Camel,™" and "It's Miller time.™"

Now look at slogans A, C, E, and G. They lack a brand name, product, or benefit. McDonald's spent heavily on advertising these slogans; however, few people could recognize the sponsor (*USA Today*, 2003).

If you do use a slogan, make it short. Adslogans.com listed 119 English language slogans in its Hall of Fame as of October 8, 2008. They averaged 5.4 words and 7.5 syllables.

In recent years, slogans seem to have become shorter. However, they should not be so short that they lose meaning. Consider these vague slogans: "Inspire the next,™" "Where else?," and "From thought to finish."

Make the slogan memorable. It should roll off the tongue. A good example is the 2004 slogan introduced by Wawa convenience stores, "Gottahava Wawa."

Ideally, the slogan should survive across time. It should be relevant when a company adds or eliminates products, when fashions change, or when the company expands its markets. In 1935, DuPont began using "Better things for better living ... through chemistry." The slogan lasted until the 1980s, when it deleted "... through chemistry." DuPont used the revised slogan until 1999.

Of course, some slogans are successful though limited to a certain time period, such as Kodak's 1890 slogan for its Brownie camera, "You press the button—We do the rest."

If properly designed, slogans can be persuasive. If poorly designed, they can distract customers. This can be detrimental, especially because they typically appear at the end of the ad—when you would like the customer to be thinking about an action step.

Sullivan (2003, pp. 105–07), a copywriter, claimed that few slogans work, and he often discourages clients from using them. It does seem that slogans are often forced onto situations where they are not appropriate. Consider the problem of developing a slogan for a U.S. state. Few states have a strong benefit, much less a USP. In 2006, New Jersey paid a marketing company $260,000 to come up with "New Jersey: We'll win you over." The governor did not like it; so he held a contest. The winner was "New Jersey: Come see for yourself." However, it does not provide a USP. (My favorite contest entry was, "New Jersey: You got a problem with that?")

Among the slogans for 22 of the largest advertisers in the United States, only six were recognized by more than 10 percent of those surveyed. Circuit City's "We're with you," K-Mart's "The stuff of life," and Staples' "That was easy," each scored near zero. Microsoft weighed in at 1 percent with, "Your potential. Our passion" (*Wall Street Journal,* June 13, 2003).

In November 2003, the marketing manager of Nestlé's KitKat candy brand discarded the brand name when he changed the slogan from "Have a break, have a Kit-Kat" to "Make the most of your break." As a result of this and other advertising changes, sales dropped sharply. He was fired, the brand reverted to its original slogan, and sales rebounded.

Slogans should make sense across cultures. The widely reported Perdue Chicken slogan, "It takes a tough man to make a tender chicken,™" failed this test.

Translated into Spanish, the slogan became, "It takes a hard man to make a chicken aroused."

Given the difficulty in developing a persuasive tagline, I suggest that advertisers pretest a number of slogans on people in the target market. I doubt that the following slogans were tested: "People expect us to be better" (Stouffer's frozen foods) or "Go away" (by a travel agency). In 2000, the U.S. Air Force used "No one comes close." (What about that precise bombing done by Air Force pilots?)

Evidence on the effects of slogans

Our quasi-experimental analysis of slogans did not show a benefit in general for the use of slogans (based on 30 pairs of ads). However, if you are going to use a slogan, include the brand name:

> **Print ads using slogans with brand name had better recall.** Using editions 5 through 9 of *WAPB*, we found 26 pairs of print ads where one of the ads used a slogan that included the brand name while the other ad used a slogan that did not mention the brand name. Recall of ads with slogans with brand name was 1.60 times better than for ads using slogans without brand names.

An analysis of non-experimental data from Ipsos ASI on 724 tested TV food commercials found that the index for persuasion was 10 percent higher for the commercials with taglines. The 20 most persuasive ads with taglines were much more persuasive than the 20 most persuasive ads without taglines. On the other hand, the least persuasive ads with taglines were much less persuasive than the least persuasive ads without taglines. These results imply that if you cannot come up with a good tagline, do not use one. This seems sensible because, as previously stated, a bad tagline might distract, often at the end of the ad when you would like people to be thinking about action steps.

8.5. Brand identifiers

Brand identifiers can provide instant recognition, and serve as a reminder of your knowledge of and experience with the brand.[3] Bill Bernbach said, "... a logo is like a man's name. When I mention a certain man you know well, everything about that man jumps into your mind ... a logo does the same thing for a product."

Brand identifiers were mentioned earlier with respect to adding credibility. Here I examine their role in gaining attention.

Logos were popular in Ancient Greece and later in Rome during Caesar's time. In an age when many people did not read, logos were almost a necessity. For example, people would identify barbers or wine shops by their logos.

In the late 1800s, Francis Barraud of London, observing his dog, Nipper, sitting attentively in front of a "talking machine," painted the scene. This fox terrier with an ear cocked to an antique phonograph became the best-known dog in the world.

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3   The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines these terms for brand identifier: icon, a pictorial representation; logo, an identifying symbol; and trademark, a distinguishing characteristic or feature firmly associated with a person or thing.

The painting, "His Master's Voice," became the trademark of the Victor Talking Machine Company in 1901, and of RCA in 1928.

Logos can become a dominant part of an advertising campaign. Leo Burnett created the Jolly Green Giant for the Minnesota Canning company in 1928. This friendly giant became so important that the company changed its name to the Green Giant Company in 1950.

Because logos can connote information and emotion across languages and cultures, they help in global marketing. They are important for providing brand identity when advertising to a target market that is unable to read, or when the target market uses many languages (as in South Africa, China, and India). Throughout the world, for example, Nike is recognized simply by its logo.

8.5.1. In a long-term advertising program, emphasize brand identifiers

Associate the logo with the brand name. Nike included its name in the Swoosh from its beginning in 1971 up through the 1980s; once it was well recognized, the image was sufficient without the brand name. However, few companies ever reach the point where they can omit the name and still be recognized. A safer strategy is to use the name as part of the logo.

By drawing upon common objects, such as a heart or a smiley face, the logo or mascot can help make an unknown brand seem familiar. However, the danger is that the logo will not become distinctive.

The logo should appear on all media, if possible. This includes print ads, websites, TV commercials, stationery, packaging, signage, gifts, and products.

For motion ads, Rossiter and Bellman (2005) recommend devoting two seconds to the brand identifiers. They also recommend mentioning the brand name orally.

Brand sign-offs add emphasis. Waste Management used both a visual and auditory sign-off in its award-winning TV campaign in the 1980s: "Waste Management— Helping the world dispose of its problems."

For still media ads, place the logo where it will lead to instant recognition. The average amount of space for the brand elements (logo, mascot, and trademark) ranged from 9.3 percent (high-involvement, utilitarian products) to 15 percent (low-involvement, unfamiliar, hedonic products) of an ad's total surface area. It is probably best to err on the side of making the logo larger than these averages, rather than smaller (Rik Pieters, personal communication, 2006).

In an analysis of 1,363 full-page Dutch magazine ads, which Rik Pieters (personal communication, 2006) did specifically for this book, about 12 percent of the space in full-page magazine ads was devoted to brand identifiers (primarily logos). Pieters found that the space for logos tended to be larger for unknown brands, for hedonic rather than utilitarian products, and for low rather than high-involvement products.

For websites, place the logo in the upper left-hand corner of each page (for languages in which people read from left to right). Nielsen (2000, p. 178), a web-design expert, stated that this is the number one rule for navigation. In addition, users should be able to click on the logo to return to the initial screen, making it functional as well.

Brand identifiers are widely used. For example, our *WAPB* analysis found that of the 480 tested full-page print ads by leading U.S. firms, 80 percent used brand identifiers. Of these, three-fourths used logos or trademarks, and one-fourth used icons or mascots.

Stewart and Furse (1986) found that 95 percent of the TV commercials reviewed used a visual brand sign-off and 71 percent used an auditory brand sign-off.

Evidence on the effects of brand identifiers

A lab experiment using nine split-book field experiments on magazine ads found that the use of a trademark increased calls from customers by 24 percent compared with a same-size ad that used the brand name only: that is, without a trademark (Abernethy and Laband 2004).

Our analysis of quasi-experimental data on print ads supported the use of band identifiers:

> **Print ads with brand identifiers had higher recall and persuasion.** We found 26 pairs of *WAPB* ads in which one ad used a brand identifier, while the other did not. Recall for ads with identifiers was 1.10 times better than for the other ads.

Turning to non-experimental data, an eye-tracking study of 24 subjects who viewed 24 full-page ads on cars and skin care found that the subjects invariably looked at the logos, and that the logos attracted much attention relative to other aspects of the ads (Rayner et al. 2001).

Additional support was provided by an eye-tracking study on 88 subjects who viewed 65 full-page Dutch print ads for fast-moving (low-involvement) consumer goods. The logo received "by far the most eye fixations per unit of its surface, followed by the text elements [including headlines] and the pictorial." Ads with a prominent placement and a larger area devoted to logos drew more attention to the brand with no negative net effects (Wedel and Pieters 2000; Pieters and Wedel 2004).

Analyses of non-experimental data from eye-tracking studies showed that ads with familiar logos drew more customer attention, and customers spent more time reading the text (Pieters and Wedel 2004; Rayner et al. 2001).

Hold the brand elements on screen. An analysis of non-experimental data on 30-second TV commercials segmented the data into three groups depending on how long the brand elements were legible on screen (Walker 2008). This table shows the responses relative to the typical ad in this sample. For example, when the product was on the screen at least 11 seconds, the persuasion score was 1.07 times that for the typical ad:

	Persuasion index versus the typical ad for:	
Seconds on screen	**Recall**	**Persuasion**
1 to 6	0.94	0.95
7 to 10	1.00	1.00
11 or more	1.08	1.07

TV commercials that included the brand name at the end were above average in changing brand preferences (Ogilvy and Raphaelson 1982). Visual TV brand sign-offs were associated with higher persuasion, but auditory sign offs were not (Stewart and Furse 1986). In contrast, Stewart and Koslow (1989) found that TV commercials with auditory sign-offs were more persuasive.

8.5.2. Use logos to express meanings or emotions

Logos and mascots can be used to express meanings or emotions. This can be aided by use of an appropriate color or design.

In 1971, Phil Knight, one of the founders of Nike, asked designer Carolyn Davidson for a trademark expressing "movement." She showed him some designs, among them the swoosh. Knight told Davidson, "I don't love it, but it will grow on me." Her fee was $35—however, she did receive more when the swoosh became a big success.

Messaris (1997, p. 59) quoted a creative director, Stephen Barker, who said, in 1961, "The harsh, angular effects of square objects ... suggest masculine temper, while the round shape of a circle implies the gentleness of a woman." Messaris asked 132 subjects to rate various shapes for potency (weak–strong, soft–hard, impotent–potent) and activity (passive–active, slow–fast, calm–excited). Consistent with Barker's observation, the star, triangle, square and rectangle rated high on potency, while the circle and ellipse rated low. In addition, the star and triangle rated highest on "activity." Keep in mind, however, that shapes may carry different meanings in different cultures.

8.6. Attractive visuals

> *The busy American is loath to read. His eye must be attracted, coaxed, cajoled [by visuals].*
> Printer's Ink, *1898*

In 1996, Parmalat and its Brazilian ad agency used children dressed as animals for milk ads. The slogan was "Parmalat—because we are mammals." Not only did Parmalat's sales increase markedly, but the company produced mammal dolls redeemable for 20 Parmalat bar codes plus $7, and, at its peak, sold 60,000 dolls per day (Berger 2001).

This section examines visuals that contain no information for potential customers. They are used simply to attract interest.

Attractive visuals might help gain attention for low-involvement and hedonic products that are widely used. Even if an ad provides no information to the customer, it would seem desirable that visuals be related to the product, service, or offer. For example, the milk-moustache ad campaign always included the product.

Consumers are more likely to stop and take notice when they see a picture. This is useful when a customer is not looking for ads, such as when reading newspapers or magazines. Analyses of eye-tracking studies show that the typical consumer viewing time of a full-page print ad is estimated to be 1.7 seconds; of this, consumers spend 0.6 seconds viewing the picture (Pieters and Wedel 2004).

Attractive visuals can gain attention. The ad should gain the attention of those looking for a given product. An irrelevant visual might cause them to skip past the ad. Attention is less important for advertising media that customers use to seek products, such as directories.

8.6.1. Consider using visuals that create favorable associations with the product

Ads that include images that the target market views favorably might lead customers to associate favorable feelings with the product. For example, animals and babies are often used to create favorable associations. On the negative side, highly favorable visuals might distract from the message. Hopkins said (1923), "Pictures should not be used merely because they are interesting. Or to attract attention."

Saatchi & Saatchi, in developing a campaign for British Coal in 1988, realized that people already knew a lot about coal. They therefore decided to create a favorable association through the use of animals. Ind (1993) and Kanner (1999) described the campaign:

> Take natural enemies such as a dog, cat, and mouse, and show them sitting together in front of a coal fire. One film maker said he could not make the idea work, another said it could only be done with special effects, and a third said he would have to use people dressed as animals. However, an unknown director, Tony Kaye, took it on. Forty cats and forty dogs were given screen tests. Those that were selected, a bulldog and a cat, lived together in a house prior to the filming so they became used to each other. Bulldogs have respiratory problems, so a fake fire was used. Fish paste was put behind the dog's ear, so that when the cat walked in during the shoot, it immediately "kissed" the dog, then sat down beside him. The tricky part was the mouse. It was placed under a cup beside the cat. When the cup was removed, the confused cat and mouse went nose to nose, giving the impression of a kiss, before the mouse backed off. When the film was reversed, we see the mouse walking in and kissing the cat and then the cat kissing the dog. The final frame read, "Now you know what people see in a Real Fire."

Today newspaper readers voted this British Coal ad their favorite in 1988. It had little apparent effect on the sales of coal, but it did seem to increase sales of bulldogs.

It is common for ads to focus on favorable associations in their efforts to create likeable ads. As you will see, there is little evidence to support this. My suggestion would be that the ad should employ favorable associations only when they enhance the message—e.g., beautiful scenery for travel ads.

Evidence on the effects of visuals with favorable associations

This principle rests heavily on received wisdom. Our small-sample analysis of quasi-experimental data on print ads does not support this principle. It is safe to say that further research is needed:

Print ads with favorable visuals had less recall. Our *WAPB* analysis found seven pairs of ads (six being for high-involvement products) where one ad had favorable visuals that were not related to the message, while the other had neutral images. Recall for ads with neutral images was 1.20 times more than for the ads with favorable illustrations.

8.7. Color for attention

Earlier I discussed the use of color to provide information. Here I discuss color that contains no information and is used simply to gain attention.

Procter & Gamble was one of the first U.S. companies to use color in advertising. It sent an advertising team to France to learn about four-color printing when the process became available in 1896. Because of technical problems and costs, however, the use of color grew slowly prior to the mid-1930s.

8.7.1. To gain attention, consider using color

Color can help to attract attention to an ad or to a section within an ad. An otherwise B&W ad might, for example, show the product in color. On the negative side, irrelevant colors might distract from a message.

Evidence on the effects of attention-getting color

In a lab experiment, 383 subjects were shown alternative print ads for a brand of seltzer water that had not yet been introduced to the market. Some were instructed to read the ads carefully, while others were allowed to skim them. Color led to increased purchase intentions, especially for those in the low-involvement "skim" group (Andrews et al. 1992).

An eye-tracking study included an ad, either in color or B&W, on each of the 96 pages of six 16-page dummy newspapers. Color increased unprompted recall of the advertiser's name by 53 percent and purchase intentions by 10 percent (Chisholm 1995).

In an eye-tracking study, 32 subjects were shown ads for eight product areas in the *Yellow Pages* and were told that they needed to make a selection from each category. As is typical for the *Yellow Pages*, the ads were for utilitarian products. Each category comprised 40 listings and eight ads. Subjects noticed more color ads (92 percent versus 84 percent for B&W) and were more likely to look at them first. In addition, they looked at them 21 percent longer (Lohse 1997).

Turning to non-experimental data, a summary of unpublished analyses of data on full-page ads in Dutch magazines led to the conclusion that color ads had 43 percent higher brand identification than B&W ads. There was a 45 percent gain in brand identification for color in full-page ads for major U.S. magazines (Franzen 1994, #4.6).

An analysis of 211 Echo Award entries to the Direct Marketing Association found that those in color produced approximately twice as many responses as the B&W ads (Woodside, Beretich, and Lauricella 1993).

8.8. Humor

When asked which ads they like best, people often mention those with humor. However, they seldom say that the ads alter their purchasing behavior. Moreover, they are sometimes confused about what brand sponsored an ad because the humor overwhelms the message.

Some advertising experts have been critical of the use of humor. Claude Hopkins (1923) wrote, "People do not buy from clowns." John Caples (1932) said, "Humorous copy, like clever copy, should be avoided by 99 copywriters out of 100." As I will show, however, humor is helpful for some conditions and harmful for others.

Perhaps the dominant issue with humor is whether or not it is related to the product. In a survey of advertising research and creative directors in 1982, almost 90 percent claimed that humor works best when it is related to the product (Madden and Weinberger 1984). A replication of this survey was conducted 23 years later and the results were virtually identical (Beard 2007).

Do not use humor that might offend potential customers or even non-customers. In addition to reducing sales effectiveness, it could lead to unfavorable press coverage or negative word of mouth. For example, a Miller Lite ad that proved offensive to many people showed two bikini-clad female models in a catfight over whether the beer tastes great or is less filling. In 2005, some advertisers in the beer industry came to the conclusion that crude ads were harming sales.

The following case illustrates the risks involved with the use of humor. Just for Feet, a shoe retailer, was on Fortune's list of "America's fastest growing companies" in 1998. Saatchi & Saatchi suggested that the company advertise on the 1999 Super Bowl "to build goodwill nationally."[4] Its commercial, which cost approximately $7 million, showed four military officers in a Humvee as they tracked a barefoot Kenyan runner. They offered him water that they had laced with a knockout drug. When he collapsed, they forced Nikes on his feet. He awakened, was horrified at the sneakers and tried to kick them off. A narrator says, "We're Just for Feet, to preserve and protect feet." The ad led to protests that it was racist. Just for Feet tried to distance itself by suing Saatchi & Saatchi for producing a politically incorrect commercial (which Just for Feet had approved prior to its airing). Just for Feet filed for bankruptcy the following November.

Humor is persuasive when the target market does not need much information about the product, and they already have a favorable attitude toward the brand. In addition, the humor should relate to the product, and it should be simple, appropriate to the situation, and not offensive. Overall, as you can see, principles for humor are complex.

TV advertising for well-known beers meets the conditions for using humor. Consider the "whassup" campaign. In 2001, Budweiser, while available in the United Kingdom, was typically out of sight in pubs and did not spring to mind when people were considering which beer to order. The "whassup" campaign targeted young males, and led people use the "whassup" term. Sales started to rise in 2001 after a downward trend during the three years prior to the campaign.

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4   This is a poorly framed objective in terms of the criteria suggested early in this book.

Based on its demonstrated effectiveness, "whassup" was an IPA award-winning campaign (Rimini 2003).

People differ about what is humorous, particularly when they come from different cultures. For multinational advertising, then, it is wise to avoid humor.

8.8.1. Consider using humor for well-known, low-involvement products

In addition to the above conditions, humorous advertisements for low-involvement goods are most effective when the humor is related to the selling point. For example, an ad for hiking maps included a well-known side-effect that supported the benefits: "Warning. This product can cause blisters, aching, and shortness of breath."

Humor is more effective in fast-exposure media (such as TV) and when viewed in the presence of others. This is consistent with the beliefs of advertising executives. Most U.S. advertising executives in Madden and Weinberger's (1984) survey replied that radio and TV were best suited for humor.

It is commonly believed that humor is good at gaining attention to ads. In a survey of research and creative directors in U.S. advertising agencies, 94 percent replied that humor was effective at gaining attention (Madden and Weinberger 1984). UK agency executives agreed (Weinberger and Spotts 1989b; Toncar 2001). However, the executives also believed that the gain in attention often came at a loss in comprehension; viewers remembered the joke and forgot the product.

An analysis of data on TV commercials in the late 1980s and early 1990s found that over 72 percent of humorous U.S. commercials tied the humor to the product, compared with 85 percent of British commercials. Also, during this time, across both countries, humor was used nearly half the time for low-involvement hedonic products, but in only one in seven instances for high-involvement hedonic products. With respect to utilitarian products, the usage was about one in four for both high and low-involvement products (Toncar 2001).

One study showed that humor was used in over 20 percent of TV ads, about 30 percent of radio ads, and 10 percent of magazine ads (Weinberger et al. 1995). Another study found that 26 percent of TV commercials contained humor compared with 5 percent of magazine ads (Catanescu and Tom 2001).

Evidence on the effects of humor

A meta-analysis of 43 studies on humor, involving non-experimental and experimental studies, led to the conclusion, as had earlier reviews, that humor enhances attention and improves the attitude toward the brand (Eisend 2009).

The following field experiments show that the persuasiveness of humor depends upon the situation:

> **Humorous ads increased attendance at social events, but harmed it at serious events.** Scott, Klein, and Bryant (1990) conducted a study in which households received flyers for a social event, some with a humorous visual, some with a non-humorous visual, and some with no visual. The following table shows the percentage of people who responded to each treatment. (Within each of the three treatments—humorous, non-humorous, and no visual—the number of households was the kept the same.)

Humor helped for social events:

Social events (households)	Percent attending social events given an ad with:		
	humorous visual	non-humorous visual	no visual
Neighborhood picnic (53)	77	36	32
Clambake (68)	98	68	59
Firemen's muster (270)	37	15	14

The researchers recruited judges who could identify local residents who attended the social events and asked them to evaluate the attendees' pleasure by observing their facial expressions. People who had received humorous ads were judged to enjoy the social events more than those who received non-humorous ads, as the following table illustrates:

Social events	Enjoyment ratings at social events given an ad with:*		
	humorous visual	non-humorous visual	no visual
Neighborhood picnic	2.2	1.0	0.7
Clambake	2.6	1.5	1.1
Firemen's muster	2.6	1.0	0.8

* -5 = "hate being here" to +5 = "love being here"

Scott et al. also used this design to examine business events. Here, humor was detrimental:

Business events (households)	Percent attending business events given ad with:		
	humorous visual	non-humorous visual	no visual
Neighborhood meeting (53)	21	26	25
Zoning referendum (68)	13	16	19
Council meeting (270)	7	6	8

In a lab experiment using a branded writing pen, humorous ads were more persuasive when customers already had a favorable attitude toward a brand. But when the prior attitude was not favorable, a non-humorous version was more persuasive. In addition, humor was best suited to situations in which there were no strong selling points (Chattopadhyay and Basu 1990).

An analysis of non-experimental data by Stanton and Burke (1998) found that humor is better suited to fast-exposure media. Humor was 20 percent more persuasive than average for 15-second commercials, but 13 percent less persuasive for 30-second commercials.

8.8.2. Consider humor for high-involvement products only if relevant to a simple argument.

For high-involvement products, the key is to have humor that is obviously relevant to a simple argument for the product. Even then, the humor should not overwhelm the message, so keep it gentle. Gentleness seems to be especially important when advertising new or improved high-involvement products.

Bernbach often used a gentle sophisticated humor to demonstrate the benefits of high-involvement products. This led people to think about the claim. One of his TV commercials in the 1960s showed two identical houses. The voice-over said:

Mr. Jones and Mr. Krempler were neighbors. They each had $3,000. With his money, Mr. Jones bought himself a $3,000 car. With his money, Mr. Krempler bought a new washer ... a new dryer ... a record player ... two more television sets ... and a brand new Volkswagen. Now Mr. Jones is faced with that age-old problem—keeping up with the Kremplers.

To test whether humor is relevant to the product, remove the product from the ad. If the ad is still humorous, it fails this test. For example, in a CLIO award-winning TV ad, IKEA advertised the durability of its furniture by showing three comical looking "scientists" as they tested various products, such as a kitchen cabinet. One tester opened and closed a cabinet door while saying, "Mom, can I have a cookie?" Another tester hit a gong each time the door closed, while the third recorded each event on a clipboard. If you removed the product from this ad, there would be no humor, so it passed the test.

Joe Sedelmaier's "Where's the beef™" campaign for Wendy's hamburgers also passed the test. In contrast, in Sedelmaier's 1985 "Russian fashion show" TV commercial for Wendy's, a husky Russian woman with a heavy accent modeled "day vear," then "evening vear," then "beach vear" (all of the clothes were the same) to demonstrate the lack of choice at other hamburger chains. That ad would be funny even without the product, so it failed the test.

Here is an exception. If there is a strong argument, yet people are resistant (e.g., stop smoking, get exercise, avoid excessive drinking), humor might be used as a distracter to reduce counter-arguing. This might help customers—and also build good relationships.

As part of being gentle, do not make fun of others. Nike violated this principle in a 1999 TV commercial in which a San Antonio Spurs basketball player made fun of Mr. Rogers of U.S. children's TV fame with, "Can you say, 'Kick some butt?'" Another Nike ad referred to people with disabilities as "drooling and misshapen." In both cases, Nike pulled the ads after receiving complaints (*Wall Street Journal*, October 26, 2000). These commercials violated long-standing guidelines. Fowler (1897), in his encyclopedia for advertisers, stated that "Perhaps the safest rule to follow is not to be funny unless there is a certainty that the fun of the advertiser will be appreciated by the buyer."

In 1987, Jerry Della Femina's TV commercials for Isuzu automobiles featured Joe Isuzu, a pathological liar. For example, in one ad he said, "This car, which costs $9, gets 94 miles per gallon, city; 112 highway." As he spoke, printed words appeared on the screen saying "HE'S LYING." Joe's signature phrase was, "You have my word on it." The ads became enormously popular. While the campaign was considered funny by nearly everyone and it received enormous attention, it raised concerns: Is this car a joke? Do people take this car seriously? Isuzu sold fewer cars in the first half of 1987 than for a comparable period in 1986 (prior to the campaign).

Wieden & Kennedy's "Lack of pretense" ads for Subaru also failed to reinforce an argument. Instead, they made fun of selling cars. Its dealers reacted in a huff:

"Funny? That's not funny! … You never talked about the deal! … We gotta sell cars today!" (Rothenberg, 1994, p. 315).

Parodies—mocking imitations of a style or of a work that is well known—carry risks. If they ridicule the original work, it is unlikely that the owner will grant use of the work. Johnson and Spilger (2000) suggest that to avoid legal difficulties, the changes from the original work should be obvious.

One reason to avoid parodies is that many viewers will not understand them. Messaris (1997) reported on unpublished studies showing that many college students failed to recognize ads that parodied the painting "Whistler's mother," Saul Steinberg's *New Yorker* cover showing a Manhattanite's view of the rest of the country, and the Iwo Jima flag-raising. This problem is especially likely in multinational advertising campaigns.

To avoid being sued, nasty parodies are not advised for commercial advertising. Lawsuits are common even when the copyright owners have a weak case (Johnson and Spilger 2000).

Gentle and favorable parodies, ones that are done in good spirit, might work. A Bernbach ad was successful for Ohrbach's bargain department store. It was a take-off on a well-known ad for a medicine called Serutan: "That's Nature spelled backwards," said the original ad. The Ohrbach ad said, "Do you feel dull and uninteresting? … you need SNIAGRAB." In another example, a Quaker Oats ad for dog food did a parody of the famous World War I "Uncle Sam" ad. A bulldog looked right at the viewer and said, "I want you to buy Kibbles."

It is permissible to harm demand for the work that is the subject of the parody if the advertiser does not profit from it. Thus, parodies could be used in not-for-profit or political advertising.

Evidence on humor for high-involvement products

In a small-scale study, four humorous B&W print ads for a camera were shown to 140 Singaporean subjects. The humor was relevant to the product and was reinforced in the caption and headline. In two versions, the humor was subtle, while in the other two, it was not. Each subject received one of the four ads. As hypothesized, purchase intentions were substantially higher for ads with subtle than for those with extreme humor (Pornpitakpan and Tan 2000).

In a small-scale lab experiment, alternative versions of a bubble gum ad were shown to 122 subjects. When humor was absent from the ad, a strong argument led to a more favorable attitude toward the brand than did a weak argument. When humor was present, the effect was reversed; the ad with the weaker argument was more persuasive than the ad with the stronger argument (Cline and Kellaris 1999).

In another small-scale lab experiment using print ads for unknown coffee brands, strong humor that was directly related to the selling point had much better recall than a control ad with no humor. Furthermore, irrelevant humor harmed recall, especially when the humor was strong (Cline and Kellaris 2007).

In a non-experimental analysis of 21 print ads for oil-field equipment, 315 oil industry experts rated the ads on various features, one being how humorous it was. They also reported on their intentions to purchase. Humorous ads had lower purchase intentions (Zinkhan 1984).

8.9. Sex

A sexual association with an advertised product might promote positive associations with that product among some people—but negative associations for others. It would seem prudent to also consider non-sexual options.

Certainly, sex attracts attention. In empirical studies, even monkeys will "pay" to see female rears (Deaner, Khera, and Platt 2005). However, sex might attract those who have no interest in the product, and might annoy some customers who would be interested in the product.

8.9.1. Use sex only when it has relevance to the product

In an ad on the jewelry.com website, a woman wearing pearls is shown in a steamy horizontal embrace with a man. The caption is: "Actual results may vary." A 1997 Singapore campaign on breast cancer showed men ogling a woman's breasts as she walked to work; the caption read, "If only women examined their breasts as much as men do."

On the other hand, if the product is not related to sex, advertisers should avoid sexual appeals as it distracts customers from the arguments. This is especially so for high-involvement products that have benefits. The same applies for the use of violence.

Evidence on the effects of using sex in ads

Subjects, 169 males and 172 females, viewed ads for a fictitious brand of body oils, some with dressed male models, some with suggestive ads, and others with nude models. Sexual content was relevant here, and nudity led to higher purchase intentions (Simpson, Horton, and Brown 1996).

A review of six empirical studies concluded that while sexual appeals attracted attention, they reduced the customer's thinking about the product. A follow-on lab experiment compared pairs of matched print ads in which one used sexual appeals and the other did not. The experiment covered 13 pro-social topics (e.g., healthy eating, museum attendance, HIV prevention). Sex was not relevant to the products. For example, an ad for libraries had a suggestive photo with the headline, "Find out what's hot between the covers at your local library." The 658 subjects were asked to view each ad for 30 seconds. Responses to a questionnaire showed that while the sexual appeals attracted more attention, they did not increase intentions to comply with the ads' appeals (Reichert, Heckler, and Jackson 2001).

Further support was provided by a lab experiment in which 12 print advertisements were shown to 60 male subjects. Six contained photographs of neutral subjects (e.g., a landscape, a house, or a motorboat), while six showed females in various stages of undress. A well-advertised household-product brand name was provided below each photo. After seven days, the ads were again shown to the subjects; they correctly recalled 61 percent of ads with non-sexual photos, but only 49 percent of those with sexual photos (Steadman 1969).

Here is an experiment about advertising when the TV program involves sex and violence. Subjects saw nine commercials for supermarket items as they watched a

TV show that was either neutral, had sexual content, or had violent content. Recall immediately after exposure and again after 24 hours was highest for the subjects who viewed the ads in the neutral program (Bushman and Bonacci 2002).

A lab experiment used 12 ads for unfamiliar brands of inexpensive consumer products that were advertised on TV programs. The 336 subjects were equally assigned to three programs with explicit sexual content, three with violent content, three with both, and three with neither. The products had little relationship to sex. Those viewing the ads in programs with sexual or violent content had lower scores for brand recall, brand recognition, buying intentions, and coupon redemptions. For example, the brand recall was 68 percent higher for people who saw a program without violence or sex than for people who saw a program with violence or sex (Bushman 2005).

In their analysis of non-experimental data, Stewart and Furse (1986) found that TV commercials using sex scored lower on recall, comprehension, and persuasion. These commercials were directed primarily for viewing on major channels, so it was expected that few products advertised in this sample would relate to sex.

8.10. Models

The use of models, typically human but also animals, has a long history in advertising. For example, in 1905, ads using drawings of models by the artist J. C. Leyendecker had a strong impact on college men. They followed every detail of dress in his Arrow Collar shirt ads.

8.10.1. Match the model to the target market and product

Experts advise that the models should match the target market and product. In many cases this is obvious, such as by having children model children's clothes.

This principle is based on typical practice. It is also consistent with research on social proof. The potential customer should think, "That person is like me—or like the person for whom I am purchasing."

Bakers Petfoods in the United Kingdom used this principle successfully. Rather than using beautiful dogs, as its competitors did in dog-food commercials, it used a range of "real dogs." The campaign was shown to be effective and was an IPA award winner (Binet 2006).

Alternatively, a model might be used as an aspiration. It is commonly believed that people's behavior is influenced by those whom they perceive to have higher status. Status can be manipulated by choice of a model, clothing, setting, and descriptions.

Evidence on the effects of matching the model to the target market

The following experiment supports the matching principle:

Product evaluations were higher when the gender of model matched the product. Print advertisements for four products (a two-door car, a medium-priced sofa, a stereo set with two speakers, and a B&W 16-inch TV) were shown to 32 male and 32 female subjects; each was assigned to one of three

experimental groups or to a control group. The car was judged to be a masculine product, the sofa feminine, and the stereo and TV mixed. Subjects saw one of each version of the four ads: female, male, both male and female, or no models. Product evaluations were highest when a male model was used for the car and a female model for the sofa. The gender of the model had no effect on the two mixed-gender products (Kanungo and Pang 1973).

Indirect evidence shows that people are influenced by those with higher status. For example, in a field experiment, members of an experimental team wore clothing to represent either a high or low-status person who violated the "Don't walk" signal at a traffic light. Of the 2,100 pedestrians that they observed, 14 percent violated the signal when the high-status person crossed, while only 4 percent violated it when the low-status person crossed (Lefkowitz, Blake, and Mouton 1955).

Additional indirect evidence comes from Walker's (2008) analysis of non-experimental data TV commercials that had been tested among adult females. When the commercials included an adult female model (57 percent of these commercials did), recall was 3 percent higher and persuasion was 5 percent higher than for the typical ad in the sample.

Normally, advertisers like to associate their products with attractive people. However, effective use of an attractive model depends on the conditions, as the next principle illustrates.

8.10.2. Use physically attractive models when the product enhances beauty or social competence

It has long been common practice to use beautiful people as models in ads. In the 1850s, ads for patent medicines included wood engravings of beautiful women. Over time however, practice seems to have changed in favor of social proof. Berger (2001) claims that there has been a worldwide trend for advertisers to use models who are more natural and real.

Attractive models improve persuasion for beauty and social competence, and, although with weaker effects, for appeals involving intellectual competence ("impress your friends with your vocabulary"). However, beautiful models do not help for issues calling for integrity ("buy this initial public stock offering"), concern for others ("volunteer for a program to improve literacy"), or utilitarian products ("a better can opener").

Advertisers can create their own beautiful models for still advertisements. Galton (1879) found that when photographic portraits of people were "averaged"—by superimposing the faces and drawing the typical features—the resulting composite portraits were judged as more beautiful than the vast majority of the individual portraits. This is because the averaged portraits had fewer irregularities. A number of researchers have replicated Galton's research by using computer renditions (e.g., Langlois and Roggman 1990).

Evidence on the effects of attractive models

As was the case for spokespersons, beauty sells when relevant. A meta-analysis of 53 journal articles and 23 dissertations concluded that beauty aids persuasion in

areas related to "social competence," somewhat so for "intellectual competence," and not at all for "integrity and concern for others" (Eagly et al. 1991.)

In a representative study, 251 female subjects were shown ads for beauty-enhancing products (earrings and lipstick) and utilitarian products (acne cover and acne treatment). Experimental versions of the ad used either highly attractive models or somewhat attractive models. Ads with highly attractive models led to substantially higher product ratings for the beauty-enhancing products, while there were no differences for the non-beauty products (Bower and Landreth 2001).

8.11. Technical quality

Make ads look professional; high technical quality implies, "we do things well." Seeing a clean, shiny tanker truck with the words "Poland Spring Water" on the side made me think that they have clean water inside the truck.

8.11.1. Strive for good technical quality at a low cost

Ads should typically be of good technical quality with respect to aspects such as printing, filming, and website design. This would seem especially so when product quality is a major concern of the target market.

This would seem to be an obvious principle. Wouldn't you want to demonstrate that you do things well—including your advertising? However, Hopkins (1923), drawing on responses to direct mail, said: "It has been found that fine stationery and pamphlets lessen the effect. They indicate an effort to sell on other lines than merit." Ogilvy (1985, p. 113) stated: "I have no research to prove it, but I suspect that there is a negative correlation between the money spent on commercials and their power to sell products."

Technical requirements can lead to enormous increases in expenditures—for example, paying hundreds of thousands of dollars for producing a TV commercial, instead of settling for one costing about one-tenth as much. In 1995, a British Air TV commercial, filmed in Australia, involved 300 actors, 40 boats, helicopters, stunt pilots, and 40,000 square feet of red and white silk to cover a small island (Kanner 1999). Was the expected ROI calculated for this ad?

Given the high cost of producing professional-looking commercials, I suggest that cost/benefit analyses be done to determine the expected return on technical brilliance compared with other ways to invest in advertising such as by developing cosmetic and substantive variations.

Evidence on the effects of using high technical quality

Non-experimental data were obtained for 30-second commercials of consumer packaged goods that were pre-tested by Ipsos ASI during the early 2000s. There were 1,208 rough ads and 1,087 finished ads. The persuasion scores for the rough ads averaged 103.7, while the finished ads averaged 105.8. On average then, finished ads were only a bit more persuasive.

Checklist 8 summarizes principles for attracting attention.

Checklist 8   Attention

8.1.   Alert the target market
8.1.1.   Alert the target market early and prominently.

8.2.   Campaign consistency
8.2.1.   Provide a consistent look to all aspects of a campaign.
8.2.2.   Keep the advertising consistent across time.

8.3.   Campaign contrast
8.3.1.   When strong arguments exist, consider using ads that contrast with competitors' ads.

8.4.   Slogans
8.4.1   Consider a short memorable slogan with the brand name and benefit.

8.5.   Brand identifiers
8.5.1.   In a long-term advertising program, emphasize brand identifiers.
8.5.2.   Use logos to express meanings or emotions.

8.6.   Attractive visuals
8.6.1.   Consider using visuals that create favorable associations with the product.

8.7.   Color for attention
8.7.1.   To gain attention, consider using color.

8.8.   Humor
8.8.1.   Consider using humor for well-known, low-involvement products.
8.8.2.   Consider humor for high-involvement products only if relevant to a simple argument.

8.9.   Sex
8.9.1.   Use sex only when it has relevance to the product.

8.10.   Models
8.10.1. Match the model to the target market and product.
8.10.2. Use physically attractive models when the product enhances beauty or social competence.

8.11.   Technical quality
8.11.1. Strive for good technical quality at a low cost.

Media-specific tactics

Most persuasion principles in this book apply regardless of the type of media. However, some principles are related closely to the type of media. For example, different principles apply for media where people are actively searching for information (e.g., the Internet) versus those where the focus is on entertainment (e.g., TV).

If there are strong arguments for a product, use long-exposure media such as magazines, brochures, or websites. They allow people to pace themselves and to reflect on the arguments.

When the message is new or complex and it is important to ensure comprehension, still media are more effective than sound and/or motion media. They allow the customer to decide when to read an ad and at what pace.

The media differ substantially in their ability to communicate information. Here are findings from a meta-analysis of 117 data sets obtained from 64 studies published since 1977. The samples were large, such as the 56 studies (involving 33,000) ads that were used to summarize information in magazine ads, except that only six studies were done on radio. Note that only 71 percent of the TV ads had information (Abernethy and Franke 1996):

	Pieces of information in ads (cues) by media: percentages of ads in			
Cues	Newspapers	Magazines	Radio	Television
One or more	98	89	98	71
Two or more	79	61	79	34
Three or more	47	37	34	15

On average, newspapers had 2.6 pieces of information, followed by magazines at 2.4, then by radio at 2.2, and TV and outdoor ads at 1.4. Websites obviously contain far more information than any of these. There was no change across the first eight decades of the 1900s in the average number of pieces of information in print ads in top-circulation magazines (Pollay 1985). This is interesting because the typical print ad became much larger over time. In contrast, the information in TV ads has been increasing during the latter part of the century, despite their getting shorter (Weinberger and Spotts 1989a; Resnik and Stern 1977).

The next table, also from Abernethy and Franke's paper, shows that the type of information varies by media. For example, 56 percent of ads in newspapers contain information on prices.

Type of information by media: percentage of ads (number of studies)

	Newspapers (10)	Magazines (56)	Radio (6)	TV (44)	Outdoor (1)
Product					
Performance	**20**	**54**	**27**	**23**	**3**
Components	28	36	68	19	38
Quality	19	23	21	10	6
Warranties	10	8	6	2	<1
Package	1	8	1	2	1
Taste	4	4	1	4	6
Safety	5	4	2	1	<1
Nutrition	neg	4	1	2	1
Price					
Price	56	26	34	10	9
Special offers	20	15	26	4	2
Distribution					
Availability	62	41	72	12	73
Research					
Independent research	2	4	1	1	0
Company research	2	2	1	1	neg

Matching the media to the conditions

Still media communicate information more rapidly than audio media. While the preferred listening rate is about 175–200 words per minute, the average adult reads hard copy at 250 words per minute. Some people read 300 words per minute, while others slog along at 150 or less. Readers can vary the speed based on their capabilities and on the newness and complexity of the material (Ketrow 1990; Just and Carpenter 1987).

In a lab experiment, subjects were given either an easy or a difficult version of a message about a legal dispute. Some subjects were assigned to read the message and others to listen to it on either audiotape or videotape. When the message was simple, comprehension was similar via each media; when difficult, however, print led to much better comprehension and was more persuasive. In addition, the audiotape was more effective than the videotape with respect to communication of difficult material (Chaiken and Eagly 1976). Similarly, a lab experiment with 80 subjects found that recall from a newscast was twice as high for audio-only than for audiovisual (Engstrom 1994). Perhaps this was because audio-only required more involvement on the part of the audience.

Another lab experiment examined comprehension for simple messages by comparing exactly the same content when delivered by audiovisual (TV), audio only (the audio portion of the TV material), or print only (the typed script). The material was taken from actual 30-second TV commercials and 30-second segments from actual TV news shown on major TV channels. The subjects' miscomprehension of the ads was 25 percent higher for audiovisual than print. Miscomprehension was also higher when news was shown on TV rather than in print. When time was not restricted, the miscomprehension rate for print was 42 percent lower than that for TV (Jacoby, Hoyer, and Zimmer 1983).

An independent series of 15 lab experiments was conducted on print versus

audiovisual versus audio-only messages. Print was always superior in terms of recall and comprehension, especially for complex material. The findings held up across gender, ages, and student subjects versus nonstudents. When the content was difficult, audio-only was superior to audiovisual; for simple content, audiovisual was superior (Furnham, Gunter, and Green 1990).

Here is an example of the type of laboratory experiment referred to in the preceding paragraph. Three actual TV commercials that averaged about 26 seconds and 50 words were shown to 69 subjects. They were for microwave ovens by Sanyo, Hitachi, or Telfal. Each subject saw each of the ads, but the media varied; a TV commercial, or a sound-only version, or a print version of each. The time was held constant for each of the media. Immediately after seeing the ads, the subjects answered questions about each ad. The print version led to the highest comprehension (Furnham, Benson, and Gunter 1987).

While the Internet continues to gain in popularity for advertising, a review of over 40 studies found that most people prefer to read hard copy rather than computer screens. Reading from monitors was about 25 percent slower than for hard copy, and recall was lower (Jones, Pentecost, and Requena 2005). This will change as contrast and clarity of typeface improve.

Given the above evidence, advertisers should rely on still media when dealing with strong arguments for high-involvement products, especially when there is news. When the news is complex, the Internet is especially relevant. Motion and sound are relevant when these conditions do not apply—and when emotion is important.

9. Still media

The principles in this section are relevant to advertising in many types of still media: these include magazines, newspapers, brochures, direct mail, posters, point-of-purchase, banners, packaging, package inserts, and billboards. And of course, they apply to the Internet.

The first print ad appeared in the 15th century, and the first handbill (flyer) in the 17th century. An explosion of print advertising continued over the next century; Hogarth, a famous painter, was one of the leading promoters. Here is an example of these ads, many of which were direct and informative: "Richard Fanson, Woolen Draper/ The North Side of St. Paul's Churchyard, London/ Sells all sorts of Woolen Drapery Goods/ Wholesale and Retail at the Lowest Prices."

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, advertisers experimented with different approaches to print advertising, and tracked the results. This led to gains in knowledge about effective advertising.

Before launching into the principles associated with still media, consider this headline for a full-page advertisement that appeared in the December 19, 2004 edition of the *New York Times*. The headline is laid out as published, only it had dark gray print on a light gray background. How many mistakes can you find?

BUYING A GIFT FOR
A DESIGN AND ENGINEERING
AWARDS JUDGE? WE KNOW
WHAT THEY'D LIKE.

This headline violates or ignores many principles, including three from section 9 alone. (My list is provided at the end of this chapter.)

The following still media principles are discussed in this section:

| 9.1. **Headline** | 9.3. **Text** | 9.5. **Typeface** |
| 9.2. Pictures | 9.4. **Structure of body text** | 9.6. **Layout** |

9.1. Headline

you must write the headline first, and then having done that,
the art … illustrates the headline.
Albert Lasker (famous advertising executive), early 1900s

According to Presbrey (1929, p. 68), the headline was the outstanding addition to English print advertising in the 1700s. Benjamin Franklin played a key role

with his ideas of adding white space above and below the headline, using a larger font size (such as 14 point), shortening the headline to a phrase, and centering it.

Ogilvy said that he wrote 104 headlines and tested 26 of them with associates before he came up with his 1958 classic: "At 60 miles an hour the loudest noise in the new Rolls-Royce comes from the electric clock." His ad ran only once in the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New Yorker*, and *Sunset*. It was so successful that Rolls-Royce sales in the United States tripled for that year. Unfortunately, Rolls-Royce could not handle the increased demand and its quality deteriorated. Therefore, it cut back on advertising and changed agencies (Glatzer 1970). Interestingly, in 1933, Charles Brower of the BBDO agency had written a Pierce-Arrow automobile ad: "The only sound one can hear in the new Pierce-Arrow is the ticking of the electric clock."[1]

9.1.1. Use descriptive headlines for high-involvement products

Headlines should catch the readers' attention and lead them into the copy. This is especially applicable for utilitarian products with strong arguments. While this principle might seem like common sense, many ads do not use it. For example, of the 304 *WAPB* high-involvement print ads with headlines, only 31 percent of the headlines were descriptive.

Headlines are also important for Internet pages because people are seeking information about products. Each page should have a different descriptive headline to guide visitors and to inform search engines.

Evidence on effects of descriptive headlines for high-involvement products

Our analysis of quasi-experimental data supports this principle:

> **Print ads with descriptive headlines had much better recall.** Our *WAPB* analysis found 24 pairs of print ads for high-involvement products in which one ad had descriptive headlines, while the other headline did not describe any product benefits or features. For example, a Bendix fan clutch ad with the headline, "Introducing the only fan clutch with a three-year, 300,000 mile warranty," had much better recall than a Bendix ad headlined, "Look for the label that delivers durability." Recall for the descriptive-headlined ads was 1.52 times greater than for the other ads.

9.1.2. Include the brand name in the headline

It is important to mention the brand in at the beginning of an ad, which typically means that it should go in the headline. This is especially relevant for well-liked brands. The brand alerts readers and provides a good first impression. In addition,

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1 I see nothing wrong with building upon what others have done. In fact, Ogilvy (1983, p. 81) recommended doing so. If I were going to write an ad for my book on persuasion, I might paraphrase John Caples' 1925 ad about a book on how to play the piano and say: "They laughed when I said this book could help improve advertising, but when they saw the increased profits, they applauded."

it is expected to be more relevant for low-involvement products in which the advertiser has only a brief opportunity to capture attention.

This is an old principle. Starch (1914) recommended including the firm or brand name in the headline. Ogilvy claimed that if the headline does not state the brand name, most people would never know which product was being advertised.

Some experts advise using the brand name as the object in the headline. Consider this successful example of an ad for bread from Bill Bernbach: "You don't have to be Jewish to love Levy's."

Evidence on the effects of using brand names in headlines

Our analysis of quasi-experimental data on print ads supports this principle:

> **Print ads with brand names in the headline had much better recall and persuasion, especially for low-involvement products.** Our *WAPB* analysis found 24 pairs print ads for low-involvement products, in which one of the ads used the brand name in the headline while the other did not. Recall for brand name ads was 1.49 times better than for the other ads.
>
> We also found 40 pairs of high-involvement ads where one ad included the brand name in the headline, while the other ad's headline did not. Recall for ads with brands in their headline was 1.20 times better than for the ads whose headlines did not mention the brand.

Which of the following two headlines is more effective?

A. Are you afraid of making mistakes in English?
B. Do you make these mistakes in English?

9.1.3. Lead the reader into the body copy

Create a headline that will encourage readers to continue reading. Consider using such words as "why," "how to," or "these" in the headline; they invite the reader to continue. In the lead-in above, Headline B generated far more inquiries because the word "these" led the reader into the copy (Caples 1932).

This principle is important for products that have strong arguments, where advertisers want customers to read the ads.

Avoid using words or punctuation that might cause the reader to stop. Use familiar words rather than vague or difficult words. Use punctuation, such as a question mark, that encourages the reader to continue reading. Ogilvy advised against using periods (full stops); they tell the reader to stop. Therefore, when the text is worth reading, avoid using periods at the end of the headline.

I examined *All-American Ads: 20s* (Heinmann, 2004). It contains approximately 865 ads published in the United States during the 1920s. Only 3 percent of the headlines used periods. However, today, periods are used frequently. Pick up nearly any nearly any magazine or newspaper and check for yourself. In addition, our *WAPB* analysis found that of the 422 full-page print ads with headlines (many of them with strong arguments), 75 percent had periods in

the headline. Current practice seems misguided with respect to use of this free principle.

Evidence on effects of leading readers into the copy

Our quasi-experimental analysis supports this principle with respect to the omission of periods:

> **Print ads without periods in the headline had better recall.** Our *WAPB* analysis of data found 20 pairs of print ads with strong arguments, in which one of the ads used a period in the headline while the other did not. Recall for ads without periods was 1.20 times better than for the other ads.

Are short headlines more effective than long ones?

9.1.4. Keep the headline short for low-involvement products only

Short headlines are desirable only for low-involvement goods. Do not worry about the length of the headline for high-involvement goods. Tell readers all they need to know—while avoiding unnecessary words, of course.

Long headlines can help to convey pertinent information for high-involvement products. Antin (1993), an advertising expert, claimed the following 38-word headline was effective:

> To the thousands of people who've tried to call for reservations on the Auto-Train™ and gotten a busy signal:
> 1. we've doubled our phones
> 2. we added many more agents
> 3. and we're now taking your calls seven days a week.

Evidence on effects of short headlines

Our analysis of quasi-experimental data supports this principle:

> **Print ads with shorter headlines had better recall for low-involvement products, but poorer recall for high-involvement products.** Our *WAPB* analysis found 31 pairs of print ads for low-involvement products in which the number of words in the headlines in each pair differed by two or more. Recall for shorter headlines was 1.07 times greater than for the other ads. However, the situation was reversed for the 118 pairs of ads for high-involvement products. Recall for longer headlines was 1.11 times greater.

A review of unpublished eye-tracking studies from Germany led to the conclusion that readers viewed most full-page print ads for about two seconds. During this scan, they spent the most time viewing the visual, followed by the headline (Franzen 1994, #5.3). Given that people read at about three or four words per second (Just and Carpenter 1987), the headline's message should be quickly apparent and easily understandable, especially for low-involvement ads.

9.2. Pictures

In 1867, French artist Jules Cheret had the idea of using artistic posters for advertising. Other artists began to create fine-art poster ads, which became popular in France. The idea spread to England where, in 1887, Pears soap used John Millais' painting of a young boy blowing soap bubbles. This ad created a sensation, and people argued over whether it was appropriate to use art in advertising.

The early 20th century ads for trains and ocean liners were works of art. Advertisers believed that "art sells." Ad agencies competed for leading artists, and paid them enormous salaries. Typically, the artist would paint a picture and a copywriter would add the text later; however, some artists, such as Frederic Remington, Maxfield Parrish, N. C. Wyeth, and Norman Rockwell, often created entire ads.

In some ads, such as trains and ocean liners, the art focused on both product information and on emotion. However, the use of artists declined in the 1930s, perhaps largely due to improvements in photography. In addition, some agencies seemed more interested in art than in persuasion. For example, in the exhibits in Sobieszek's (1988) book on artistic advertisements, the connections between the art and the sales messages were seldom clear.

9.2.1. For high-involvement ads based on strong arguments, consider informative pictures.

> *Some manufacturers illustrate their advertisements with abstract paintings. I would only do this if I wished to conceal from the reader what I was advertising.*
> *David Ogilvy, 1960s*

Pictures can provide an efficient way to communicate information. They can show size, shape, features, and colors of a product. A map can show how to locate a store. On the other hand, pictures are not needed for every ad. Messages can often be conveyed more effectively without a picture.

Uninformative pictures might distract from strong arguments. To the extent that an uninformative picture is interesting, recall of strong arguments might suffer even more.

Artistic quality is only persuasive when the product relates to art (such as with museums, art, or fashion), when the appeal is strictly for emotion, or when the ad seeks "high-class appeal." For an appropriate and apparently successful example of the latter, Harvey Nichols, the stylish U.K. department store, launched a campaign in 1992 to reinforce its image among status-conscious people. It used ads with B&W artistic photographs that associated its name with designers and artists. The text seldom included information.

Do not distract readers by writing on pictures. The reasoning is threefold: First, it makes the text more difficult to read; second, it obscures the information in the picture; and third, because the writing and the picture compete for attention, readers might have trouble understanding the information. Note that in their efforts to convey information, newspapers seldom write on pictures. Internet experts also advise that advertisers should not write on pictures or on "wallpaper." Advertisers seem to agree. For example, our *WAPB* analysis of 480

tested full-page print ads found that writing on pictures occurred in only 12 percent of the ads.

There are times when text can be effectively provided on pictures, such as when the picture contains a uniform plain background, or when the writing enhances the key point. For example, a Little Brothers ad, "Friends of the elderly," showed a close-up of an old man's face. The copy around his mouth said, "They're not wrinkles, they're stories." The writing on his brow said, "wondering if I'd ever return from Iwo Jima alive." Below the wrinkles around his left eye, the text read, "winking at the USO girl who became my wife" (Berger 2001).

Consider using "bleed" for print illustrations. This means that a picture runs to the edges of full-page ads—that is, there is no border. Perhaps it makes the picture larger with no loss of information? In any event, bleed is a costless principle with no apparent disadvantages.

In many cases it takes more than one picture to get the message across. An analysis of full and double-page ads in *Time* and the *Saturday Evening Post* found that from 1930 to 1959, ads had an average of 2.9 pictures per ad. This dropped to 1.5 during the Bernbach era in the 1960s. In the following two decades, it rose to 2.4 (Feasley and Stuart 1987).

Evidence on the effects of pictures

In a lab experiment, subjects saw an ad for a camera with a fast shutter speed with the text stating "You can take a picture of people on a fast-moving roller coaster." Some subjects saw an ad that contained only text, while others saw the ad with the text plus a photograph of people on a roller coaster. Because the subjects already knew what a fast-moving roller coaster looks like, the picture was uninformative. Those who saw only the text had better recall than those who saw the text plus the photo—a mean of 4.6 versus a mean of 3.6 recalled phrases (Unnava and Burnkrant 1991).

Our analysis of quasi-experimental data examined the effects of writing on pictures:

> **Print ads without writing on pictures had better recall.** Our *WAPB* analysis found 43 pairs of print ads in which one wrote on the picture, while the other ad did not. Recall for ads without writing was 1.14 times better than for the other ads.

With respect to bleed, Finn (1988) found ten non-experimental studies. In each study, bleed helped. Some examples: an analysis of 1,379 *Iron Age* ads found that ads with bleed were 10 percent higher for "percentage-noticed" (Assael, Kofron, and Burgi 1967); an analysis of 1,070 ads in *Life* magazine found that ads with bleed had higher readership (Diamond 1968); and an examination of 154 one-page magazine advertisements found higher readership for ads with bleed (Holbrook and Lehmann 1980).

An analysis of non-experimental data on 109 print ads from three business-to-business magazines found that multiple-picture ads (with the text wrapping around the pictures) scored higher than single-picture ads for awareness, interest, and brand preference (Chamblee and Sandler 1992).

9.2.2. When using a picture, relate it to the headline or message

Experts suggest relating the picture to the headline—assuming that the headline is related to the key message. For example, a 1960 Volkswagen ad used a headline, "Think small," and had a picture of a car that took up less than 3 percent of the ad's space, the rest being blank.

Typical practice follows this principle. A content analysis of over 2,100 print ads found that of those ads with pictures, 93 percent of the headlines and pictures were linked (Leigh 1994). And our *WAPB* analysis of 422 full-page print ads with headlines showed that 78 percent related the picture to the headline.

Evidence on the effect of a picture related to the headline:

Our analysis of quasi-experimental data provides support:

Print ads with pictures related to headlines had better recall. Our *WAPB* analysis found 46 pairs of print ads in which one ad used a picture that was directly related to the headline, while in the other ad there was no obvious connection. For example, an ad for Colgate toothbrushes headlined, 'When a toothbrush really fits, teeth really get clean," accompanied by a picture of a toothbrush perfectly positioned inside a person's mouth, had a recall score almost twice that for another Colgate ad that did not include a picture–headline linkage. Recall for ads with a headline linked to a picture was 1.12 times better than for the other ads.

9.2.3. Use clear and readable captions for pictures

Captions have been used for many years. For example, in an 1875 ad for a new device, the *New York Tribune* carried a picture of the product with the caption, "This is a picture of the 'type writer.'" Captions can be placed above or below the picture. In some cases, the headline can also serve as a caption.

Captions can alert the reader to the purpose of the picture. They are especially helpful when the picture's message is not immediately obvious to the target market and when the information is new.

People who read ads are often in a rush and might only glance at the picture. A caption can help to ensure that the reader gets the message quickly. It provides an opportunity to reinforce the brand name and message. For example, a 1960s ad showed a picture of four-and-a-half Volvos with a caption (which also served as a headline) that read, "A lifetime supply of Volvos."

Ogilvy claimed that four times as many people read captions as read the body copy, and that all pictures should have captions.

I found little evidence related to the effectiveness of captions. Their use relies primarily on common sense and received wisdom. Also, in Wheildon's (1995, p. 122) study, 67 percent of his readers preferred pictures that had descriptive captions. They did not like having to search ads to determine what the pictures represented.

9.3. Text

By text, I refer to words other than those in headlines, captions, and brand identifiers. The following principles are especially applicable when strong arguments exist.

9.3.1. Make the first paragraph relevant, short, and easy to read

The first paragraph, and especially the first sentence, should be relevant to the key message. Once people start reading an ad, they are likely to continue, so the beginning of an informative ad should be short and easy. This is consistent with evidence from the Zeigarnik effect: once people start a task, many of them feel a need to finish it.

An analysis of eye-tracking studies for full-page Dutch magazine ads found that approximately three-quarters of viewers did not read the whole ad (Elpers, Wedel, and Pieters 2003). This is not necessarily a problem because a good ad should quickly indicate whether it is in the customer's interest to keep reading.

An ad that shows the most important information first is more likely to retain the interest of the target market. In addition, even if consumers do not continue with the entire ad, they will have read the most important information. Consistent with this, website-design experts such as Nielsen (2000) advise against the use of a "splash page"—an attention-getting page with no information—because it delays customers from reading the most important information.

Ogilvy claimed that an opening paragraph with fewer than 11 words would increase readership of the full text. Our *WAPB* analysis found that of the 480 full-page print ads by leading U.S. firms, only 11 percent used an opening paragraph of 11 words or fewer. But 71 percent of them did put the main message in the first paragraph.

Evidence on the effects of a relevant and short first paragraph

Our analysis of quasi-experimental data on print ads supports using a relevant and short opening paragraph:

Print ads with relevant first paragraphs had much better recall. Our *WAPB* analysis found 46 pairs of ads in which one ad placed the main message near the beginning, while the other ad did not. For example, an ad that began with the claim, "the new Isuzu Rodeo comes with a powerful new 24-valve, V-6 engine" had a recall score of more than four times that for another Isuzu ad that did not state its main message in the beginning. Recall for ads with relevant openings was 1.74 times better than for the other ads.

Print ads with a short first paragraph had better recall. Our *WAPB* analysis found 36 pairs of print ads that had 11 words or fewer in their first paragraph, while the other ads had more. Recall for shorter opening paragraphs was 1.13 times greater than for the other ads.

We also analyzed non-experimental data in *WAPB*. In comparison with the

industry norms for each ad, the persuasion score for the 151 ads with a relevant message in the first paragraph was 7 percent higher than the comparable score for the 25 ads without a relevant opening.

Given that people are exposed to hundreds of ads each day, should the text be short?

9.3.2. Provide long copy when reading time is not constrained

> *The more you tell, the more you sell.*
> *Hopkins, 1923*

Long text—say at least 50 words—is especially persuasive for high-involvement utilitarian products when the target market needs information. Thus, it is particularly relevant for new or improved products. For example, following Apple's *1984* TV ad, its 20-page ad in national magazines was read by more people than any article in those issues.

Long copy is especially important during the early stages of a product's life cycle—the stages in which customers are most in need of information. An analysis of 62 full-page print ads found that the average copy length for products in their introductory phase was over twice that of products in the growth phase, almost three times that of products in the mature phase, and almost seven times that of products in the declining stage (Dodge and Fullerton 1984).

Even if customers for low-involvement products do not read the entire text of the long copy, they often assume that long copy is providing good reasons for buying the product. For example, in the early 1900s, Claude Hopkins wrote a five-page solid-text advertisement for Schlitz beer; his ad was said to have helped move Schlitz from fifth to first place in sales.

Many experts have claimed that long text is persuasive. King Gillette, the inventor of the safety razor in 1888, said that you cannot have too much copy as long as it is honest and to the point. Henry Ford agreed. So did David Ogilvy; one of his Rolls-Royce ads had 1,400 words.

Beware: long copy that goes beyond what is needed will increase the advertiser's media costs and waste customers' time. Furthermore, needless words are likely to detract from strong arguments. So it is advisable to include all relevant information in few words. This is not easy advice to follow. In 1657, Blaise Pascal sent a letter saying, "The present letter is a very long one, simply beause I had no leisure to make it shorter."

Evidence on the effects of long copy

In a lab experiment, print ads for eight products were randomly presented to 164 German subjects. For each product, one version had text while the other version did not. Subjects were allowed only three seconds, which was clearly an insufficient time to read each ad. Nevertheless, they rated the ads with text as more credible (Meyer-Hentschel 1984).

Turning to non-experimental evidence, in the Direct Marketing Association's 1991 Echo Award competition, the 99 direct-mail pieces that exceeded seven pages

drew an average of about 25 percent more consumer inquires than did the 94 pieces that were seven pages or fewer (Woodside, Beretich, and Lauricella 1993).

Customers often will not bother to read long copy for low-involvement goods, as shown in an analysis of 1,080 ads in *Life* magazine—readership was lower for ads with more than 50 words. However, this was not true for high-involvement utility products (Diamond 1968). An analysis of 539 ads from *Iron Age*, a trade magazine for the iron and steel industry, found that ads with more than 100 words received higher scores for "started to read," "aroused interest," "read half or more," and "kept customers sold" (Soley 1986). A McGraw-Hill study covering nearly 3,600 ads, presumably for business-to-business markets, found that longer ads (300 or more words) increased awareness, led to more interest, and improved consumer preference for the brand (Donath 1982).

9.3.3. Repeat the main message at the end of the ad

The message "reinforcer" used at the end of an ad should be short, memorable, and relevant to the product. The principle is often used. For example, in our *WAPB* analysis, 64 percent of the print ads repeated the main message at the end.

Evidence on effects of repeating the main message at the end of an ad

Our quasi-experimental analysis of print ads supports this principle:

> **Print ads with message repetition at the end improved recall and persuasion.** Our analysis of quasi-experimental data from *WAPB* found 52 pairs of print ads in which one of the ads used a short message reinforcer at the end while the other did not. For example, an ad for Monroe car shock absorbers that ended with the repeat claim 'the bump stops here" had much better recall than another Monroe car shock ad that did not repeat the main message at the end. Recall for ads with late repetition of the message was 1.14 times better than for the other ads.

We analyzed non-experimental data on print ads in *WAPB*. In comparison with the industry norms for each ad, the average persuasion score for the 134 ads with message reinforcers was 3 percent higher than the comparable score for the 51 ads without such reiteration.

9.4. Structure of body text

When an ad has a lot to say (long copy), it is helpful to add structure to guide readers. This is especially so in ads for high-involvement products with strong arguments.

9.4.1. Use informative subheadings for long copy

Subheadings should provide only key words that tell your ad's story in brief glances. They should catch people's eyes when scanning.

Place the most informative words at the start of the subheading. Avoid using

articles or superfluous words in subheadings. For example, scanning is more difficult if subheadings start with articles such as "the" or "an." This principle is especially important in Internet ads, in which people tend to scan text, and search engines look for key words.

Readers seem to appreciate informative subheadings. In Wheildon (1995, p. 125), 78 percent of the subjects reported that subheadings were useful, especially in longer articles. None found them unattractive or intrusive. Nevertheless, in our *WAPB* analysis of the 422 print ads with long copy, fewer than half used informative subheadings.

Evidence on the effects of informative subheadings

Our analysis of print ads supports the use of informative sub-headings:

> **Print ads with informative subheadings improved recall.** Our *WAPB* analysis of quasi-experimental data found 58 pairs of print ads in which one of the ads used informative subheadings while the other did not. Recall for ads with subheadings was 1.25 times better than for the ads that did not.

We also analyzed non-experimental data on print ads in *WAPB*. In comparison with the industry norms for each ad, the average persuasion score for the 103 subheadings ads was 6 percent higher than the comparable score for the 89 ads without subheadings.

9.4.2. Use reader guides for long copy with strong arguments

A variety of techniques can be used to add emphasis to items in ads with long copy. Emphasis is particularly relevant for ads that readers typically scan, such as Internet ads. Determine the most important points in the body copy, then emphasize them.

Drop caps (also called "oversized first letters") used for first letter in the text represent one way to guide the reader's eye to the start of the text.

Other reader guides include the pointing finger ☛ (introduced in the 1600s), dividing lines, bullets, arrowheads, different fonts, asterisks, marks in the margins, and boxes for key sections.

Punctuation also guides readers, of course. Consider the title of the book *Eats, Shoots and Leaves*. The omission of the comma could change the story from one about a hungry and dangerous intruder to one about pandas. Also, consider the opposite meanings of "Don't stop" versus "Don't, stop." I had not realized the power that one can gain from using punctuation to structure text until I read the short book, *A Dash of Style* (Lukeman 2006).

Use reader guides sparingly. Adding more guides serves to lessen the impact of each one and the effect might seem pushy, especially for high-involvement products.

Avoid underlining text. This is especially important in Internet ads because underlining implies a link.

Avoid references to materials that appear elsewhere in an ad. It is time consuming and tiring for readers to have to jump around in the text. For this reason, ads

seldom include cross-references; advertisers include them only when they do not want consumers to read specific material, such as "Use of this product can cause death." The Internet provides a solution; if details are necessary, use links. However, avoid links that take readers to another website. If external links are unavoidable, place them at the bottom of the page, after the action step.

Evidence on the effects of reader guides

This principle is based primarily on received wisdom. Indirect evidence was provided in a *Yellow Pages* experiment. The issue was how to attract attention to an ad that is on a page with other ads. Eye tracking was used for 32 subjects as they viewed ads for eight products in the *Yellow Pages.* They were asked to imagine that they were going to make selections (e.g., for flowers) and to rank their top three choices. There were 40 listings in each category. Subjects were 1.4 times more likely to view listings shown in bold font and to choose products in those ads (Lohse 1997).

9.4.3. Use columns for long informative text

Ivory Soap used two-column ads as far back as 1883. Long lines make it harder for readers, especially poor ones, to traverse back to the next line. Very short lines are inefficient as they do not allow readers to capture as many characters per eye fixation. The optimal length for reading a print ad is about 50 characters per line, and for computer screens about 55. This is not a firm rule as line lengths between 20 and 70 characters are acceptable.

When setting columns in a word processing program, it can be helpful to adjust character spacing.

Evidence on the effects of columns

Lab experiments—two for print and three for computer screens—supported the above optimal line lengths of 50 characters for print and 55 for on-screen (summarized in Dyson and Haselgrove 2001).

Our analysis of quasi-experimental data supports the use of columns:

Print ads using columns for long copy had higher recall. Our *WAPB* analysis found 25 pairs of ads with long copy (i.e., containing 100 or more words) in which one ad used columns, while the other ad did not. Recall for the ads using columns was 1.08 times better than for the other ads.

There is some uncertainty about the optimum width of columns. Eight studies of line lengths on computer screens concluded that reading ease, speed, and accuracy of subjects were better when length lines were approximately 70 characters per line (Bernard, Fernandez, and Hull 2002).

In Wheildon (1995, p. 125), 38 percent of his subjects said it was difficult to read body type in columns that were more than 60 characters wide. At the other extreme, 87 percent said it was difficult to read columns with fewer than 20 characters.

9.4.4. Consider blank line spacing between paragraphs for scannability

Benjamin Franklin was apparently the first printer to break up blocks of text with blank space (Goodrum and Dalrymple 1990). Prior to that, advertisers did not want to "waste" space.

White (or blank) space helps guide the eye to key parts of an ad. Put white space before and after key points to emphasize them.

Blank-line spacing between paragraphs makes the text easier to scan than with first-line indents. However, blank-line spacing is less relevant for high-involvement products with strong arguments because advertisers want to encourage readers to read rather than to scan. Blank lines might be disruptive to readers as if to alert them to a shift in topic.

Websites use blank-line spacing. In July 2006, we examined a sample of 100 popular websites and found that all used blank-line spacing. In contrast, to encourage reading rather than scanning, the vast majority of books use first-line indent rather than blank-line spacing.

In 2006, we examined 164 full-page (and two-page) ads in *The Economist*, *Kiplinger's Personal Finance*, and *Ladies Home Journal*. Of these, 94 percent used blank-line spacing, while only 6 percent used first-line indents to begin a new paragraph. This represents a sharp contrast with advertising from the 1920s in the United States (Heimann 2004), where first line indents were common.

Evidence on the effects of blank-line spacing between paragraphs

In a lab experiment, approximately 500 Grade 6 and 7 schoolchildren were assigned to read either material with blank-line spacing between paragraphs (and no indent), or material with a first-line indent (and no line-space). In a task that involved retrieving information, the group with the blank-line spacing did about 6 percent better than those with first-line indents (Hartley, Burnhill, and Davis 1978).

Our quasi-experimental analysis suggests that first-line indents are better for print ads for high-involvement products. However, this topic seems worthy of further research:

High-involvement print ads with paragraphs separated by first-line indents for paragraphs had higher recall than the use of blank lines. Our *WAPB* analysis found 34 pairs of print ads for high-involvement products, in which one ad used blank-line space between paragraphs while the other used first-line indentations. Recall of ads with first-line indents was 1.14 times better than for ads with blank-line spacing between paragraphs.

9.4.5. Consider justification for moderate to long lines of text

Justification (also called "total justification" or "full justification") means that the text is flush on both the left and right margins, as this paragraph illustrates. It gives a strong clue as to the end of a paragraph. However, one might argue that the different inter-word spaces might confuse less proficient readers.

Medieval European scribes made great efforts to achieve justification. The advent

of the Gutenberg press in 1445 simplified their job. Full justification was used in the first known print ad, which was written by William Caxton around 1480 in an advertisement for a book. Advertisers continue to justify text for long copy, as you can see by examining print ads in nearly any media except the Internet.

Centered text and ragged left are impractical when the objective is to communicate, although they might be useful as part of a distraction strategy.

The evidence on justification shows that the benefits are weak. My suggestion is that when it is easy to do and when it looks good, you might as well do it. For example, it does not look good in books with large fonts such as children's books. In addition, given the complexities of displays for websites, it makes little sense to try to justify anything other than files that people want to print (e.g., PDF files).

Evidence on the effects of text justification

Justification is slightly better suited to fast readers, judging from on-screen reading experiments. Less proficient readers seem to have difficulties when the spacing between words is uneven (Baker 2005).

Experiments with college students found that comprehension was about 5 percent greater with justified text than ragged right (Hartley and Burnhill 1971). However, other research provides little support for full justification (Jamison 1998).

9.4.6. Squeeze inter-letter spacing gently

Squeezing the inter-letter spacing can help in layout design; for example, it can keep a headline or subtitle on a single line. It particular, it helps to improve appearance when presenting text in columns. Finally, smaller character spacing can reduce media costs by up to 30 percent.

In addition to squeezing inter-letter spacing, consider selecting a condensed font—letters that are normal in form and height, but narrower than the standard. Many typefaces are designed with a condensed form, such as: This is regular Arial type; **this is condensed Arial type.** Some fonts have ultra-condensed versions.

Do not reduce spacing below 70 percent of normal, although this depends on the fonts that are used. And, when reducing spacing, read the text carefully. Some letters, such as "r" and "n," might be problematic; for example, in reading "Use this product on burns!" in condensed fonts, some readers might see "burns" as "bums."

Changes in inter-letter spacing affect readability. This is because people read words rather than letters; in doing so, they seem to depend on the length of a word and on its first and last letters (as well as context, of course). Wider spacing makes it difficult to know where one word ends and another begins.

Evidence on inter-letter spacing

Evidence on this principle is mostly based on received wisdom. However, Wheildon (1995, p. 113) asked 500 subjects to read many print styles. The subjects reported that headlines squeezed between 70 percent and 90 percent were easier to read than normal spacing.

9.4.7. Use phrase spacing for informative text

Spacing can be used to guide readers. The list format, in which key phrases are placed on separate lines for emphasis, illustrates this well. In addition, by placing spaces between phrases, readers can more effectively absorb meaningful chunks of information. The eye fixations become more rapid when moving from one phrase to the next, and readers are less likely to need to go back to prior phrases.

While the spacing between phrases is larger than the normal inter-word spacing, the physical length of the lines can be held constant by making inter-word spaces smaller. The key is that inter-phrase spacing is larger than the typical inter-word spacing. Spacing should only be added for phrases with three or more words, and the spacing should not compete with punctuation.

For ads of one page or less, it is sufficient to use judgment in deciding where to put the spaces. It doing so, it might also help to read the passages aloud in making these decisions. Some care must be given to the spacing so that it does not distract readers.

Advertisers who prepare long-copy ads, like direct mail brochures, can benefit from using a computer phrase-spacing program, such as ReadSmart provided by Language Technologies, Inc. (LTI) in Tucson, Arizona. The program adds spacing in a way that does not attract attention. And, of course, for long text it is much less expensive to use a program.

Phrase spacing was developed in the 1980s to help people with reading difficulties. However, since then, experiments have shown that proficient readers also benefit.

Evidence on the effects of phrase spacing

A meta-analysis found 13 experimental comparisons on comprehension of phrase spacing versus normal spacing. Phrase spacing increased reading speed by 5 percent for the 17 experimental comparisons in these studies. Comprehension was better for phrase spacing in all 13 comparisons—on average, by almost 15 percent (Bever et al. 1990).

In a later lab experiment, university students were shown 12 essays, some with phrase spacing and some without. The high-ability readers (based on verbal SAT scores) in the group improved their number of correct answers by 4 percent with phrase spacing, while the lower-ability readers improved by about 15 percent (Jandreau and Bever 1992).

This book that you are reading has been set using phrase spacing by ReadSmart. Notice that the spacing changes are subtle. I am hoping that you gain 4 percent in comprehension and 5 percent in speed.

9.5. Typeface

Printing should be invisible.
Beatrice Warde, 1932

If someone comments on the beautiful typeface, said Beatrice Warde, the designer has failed because the typeface should not come between the reader and the

message. She used the analogy of a window; it should not obscure what you want to see. A stained glass window will attract attention, but it obscures the view.

Reading speed and comprehension are key factors in the selection of typeface.[2] However, meanings and connotations should also be considered.

9.5.1. Use a simple serif typeface when readability is important, and a simple sans serif typeface when legibility or scanning is important

Legibility refers to the clarity of the lettering. It is important for catching reader attention with a few words. Readability refers to the ease of reading. It is important when the text involves many lines. Of course, they are related; readability requires legibility.

If legibility is acceptable and readability is important, use serif fonts. Serifs are the small tick-like strokes at the end of the main strokes of a letter, as the font that you are now reading illustrates; a sans serif typeface does not have these strokes.

John E. Powers, a well-known advertiser, was among the first to recognize the value of serif fonts. In 1880, he began to use 12-point Caslon, a serif font, and declared it to be a "must" to make print ads readable.

If legibility is the key issue, such as for signage, computer monitors, or billboards, use a sans serif typeface such as Arial.

The appearance of fonts on computer screens depends on technical issues. For example, Windows and Macintosh display the same font differently. Because of the low resolution, the letters in serif typeface tend to run together. Consider identifying I, 1, or l on a low-resolution screen. Larger fonts help to resolve the legibility problem on screens. Because of lower resolution, italics font is not recommended for computer or TV screens, except to emphasize words or short phrases.

Georgia is a serif typeface that is designed for on-screen reading. It is similar to Times New Roman; however, the uppercase letters are lighter, the x-height (lower half) of the lowercase letter is taller, and differences between 1, l, and I are more distinctive, as shown in this paragraph.

To aid scanning, attract attention, and provide contrast with the body text, headlines and subheadings should stress legibility. A sans serif typeface, such as Arial or Verdana, has been commonly advised for use in websites. I did not think it necessary to say that you should not use fonts that have been developed for computer screens for hard copy. That is, until I saw that in August 2009, IKEA, a paragon of design, had decided to use Verdana for its catalogues. Designers were aghast (Abend 2009).

Ogilvy recommended using a consistent font, although company and brand names should generally be in their standard font. When good arguments exist, changing typefaces might distract readers.

Evidence on effects of simple serif fonts

In a lab experiment, 205 subjects were asked to choose between two cordless telephones. Half of the subjects received the product description in an easy-to-read

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2 A typeface typically has 228 characters including letters, numbers, accents, punctuation, and so on. Typefaces come in families, which consist of roman letters, italics, bold roman, and bold italics, and there are hundreds of typeface designs.

font while the others received it in a difficult font (italicized gray). The difficult font could be read accurately, but it required more effort. Of those receiving the standard font, 17 percent deferred making a choice. In contrast, of those receiving the difficult font, 41 percent deferred (Novemsky et al. 2007).

A lab experiment presented an ad to fast and slow readers. Half of the readers received serif font and half sans serif. The ad, which discussed the virtues of traveling to Canada, was too long to read in the one-minute timed trial. The fast readers who received serif font read 8 percent faster than those given sans serif font, while the slow readers were 3 percent faster (McCarthy and Mothersbaugh 2002).

9.5.2. Provide high contrast between typeface and background

High contrast between the typeface and the background makes the text easier to read, and thus aids reading speed and comprehension. Thus, it is important for high-involvement products with strong arguments.

With respect to print ads, black lettering on a plain white background provides the highest contrast. This is long-standing advice: for example, Hollingworth (1913) advised against the use of colored backgrounds.

> Reverse type is hard to read, especially when there are several lines of text. On occasion, it can be used to attract attention when there are only a few lines of text.

If they have a high contrast with the background, colored fonts can attract more attention. They might be useful for short text, such as an action step. Advertisers often violate this principle. An analysis of 565 consumer magazine ads showed that while 78 percent of the headlines were on a plain background, only 54 percent of the headlines provided high contrast. Much of this was because of the use of color headlines (Schindler 1986).

Evidence on the effects of high contrast for text

This lab experiment supports using high contrast:

> **Color typeface harmed recall in print advertising.** *Yellow Page* ads, professionally reconstructed to vary the text and the background, were presented to 132 subjects. Each subject saw the 20 ads, which consisted solely of words, with exposure times of four seconds per ad. Half the subjects received color fonts while the other half received B&W. Two days later, the subjects' recall of the ads that used B&W font was 1.2 times greater (Childers and Houston 1984).

Our quasi-experimental analysis found that high contrast improved recall:

> **Print ads for high-involvement products with strong arguments that had good background contrast improved recall.** Our *WAPB* analysis found 38 pairs of print ads for high-involvement products with strong arguments in which one ad used high contrast for text while the second did not. Recall of ads with high-contrast text was 1.11 times better than for the other ads.

Reverse print slows readers. Starch (1914), in an experiment using 40 subjects, found that a light font on a dark background reduced reading speed by 42 percent. Wheildon (1995, pp. 97–9) tested reverse print using 224 subjects, each of whom read a long message. He reported much better comprehension for those who read "black on white," than for those who read the same passages with "white on black."

Shading slows readers. As with reverse print, it should be used only for small sections of an ad. Light shading, when used sparingly, is useful as an attention-getting device. However, shading might harm comprehension. Wheildon (1995, p. 97) found that shading beyond 10 percent (10 percent is shown above) reduced comprehension when used for large blocks of text. He reported large drops in comprehension as shading increased to 30 percent.

In Wheildon's (1995, p. 77–102) experiments, most subjects found color fonts to be attractive and black to be boring; however, their comprehension was better when a black font was used.

9.5.3. Avoid uppercase and bold font for informative text with three or more lines

Readability suffers when all capitals or bold are used for text that extends three or more lines. This is especially important for high-involvement products with good arguments. Note that this does not apply to normal headlines. Headlines are typically in bold, and that is a proper way to call for attention.

Capitals require more space. Based on a small sample, I found that capitals require about 30 percent more space.[3] Thus, avoiding capitals can provide substantial savings in media costs. Bold does not need so much space; my small sample estimate indicated that it needs about 4 percent more.

Advertisers often use bold or capitals for low-involvement purchases to gain attention or to add an emotional dimension. It can sometimes improve legibility, such as for STOP or DANGER! Thus, it is useful for billboards and signage.

Bold and especially capitals are analogous to shouting. They distract a consumer who is considering a high-involvement purchase. Consider how you would feel if a salesperson screamed BUY THIS CAR.

Advertisers sometimes use capitals to announce defects or limitations in products, such as "FAILURE TO COMPLETE THIS [GOVERNMENT] FORM PROPERLY WILL LEAD TO PENALTIES OF $100 PER DAY." While it looks like the ad is adding emphasis, the reality is that consumers will be less likely to read or correctly understand it.

Evidence on the effects of capitals and bold

A study using 40 readers found that when all letters were capitalized in long text, reading speed was 10 percent slower than when lower-case letters were used (Starch 1914).

Our quasi-experimental analyses found that bold aided recall when used in headlines, but it harmed recall when used for three or more lines in the text:

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3   I did this by converting the typeface in this book to see how many pages were added.

Print ads with bold headlines had higher recall. Our *WAPB* analysis found 33 pairs of print ads in which one ad used bold font in its headline while the second did not. Recall of ads with bold headlines was 1.14 times better than for the other ads.

Print ads for high-involvement products with strong arguments had higher recall when they avoided bold font for the text. Our *WAPB* analysis found 12 pairs of print ads for high-involvement products with strong arguments, in which one ad used bold font for text (of at least three lines) while the second did not. Recall of ads with regular font was 1.16 times better.

Wheildon (1995) presented subjects with passages using either all capital letters or all lowercase letters. Across five different fonts, subjects rated lowercase type as much easier to read than capitals.

Bold fonts seem harsh. In a study using on-screen text, a bold-looking font, **Impact**, was ranked first of 19 fonts in terms of being assertive, rigid, rude, sad, unattractive, coarse, and masculine (Shaikh, Chaparro, and Fox 2006).

In Wheildon's (1995) experiments, readers complained of fatigue when reading bold text. Wheildon conducted his tests using Times Roman font, and found that his subjects' comprehension was much better when he used a regular font rather than bold.

9.5.4. Select a typeface to enhance meaning or emotion

In addition to transmitting content, typeface also has connotations that can affect meanings and emotion. Thus, the selection of typeface might involve trade-offs between ease of reading and connotations.

For example, in a study of how users perceived 20 different typefaces on-screen, Times New Roman was rated first with respect to implying stability, maturity, and formality. It was rated second for conformity and practicality (Shaikh et al. 2006).

Consider the typeface also as a means to express product characteristics. For example, it could be used to emphasize that a product is **heavy and sturdy** (e.g., a truck), `light and airy` (e.g., summer clothing), short, or tall. Or it could be used to connote elegance, simplicity, professionalism, or youthfulness.

An example: In a General Motors ad regarding how motorists can fight fatigue, the final letters in the word "fatigue" were slumping over, and the picture showed the crumpled front end of a test car, and the crumpled words, "Safety doesn't stop here."

A typeface might take on connotations because of common usage in a particular context. Colored typeface might help express emotion or be relevant to a product, such as orange for Halloween and red for Valentine's Day.

Fonts can also be used to connote images or historical periods. For example, you might use a typeface common to the early 1900s to advertise a beer made the old-fashioned way. Tourist ads for Napier, New Zealand use art deco typeface to emphasize its many art deco buildings.

Evidence on the effects of typefaces that support meanings

Our quasi-experimental study supported this principle:

> **Print ads that used typeface to convey product characteristics improved recall.** Our *WAPB* analysis found 16 pairs of print ads in which one ad used typeface that expressed product characteristics while the second did not. For example a Korbel Champagne ad that used an elegant font for its headline *Uncork the magic!* had a recall score that was twice that of another Korbel ad that used an ordinary font. The recall of ads with meaningful typeface was 1.28 times better than for the other ads.

In a lab experiment, 18 subjects read the names of various animals as soon as possible after they were flashed onto the screen. The typeface was either consistent or inconsistent with the animal (e.g., a heavy or light typeface for "elephant"). Correct responses were faster when the typeface meaning was consistent with the animal (Lewis and Walker 1989).

We analyzed non-experimental data from *WAPB*. In comparison with the industry norms for each ad, the average persuasion score for the 170 ads that used meaningful typefaces was 8 percent higher than the comparable score for the 50 ads that used ordinary typefaces.

9.6. Layout

Layout refers to the space given to the key elements of an ad—the picture, headline, copy, and brand identifiers. It also relates to their placement within the ad, and to the use of white space.

The layout should grab attention and then hold it. This is often difficult. An eye-tracking study for newspapers, conducted in England, found that subjects spent an average of 0.62 seconds per print ad (Chisholm 1995). Using four versions of a full-page ad for shampoo, a Dutch eye-tracking study found that subjects spent 0.63 seconds scanning the typical full-page magazine ad, and the time was equally divided between the picture and the headline (Rosbergen, Pieters, and Wedel 1997). For retail ads that compete with other ads on the same page (that is, ads fighting clutter), subjects spent less time, about 0.2 seconds for Dutch ads. However, subjects who "selected" an ad spent about 0.4 seconds on their initial scan (Pieters, Wedel, and Zhang 2007).

Relevant pictures and headlines can stop readers when they are scanning. Once stopped, text attracts attention and, more importantly, maintains that attention.

Layout is especially important for the Internet. Websites can convey an enormous amount of information about a product and it is important to help users to navigate a site. The problem is complex because some people are new to a site while others are familiar. And some are familiar with a product while others are not. Thus, much attention has been devoted to layout issues under the term "usability." Those who advertise on the Internet should avail themselves of some of the excellent books on usability such as Nielsen (2000) and Lynch and Horton (2009).

The following principles are especially important for high-involvement products with strong arguments.

9.6.1. Obey gravity

In 1870, the N.W. Ayer Agency of Philadelphia popularized the "picture window" layout. A picture fills the top three-fifths of the ad; the ad uses a bold headline; and the bottom two-fifths includes one or more columns with a logo near the base. It provides a logical way to use the gravity principle.

An analysis of print ads found that from 1930 through the 1950s, layouts were complex. Experts viewed this as a dark period in the history of advertising. In contrast, the Bernbach era of the 1960s brought back the picture window as part of a clean and organized look. Practices in the 1970s and 1980s moved back toward a cluttered look (Feasley and Stuart 1987).

For English and many other languages, the logical flow starts in the upper left corner, continues to the right, then moves downward, and begins again at the left. It seems sensible to start in the upper left and finish in the lower right. This flow obeys gravity. This is relevant for ads with long text.

It has long been known that readers of advertisements often do not follow the law of gravity. An early study found, for example, that a reader's eye often starts in the lower left corner and moves to the upper right (Adams 1916). Over the years, eye-tracking studies have supported the view that readers' eyes jump around while they view ads. Nevertheless, the principle of gravity aids readers in knowing where to look.

In some cases, advertisers might depart from gravity to make a point. The Chiropractic Association of South Africa did this effectively in an ad that read, "Does this hurt?"—the ad was turned on its side and the text ran bottom to top.

9.6.2. Avoid large pictures in informative ads

Pictures compete with text for space. Unless a picture provides the information more effectively than text, keep pictures small for informative ads.

To get an idea about current practice, I asked Rik Pieters to prepare an analysis of 1,363 full-page Dutch magazine ads. Pictures took up 58 percent of the space. More space was devoted to pictures for hedonic than for utilitarian products (62 percent versus 53 percent), and more space was provided for pictures for high-involvement than for low-involvement products (60 percent versus 55 percent).

One study coded 1,300 full-page print ads from major magazines in the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Korea, and India. Pictures used 64 percent of the space for durable goods and 71 percent for non-durables. There was modest variation across countries: for example, with respect to durables, India devoted the least space to pictures (56 percent), while Korea devoted the most, 69 percent (Cutler and Javalgi 1992).

Evidence on the effects of picture size

Our analysis of quasi-experimental data suggests that illustrations in print ads are currently too large.

Informative print ads with smaller pictures had higher recall. Our *WAPB* analysis found 17 pairs of ads in which one ad had a smaller picture than the other ad. Recall for the ads with smaller pictures was 1.08 times greater than for the other ads.

Pieters and Wedel (2004) analyzed eye-tracking data for 1,363 full-page Dutch magazine print ads viewed by 3,600 subjects who read 65 consumer magazines. Ads with pictures drew more attention. However, subjects paid less attention to ads that dedicated a higher percentage of space to the picture than to the text. Ads with a high text area had higher attention, especially for high-involvement products. A similar conclusion was obtained when there was clutter—retail ads that appeared with many other ads on the same page. Pieters and Wedel recommended that in general, ads should substantially reduce the space for the picture and increase the space for the brand elements.

An analysis of non-experimental data on over 1,000 ads in the *Minnesota Morning Tribune* annually from 1948 through 1958, found that the picture–copy ratio had little influence on readership (Troldahl and Jones 1965).

9.6.3. Balance the layout

Starch (1914) said that an ad should look balanced. For example, an ad with a photograph that occupies the top half of a page looks top-heavy. If you enlarge the bottom section by about 3 percent, the ad looks more balanced.

The art community believes that the length versus width proportion affects our perception of balance and of beauty. Classic art works typically use a ratio of 1.3 to 1 for the length to width ratio.

Photographers advise dividing photos into thirds, horizontally and vertically. Items at the points at the intersections (denoted by the black dots in the exhibit below) and within the "inner box" attract the most attention.
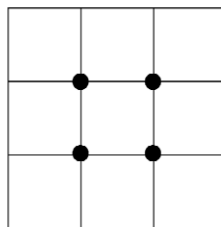
In some cases, the layout might be used to emphasize a message rather than to seek balance as in this ad for Penn tennis balls to be used at an upcoming tournament:

Get
to
pro
tennis

ready
see
Penn
balls

Center the main headings when using full-text justification. When using left justi-fication, as with an Internet ad, Lynch and Horton (2009) advise also using left justification for the headings.

It is difficult to explain all the factors that might affect balance, so it might help to ask a convenience sample of people whether an ad looks balanced.

Evidence on the effects of balance

Our analysis of quasi-experimental data supports the use of a balanced layout:

> **Print ads with a balanced layout had much higher recall.** Our *WAPB* analysis found 36 pairs of ads in which one ad centered the picture to show the product in the 'inner box,' while the other ad did not. Recall for the balanced-layout ads was 1.5 times greater than the other ads.

Typical practice in art leads to a ratio of length to width called the "platinum number." In a study of 594 works of classic art and 471 works of popular art, this ratio averaged 1.3 (Shortess, Clarke, and Shannon 1997). This is thought to provide an attractive and balanced look.

Answer to question on page 243, "How many mistakes can you find?"

This headline appeared over an ad for the Kodak EasyShare digital camera as the top half of a full-page ad in the December 19, 2004 issue of the *New York Times Magazine*. It used a dark gray font on a gray background. The ad overlooked or violated many principles, including the following:

1.1.1.	Describe specific, meaningful benefits.	7.7.1.	Use wordplay if it is clearly related to the product.
1.1.2.	Communicate a unique selling proposition (USP).	7.8.1.	Consider using novel metaphors that are related to a benefit.
1.2.1.	Provide news, but only if it is real.	8.1.1.	Alert the target market early and prominently.
1.3.1.	Provide product information that customers need.	9.1.2.	Include the brand name in the headline.
6.12.1.	Use product-related questions only if you have good answers.	9.1.3.	Lead the reader into the body copy (e.g., no period).
7.6.2.	Use words that enhance the purchasing and consuming experience.	9.5.2.	Provide contrast between typeface and background.
7.6.3.	Use familiar words and phrases.		

Checklist 9 is designed to help you apply the principles for ads in still media.

Checklist 9 Still media

9.1.   Headline
9.1.1.   Use descriptive headlines for high-involvement products.
9.1.2.   Include the brand name in the headline.
9.1.3.   Lead the reader into the body copy.
9.1.4.   Keep the headline short for low-involvement products only.

9.2   Pictures
9.2.1.   For high-involvement ads based on strong arguments, consider informative pictures.
9.2.2.   When using a picture, relate it to the headline or message.
9.2.3.   Use clear and readable captions for pictures.

9.3.   Text
9.3.1.   Make the first paragraph relevant, short, and easy to read.
9.3.2.   Provide long copy when reading time is not constrained.
9.3.3.   Repeat the main message at the end of the ad.

9.4.   Structure of body text
9.4.1.   Use informative subheadings for long copy.

9.4.2.   Use reader guides for long copy with strong arguments.
9.4.3.   Use columns for long informative text.
9.4.4.   Consider blank line spacing between paragraphs for scanability.
9.4.5.   Consider justification for moderate to long lines of text.
9.4.6.   Squeeze inter-letter spacing gently.
9.4.7.   Use phrase spacing for informative text.

9.5.   Typeface
9.5.1.   Use a simple serif typeface when readability is important, and a simple sans serif typeface when legibility or scanning is important.
9.5.2.   Provide high contrast between typeface and background.
9.5.3.   Avoid upper case and bold for informative text with three or more lines.
9.5.4.   Select a typeface to enhance meaning or emotion.

9.6.   Layout
9.6.1.   Obey gravity.
9.6.2.   Avoid large pictures in informative ads.
9.6.3.   Balance the layout.

10. Motion media

This section covers media that use motion and/or sound: TV commercials and infomercials, videos, radio, commercials at movie theaters, cell phones, videos on the Internet, and so on.

Motion and sound lend themselves to emotional rather than informative appeals, and simple demonstrations reinforcing customer beliefs rather than changing them.

The motion and sound principles are discussed in the following sections:

10.1. Scenes

In a manner analogous to the layout of a print ad, the motion ad must consider the content and sequence of the various scenes.

10.1.1. Use an opening that is directly related to the product, brand, or message

Place the brand, product, claim, or offer on screen near the opening shot. It is important to have viewers' full attention, so this suggests putting the central message near the beginning, but not within the first two seconds because some viewers are still switching gears. Provide the key information orally and visually. Consider a surprise only when it is relevant to the message. A relevant opening is especially important for high-involvement utilitarian products.

Roman, Maas, and Nisenholtz (2003) claimed that the first five seconds of a TV commercial are crucial. The viewer must find something relevant quickly to desire to keep watching. Most advertisers seem to agree. For example, Stewart and Furse (1986) found that the product category, brand name, or product (or package) was usually shown in the first five seconds of commercials.

Evidence on the effects of openings related to the product, brand, or message

Analyses of non-experimental data show the importance of a relevant opening. Walker (2008) found that TV commercials that identified the brand in the first four seconds did better than the overall average by 8 percent for recall and 7 percent for persuasion. In contrast, ads that delayed brand identification for more than ten seconds scored below the overall average by 7 percent for recall and 10 percent for persuasion. Stanton and Burke (1998) found persuasiveness to be 25 percent higher than the average for 30-second TV commercials when the product category was identified in the first four seconds. Stewart and Furse (1986) found that

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commercials with early mention of the product or brand had much better recall and were slightly higher on persuasion. Finally, Ogilvy and Raphaelson (1982) found that commercials that started with a key idea were better at holding viewer attention and at persuasiveness.

10.1.2. Emphasize the product or message

There are many ways to emphasize the product or message. These include lighting, zoom-ins, and placement. In addition, hold them on screen.

Focus the lighting on key features of the product such as weight, shine, or size. This would seem especially important for products that are purchased for their color, such as clothing, or where color is an indicator of quality, such as for food.

If you hold some information constant, such as the brand name or product, viewers can at least see what the ad is about even if they are not paying close attention, or if they are scanning though ads that were recorded. If it is relevant to their needs (e.g., perhaps they are shopping for a car and a Toyota ad appears), they might then view the ad at the normal speed. Also, keep in mind that people pay attention to commercials only about half the time when they are presumably watching TV (Anderson 1985).

This principle is widely used. Products were on-screen in about 95 percent of the over 1,500 tested 30-second TV commercials from Ipsos ASI (Walker 2008).

Evidence on the effects of emphasis on the product

Walker's (2008) analyses of 30-second TV commercials found the following results, where 100 represents the average for the sample of 1,513 commercials. Thus, for example, when the product was on-screen for 19 or more of the 30 seconds, recall was 113, or 13 percent higher than average:

Product is on-screen	Recall	Persuasion
Not at all	79	66
1 to 12 seconds	84	90
13 to 19 seconds	103	105
19 or more seconds	113	106

He obtained similar results for the legibility of the product and label on-screen.

TV commercials in which the product was on the screen for a longer time had higher recall and were more persuasive than the typical ad in their sample (Stewart and Furse 1986). Stanton and Burke (1998) found much higher persuasiveness for products on the screen for at least six seconds, especially for short (15-second) ads.

Messaris (1997) reviewed two studies and concluded that close-up shots increased viewer attention and involvement.

10.1.3. If believability is important, show the spokesperson on-screen

To enhance believability, show the spokesperson on the screen rather than using voice-overs. Customers will feel better when they see the person who is talking

to them, such as when the owner, Dave Thomas, talked to customers in Wendy's restaurant commercials.

On the other side of this issue, commercials with only voice-overs are cheaper than using a spokesperson, and they are easier to adapt to other languages. In addition, voice-overs can allow for more emphasis on the product. Therefore, if believability is not critical, voice-overs will work. This seems to be typical; an analysis of over 1,500 tested TV commercials from Ipsos ASI found voice-overs were used in 87 percent of the ads.

In most cases, the spokesperson is near the center. However, following received wisdom, if the spokesperson is addressing someone else on-screen or where discussing a product, place the spokesperson about one-third of the distance from the edge of the screen, facing the two-thirds section of the screen. This adds balance.

Should the spokesperson look at the product, the viewer, or at another person? If believability is an objective, the spokesperson should look at the audience. Richard Nixon damaged his appeal to voters because he often failed to look at the audience in his TV debates with John Kennedy. Those who heard Nixon on radio had a higher opinion of him than did those watching TV.

Evidence on the effects of an on-screen spokesperson

Evidence from five lab experiments showed benefits to a direct look. In these, prospective job applicants who had more eye contact with the camera (and thus the viewer) were ranked as more intelligent, warm, enthusiastic, and likable than those whose eyes looked elsewhere (summarized in Wheeler et al. 1979).

As for non-experimental evidence, voice-overs scored 6 percent lower on recall than on-screen spokespersons, but 3 percent higher on persuasion (Walker 2008). In addition, Franzen (1994, #5.6), drawing upon unpublished commercial research, claimed that voice-overs do not do well at holding attention.

10.1.4. Use short "supers" to reinforce key points

Supers (or subtitles) are on-screen written words that reinforce a message. They can also clarify the spelling of words, such as brand or product names. Stewart and Furse (1986) found that 92 percent of TV commercials contained supers that reinforced a key part of the message.

People have difficulty watching pictures while reading and listening. As a result, it is vital to synchronize the supers with the sound and visual effects.

A review of unpublished studies concluded that no more than ten words should be on the screen at one time (Franzen 1994, #5.6).

Evidence on the effects of using supers that reinforce the message

This principle is based on received wisdom and is supported by one lab experiment and by analyses of non-experimental data.

In a lab experiment, two versions of TV commercials were shown to 1,978 people. There were 22 commercials that were representative of products advertised on TV. In ads where supers reinforced the oral content, compre-

hension of commercials was substantially better (Hoyer, Srivastava, and Jacoby 1984).

Turning to non-experimental data, TV commercials with supers changed brand preferences only when they reinforced the main point of the ad (Ogilvy and Raphaelson 1982). And TV commercials with "substantive supers" were more persuasive than those without supers (Stewart and Koslow 1989).

10.1.5. Make the closing scene relevant to the key message

The closing scene tends to be memorable—assuming that the viewers are still watching the ad. It should reinforce the product, brand name, or key selling point.

Sutherland and Sylvester (2000, p. 103) advise against the use of clever but irrelevant throwaway lines or information at the end of an ad because they might distract from strong arguments. For example, in a 2005 TV commercial for a Hummer automobile, a small man walks into a group meeting. Everyone is stumped on what to do about the design of the Hummer until he says, "Why not make it smaller?" The ad then shows a smaller version of the Hummer. The final scene, which showed the small man walking past a tall, well-endowed woman, overwhelmed the message.

This principle is consistent with lab experiments showing that the material at the end of a message is remembered better than the information in the middle of an ad.

10.2. Voice

Certain features of a person can be inferred from voice. More importantly from advertisers' viewpoints, people *think* they can judge characteristics of people from their voices.

10.2.1. Use an appropriate voice

An appropriate voice for a spokesperson or a testimonial depends on the situation. An authoritative voice may be useful if the brand is not well known to the target market; authority can be connoted by a deep male voice that is moderately loud and has marked intonation. If you want to create a friendly aura, use a pleasant voice.

Voices that connote high social status can enhance believability. This includes word choice, pronunciation, grammatical structure, voice quality, and articulation.

Use announcers who are effective at using inflection to convey ideas. The rises and falls in the spoken words carry meaning. For example, a person could say, "Oh" to mean, "You will, will you?" or "Gee, I never thought of that!"

Accents can also be useful to connote authority in certain product areas, such as a French accent for food or fashion, German for cars, or proper English for literature.

Spokespersons and those giving testimonials should generally have the same accent and the same manner of speaking as the target audience. For example, a commercial could use a teenager's voice and language to advertise clothing to teenagers. In addition to making the message easier to understand, this builds on

social proof as a way to influence customers. Advertisers can audition voices, and then test them among potential customers to see which most closely matches the typical customer.

Evidence on the effects of voices

This principle is based primarily on received wisdom although there is some indirect evidence.

Telephone interviewers with higher pitch, greater variation in pitch, greater loudness, faster rates of speaking, and clearer pronunciation were more persuasive when asking people to participate in surveys. Fortunately, useful subjective judgments of voice qualities can be accurately made by having a few raters listen to short (e.g., ten-second) samples (Oksenberg, Coleman, and Cannell 1986; Harms 1961).

10.2.2. Avoid orally ambiguous words

Care should be taken to ensure clarity in oral scripts. This principle is especially important when the target market includes those who are hard of hearing and when the audience receives only an oral message.

Avoid the use of *s*, *f*, *m*, and *n* because they difficult for some listeners to distinguish. While it might be difficult to rewrite a script to avoid certain letters, it is certainly possible. The 1969 French book *La Disparition*, by Georges Perec, was written without the letter "e," translated to English without an "e," and then reviewed in English without an "e" (*New York Times Book Review*, August 4, 2004).

Beware of homonyms as they also are hard to interpret. For example, the following statement is ambiguous when delivered orally: "They raised the new house as soon as the old one was razed." Find words that are not ambiguous.

When ambiguous words, such as an unusual brand name, are unavoidable, use visuals to reinforce the oral. In its initial advertising in the United States, the Swedish company IKEA (pronounced ee-kay'-ah in Swedish) decided it would be too difficult to educate customers on the proper pronunciation; therefore, it changed the pronunciation for the U.S. market and showed print and billboard ads that included a picture of an eye and a key followed by an "ah."

10.3. Music and sound

Music has many functions in advertising, such as gaining attention, establishing a mood or emotion, evoking a time period, or identifying a brand. Music has a long history in advertising. In ancient Greece, musicians often accompanied town criers; they attracted attention and entertained people as the criers talked about the latest products.

10.3.1. Consider using music or sounds for low-involvement products, but not for high-involvement products with strong arguments

If you have nothing to say, sing it.
Old adage in advertising

Music and sound are appropriate for well-known, hedonic products that are being advertised by emotional appeals. They are not appropriate for high-involvement products with strong arguments because they may compete with the attention that customers pay to the arguments.

Music is commonly used in television and radio commercials. One estimate was that 40 percent of 2,000 tested TV commercials from leading advertisers included music (Stewart and Furse 1986; Stewart and Koslow 1989). Another estimate provided much different results: Music was used in 87 percent of a sample of 30-second TV commercials tested by Ipsos ASI (Walker 2008).

Unusual sound effects ("out of place, unusual or bizarre use of sound") were used in fewer than 2 percent of the TV commercials examined by Stewart and Furse (1986).

Evidence on the effects of music or sounds

A lab experiment involving 30-second radio ads for nine product categories found that message recall was better in a control group that heard ads without music than in a group that heard ads with music. This was true although the products were primarily hedonic products for which music might seem relevant, such as restaurants, nightclubs, and movies (Kellaris, Cox, and Cox 1993).

In another lab experiment, 80 women were randomly divided into two groups to view TV commercials with the theme, "Estée Lauder introduces a hair shampoo, Shena." Those in the high-involvement group were told that there was a substantial difference in quality, and were asked to pay special attention to the product's benefits. Those in the low-involvement group were told that there were no differences among brands of shampoo; to distract their attention, they were also instructed to "Assume that you have just received a long-distance telephone call stating that one of your closest friends of 20 years is seriously ill, and wants to see you." Half the subjects in each group were exposed to the commercials with background music. In the high-involvement group, those hearing music had lower purchase intentions, 3.0 versus 3.7 for the no-music group (on a seven-point scale). The effect was reversed for the low-involvement group—2.8 versus 2.1 (Park and Young 1986).

Now for non-experimental data, where, unfortunately, we know little about whether the products are high or low-involvement. When words were spoken over background music on TV commercials, recall suffered by 9 percent and persuasion by 3 percent (Walker 2008).

An analysis of results from unpublished studies by four advertising research companies—Burke, Mapes and Ross, McCollum Spielman, and Y&R—showed that the recall index for TV commercials with music was about 6 percent lower than the average for this sample (Hecker 1984).

TV commercials with music were no better on recall or persuasion than were ads without music, and they were slightly lower on comprehension. In addition, the commercials in which music created a mood were less persuasive (Stewart and Furse 1986).

Assume that you are walking past a wine display of German and French wine in a local

supermarket. French music is playing. Would hearing this music make you more likely to purchase a French wine?

10.3.2. If music or sound effects are used, make them relevant to the product

Consider sound effects that are clearly relevant to the product, its use, or to a key aspect of the message. For example, Maxwell House commercials used the sound of percolating coffee. Another example: Soft drinks add a fizzing sound as the drink is poured.

Avoid sound effects that might distract from good arguments.

Music is most appropriate when the advertisement uses emotion. Experts have collaborated to develop guidelines on how to match elements of music to emotion. Bruner (1990) provides the following summary table. It updates work that was first published in 1937 and revised in five publications since that time.

Emotional expression	Musical element					
	Key	**Tempo**	**Pitch**	**Rhythm**	**Harmony**	**Volume**
Exciting	Major	Fast	Medium	Uneven	Dissonant	Loud
Frightening	Minor	Slow	Low	Uneven	Dissonant	Varied
Happy	Major	Fast	High	Flowing	Consonant	Medium
Humorous	Major	Fast	High	Flowing	Consonant	Medium
Majestic	Major	Medium	Medium	Firm	Dissonant	Loud
Sad	Minor	Slow	Low	Firm	Dissonant	Soft
Sentimental	Minor	Slow	Medium	Flowing	Consonant	Soft
Serene	Major	Slow	Medium	Flowing	Consonant	Soft
Serious	Major	Slow	Low	Firm	Consonant	Medium

In a personal communication, Bruner said that these findings apply mostly to Western cultures. However, if the music is "pure" (i.e., it does not mix the emotional expressions shown in the table), it seems likely that it would raise the same emotions in other cultures.

A *Dallas Morning News* TV commercial for their sports coverage showed a type-writer spelling out the word "b-a-s-k-e-t-b-a-l-l." As each key was struck, it had the sound of a basketball being dribbled. The word "football" was typed all at once to the sound of football players colliding. This ad won a 1988 CLIO award (based on voting by advertising executives).

Evidence on the effects of relevant music

Studies on greeting card advertisements found that music worked best when it evoked feelings that fit the occasion (Alpert, Alpert, and Maltz 2005). So let's go back to whether you would select that French wine:

French music led people to buy French wine. A two-week experiment was conducted in the alcoholic beverages section of a U.K. supermarket. When German music was playing, shoppers bought almost twice as much German wine as French wine, and when French music was playing, they bought five times as much French as German wine. When asked on a follow-up question what factors influenced their choices, only one of the 44 respondents mentioned

music. When asked specifically about the music, 86 percent said that it had no influence on their choices (North, Hargreaves, and McKendrick 1999).

A lab experiment with eight radio ads for college football found that the imagery provided by sound effects (a marching band and the roar of the crowd) was a more effective way to create images and to arouse emotions than vivid language (e.g., "the frenzied roar of the crowd as a powerful running back slashes into the end zone"), or instructions to imagine the emotions (Miller and Marks 1997).

Now for the non-experimental data. TV commercials in which the lyrics of a song were related to the message were 2 percent better on recall and 1 percent higher on persuasion (Walker 2008). TV commercials coded as having unusual sound effects ("out of place, unusual, or bizarre use of sound—for example the sound of a jackhammer as someone eats a pretzel") were not as persuasive as the typical commercial in their sample (Stewart and Furse 1986).

10.4. Pace

By the pace of an ad, I mean the speed with which words, sounds, and images are presented. This section discusses three aspects of pace: speaking rate, pauses, and visual changes.

10.4.1. Use rapid speech for simple messages about low-involvement products

Rapid speech is appropriate when customers need minimal information. In general, it adds to the believability and competence of the spokesperson. However, it should be avoided for high-involvement products when there is new information to convey, or for sensitive issues such as health or personal tragedy.

The typical speaking rate is about 160 words per minute. Preferred listening rates vary from 150 to 200 words per minute. A small lab experiment concluded that college students preferred 175 words per minute (Lass and Prater 1973).

The number of words in TV commercials averages about 130 per minute, but of course, commercials have intervals where no one is speaking (Stewart and Furse 1986).

Advertisers can increase the pace by having the spokesperson speak quickly. It is better, however, to use electronic time compression, as it makes sounds crisper and less hurried than when an announcer speaks rapidly.

Evidence on the effects of rapid speech

Time compression is economical because it allows an advertiser to fit an ad into an allotted time slot, and thus avoid ad retakes. It can save up to 30 percent of media placement costs.

Time compression of up to 30 percent has little effect on purchase intentions. Thus conclusion was based on eight experiments summarized by Vann, Rogers, and Penrod (1987)

Fast talkers are judged as more competent, truthful, fluent, energetic,

enthusiastic, and persuasive than slow speakers (based on a research review by Moore, Hausknecht, and Thamodaran 1986).

Let's now look at when the speaking pace should be slower.

10.4.2. Use slow speech for strong arguments or to show concern

> *Gentlemen, listen to me slowly.*
> *Samuel Goldwyn of MGM*

Fast talkers disrupt listeners' thinking. Those with weak arguments (the word "politician" springs to mind) sometimes use a fast pace in their ads. Therefore, when strong arguments exist, use a slow pace to allow customers to absorb the information. Also use a slow pace when there is a need to show concern about sensitive issues.

A slow pace also helps those who are hearing impaired .

Evidence on the effects of speaking rate when there are strong arguments

A slow pace allows the audience to think more about the arguments, while a fast pace disrupts counter-arguing. Three experiments varied the speaking rates in commercials from 110 to 230 words per minute in ads for 12 products presented to 482 subjects. Speeds that were 30 percent faster than typical rates (about 160 words per minute) disrupted consumer thoughts about the message and caused people to think more about other things. Thus, when the arguments were weak, a faster pace led to better brand attitudes (Moore, et al. 1986). A related experiment that used a taped radio message about speed limits for automobiles found that a 30 percent time compression disrupted counter-arguing, but that it had little effect on attitudes or behavioral intentions (Vann et al. 1987).

10.4.3. Use short silences before and/or after strong arguments

Keep the silence short, lest the audience drift to other thoughts. How short? About two seconds.

Silence *before* a key point helps build tension and gain attention for what follows, and silence *after* a key point allows the audience to think about the message. This conclusion is in accord with responses from 53 creative directors in the United States and Canada (Olsen 1994).

If an advertiser expects resistance to a message that is clearly in the interest of customers (e.g., an anti-smoking message), consider avoiding silence after a strong claim in order to reduce counter-arguments.

Evidence on using short silences before and after strong arguments

In a lab experiment, 409 subjects were presented with five radio ads about cell-phones—a relatively new product to U.S. customers at the time. Backgrounds of either silence or music were inserted between information about three features: price, free activation, and voice mail. The normal pause between items (where an item may be one or more words) is .25 seconds. Either silence or music for

intervals of zero, one, two, or three seconds was added to the normal pause. Recall was highest when the silence was about two seconds or slightly less. However, when the silence exceeded two seconds, recall was diminished. In a related experiment, 81 subjects were annoyed by a three-second silence; they reported a much higher likelihood of thinking about "things unrelated to the advertisement." Distraction was less pronounced for three seconds of music (Olsen 1997).

In an earlier lab experiment using 144 subjects with the same materials as in the preceding paragraph, subjects who heard silence right before the key information recalled 44 percent of this information, whereas those who just heard music throughout the ad recalled only 15 percent. Silence had the greatest effect when used to highlight the last item in a series (Olsen 1995).

10.4.4. Hold scenes to hold attention

Hold a scene to keep the viewers' attention for something important. Said another way, it is important to avoid frequent scene shifts for high-involvement products when strong arguments exist. Scene cuts are disruptive.

Interestingly, frequent shifts in scenes have become more common over time. Shot-lengths in 30-second commercials decreased from 3.6 seconds from 1978 through 1980, to 2.3 seconds for 1989 through 1991. Over this 11-year period, the number of camera angles increased from 8.4 to 13 (MacLachlan and Logan 1993).

Evidence on the effects of scene length

In a lab experiment, 36 subjects were presented with six slow-paced TV commercials (average of 2.2 cuts in 30 seconds) and six fast-paced commercials (15.8 cuts in 30 seconds). While the fast-paced ads attracted more attention, the subjects recalled only about three-quarters as many claims as the subjects shown the slow-paced commercials (Bolls and Muehling 2003).

In a lab experiment using TV advertisements for political candidates, fast cuts inhibited recall of the information in the ads (Geiger and Reeves 1991).

A lab experiment with 195 subjects tested animation in two Internet ads. Subjects were in one of three treatments related to banner ads: static, moderate animation, or fast animation. Animation led to higher click-through intention rates. While faster animation in banner ads attracted more attention, it led to irritation and to more negative thoughts than did slower animation (Yoo and Kim 2005).

Turning to non-experimental data on TV commercials, a high number of scene cuts (over 25) harmed recall (24 percent lower than the average for this Ipsos ASI sample) and persuasion (13 percent below average). In addition, commercials rated as having high "visual complexity, motion, or abstraction" were lower on recall (15 percent below average) and persuasion at 9 percent below average (Walker 2008).

Commercials with more scenes (more "cuts") had lower comprehension than those with fewer cuts. This was based on an analysis of 1,978 viewers' comprehension of 22 actual TV commercials (Hoyer, Srivastava, and Jacoby 1984).

Analyses of non-experimental data on 641 tested 30-second TV commercials from the Mapes & Ross company showed that day-after recall was 39 percent

better and brand preference was 36 percent higher for commercials with five or fewer camera shots than for those with 20 or more shots. Surprisingly, short-scene (MTV-style) commercials were substantially less persuasive and less memorable for 18 to 34-year-old viewers than for viewers who were 50 to 65 (MacLachlan and Logan 1993).

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Checklist 10 summarizes the principles related to advertising on media using motion and sound.

Checklist 10 Motion media

10.1. Scenes
10.1.1. Use an opening that is directly related to the product , brand or message.
10.1.2. Emphasize the product or message.
10.1.3. If believability is important, show the spokesperson on-screen.
10.1.4. Use short "supers" to reinforce key points.
10.1.5. Make the closing scene relevant to the key message

10.2.   Voice
10.2.1. Use an appropriate voice.
10.2.2. Avoid orally ambiguous words.

10.3. Music and sound
10.3.1. Consider using music or sounds for low-involvement products, but not for high-involvement products with strong arguments.
10.3.2. If music or sound effects are used, make them relevant to the product.

10.4. Pace
10.4.1. Use rapid speech for simple messages about low-involvement products.
10.4.2. Use slow speech for strong arguments or to show concern.
10.4.3. Use short silences before and/or after strong arguments.
10.4.4. Hold scenes to hold attention.

Creativity

the most dangerous word in all of advertising [is] originality …. Here, misty, distant, and infinitely desirable, is the copywriter's Holy Grail. Unfortunately it has ruined more advertisers than it has ever made.
Rosser Reeves (1961)

The persuasion principles provide only one of the elements in the creative process, albeit an important one. The application of the principles requires much creativity.

Based on my reading of the experimental evidence, I have concluded that common approaches to creativity are detrimental. These include meetings, retreats, rewards for "creative thinking," team-building exercises, and urging people to be creative and to "think outside the box." Not to mention the use of charismatic leaders.[1] These approaches drew disdain from creative advertisers in the past. Bill Bernbach summarized it well when he said: "Today, everybody is talking 'Creativity,' and frankly, that's got me worried … I fear all the sins we may commit in the name of creativity." It is still "today."

If you are concerned about creativity, do not look at current practice in other organizations. Most organizations use procedures that thwart creativity. My own industry is one of the leaders in this effort. If someone has evidence on a useful new technique or principle, we ask two or three experts in the area to vote on whether the researcher should be allowed to publish his evidence. Given that these reviewers are involved with the old approach, at least one will invariably vote no (for experimental evidence, see Mahoney 1977). In other words, we censor new approaches. We call it peer review, and the original justification was that there is only so much space in journals. That argument has been eliminated by the Internet. But the system remains as a way to punish researchers who might stray and discover something new and useful.

This chapter provides advice on methods for identifying creative people and for nurturing their creativity. The research findings are counter-intuitive.

Find creative people

A review of research on creativity led to the conclusions that creative people describe themselves as original, emotional, enthusiastic, argumentative, assertive, independent, self-confident, rebellious, and impulsive. People who are not creative describe themselves as gentle, patient, peaceable, contented, and concerned with others.

Creative people also tend to be uninterested in facts for their own sake. They lack interest in the details of life that most people think about (e.g., the weather, sports,

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1 One of my favorite book titles is for a biography of a charismatic leader in the "creative" Hollywood film industry: *Don't Say Yes Until I Finish Talking.*

TV, politics). On the other hand, creative people have a wide range of research interests and can combine ideas from different disciplines (Martindale 1989).

Most organizations strive to hire team players who get along well with others. Is this wise where you are looking for creativity in an advertising environment?

Here are some traits from studies of creative researchers in psychology and related areas (Jackson and Rushton 1987, pp. 143–6):

Less-creative researchers	More-creative researchers
• fun-loving	• compulsive
• sociable	• dominant
• meek	• aggressive
• supportive	• anxious
• extraverted	• ambitious
• aesthetically sensitive	• independent

After reviewing research studies on the topic, Ng (2001) concluded that "'nice people' are not creative and creative people are not 'nice.'" For example, in one study a personality test was administered to 58 individuals in the creative departments of prominent UK advertising agencies and small design groups—presumably jobs that require creativity. The results were compared with those of 70 managers in mainstream UK corporations taking the same test—jobs that presumably needed lesser degrees of creativity. The people in the "creativity jobs" scored much higher on neuroticism, hostility, and depression (Gelade 1997).

David Ogilvy was widely regarded as a genius in advertising, and I agree. The story goes that he wondered if it was true. After all, he had flunked out of Oxford. So he decided to find out exactly how smart he was, expecting to learn that his IQ was approximately 145. However, he reported that he scored 96 (*Business Strategy Review* 2005). It is difficult to believe Ogilvy's story; after all, he had been admitted to Oxford. I suspect that he was trying to make a point that people should be judged based on performance, not on IQ. Very high intelligence does not play an important role in creativity. Even among research scientists, the evidence suggests that IQs beyond 120 do not play an important role in creativity.

After summarizing decades of research on personnel selection, Meehl (1956) advised that when deciding whom to hire, you should make a decision before meeting the candidates. Another half-century of research supported Meehl's advice (Grove et al. 2000). This advice leads you to focus on information about a candidate's ability to perform the job. When you meet a person, you are distracted by features that might be irrelevant to the job, such as height, accent, looks, weight, and gender. Thus, some orchestras have applicants play behind a curtain when auditioning, a procedure that has enabled more women to get these jobs.

Because of their difficult personalities, it would seem to be especially important to make hiring decisions prior to meeting candidates when trying to hire creative people. One recommendation is to have them submit portfolios or other material evidence of creativity prior to a personal appearance. You might also consider having an administrator screen out irrelevant resume information such as religion, race, age, gender, and nationality.

If the work must be done in a group, consider the type of group. For example, might it be useful to have a diversified team working on a campaign? A meta-analysis of the performance on a variety of tasks compared groups that were formed to have "task-related" diversity with those formed to emphasize "bio-demographic" diversity. Task diversity groups were superior on quality and productivity (based on 15 and nine experimental comparisons, respectively). Bio-demographic diversity did not aid performance; in fact, there was a slight negative relationship (Horwitz and Horwitz 2007). In summary, look for people who bring different skills and different knowledge, rather than looking for bio-demographic diversity. Note how this policy conflicts with policies in large organizations. For example, my industry celebrates bio-demographic diversity, which decreases creativity, and goes out of its way to punish diversity of ideas, such as in approaches to learning and research.[2]

Idea diversity can also be gained by soliciting advertising ideas from various stakeholders, such as customers, suppliers, or employees. I expect that much could be gained by developing procedures for listening to these people and deciding what actions might help.

Generate creative ideas

Many creative discoveries result primarily from the efforts of one person. Anecdotal evidence abounds. For example, Farnsworth invented the television, while RCA was unable to do so. Major companies have rejected inventions by such individuals as Steve Jobs, Chester Carlson, and Bill Bowerman (which led to Apple, Xerox and Nike, respectively). Great books, paintings, music, and architecture are created by individuals, not by committees. David Ogilvy said, "Commercials should never be created in a committee … advertising seems to sell most when it is written by a solitary individual."

When people get together in groups, creativity is suppressed. My guess is that the lifespan of a creative idea in a traditional group meeting is about a minute. Imagine how creative Benjamin Franklin would have been had he worked in one of today's large organizations.

Group productivity also drops because of "social loafing." People in groups tend to slack off, especially when they expect their co-workers to perform well. A meta-analysis of 78 social-loafing studies supported this belief (Karau and Williams 1993).

Dave Barry, the humorist, was serious when he wrote in 1998: "If you had to identify, in one word, the reason why the human race has not achieved, and never will achieve its full potential, that word would be 'meetings.'"

Many well-respected advertisers, including George Lois, have had little love for meetings. Shirley Polykoff, a noted advertiser at Foote, Cone & Belding, wrote that in the 1950s, "big agencies … specialized in weekly staff meetings of monumental monotony."

If you cannot eliminate meetings, limit the number of people who attend

2   We typically claim it is not possible to assess learning in universities, so we ask students to tell us whether they are happy with courses.

them. In the 1960s, Bill Bernbach formed teams consisting only of a copywriter and an art director. In the early 2000s, it was common for advertising agencies in London to hire two-person teams (White 2004). And keep meetings short. Some firms use stand-up meetings as a way to keep them brief.

While meetings with clients are necessary, they frequently thwart creativity. In 1962, Bill Bernbach told the Avis CEO, Bob Townsend, "You must promise to run everything we write, without changing a bloody comma ... we don't like to see it get all mucked up in committees. When good advertising goes up there, it gets uncreated." But when Townsend saw the "We try harder™" campaign, he thought it was awful and considered canceling it (Glatzer 1970). Fortunately for him and for Avis, he didn't. Avis was still using the slogan as of 2009.

An alternative to in-person meetings is to allow people, especially those in creative jobs, to work independently, while remaining able to benefit from the suggestions of others. Memos and the Internet can provide efficient meeting substitutes. In some cases, face-to-face meetings are necessary-when negotiating, for example. However, when creativity and problem solving are important, face-to-face meetings are typically detrimental, as shown by evidence that I summarized (Armstrong 2006).

Here is a study on creativity in product development. A survey was conducted of 155 firms in the U.S. optics industry, with a follow-up survey on 73 of these firms. Because some firms were located near each other, they had more face-to-face communication, Other firms were more geographically distant; therefore, they relied primarily on e-mail communication. Those who relied less on face-to-face meetings had more creative new products and faster development times. However, the authors also noted the importance of developing strong personal ties; for example, initial face-to-face meetings can play a useful role (Ganesan, Malter, and Rindfleisch 2005).

Problem statements

> *Solving a problem simply means representing it so as to make the solution transparent.*
> *Herbert A. Simon, 1961*

The phrasing of a problem will narrow the search for solutions. To get around this, write the problem statement in alternative ways and ask others to independently do the same. A problem phrased as, "How can we convince people to stop smoking?" will generate one set of solutions (e.g., tell smokers about the dangers of smoking). Phrasing the problem as, "What could be done to get people to stop smoking?" broadens the issue and generates other possibilities such as persuading nonsmokers to ask smokers not to smoke, or persuading legislatures to pass laws against smoking in public places. In effect, I am advocating "problem-storming."

Brainstorming, brainwriting, and electronic brainwriting

The presence of other people typically hampers creativity. Some members of a group might be reluctant to contribute because others might pass judgment on

their ideas. In 1940, Alex Osborn, the "O" at the BBD&O advertising agency, addressed these issues using a procedure called "brainstorming," a structured method of generating ideas by reducing evaluation. Evaluations of the ideas should occur at a later time using different procedures, and perhaps even different people.

To use brainstorming, you must first gain agreement from the group to try the technique for a fixed time period. Do not brainstorm for long periods. Ten minutes is usually sufficient for a given problem.

To make brainstorming work, you need a trained "facilitator," who focuses only on the group process. Without a facilitator, groups are unable to adhere to the brainstorming process, as an experiment by Offner, Kramer and Winter (1996) showed. The facilitator:

- does not introduce ideas, but concentrates only on helping the group follow the rules
- records ideas
- encourages a large number of ideas
- reminds the group not to evaluate ideas, either favorably or unfavorably
- encourages unusual ideas.

Research on brainstorming has shown that facilitators and participants get better at brainstorming as they gain experience with this formal process.

To ensure that ideas are not lost, one person should be appointed to act solely as a recorder. The recording process should not be visible, however. When recording is done publicly, participants slow down to wait for the recorder to post the ideas, thus interrupting the flow of ideas (Offner et al. 1996).

Research on brainstorming has been conducted since the late 1950s. The findings show that when a brainstorming session is run with facilitators who follow the above guidelines, it generates many more creative ideas than does a traditional meeting with the same number of person-hours. While the procedure requires training and the use of at least one facilitator, the benefits, in terms of useful ideas, can be enormous.

The original brainstorming procedure focused on avoiding negative feedback. Further research led to the conclusion that positive feedback was also harmful (e.g., "That's a great idea"). In fact, it is even more damaging than negative feedback because it leads groups to conclude that their job is finished (Connolly, Jessup, and Valacich 1990).

Interestingly, few firms actually use brainstorming as described here and as tested in research studies. My career has led to experience with many organizations over nearly half a century, yet I have never been in a brainstorming group run by anyone in these organizations. Many people, my students for example, tell me that they have been involved in brainstorming sessions; however, when I ask them to describe the process, it is clear that they are describing traditional meetings. David Kelly, founder of IDEO, a well-respected consulting company that helps clients develop new products, also found that companies seldom use brainstorming. Part of the success of IDEO is because it helps companies to properly use brainstorming (Sutton and Hargadon 1996).

Brainstorming reduces group pressures, but it does not eliminate them. An even more effective way to reduce pressure is to use "brainwriting." In brainwriting, people individually and anonymously write ideas. The ideas are then put into a master list.

Brainwriting can be done when people are at different locations; or it can be done within a meeting by taking short "time-outs" and asking people to individually write as many ideas as they can on the topic for about six to ten minutes. To reduce evaluation concerns, participants should not sign their list. The ideas are then summarized.

Over 20 studies have shown that brainwriting is substantially more effective than brainstorming (Gallupe, Bastianutti, and Cooper 1991). In addition to reducing group pressure, less time is spent on listening (Diehl and Stroebe 1987). Thus, it is much less time-consuming especially with large groups. Large groups can participate in brainwriting.

Organizations with a frequent need for creativity should consider electronic brainwriting. With this process, creative people enter their ideas on a computer program. When all participants have finished, the ideas are listed anonymously on a screen. Consider the advantages: Because everybody is writing simultaneously, it takes less time; because of the anonymous nature, everybody is equal; it can be held with group members in remote locations; people can work on it when it is convenient; people can sleep on ideas; and there is a complete record of the ideas generated.

Lab experiments have shown that, for a given level of man-hours, electronic brainwriting groups can produce many more "high-quality ideas" than properly conducted brainstorming groups. Furthermore, the subjects were more satisfied with electronic brainwriting (Gallupe et al. 1992; Valacich, Dennis, and Connolly 1994). Another study, describing lab experiments, concluded: "Across five studies involving more than 800 people, productivity advantages have ranged from 25 percent to 50 percent for four-person groups and to nearly 200 percent for twelve-person groups" (Gallupe and Cooper 1993).

Electronic brainwriting is gaining popularity. By the late 1900s, several million people in over 1,500 organizations around the world had used electronic brainwriting (Briggs, Nunamaker, and Sprague 1998).

A related approach to brainwriting is called "gallery writing." This can be done manually or electronically. In the manual mode, group members silently write unsigned suggestions about the discussion topic on flip charts. They then post the pages on the walls. Others write comments on the suggestions. This approach is effective and is well liked by participants (Aiken and Vanjani 2003).

It helps to set high goals for the number of ideas to be generated. This conclusion is based upon the substantial literature on goal setting (Locke and Latham 2002). It was tested directly for generating ideas for advertising: groups of subjects were asked to generate one, three, five, or eight ideas for advertising a hypothetical brand of beer. A panel of four advertising professionals rated the ideas. The group given the goal of generating eight ideas actually generated 25; furthermore, the percentage of good ideas did not wane as the quantity of ideas increased. The group given the lowest goal generated only one idea (Bergh, Reid, and Schorin 1983).

The use of analogies can aid the search for creative solutions. Listing similar problems and describing possible solutions can stimulate ideas for solving a current problem. For example, if the task is to advertise automobiles, you might think about how other forms of transportation (trains or ships) were successfully advertised. To avoid suppressing creativity, examine these after, not before, developing your initial ideas.

Groups can enhance creativity with the above-mentioned structured procedures. An alternative is to use virtual groups. In these, participants communicate using e-mail, reports, and letters, but do not meet face to face. Thus, they are not influenced by factors, such as a person's height or looks, body language, facial expressions, tone, or other factors that might cause them to be careful about suggesting ideas that differ from the ideas that are prevalent in the group. As a result, virtual groups can use inputs from many people. I summarize evidence on the value of alternatives to face-to-face meetings in Armstrong (2006).

The "second-solution" technique offers another approach to generating ideas. A facilitator asks the group members what the best solution would be if they were prohibited from using their first solution. This technique aids implementation because the group's energy is devoted to finding alternatives rather than defending the current solution. In a problem involving a change in employee work procedures, the solutions were of better quality when groups were instructed to find a second solution after they had initially solved the problem. The second solutions were obtained in approximately two-thirds of the time needed to find the first solutions, and the groups generally preferred their second solutions to the first ones (Maier and Hoffman 1960).

Despite their popularity, I advise against the use of focus groups. As shown by a lab experiment, it is more cost-efficient to generate ideas by using individual non-directive interviews (Fern 1982). Focus group are also prone to misuse in that many people interpret the results of focus group sessions as evidence or as forecasts.

Build on ideas

I have learned that any fool can write a bad ad, but it takes a real genius to keep his hands off a good one.
Leo Burnett, 1950s

Consider what happens when a group member has an idea that differs from the beliefs of the other members. Initially, the others will try to bring the deviant member into line by reasoning with that person. If they are unsuccessful, they frequently ostracize the deviant person. This phenomenon is easy to demonstrate. There are studies in social psychology that demonstrate the enormous strength of this effect—such as the famous Johnny Rocco study by Schachter (1951)—but I imagine many readers have experienced this phenomenon.

One way to address this problem of rejecting new ideas is to use the "build" technique. Instead of discussing the negative aspects of an idea, focus on how to clarify or improve it. This enables the group to nurture ideas that differ, and helps

group members to avoid the feeling that new and creative ideas are to be avoided. This technique requires a discussion leader to keep the group on track.

Maier (1963), which is still one of the best books on how to run groups, provided the following suggestions for groups (which I have modified). These suggestions are especially relevant for group leaders for face-to-face meetings, but they can also be modified for virtual groups:

- *Be problem-centered.* Keep all discussions problem-centered and avoid looking for excuses or seeking to blame others for a problem. Avoid negative statements.
- *Record suggestions.* Keep track of all suggestions for solving a problem so that each may be explored fully at some point.
- *Explore.* Explore multiple suggestions for addressing an issue. Ask probing questions, such as "Are there alternatives to using emotion to convince people?" "Do we have enough information about what the customers want?" "Are we mistaken in the assumptions about the target market?" "Is there a way to combine suggestions to generate an even better ad?" or "Is there any relevant research on the issue?"
- *Protect people.* Protect individuals from personal attacks and criticism. Ensure that their ideas are thoughtfully considered.
- *Protect alternative viewpoints.* Innovations come from different viewpoints; nurture rather than ignore such viewpoints. Maier and Solem (1952) illustrate this by using this problem: "A man bought a horse for $60 and sold it for $70. Then he bought it back again for $80 and again sold it for $90. How much money did he make in the horse business?" The correct answer is $20; yet 55 percent of his subjects got it wrong. As expected, group discussion helped, especially when leaders were trained to consider alternative views. In these groups, only 16 percent of the groups got the wrong answer versus 28 percent in the leaderless groups. I have found that correct answers can be obtained in nearly all groups if group members each solve the problem separately before the group discusses the solutions. This protection of alternative viewpoints is especially important for problems where only a single person in the group has the right answer.
- *Understand and resolve differences.* Understand differences of opinions within the group and attempt to resolve them.

These are useful guidelines, backed up with evidence. However, to my knowledge, they are rarely used in organizations.

Despite the improved creativity and productivity that comes from structured meetings, many people prefer unstructured meetings. They feel more satisfied and believe that they have produced more ideas by using an unstructured free-flowing format. However, this satisfaction has often been shown to be inversely related to the number of useful ideas that were generated (e.g., Connolly et al. 1990; Paulus et al. 1993; Valacich et al. 1994).

Exhibit D provides a summary listing of the processes for developing and nuturing creativity in advertising:

Exhibit D Developing and nurturing creativity: A checklist

Find creative people:
- Judge their work, not them (avoid bio-demographic information).
- Decide whom to hire before meeting a candidate.

Generate creative ideas by using:
- many individuals, working independently
- multiple problem statements
- brainwriting
- analogies
- second-solution technique.

Build on ideas before evaluation with:
- virtual teams
- structured meetings.

Evaluating advertisements

Develop alternative campaigns, nurture them, and then test them. Many firms do this, especially with TV commercials. Investments in developing TV commercials can be high, and the media costs are also high; therefore, firms should try to ensure that their ads are persuasive.

Commercials are often tested in what is referred to in rough or preliminary form—that is, they are low-budget first takes. Working with alternative ads helps avoid having to "protect" a group's solution. Instead, the group now has a number of solutions from which to choose. A competition among alternative campaigns is likely to pay off (O'Connor, Willemain and MacLachlan 1996).

The development of an alternative campaign is also desirable in the event that the original campaign falls short. Define criteria in advance and have a contingency campaign available. Unfortunately, few organizations use contingency plans (Armstrong and Reibstein 1985).

What follows is a discussion of advertisement evaluation from three perspectives: expert judgments, research, and adherence to principles.

Expert judgments

> *Rarely have I seen any really great advertising created without a certain*
> *amount of bent noses, irritation, and downright cursedness.*
> Leo Burnett, founder of ad agency, 1940s

People, including advertisers, tend to fall in love with their own ideas. However, at some point they should obtain independent expert judgments of their advertising campaigns. Procedures such as Delphi could help to provide such alternative viewpoints.

Delphi is a formal survey of experts involving two or more rounds of anonymous responses. The respondents explain the reasons for their responses on each round. Details about this procedure, and the software to use it, are found at adprin.com under *Creating Ads/Improving Ideas*.

Unfortunately, overall judgments of advertisements do not have high validity. In addition, it is difficult to translate the results into action steps. That is, you might judge one ad better than another; but do you know why? And do you learn how to make the good ad even better?

Interestingly, groups that nurture dissent produce better decisions, as shown in research by Nemeth et al. (2001). Unfortunately many organizations cherish agreement, and typically act to override dissent. Nearly everyone in these organizations understands the rules of the game. Those who do not obey these (unspoken) rules often find themselves ostracized.

A process called "the devil's advocate" (DA) involves gaining a group's acceptance to arbitrarily select a group member whose task is to find the negative aspects in a given proposal, such as an advertising campaign. Once the defects are identified, the group can consider improvements.

The DA procedure has a long history. In 1587, the Roman Catholic Pope, Sixtus V, instituted the DA to help evaluate whether a person should be canonized as a saint. The Church used this procedure until the 1980s. In the latter half of the 20th century, it was recommended for evaluating proposals in organizations. In practice, however, people use the term to apply to any meeting in which they evaluate the merits of a situation.

A literature review found no support for the use of the DA even when properly applied. What appears to happen is that those presenting a plan believe that there is no hope of convincing someone who has been instructed to be completely negative (the DA). As a result, group members are led to reinforce their arguments for the current plan instead of using the criticisms to effect change (Nemeth and Nemeth-Brown 2003).

Experimental studies have shown that *authentic dissent* (that is, when people are arguing for what they believe) is more effective than the DA procedure. This occurs partly because the group realizes that an authentic dissenter might change, whereas the role of the DA is not to change. Furthermore, the assignment of the role did little to protect the people playing DA; they became unpopular. While this also happened to authentic dissenters, people tended to respect authentic dissenters for their courage.

Those with authentic beliefs do a better job in arguing their positions than do those who are merely assigned to the role. Based on their experiments, Nemeth et al. (2001) found that authentic dissenters were able to get group members to focus more on opposing thoughts than supporting ones, thus contributing to more opinion change.

With authentic dissent, potential dissenters realize that they might become unpopular; so they are usually reluctant to speak up. In addition, as with the DA, it is time-consuming because only one person dissents, while the rest defend; it can lead groups to bolster their arguments rather than to think about how to overcome objections.

These problems can be overcome by a procedure that I refer to as multiple anonymous authentic dissent (MAAD). This involves asking experts, including all those involved with a given proposal, to act as dissenters. Each person independently writes all potential defects that they perceive in a proposed campaign. They then send their defect lists (unsigned) to an administrator who organizes, edits, and circulates the list to the group. Each expert then assumes that each of the objections has merit, and describes ways to deal with the objections, then sends them (again unsigned) to the administrator. Finally, the suggested improvements are then summarized by the administrator and provided to the group so that they can make appropriate revisions to the campaign. This process can be repeated.

To ensure that group members respond in a timely fashion, the MAAD process can be conducted during a meeting by taking a time-out for individual work.

Judging from related research on group processes, MAAD should be effective at improving proposals. Because many people can be involved in finding defects, the likelihood that important defects will be discovered increases. This process is analogous to a scientific peer review. As is known from research on peer reviews, individual reviewers catch only some of the errors when they review papers for

publication. For example, in an experiment on medical research, 68 percent of the "reviewers" of a fictitious paper with intentional errors did not realize that the conclusions in the paper were not supported by the results (Baxt et al. 1998).

Properly used, efficiency will be higher with MAAD than with traditional meetings (or with DA) because time is not wasted in defending the original campaign. Instead, the group effort goes into improving it. Under MAAD, groups are more likely to accept changes because they are the ones proposing the changes.

The need for anonymity in dissent is often critical to survival in an organization. This calls for contributions by everyone on the project, as well as a summary that is done in a way that will protect the identities of individuals.

Research

The advertising principles can only take you so far. Research is often needed to assess consumer responses to advertising. It can be applied prior to, during, or after a campaign, or—as is frequently the case—during all three phases.

Experiments and quasi-experiments are the proper ways to assess advertising. Non-experimental analyses are seldom of much value because advertising problems are so complex that even massive sample sizes can be misleading.

As in medicine, there are no absolutes. You must compare alternative advertisements. Think of it like a medical experiment. Compare treatments A, B and C, preferably where one treatment is the control (e.g., no exposure to advertising).

Focus on persuasiveness. Ideally, use actual behavior, such as when testing alternative versions of direct response ads. Lacking behavioral measures, focus on intentions to purchase—or on other actions requested by an ad. Liking is not an objective, so do not ask customers, clients, or managers which ads they like.

All analyses should be done by individuals. Use more than one person to analyze the same problem and compare their written solutions—a procedure known as *parallel processing*. While one person might make a mistake in conducting an analysis, it is unlikely that another person will make exactly the same mistake if the analyses were conducted independently.

Those who fail to do formal analyses often suffer. For example, in 1992, Maytag's Hoover unit in the United Kingdom advertised that it would provide a free air ticket to anyone who spent over £119 for a Hoover vacuum cleaner. Although Hoover did not analyze the costs of the program correctly, over 200,000 customers did; they realized that some flights cost more than £119 at the time. Therefore, they were happy to buy a spare vacuum cleaner. This promotion proved to be a disaster for Hoover; its president and other top executives were subsequently fired.

Using the principles to evaluate ads

advertising needs principles … not opinions.
Rosser Reeves, 1961

I have discussed the use of principles for creating ads. They can also be used to evaluate ads. By identifying relevant principles that are overlooked or misused,

an advertiser can take steps to improve an ad. *Persuasive Advertising* provides structured checklists at the end of each chapter. Checklists typically improve decision-making in complex situations such as flying airplanes (e.g., Arkes, Shaffer, and Dawes 2006).

Would you want a surgical team to operate on you if they had no checklist? For example, a 2008 study evaluated the effects of the implementation of a 19-item checklist for hospital procedures. A before/after experimental design was used for thousands of patients in eight hospitals in eight cities around the world. In the month after the operations, the checklist led to a reduction in deaths from 1.5 percent to 0.8 percent, and in complications from 11 percent to 7 percent (Haynes et al. 2009).

The principles checklists can help improve nearly any ad. For example, an advertising campaign in Scotland sought to increase the number of people available for organ donations after their deaths. This campaign, based on guilt, had modest success; about 100,000 people signed up and six transplants were anticipated as a result. The campaign won an IPA award for effectiveness (Storey 2008). As noted in this book, guilt is indeed a powerful persuasion principle. However, by using the advertising principles checklists, I was able to find relevant principles that the campaign ignored. By far the most powerful overlooked principle was to make organ donation the default option. The campaign also violated the principle of social proof by implying that donating is not common. The ads failed to provide a foot-in-the door action, or to ask people to offer organs to a list of similar individuals, as has been successfully used by LifeSharers.

Members of the campaign team can use the checklists. For an independent assessment, you might use members of internal review boards at agencies (as well as review boards set up by clients) or firms that specialize in doing such audits. These could use trained raters, make comparisons against benchmark ads, and use the results to provide new and improved ads.

Use two or more people to independently use the checklist, then compare their judgments. Efforts could then be made to revise the ads so as to avoid violations and to implement additional relevant principles.

I have often used these checklists to evaluate ads. In all cases, there were ways to improve the effectiveness of the ads. To aid in the assessments, an "AdPrinAudit" Excel tool is provided on AdPrin.com.

Drawing upon research that dates back to Benjamin Franklin—and upon modern-day research that began with Schmidt (1971) and has continued since that time (e.g., Dana and Dawes 2004; Armstrong and Graefe 2010), I propose that you use the "index method" to get an overall assessment of the persuasiveness of an ad, whether for print, TV, or the Internet. To calculate the index for an ad, count the number of advertising principles that have been properly applied and subtract the number of principles that have been violated. As the Index is based upon the principles in this book, I call it the "Armstrong Index™."

The index method is surprisingly useful for complex situations subject to uncertainty, and where there is substantial prior knowledge to draw upon—which is the case for advertising.

Principles map

> *I am told there are people who do not care for maps, and find it hard to believe.*
> *R. L. Stevenson, writing about* Treasure Island

The Persuasion Principles Map (Exhibit E), reproduced on the inside back cover, can help you find relevant principles. In addition, each of the References is linked to the text. Finally, you can find things by using the indexes.

Exhibit E   Persuasion principles map

Strategy

1. Information	**2. Influence**	**3. Emotion**	**4. Mere exposure**
1.1. Benefits	2.1. Reasons	3.1. Emotional focus	4.1. Brand name
1.2. News	2.2. Social proof	3.2. Trust	4.2. Product placements
1.3. Product	2.3. Scarcity	3.3. Self-expression	
1.4. Price	2.4. Attribution	3.4. Guilt	
1.5. Distribution	2.5. Liking	3.5. Fear	
	2.6. Authority	3.6. Provocation	
	2.7. Commitment		
	2.8. Reciprocation		

General tactics   ### Media-specific tactics

5.   Resistance

5.1. Distraction
5.2. Perspectives
5.3. Stories
5.4. Barriers
5.5. Brand or company emphasis
5.6. Spokespersons
5.7. Forewarning
5.8. Two-sided arguments
5.9. Indirect versus direct conclusions
5.10. Innuendos
5.11. Customer involvement
5.12. **Free** trials and samples
5.13. Causes

7.   Message

7.1. Arguments
7.2. Clarity
7.3. Forceful text
7.4. Interesting text
7.5. Tone
7.6. Word selection
7.7. Wordplay
7.8. Metaphors and figures of speech
7.9. Simplicity
7.10. Informative illustrations
7.11. Informative color
7.12. Ad consistency
7.13. Disclaimers and corrective
        advertising

6.   Acceptance

6.1. Problem/solution
6.2. Demonstration
6.3. Evidence
6.4. Data presentation
6.5. Customer endorsements
6.6. Celebrity endorsements
6.7. Expert endorsements
6.8. Comparative advertising
6.9. Negative advertising
6.10. Refutation
6.11. Puffery
6.12. Questions
6.13. Repetition
6.14. Subliminal messages
6.15. Memory devices
6.16. Word of mouth
6.17. Call for action

8.   Attention

8.1. Alert the target market
8.2. Campaign consistency
8.3. Campaign contrast
8.4. Slogans
8.5. Brand identifiers
8.6. Attractive visuals
8.7. Color for attention
8.8. Humor
8.9. Sex
8.10. Models
8.11. Technical quality

9.   Still media

9.1. Headline
9.2. Pictures
9.3. Text
9.4. Structure of body text
9.5. Typeface
9.6. Layout

10.   Motion media

10.1. Scenes
10.2. Voices
10.3. Music and sound
10.4. Pace

Conclusions

Persuasive Advertising is the result of 16 years of gathering and analyzing evidence on persuasiveness in advertising, and presenting it in such a way that it can be useful to others.

I have assumed that anyone involved in purchasing, creating, or evaluating advertising can be more effective by using evidence-based principles. To accomplish this, they must have easy access to principles. In effect, this book provides a map designed specifically for those purposes.

Practitioners will continue to produce new ideas on persuasion, and research by academicians will continue to be the major source of evidence on the effectiveness of the principles.

While the analysis of non-experimental data has contributed to the development of advertising principles to date, it has outlived its usefulness. Further progress will depend heavily on lab and field experiments, quasi-experimental research, and meta-analyses. The Internet and direct-response advertising offer opportunities for conducting such experiments. Advertising research firms should join in this effort by providing quasi-experimental and experimental data to test and refine the principles. In short, as in the case for medical treatments, progress in persuasive advertising depends upon the development and communication of evidence-based techniques and principles.

As the field continues to expand, new discoveries will be reported on advertisingprinciples.com (AdPrin.com). I hope that many people will contribute to this effort to summarize all useful knowledge about persuasion through advertising.

Advertising's ultimate objectives are to persuade people to buy a product, donate time or money to a cause, or support an idea. But the principles underlying what works in advertising also apply to persuasion in other areas of life.

Appendices

Appendix A
Challenges to generalizing from experimental evidence

Those who oppose the use of experimental evidence in the development and assessment of advertising offer many reasons for doing so. I list the most common reasons to help you evaluate the level of confidence you can place on the studies referenced in this book.

First, I list four issues that might raise concern, but that do not apply to *Persuasive Advertising*:

1. *Do convenience samples (e.g., students, mall intercepts) affect the validity of experiments related to persuasion?*

Our interest in this book is how people respond to alternative approaches to persuasion under different conditions. For this purpose, the findings from convenience samples are relevant. Convenience samples have been standard practice in experiments for well over a century, not only in medicine, but also in the social sciences as well as in advertising.

When a tangible item (such as an ad) must be shown to a respondent, historically this required in-person interviews. Jacoby and Handlin (1991) found that marketing researchers used mall interviews for 95 percent of their in-person studies (the others being door-to-door at 3 percent and central locations at 2 percent). None of the in-person studies used probability designs to select the subject pool. Jacoby and Handlin also analyzed papers in academic journals that "Described 'primary' empirical research and used samples of people either individually or in groups." Based on a sample of 446 papers from 34 academic journals, they found that 97 percent used convenience samples to select the subject pool.

A substantial number of studies have been conducted to determine whether results from convenience samples can be relied on. My conclusion from this research is that convenience samples—whether using students or friends or subjects recruited through ads, as was done in Milgram's famous obedience studies, or through mall surveys—are relevant for experiments involving decision-making processes.

A close match was found between laboratory studies (often using students) and field studies in organizational behavior. For example, in the nine cases allowing for comparisons, the direction of the findings agreed, while in six cases where the magnitude of effects could be compared, three were virtually identical and two had only small differences (Locke 1986).

A convenience sample of physicians and pharmacists was used in an experiment on the use of disclaimers for a drug sold by Berlex Labs. Berlex was the plaintiff in a

lawsuit, where the defendant was Shering AG. The use of a convenience sample was challenged by the defendant, which then commissioned an extension of the study using a probability (representative) sample of subjects. As expected, the findings were similar and they upheld the original conclusions (Jacoby and Szybillo 1994).

Additional studies have also supported this conclusion. They include studies involving decision-making processes in accounting (Liyanarachchi and Milne 2005) and in managerial decision-making (Remus 1996).

2. Do subjects try to help researchers?

The notion that subjects try to help researchers confirm hypotheses is referred to as the "demand effect." Orne (1962) describes one of the more influential studies on demand effects. He conducted a small informal study in which he asked people to agree to participate in an experiment. He then gave the subjects sheets of random numbers and asked them to perform 224 addition computations on each. When they finished, he told them to pick up a card with instructions on what to do next. Each card had the same instruction: "You are to tear up the sheet of paper which you have just completed into a minimum of 32 pieces then go on to the next sheet of paper and continue working as you did before; when you have completed this piece of paper, pick up the next card which will instruct you further. Work as accurately and as rapidly as you can." Orne wanted to see whether the subjects would continue with such a meaningless task. To his amazement, they kept at the task for hours with no signs of hostility. The experimenters gave up before the subjects did.

Does this show that they wanted to please the experimenter? To please the experimenter, subjects would have to discern the experimenter's hypothesis, which is difficult. Therefore, it is doubtful that this was their motivation.

There is little evidence that demand effects are serious in the types of experiments we report. An alternative explanation is that people like to present themselves in a favorable light; A lab experiment supported this explanation (Sigall, Aronson, and van Hoose 1970).

3. Are some studies too old?

The principles in this book are based on how people respond to persuasive strategies. These tend to remain constant over time. Many of the early research studies in advertising are excellent—and still offer valuable advice. Some of them are cited in this book and many have been referred to in papers that I cite. Gigerenzer (2000) reached a similar conclusion about research in psychology:

> Several years ago, I spent a day and a night in a library reading through issues of the *Journal of Experimental Psychology* from the 1920s and 1930s. This was professionally a most depressing experience, but not because these articles were methodologically mediocre. On the contrary, many of them make today's research pale in comparison with their diversity of methods and statistics .... What depressed me was that almost all of this work is forgotten.

4. Are most findings just common sense?

Most theories and findings by academics are common sense. Consider this statement from a book on persuasion: "Writing pervades modern life as a principal vehicle of communication."

   Common sense applies even to some of the more famous studies. Elementary school students were asked to predict the outcome of 17 classic experiments in psychology. With the exception of a cognitive dissonance experiment, the students, on average, guessed correctly (Mischel 1981). However, these classic studies also showed that the effects of some phenomena, such as authority, were far more powerful than people realized. Thus, simple common sense was not always correct, as you can see from the research on advertising.

While you might ignore the limitations listed above, keep the following in mind:

Only a small percentage of relevant studies in advertising look at behavior

This is true. Fortunately, there is ample evidence that attitudes are related to behavior. A meta-analysis by Kim and Hunter (1993a) found 138 comparisons of attitude and behavior with a total sample of almost 91,000 subjects. Attitudes and behavior were closely related overall (r=0.79).

   More generally, the criteria in the studies were based on intermediate measures including intentions to buy, which are predictive of behavior. In Kim and Hunter (1993b), a meta-analysis found 47 correlations between intentions and behavior with 10,203 subjects; they showed a strong relationship between intentions and behavior. This is especially true for high-involvement goods, as Morwitz (2001) showed. Wright and MacRae (2007), in their meta-analysis, found that purchase intentions studies provide unbiased predictions of behavior.

   In addition, while only a small percentage of advertising studies look at behavior, that percentage amounts to a large number of studies; that is, in absolute numbers, many studies have examined behavior in advertising.

   When behavior, such as sales, was studied, it was done typically only through short-term responses. This does not pose a serious limitation, because advertising seldom has a long-term effect without first having a short-term effect (Jones and Blair 1996; Lodish et al. 1995a; Riskey 1997).

   Most advertising studies are one-shot studies. Few studies in marketing are replicated or extended, as only about 1 percent of marketing journal space has been dedicated to replications. Of the replications and extensions, 60 percent conflicted in some way with the original studies (Hubbard and Armstrong 1994). For example, in doing literature searches for this book, I found that some interesting findings (e.g., principles related to the Golden Section and to subliminal perception) were not supported when replicated. Other findings, such as two-sided arguments, apply only under certain conditions, as was discovered by research extensions. Unfortunately, this situation with respect to replications and extensions has deteriorated over time. The replication rate of studies in major marketing journals dropped by over half in the last decade of the 20th century,

with the result that only a fraction of 1 percent of findings in marketing journals have been successfully replicated (Evanchitzky et al. 2007). The situation is not so bad, however, considering that few publications in marketing are important and thus worth replicating. I focus on important studies in this book, and many of them have been replicated and extended.

Appendix B
Data on print ads from *Which Ad Pulled Best* (*WAPB*)

Sandeep Patnaik and I, along with a team of research assistants, analyzed full-page print ads from the *Which Ad Pulled Best* (*WAPB*) using primarily editions 5 through 9 (Burton and Purvis 1987–2002), although edition 4 was used for principles with small samples Each edition contains 50 pairs of ads except for the 9th edition, which has 40 pairs. These ads were prepared by leading U.S. advertisers and were copy tested by Gallup & Robinson.

The *WAPB* database allows testing of the direction and effect size for the advertising principles because most conditions were identical for each ad in the pairs. The target market, product, and media were the same. Of the 240 pairs of ads in editions 5 through 9, just over half were for the same brand. Given these controls for various factors, we refer to these as "quasi-experimental field data."

Recall scores were available for ads in 40 of the pairs in each edition. Recall represents the percentage of respondents who can accurately describe an ad the day following exposure. Reader-interest scores were available for ten pairs in each edition (except for Edition 9). For simplicity, we refer to both of these scores as "recall." For the most part, the scores were obtained based on interviews to test the extent to which both the product and the advertiser were correctly identified.

Note that the advertising principles relate to persuasion, whereas the *WAPB* analyses of the quasi-experimental data are based on recall. Of course, we can expect recall to be related to persuasion. A person who is not aware of an ad is unlikely to act on it (yes, I am aware of those claims that people could be affected by ads they do not notice). In support, Zinkhan and Gelb (1986) found that high "noted" scores (a type of recall score) were positively related to intentions (the correlation was 0.52).

Another limitation is that each test examined only one of roughly 180 principles that a print ad might use. Fortunately, however, many of these other principles were similar across each pair of ads.

We compared ads that used a specific principle with matched ads that did not. If all advertisers followed the principles, we would not have been able to conduct this analysis. Fortunately for us, many ads violated principles. This enabled us to use the quasi-experimental analysis for 58 principles. In some cases, the analyses were also used to assess the conditions within the principles; thus, there were 69 analyses in total.

A team of research assistants supervised by Sandeep Patnaik coded the conditions and actions for each ad. The coders had no prior knowledge about an ad's effectiveness. Coding sheets were used (advertisingprinciples.com includes sample sheets). In some cases, such as the number of words in a headline, the coding was

obvious. However, in many cases, such as determining whether an ad related to a high-involvement or low-involvement product, the coding was subjective. Thus, it required thoughtful coding by someone familiar with the principle.

In some cases, we used more than one coder. For example, there were three coders for the ads for the principle to "Communicate a USP."

The Instructors' Manuals for *WAPB* also provided persuasion scores, but usually only for the ads with the highest recall. Persuasion was "measured by 'Favorable Buying Attitude' and is the ability of the ad to increase buying interest or generate favor for the product." Thus, we did not have quasi-experimental data on persuasion. Instead, we examined non-experimental data on persuasion scores for all ads in each edition. We compared the persuasion score for ads that followed a given principle with those that ignored or violated the principle, and reported the extent to which the ads that employed the principle had higher relative persuasion scores. Thus, if the ads that used the principle were 12 percent more persuasive than their benchmark ads, while the ones that did not follow the principle were 7 percent more persuasive than their benchmark, the former would have a 5 percent advantage. Because these are non-experimental data with no controls for conditions, the analyses, at best, provided only a crude measure of persuasive effects. We did not use results in which the sample size was small, the principle involved a number of conditions, or the gains were trivial.

The analyses also helped to validate and refine the principles. For example, for one potential principle, "include a verb in the headline," we initially relied upon the reasoning of advertising experts. The *WAPB* analysis produced results that contradicted our initial way of stating the principle. We then went back to the prior literature and found a study with evidence that verbs should not be used in head-lines (Rossiter 1981). Eventually, we dropped this principle because of conflicting evidence. We also failed to find any effect for another principle, "avoid negative words in the headline." Once again, an empirical study led us to realize that we had overlooked a key condition—that negative words are useful when refuting a common belief (Rossiter 1981).

We provide details on the *WAPB* analyses, along with full disclosure of the codings, at advertisingprinciples.com under the heading, "Analyses for *Which Ad Pulled Best*." In addition, the website includes all the ads that we used along with the codings. In some cases, parts of the ads were not easily identifiable, although the text is always easy to read. The copy testing scores are available upon request to those who might want to conduct replications or extensions.

Appendix C
Non-experimental data on TV commercials

Many studies have used non-experimental data to compare the effectiveness of ads that use a principle with those that do not. Such studies are only useful when conditions (e.g., high-involvement or low-involvement product) play a small role. This applies although the sample sizes may seem large. Furthermore, the analyses are nearly always reported without regard for conditions. Even if the conditions were coded and included in the analyses, it would be impractical to consider many of them with only 1,000 commercials. More important, advertisers try to match their approach to conditions, so it is not really possible to assess the effects of the principles when important conditions apply.

The large-scale study by Stewart and Furse (1986) examined 1,059 TV commercials that had been submitted for testing to Research Systems Corporation. They involved mostly fast-moving consumer products, such as cereals, beverages, cleaners, and paper products. Almost 90 percent of the ads were of 30-second duration, and the others were of 60-second duration. Stewart and Furse used regression analysis to see how 160 features of the ads affected recall, comprehension, and persuasion. They provided a summary of their findings in their Appendix C, and I provide the full text at advertisingprinciples.com under "Developing ad campaigns." (For related studies, see Stewart and Koslow 1989; Laskey, Fox, and Crask 1994; Stanton and Burke 1998; and Phillips and Stanton 2004.)

Dave Walker conducted extensive analyses of tested TV commercials and made these findings available for *Persuasive Advertising*. Dave is Senior Vice President, Global Research Director for Ipsos ASI, the advertising research division of the Ipsos Group (ipsos.com). His analyses look at one principle at a time and allow for an estimate of the importance of the principle.

Ipsos ASI tests ads in a context that simulates natural television viewing among respondents who are not initially aware that the advertising is the subject of the study. Multiple commercial spots (including the ads to be tested) are placed in a half-hour television show in a format typical of commercial programming. The program and the placement of ads are held constant across studies to provide a consistent context for test exposure. Respondents are screened and recruited by telephone to participate in a study to evaluate "new television material being considered for broadcast." The day after watching the program, respondents are re-contacted by telephone for the follow-up interview to verify compliance with instructions, and to obtain information about recall and persuasion..

The *recall score* represents the number of respondents who recall an ad and describe it correctly. Ipsos ASI studies have shown that this measure is an indicator of the rate at which in-market exposure produces ad awareness, and is

one indicator of the ad's potential to impact consumer behavior. After the recall questions, respondents are re-exposed to selected ads, individually. For each ad, they answer a structured series of open- and closed-end questions including an in-depth profile of communication, reactions to the ad itself, purchase intent, and attitudes toward the brand. Ipsos ASI studies have demonstrated that their recall measure is correlated with actual changes in sales.

The findings reported in this book are based on a subset of 1,513 thirty-second spots, tested among a consumer sample of women aged 18 to 65 from 2001 through 2003.

Appendix D
Prospect theory and persuasion

People seem to be more affected by the thought of losing something than by the thought of gaining the same amount. Consider your reaction to a 25 percent loss in the stock market versus an equivalent gain. Which would seem larger to you? This common-sense idea has been called "prospect theory" (Tversky and Kahneman 1981).

Few areas related to persuasion have been studied as much as prospect theory. It has led to advice to tell customers how they can cut their losses ("If you do not act now, you could lose $200"), rather than how to make gains ("Save $200 on this sale"). In contrast, many advertising experts say to focus on the positive and tell people how they can make gains. So who is right, the loss-framers or the gain-framers?

Alas, the research on prospect theory has proven to be barren of useful advice with respect to persuasion. Loss-framed messages are no more persuasive than gain-framed messages. The primary evidence was provided in a meta-analysis involving a variety of experiments with 165 effect sizes from 50,780 subjects (O'Keefe and Jensen 2006). An earlier review of 36 studies reached the same conclusion (Levin, Schneider, and Gaeth 1998).

Furthermore, attempts to identify conditions under which loss framing might help have led to little success. A review of prospect theory found 136 papers with experiments using approximately 30,000 subjects, and indicated that it was difficult to determine the conditions under which it is best to emphasize avoiding a loss rather than making a gain (Kühberger 1998). For example, some researchers speculated that prospect theory might apply to health care; however, Wilson, Purdon, and Wallston's (1988) review of the research on prospect theory did not help them formulate recommendations for health care messages.

Why doesn't prospect theory help in advertising? One conclusion is that it has been tested in ways that have little relevance to real-world problems (Levy and Levy 2002).

Gal (2006) concluded that the appearance of greater weighting of losses to gains is not a fundamental psychological propensity as claimed by prospect theory proponents. Instead, it is because of an experimental artifact resulting from the status quo (inertia) bias.

Appendix E
Media allocation methods

Persuasive Advertising focuses on how to develop ads that persuade. It does not deal with how to deliver those ads to customers. Here are five methods that can be used to decide how much to spend on media as well as how to allocate that spending across various media. I start with the weakest method and work towards the strongest. Ideally, one should use all five methods, but put more weight on the findings from the stronger methods:

Last year's advertising expenditures for the brand

This method assumes that last year's advertising was optimal and that the task is to determine how expected changes in the future would affect changes in the ad budget.

1. Ask two or more heterogeneous experts, working independently and anonymously, to examine last year's advertising-to-sales (A/S) ratio and to provide written lists of the arguments favoring increases in advertising expenditures and those favoring decreases. They are then asked to make subjective estimates of whether to increase or decrease advertising expenditures and by what percentage.
2. The judgmental estimates from the experts are then averaged, presumably using equal weights.
3. Obtain A/S ratios for as many prior years as possible for this product.

The Delphi procedure might be useful with steps 1 and 2 above. Software can be obtained at advertisingprinciples.com

Typical expenditures for the firms in your industry

The typical expenditure method assumes that your competitors are rational and that it is not wise to depart substantially from typical behavior unless there are strong reasons to do so. This is usually a reasonable assumption, although advertising warfare and hysteria (such as with the advertising during the dot.com bubble) create problems.

1. Ask experts, working individually, to write down arguments in favor of, or against, an A/S ratio that differs from the average for the product category. For example, it would be higher if the company had some important new products. It would also be higher (lower) if it had a campaign that followed (did not follow) many of the advertising persuasion principles, or if it did well (poorly) relative to other ads in copy tests.

2. Ask the experts to provide estimates of how much the advertising/sales ratio should depart, in percentage terms, from the typical expenditure.
3. The estimates from the experts are then averaged, presumably using equal weights. To the extent that there is uncertainty (e.g., as shown by widely varying estimates), be conservative and avoid large deviations from the typical A/S ratio for the product class.

Consider using the Delphi procedure for steps 1, 2, and 3.

4. Obtain historical information on the A/S ratio for the product in question and adjust it by the estimates in #3 above.

Elasticity method and Wright's rule

To apply the elasticity method,[1] you can start by assuming that an advertising campaign will have a typical elasticity of about +0.1. This is based on Sethuraman and Tellis (1991), Tellis (2009), and related papers summarizing over 260 estimates of elasticities. Better yet, find the elasticity for your situation considering the type of product and the media. You can get some idea for this from Table 1 in the Sethuraman and Tellis paper. For example, the elasticity for durable goods is about 0.23 (because they often contain news) while that for non-durables is about 0.03.

The elasticity will be higher if your campaign follows the prescribed principles, and lower if it violates principles. In addition, elasticities are higher in the introductory phase of a product. They are lower at the brand level than at the industry level if the competitive brands tend to match their competitors' advertising expenditures (Assmus, Farley, and Lehman 1984).

The elasticity for TV commercials is about 0.03 while that for print ads is about 0.17. Note, however, that these are non-experimental data. They do not imply that you can get a higher return by switching from TV to print, for example. Rather, they say that products that are appropriate for print advertising have a higher elasticity. For example, products that are in the early stages of the life cycle and those with substantive news are typically advertised by print media, so they have a higher elasticity than the well-known products advertised on TV. So first decide on the proper media, then use the appropriate elasticity. And if the decision on media is not clear-cut, be conservative in the selection of an elasticity by staying close to 0.1.

Once you have an estimate of the elasticity, apply Wright's rule (Wright 2009): that is, set the advertising budget at a level equal to the elasticity *times* the gross margin on each item of the product being advertised *times* the forecasted sales.

For products that have been advertised for some time, the elasticity method can also be used to examine propose modest changes in proposed advertising expenditures. For example, to assess the impact of an increase of 10 percent on advertising expenditures, use the elasticity to assess the changes in the number of additional units that would be sold, then calculate the change in the gross margin that would be achieved.

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1 See the Glossary for an explanation of elasticities.

Decomposition

Decomposition means that you take a complex problem, break it down in parts, estimate each part, then combine them. It is especially useful when the breakdown allows you to draw upon different sources of knowledge, and when each of the components is subject to less uncertainty than is the global estimate of elasticity. For evidence on the effectiveness of this method, see MacGregor (2001).

Determine elements of the process by which an ad can lead to behavioral change. The decomposition procedure will guide you through this process. Here is a possible format for a print ad:

Number of people in the target market exposed to the ad = T
Percentage of above who
 a) See the ad
 b) Read the ad (percentage of "a")
 c) Understand the ad (percentage of "b")
 d) Intend to purchase because of the ad (percentage of "c")
 e) Actually purchase (percentage of "d")
 f) Repeat purchases from new buyers (percentage of "e")

ROI = [{(T)*(a)*(b)*(c)*(d)*(e)*(f)*unit margin} minus the cost of campaign] divided by the cost of the campaign

The inputs can come from data or from expert judgments. For example, to estimate "understanding" of an ad, you might draw on data from Beltramini and Brown (1994), who estimated correct comprehension of 80 percent for print ads and 73 percent for TV commercials.

When relying on judgmental estimates, obtain independent estimates from at least five people, each of whom has knowledge about the effect of advertising. Ask each expert to provide an estimate of the expected effect of the ads, and also 95 percent confidence intervals about the estimates. Use equal weights to combine estimates of the expected effect and of the confidence interval.

Experimentation

Field experiments are ideal, given that it is feasible and economical to obtain information on response to the ads.

It is easy to experiment with direct response advertising. For example, if the advertising will be done by direct mail, try a sample of 10,000 names and test alternative versions of an ad, say 5,000 to each of two versions. Examine the profit made from the resulting sales and divide by the variable costs of the test ads (ignoring the cost of developing the ads and any fixed costs) to determine the return on investment. If profitable, then send the most effective ad to the rest of the mailing list. If they are close in effectiveness, send different ads to each subsample to spread the risk.

Appendix F
How to select an advertising agency

Below, I offer criteria for evaluating an advertising proposal. To determine whether the list is comprehensive, I reviewed it with five experts. In all, they represented over 120 years of experience in advertising. One of these experts was a director of a large New York advertising agency, one had been the head of advertising research for a large consumer products company, one was the founder and head of a moderate-sized Philadelphia agency, and two were marketing professors who had worked for ad agencies. I asked them what was missing from the list and how would they weight these factors in the evaluation of an agency.

The experts did not think anything was missing. The average importance weightings across the five experts are provided in parentheses. They were provided in 1996, and some of the criteria have been explained in more detail here, so they are only rough guides.

1. Planning techniques

Does the agency know how to plan a campaign effectively? For example, does it provide an effective time-line for developing a campaign? Does it consider alternative strategies? Does it have contingency plans? Much evidence exists that formal planning techniques will improve the performance of an organization. Is the agency aware of this research and of the recommended procedures? (9 percent)

2. Objectives

Does the agency focus on your primary objectives? Does it know how to assess the effectiveness of advertising so as to be able to determine whether the advertising is meeting these objectives? What are the measurable outcomes, and what level of success might be expected on each? Will the agency provide any guarantees on the success of the campaign? Can it tell whether the advertising is providing a good ROI? Is its compensation tied to the ROI of the campaign? (11 percent)

3. Target market research

If it is necessary to obtain additional information about the target market, does the agency know how to design and evaluate such studies so that they will relate effectively to the advertising campaign? Does it know how to use survey research methods effectively? An examination of one of its earlier reports might be useful here. Is it aware of the research in this area? One way to assess this is to compare one of its target market research reports with the evidence-based advice provided by Dillman (2000). (9 percent)

4. Creativity techniques

While clients may not be able to judge the level of creativity of a proposal, they should be able to judge whether the procedures seem to be useful, so they should ask the agencies to explain these procedures. What techniques and procedures does the agency use to enhance creativity? For example, when it says that it used brainstorming, does this merely mean that a group of people sat around and tossed out ideas, or does it mean that it actually followed a highly structured brainstorming procedure? (16 percent)

5. Persuasion research

Is the agency familiar with the research findings on how to persuade people? If yes, how does it ensure that this research is brought to bear on the advertising campaign? Does it have good grounds for violating this research? (4 percent)

6. Copy alternatives

How many alternative approaches will the agency propose? (9 percent)

7. Copy testing

What formal procedures would the agency recommend to test and select the most effective of its copy alternatives? (7 percent)

8. Media alternatives

What media alternatives would the agency consider, and why? (9 percent)

9. Media testing

How would the agency determine the optimal amount to spend on an advertising campaign? What procedures would it recommend to select the most effective media? Does it focus on the objectives? For example, how would it calculate ROI by media? (7 percent)

10. Capabilities of the team

What are the capabilities of the people who will be working on the proposed account? Do they have any conflicts of interest? Does the agency have a complete list of clients served, so that failed as well as successful relationships might be examined? (15 percent)

11. Taste/legal/ethical guidelines

What procedures does the agency take to avoid offense to interest groups, boycotts, or lawsuits? For example, does it have a formal review board that has legal expertise and that recognizes the interests of groups that might be affected? Does it have a written code of ethics that it asks the advertising team members to sign for each campaign? (4 percent)

The experts placed much importance on the creativity process (criteria 4 at 16 percent). They placed little importance on persuasion research (4 percent). I hope this book's evidence will lift that percentage.

For an example of the application of this procedure to a proposal for the Subaru U.S. account, see Armstrong (1996). To apply this procedure for selecting agencies, use the Proposal Evaluation Sheet, available on advertisingprinciples.com.

Appendix G
Management presentations: An evidence-based checklist

The following checklist relates to making persuasive oral presentations for problem solving. Many of the guidelines draw upon the principles in *Persuasive Advertising*. [The principles are denoted in brackets]. This list is provided in a checklist format on AdPrin.com.

Structuring the talk

1. *Agenda.* Make an agenda for the talk. If appropriate, send the agenda to the client before the talk.
2. U*se only strong arguments*. Avoid weak arguments as it adds complexity and because people tend to take an average of the strength of the arguments. [7.1.1.]
3. *Focus on positive arguments.* Instead of showing what is wrong, show how you would improve upon the situation. [7.1.2.]
4. *Provide objective support*. (Do not say "I think," "I believe," "We are confident," etc.) Present evidence, not emotion or opinions. [3.1.1.] Use independent third-party support; describe results from prior research studies even if based on small samples. [6.3.1., 6.3.2.]
5. *Use indirect conclusions for "new" conclusions*. Build the case so that the audience can infer the conclusions on their own when a conclusion is new or challenging. Do not force conclusions on them. But if the conclusion is not obvious, or there is not enough time to reflect, or the audience already agrees, provide explicit conclusions. [5.9.2.]
6. *Use two-sided arguments.* Describe risks and limitations and explain how they can be handled. [5.8.1.] Put the favorable arguments first or alternate favorable and unfavorable ones. [5.8.2.]
7. *Use a single theme – or two – to tie the talk together.* [7.9.1.]

Preparing for the talk

8. *Rehearsal*. If the talk is important, ask one or more people to act as if they were the clients and present your talk to them. Be sure that they stay in their role.
9. *Dress*. Dress to show respect for the client. An added advantage is that formal dress adds credibility. [5.6.2.]
10. *Casting*. If working in a group, select a spokesperson who sounds credible and who is similar to the client (e.g., in accent and manner). Ask the others to sit among the clients. [5.6.1., 5.6.2., 5.6.3.]

11. *Handouts.* Where appropriate, provide handouts such as an agenda and space for comments. Avoid detailed handouts as they can distract.
12. *Slack*. Include slack time. For example, if you have 20 minutes available, plan the talk for 15 minutes. Make some parts of the talk optional, and do not show these on the agenda.

Presenting the talk

Organization

13. *Purpose*. Describe the objectives of this talk and what actions steps will be considered.
14. *Introduction*. Present the most important things first. [9.1., 10.1.] Focus on action-oriented recommendations and benefits. [6.17.1., 6.17.2., 6.17.3.] Attention is at its peak here. Do not distract with stories or jokes. [8.8.2.]
15. *Agenda.* Present an outline of the presentation so your audience will know where you are headed. Show timing, such as "the last ten minutes will be available for questions." [9.4.1.]
16. *Structure.* Build the presentation around the recommendations.
17. *Show support for each recommendation.* [6.3.1., 6.3.2.]

Visuals

18. *Visual aids*. Visual aids (e.g., PowerPoint) can help people follow certain aspects of a talk. This is especially valuable when showing designs, presenting lists, and summarizing data. However, for complex material, audio-visual information is difficult to comprehend. [Sections 9 and 10.] The material must be organized so that the different communication modes reinforce one another. For example, you do not want people reading ahead of you, so either roll out each point as you discuss it on a slide, or use many simple slides.
19. *Use key words as bullet points*. Keep the visuals simple so that the oral presentation keeps pace with the written information. [9.4.1.] This helps to retain attention and gives you a reason for being there -- to explain each point.
20. *Keep overheads simple.* Eliminate anything that does not contain information. [7.9.2.] This means no wallpaper. If something on a slide is not absolutely necessary, remove it.
21. *Use high contrast for text.* Make it easy for viewers by using high contrast between the text and the background. Use black on white. Do not write on illustrations or on wallpaper. Do not use colored fonts [9.5.2.]
22. *Use sans serif font to enhance legibility.* [9.5.1.]
23. *Use color only when it has a meaning*. For example, "We recommend that you make the product available in the following colors." [7.11.1.] When you do use color, explain the meanings in words because some people are colorblind. In addition, people might make B&W copies of the slides.
24. *Use exhibit titles if the conclusions are not obvious*. Provide an informative title for exhibits if the conclusions from the data are not immediately obvious or if the conclusion is already widely accepted by your audience. [5.9.1., 5.9.2.]

It is best if you can present the evidence and let the listener draw the proper conclusion.

25. *Contingency plan.* If you use a presentation program such as PowerPoint, plan the talk so you do not lose time setting up. And be prepared to talk without showing the visuals, so have a hard copy of the slides for yourself. Fortunately, audio is as effective as audio-visual for much material. [Sections 9 and 10.]

Speaking

26. *Use one speaker.* It is easier to manage the presentation if you have only one speaker. If you need a second speaker, the lead speaker should be responsible for timing and questions. [7.12.1.]
27. *Accept clarification questions.* Restrict complex questions to clarification during the first part of the presentation. In your introduction, ask the client (audience) whether that is acceptable, stating that this is how you have scheduled the timing for your talk, and that you have reserved time for questions near the end.
28. *Post serious questions.* If questions other than clarification ones arise during the presentation, summarize them (and perhaps write them so all can see). Say that you will address them later in the talk or after the talk. This will help to ensure that you complete your talk and the talk will look coherent. [7.12.1.]
29. *Use a moderate pace.* Talk at a moderate pace if you have excellent content. [10.4.2.] For material that is known by the audience, you can speak up to 30 percent faster than the normal pace and still be understood. [10.4.2.] Interestingly, fast talkers are regarded as more competent, truthful, fluent, energetic, enthusiastic, and persuasive, but a fast pace does not work well with complex material.
30. *Use a calm, reasonable tone.* However, the speaker should show energy and interest and use forceful language. [7.5.1.]
31. *Pause before key points.* Pauses of two seconds are recommended to create some interest in what follows. [10.4.3.]
32. *Pause after key points.* Pauses allow people to reflect on what was said. [10.4.3.]
33. *Check for understanding.* Ask whether the audience needs clarification. This also helps to gain their involvement. [5.11.5]
34. *Ask questions that you will answer.* To gain attention, raise a question before you make a key point. Do this occasionally, and only when you have a good answer. [6.12.1.]
35. *Make eye contact.* This raises interest and increases trust. Talk to people in the audience who are good at listening. If you are being filmed, look at the camera. [10.1.3.]
36. *Avoid humor.* If you have strong arguments, be careful about humor. Humor is seldom appropriate for a high-involvement process as it detracts from thinking about the arguments. It may also steal the spotlight from the recommendations. However, gentle humor that is relevant to the message may help to reinforce the point. [8.8.2.]
37. *Repeat key points by changing the way you make each point.* Space the repetition. Avoid high repetition in situations where people are paying attention. [6.13.3.]

Ending the meeting

38. *Orient the questions.* Provide guidelines for the questions. In particular, orient them around the proposed action steps. Say, for example, "What do you need to know about recommendation #2 before taking action?"
39. *Listen.* When people ask questions, the key thing is to listen and to understand. You want to increase the amount of time they spend talking by reducing the time you talk. Normally, it is the custom to make suggestions in the form of questions, so in most cases you do not need to provide an answer on the spot. "Thank you" is often sufficient. If people really need an answer, they will let you know. If the issue is complex and you are uncertain, rephrase it to ensure that you understand.
40. *Do not solve problems during the session.* If you are not sure how to answer something, do not make things up on the spot. Check to make sure that you understand the question and tell the questioner you will get back to them.
41. *Summarize.* After all of the questions have been asked, summarize them and say that you plan to do address them and get back to the client.
42. *Go for the close.* Go back to your recommendations and try to gain agreement on action steps. [6.17.1., 6.17.2., 6.17.3.]
43. *Use the "rejection and retreat" approach.* If a recommendation is not accepted, raise the possibility of taking a small relevant action step.
44. *Leave a written report (or promise one).* The written report should be in prose. A week from now, the overheads will not be intelligible to others.

After the talk

45. *Send a summary of action steps.* Send a summary of the key issues and of the action steps agreed on as a result of the talk. Describe who will do what by when.
46. *Inform the client about progress.* Follow up with the results of your action steps. If you made changes as a result of the meeting, tell the client about them.

Acknowledgement: Andrew Abela (author of *Advanced Presentations by Design*) and Lisa Warshaw (director of the Wharton Communication Program) helped in the development of this oral presentation checklist.

Appendix H
Written management reports: An evidence-based checklist

The following guidelines refer to a management report written to gain acceptance for a recommended course of action. They are provided under the assumption that there are strong arguments to support your recommendations. Some of these suggestions are based on received wisdom and some on the principles (and empirical evidence) in *Persuasive Advertising.* [The relevant principles are listed in brackets.] This list is provided in a checklist format on AdPrin.com.

Target market

1. Be sure to understand who you are writing for and what are their expectations. An effective way to do this is to ask people to stand in the role of the target market as they write comments on the report.
2. Add a cover letter where needed.

Source

3. Identify who wrote the report, when they wrote it, and how to reach them.
4. Establish your expertise, if not done previously. Put this at the end of the report unless you are well known for your expertise. [6.7.1.]

Recommendations

5. Make the recommendations operational. For example, "Raise the advertising budget by 5 percent over the next year." [6.17.1., 6.17.2., 6.17.3.]
6. Build the report around the recommendations. [7.9.1.]
7. Offer choices among options and guidance on how to select the best option. [1.3.2., 1.3.3.]
8. Describe specific benefits: for example, "Profits from this campaign will exceed $185,000 over the next five years." [1.1.1.]

Arguments

9. Describe the process used to reach your recommendations. [2.1.2.]
10. Focus on strong arguments. Weak arguments would distract. [7.1.1.]

11. Use only positive arguments. Instead of showing what is wrong, show how you would improve upon the situation. [7.1.2.]
12. Use indirect conclusions for "new" conclusions. Build the case so that the readers can infer the conclusions on their own when a conclusion is new or challenging. Do not force conclusions on readers. But if the conclusion is not obvious, or the audience already agrees, provide explicit conclusions. [5.9.2.]
13. Use two-sided arguments. [5.8.1.] Describe risks and limitations and explain how they can be handled. Put the favorable arguments first or alternate favorable and unfavorable ones. [5.8.2.]
14. Use a single theme – or two – to tie the report together. [7.9.1.]
15. Provide enough detail on data and methods (in an appendix or on a website) to allow for replication. [6.3.2.]
16. Provide sources (e.g., Smith 1995) in the text and provide access to full text. [6.3.]
17. Show that you *analyzed* alternatives. [6.3.1.]
18. Provide objective support. (Do not say "I think," "I believe," "We are confident," etc.) Present evidence, not emotion or opinions. [3.1.1.] Use independent third-party support; describe results from prior research studies even if based on small samples. [6.3.1., 6.3.2.]
19. Provide examples, stories, and pictures when needed to explain your points. [7.10.1.] These can also be helpful when the audience has strong beliefs that are not consistent with your proposals.

Reader guides

20. Executive summary. The first page should provide recommendations on what to do, why to do it, and how this was determined. Assume that the client will only read the first page. [9.1.1.]
21. Provide an introduction on how the report is organized. [9.4.2.]
22. Provide roadmaps such as a Table of Contents and informative sub-headings. [9.4.2.]
23. Use bullet-point sub-headings for three or more items in a list. [9.4.2.]

Exhibits

24. Tables are typically easier for people to understand and they are more precise. If you cannot get a table to work, consider a chart (for example charts can help to show patterns over time). Avoid pie charts. [6.4.2.]
25. Organize data so that the conclusion is obvious [6.4.2].
    • Put data to be compared in columns, not rows;
    • Round data, typically to three significant digits;
    • Show column averages (and row averages, if relevant). Order rows by size or by key variable;
    • Use layout to guide the eye (do not use vertical lines);
    • Highlight data to reinforce conclusions (e.g., boldface key numbers).

26. Avoid anything that is not essential to understanding a table or graph. [7.9.2.]
27. Provide descriptive titles for an exhibit if the conclusion is not obvious, or if the conclusion is already widely accepted by the audience. [5.9.2.]

Style

28. Use prose for the report. Bullet points are not sufficient, although they can be useful as headings.
29. Write forceful reports. Use specific words with concrete meaning. [7.3.1.] Do not hedge. [7.3.2.]
30. Do not use negative words as they harm clarity. [7.2.2.] Avoid apologies.
31. Do not go beyond your evidence or speculate (unless you are proposing further research).
32. KISS—Keep it Short and Simple: (Simple words; common words; short sentences; one idea per sentence; eliminate unnecessary words; avoid jargon unless common among all of the target market.)
33. Avoid cross-references (going elsewhere to see important results is distracting, so do not put important tables at the end of a report).
34. Put important information in the report itself (not in an appendix).
35. Use common typeface for text and be consistent. Use a serif typeface to aid reading although sans serif might be used for clarity of headings. [9.5.1.] Use black on white; do not write on shading; do not use colors for fonts or backgrounds. [9.5.2.]
36. Use a calm tone. Avoid exclamation marks. Do not use all caps. Avoid bolding that extends more than three lines. [9.5.3.]
37. Do not number the sections unless you need them to help people find things. This is consistent with the guideline to avoid distractions and things that do not contain information.
38. Use few footnotes—none if possible.
39. Consider also providing an electronic copy of the report—especially when the report can provide links to supporting information.

Rewrite

40. Rewrite until it is clear and interesting. The first draft never works.
41. Proofread to eliminate obvious errors. Even better, ask someone else to proofread. Readers may think small errors reveal a lack of care and generalize about your analysis.

Appendix I
Advertisingprinciples.com (AdPrin.com)

The AdPrin.com site is designed to provide support to people who want to use the evidence-based approach to persuasive advertising. The site includes, among other resources:

* easy-to-use checklists to help apply the principles described in this book
* updates to principles as new evidence becomes available
* suggestions for revising principles or for adding new principles
* educational materials related to the principles
* some advertisements and commercials referred to in this book
* corrections to the book
* commentary on the book
* reviews of the book
* links to resources that might help in applying the principles
* a facility to suggest useful new features.

Glossary

Advertising elasticity The relationship between percentage changes in advertising expenditure and unit sales. Thus, an elasticity of 0.1 means that if the expenditure on advertising for a brand increases (decreases) by 10 percent, unit sales would increase (decrease) by 1 percent.

Alignable choice A set of products in which the differences are based on a single dimension, such as the size of a container of milk. I sometimes refer to these as easy choices.

Anchoring The tendency of people to focus on a value, such as a suggested retail price of a product, when making a decision.

Body text or body copy The main text of an advertisement, not including the headline or brand identifiers.

Brainwriting A technique in which group members work alone to list their ideas for a given problem. It can also be done within a group meeting by taking a short time interval for individual work, say ten minutes, during which group members individually write all the solutions they can think of for a given problem. They submit their lists anonymously and the ideas are then collated. This procedure is more effective than brainstorming.

Campaign A series of advertisements with a common objective.

Caption A description commonly placed above or beneath a photograph or an illustration.

Cognitive dissonance Psychological conflict resulting from incongruous beliefs and attitudes held simultaneously. Dissonance can occur when individuals receive information that conflicts with their beliefs.

Comparative advantage The degree to which a brand is superior to a competitive brand on a given feature or benefit.

Comparative advertising Advertising that compares two or more brands of the same type of product or service, and makes comparisons in terms of one or more specific product or service attributes. Direct comparative advertising explicitly names a competitive brand (e.g., "better than Bose") and indirect comparative advertising refers to competitive brands without explicitly naming them (e.g., "better than other leading brands").

Concrete words Words that denote a material object as opposed to an abstract quality, state, or action. I use this word as synonymous with "specific."

Copy The text used in ads. (See Body text.)

Copy testing Research to determine how consumers will respond to an ad. In particular, will the ad affect behavior?

Correlation Correlations give an idea of how closely two variables vary, going from -1 (perfect agreement in the negative direction: if x is higher, y is lower) to +1 (perfect agreement in the positive direction: if x is higher, y is higher). It is

widely confused with causality (which it is not). A pattern of correlations may help to support a statement about causality, but the lack of a correlation does not mean that variables are not causally related. For example, it might occur because one variable did not vary, or because the relationship was masked by the variations in another variable. It is not an easy measure to understand because it is related to various properties of the data. For example, data on individuals tend to have smaller correlations (below 0.1) than group data, and time series can have very high correlations (above 0.9) even for spurious relationships (such as two variables that rise over time). Unfortunately, it is difficult to infer importance or effect sizes from correlations. In addition, it is easy for statisticians to obtain higher correlations by using various "tricks." Armstrong (1970) showed how a correlation of 0.92 was obtained by correlating two series of random numbers. I try to refrain from reporting correlations; however, in some cases, it is the only measure provided by the researchers, and can be used as a very rough measure of relative importance.

Credence product   A product for which the claims are based on faith. The consumer cannot check this, even after using the product. However, published tests or comments from prior consumers could help to transform a credence product into a search product (see Search product).

ELM (pronounced E-L-M) Elaboration likelihood method. Persuasion follows a central route. In other words, recipients think about the message, when they have the motivation and ability to process the message. However, if they lack either the motivation or ability, persuasion follows a peripheral route. They may rely on simple cues, such as, "If he is an expert, it must be right." Booth-Butterfield and Welbourne (2002) review its impact on research.

Elasticity See advertising elasticity.

Endowment effect The concept that an object becomes more valuable when one possesses it.

Experience good A product for which claims can be evaluated only after a period of use by the consumer.

Exposure Consumers have seen or heard an ad, even if have they paid little attention to it.

Eye tracking A research method that determines which part of an advertisement consumers look at by tracking the pattern of their eye movements. Initial studies have been traced to the 1920s.

FDA (Food and Drug Administration) The U.S. government agency that regulates advertising of foods, drugs, and cosmetics.

Focus group interview A research method that brings together a small group of consumers to discuss a topic, such as a new product, under the guidance of a trained interviewer. Focus groups are often misused. They should seldom be used for research because they are biased, inefficient, and expensive. They were not designed to evaluate or to predict; but unfortunately, they are often used for these purposes. In short, do not use focus groups to evaluate advertising. Here are the reasons:

• *Biases occur in selecting samples*. Selection of focus group members often

necessitates self-selection because it requires that a group meet at a specific time and place.

- *Sample sizes are small.* Because people interact with one another within the group, a researcher cannot claim that the observations of each member are individual.
- *Responses are biased by other subjects*. In scientific work, effort is devoted to ensuring that other subjects do not bias subjects' responses. In focus groups, people listen to others and they are influenced by their responses.
- *Biases occur because of the administration.* Questions are often modified by the leader to favor a particular answer; such modifications might be unintentional. In addition, customer responses are subject to interpretation, creating another potential bias.
- *People tend to treat the responses as good predictors.* There is no evidence that focus groups provide useful predictions.
- *Focus groups are expensive.*

Font A typeface style in a single size. A single font in English includes all 26 letters of the alphabet, along with punctuation, numbers, and other characters.

Font size The size of the font typically measured in points, where a point is approximately 1/82 of an inch.

Framing Questions or statements worded in ways that influence how the viewer interprets them. Framing is also known as providing a "perspective."

FTC (Federal Trade Commission) The U.S. federal agency primarily responsible for regulating advertising.

Gallup & Robinson A leading advertising research firm set up by George Gallup and Claude Robinson in 1948. G&R provided recall and persuasion scores for the advertisements included in *WAPB* editions.

Gunning Fog Index A measure of readability based on the length of sentences and large words. $G = 0.4 * (S+W)$, where S is the average number of words per sentence, and W is the percentage of words with three or more syllables (ignoring common suffixes, such as "ed" and "ing"). The resulting index approximates the number of years of schooling needed to understand the material. Word processing programs allow for easy assessment of readability. The analysis should exclude tables, references, subtitles, and numbers.

Hedonic product A product that offers a positive experience; also called transformational products.

Hierarchy of effects A series of steps by which people receive and use information to reach a decision regarding actions they will take. The hierarchy of effects model was developed in the early 1900s and is widely used both in advertising and other areas of persuasion. The following illustrates a three-step version:
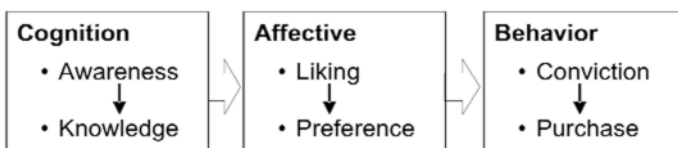
There are many other versions, such as AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action). While these seem like sensible ways to structure the problem, I was unable to find evidence that they lead to improved decision making, nor were Barry and Howard (1990) successful. O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy (2004) claimed that the hierarchy is of little value. They said that different sequences of the steps are plausible, and all the steps need not occur for a message to be persuasive. Hierarchy of effects models have been used in other fields (usually under different names). Evidence supporting its value in these other area is also sparse.

High-involvement product A product or service that people evaluate carefully before making a purchase decision. It is likely to be an expensive or visible product, such as an automobile, that involves some monetary (e.g., expensive) or personal risk (e.g., clothing).

Intention A plan by a consumer to engage in certain behavior such as to purchase a product, make a donation, or attend a function.

IPA (Institute of Practitioners in Advertising). A U.K. organization that has been conducting awards competitions to recognize campaigns that clearly demonstrate advertising effectiveness. The awards began in 1979. As of 2009, there were over 830 tested case histories summarized in 17 volumes, and accessible through ipa.co.uk and the World Advertising Research Center (warc.com).

Ipsos ASI One of the world's largest advertising research firms. It provided findings from analyses of non-experimental data on 30-second TV commercials that it had tested for recall and persuasion among adult women. Appendix C describes some of its procedures.

Jingle Music and verse combined in a commercial; it is often sung and is usually characterized by a rhyme.

Layout The ordering and spacing of the various components of headline, illustration, copy, and brand identifiers.

Logo A brand name or symbol often presented in a special lettering style or typeface.

Long-exposure ad An ad, such as in a magazine or on a website, that is sufficiently long to allow customers to take their time in viewing or reviewing.

Low-involvement product A product or service that a consumer is unlikely to evaluate carefully before making a purchase. It is generally an inexpensive product, such as soap, that involves little risk.

Meta-analysis A structured quantitative review of the literature on a given topic. A meta-analysis should disclose the procedures used to select and code the studies, the method for summarizing the findings, and the procedures used to ensure that the search for information on this topic was comprehensive. For an example of how to effectively conduct a meta-analysis, see any of the studies by O'Keefe that I have cited.

Metaphor A combination of two or more elements in which one element is understood or experienced in terms of the other; a form of wordplay that

applies a word or a phrase to a concept or an object, such as a brand, to imply a feature of the object (e.g., Budweiser is "the king of beers").

Nondirective interviewing A technique in which an interviewer asks broad questions to lead the interviewee into a discussion of issues that the interviewee considers important. The interviewer probes for additional details but does not introduce ideas or evaluate what the interviewee says. The following guidelines can aid in conducting such interviews:

- Start the interview by explaining what you would like to find out. The initial part of the interview is often the most difficult. If the opening statement (e.g., "Tell me about your objectives") does not draw a response, try something a little more specific (e.g., What is the target market for product X?). Assure the interviewee that all responses will be anonymous. During the interview:
- Don't evaluate what interviewees say. If they feel they are being judged, they will be careful about what they say.
- Let interviewees know that you are interested in what they say. To find out more about a particular subject that the interviewee mentions, ask for elaboration- e.g., "That's interesting, tell me more." Or you may use a reflection of the interviewee's comments—"You seem concerned by ...," often picking up the last few words used by the interviewee. These requests help to provide more information and let interviewees know that you are interested in what they are saying. Take notes. This shows that you are interested; it will also help you to listen—and to remember.
- Don't interrupt. Let interviewees carry the conversation once they get going. They will talk about what they think is important.
- Don't bring in your own ideas during this interview. You can do that at the next meeting.
- Don't worry about pauses in the conversation. The interviewee might get a bit uncomfortable during pauses. Don't pressure the interviewee—and don't be in a hurry to talk if it is likely that the interviewee is thinking.

Random sample A sample taken from any given population in which each person maintains equal chances of being selected as part of that sample. In practice, this term is used to refer to any type of probability sampling, and I use it that way in this book.

Recall Remembrance of an ad's content. There are many ways to measure recall. For example, in our analyses of ads from *Which Ad Pulled Best?*, recall was proven name registration (PNR); it was measured a day after the respondent has read the magazine with the target ad in it. Measuring PNR involves unaided recall ("What ads do you remember in the *Time* magazine that you read yesterday?"), category-aided recall ("Do you remember any ads for any cars? Which ones?") and brand-aided recall ("Do you remember an ad for Toyota?"). PNR is the percentage of respondents who are able to correctly remember the target ad and then go on to describe the ad accurately when asked to do so.

Received wisdom Commonly held beliefs that are based only on unaided judgment, as reflected by typical practice and expert opinions.

Return on investment (ROI) The profit earned divided by the investment employed to earn that return; usually expressed as a percentage gain on an annual basis (e.g., P&G assesses ROI at least twice a year on each of its brands).

Rhetorical device A technique for using language to produce emphasis (such as repetition or alliteration).

Sans serif typeface A typeface without serifs, and usually with minimal or no variation in thickness of strokes. Helvetica is a sans serif face.

Search product A product for which the consumer can evaluate claims easily and accurately prior to making a purchase by inspecting the product or by using information sources, such as *Consumer Reports* or amazon.com.

Serif typeface A type style with definitive endings (serifs) to the open-ended letter strokes and most corners of letters; the small finishing lines attached to the letters. Times New Roman is a moderate Serif typeface.

Supers Words superimposed on a TV, video, movie, or computer screen during an ad.

Tagline A phrase that conveys a brand's most important product attribute or benefit in a short memorable phrase. Used as a synonym for "slogan."

Time compression A device used in broadcast production to delete time from television or radio commercials, primarily by reducing the intervals between words.

USP (unique selling proposition) A short statement of a product's strongest benefit (real or perceived). It can be objective or subjective, and it can be rational or emotional.

Utilitarian product A product or service that solves a problem.

Voice-over An unseen narrator or commentator in TV commercials.

WAPB (Which Ad Pulled Best) A series of books that presents 50 pairs of ads, each matched against another ad for the same product, ad size and media (and half the time for the same brand). For details, see Appendix B. As of 2002, the series was in its 9th edition.

White space Unoccupied parts of a print advertisement, including between blocks of type, illustrations, headlines, or brand identifiers; also refers to blank sections with colored background.

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Note: the references are linked to the text using the designation (P XXX) to show the page number(s) on which each is referred to.

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Name index

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1.1. Benefits	2.1. Reasons	3.1. Emotional focus	4.1. Brand name
1.2. News	2.2. Social proof	3.2. Trust	4.2. Product placements
1.3. Product	2.3. Scarcity	3.3. Self-expression	
1.4. Price	2.4. Attribution	3.4. Guilt	
1.5. Distribution	2.5. Liking	3.5. Fear	
	2.6. Authority	3.6. Provocation	
	2.7. Commitment		
	2.8. Reciprocation		

General tactics

5. **Resistance**	6. **Acceptance**
5.1. Distraction	6.1. Problem/solution
5.2. Perspectives	6.2. Demonstration
5.3. Stories	6.3. Evidence
5.4. Barriers	6.4. Data presentation
5.5. Brand or company emphasis	6.5. Customer endorsements
5.6. Spokespersons	6.6. Celebrity endorsements
5.7. Forewarning	6.7. Expert endorsements
5.8. Two-sided arguments	6.8. Comparative advertising
5.9. Indirect versus direct conclusions	6.9. Negative advertising
5.10. Innuendos	6.10. Refutation
5.11. Customer involvement	6.11. Puffery
5.12. **Free** trials and samples	6.12. Questions
5.13. Causes	6.13. Repetition
	6.14. Subliminal messages
7. **Message**	6.15. Memory devices
7.1. Arguments	6.16. Word of mouth
7.2. Clarity	6.17. Call for action
7.3. Forceful text	
7.4. Interesting text	8. **Attention**
7.5. Tone	8.1. Alert the target market
7.6. Word selection	8.2. Campaign consistency
7.7. Wordplay	8.3. Campaign contrast
7.8. Metaphors and figures of speech	8.4. Slogans
7.9. Simplicity	8.5. Brand identifiers
7.10. Informative illustrations	8.6. Attractive visuals
7.11. Informative color	8.7. Color for attention
7.12. Ad consistency	8.8. Humor
7.13. Disclaimers and corrective advertising	8.9. Sex
	8.10. Models
	8.11. Technical quality

Media-specific tactics

9. **Still media**
9.1. Headline
9.2. Pictures
9.3. Text
9.4. Structure of body text
9.5. Typeface
9.6. Layout

10. **Motion media**
10.1. Scenes
10.2. Voices
10.3. Music and sound
10.4. Pace