

# WHAT MAKES GREAT CREATIVE Great?

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At face value, many pharmaceutical ads might be considered “interesting.” **BUT BEING INTERESTING DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN EFFECTIVE.**



**In order to be “great,” creative efforts must be so powerful and persuasive** that they demand a reaction.

**S**ometimes the most “interesting” creative efforts are so cluttered, text-heavy, or nerve-racking that the message is diluted and target observers are too distracted to react. That’s too bad, because in order to be “great,” creative efforts must be so powerful and persuasive that they demand a reaction — a powerful impulse to buy, a desire to gain more insight into the product or the message itself, or the decision to follow up via phone or e-mail.

Great creative must connect with the target audience and make consumers care about the brand and be compelling enough to elicit a response.

It might be an insight that hasn’t ever been considered, a visual that evokes a sudden epiphany, or a message that catches the reader by surprise, leaving him or her emotionally charged.

But whatever it is, great creative must do three things:

- Connect with its target audience,
- Compel a response, and
- Demand a reaction.

## THE SIX CRITERIA FOR GREAT CREATIVE

There are six definitive criteria for what is considered great creative.

### 1 Great creative makes one stop and notice.

Leo Burnett once said, “If you don’t get noticed, you don’t have anything.



The art is in getting noticed naturally, without screaming or without tricks.”

This gout disease awareness ad from TAP Metabolic Disorders conveys the prickly discomfort associated with gout. Meanwhile, the copy communicates one simple clinical message: Controlling serum uric acid levels can reduce the risk of recurrent gout. Viewers stop and take notice. In short, this visually compelling ad evokes a visceral reaction and induces an unconscious empathic response and sensory reaction to how gout feels.

### 2 Great creative is on strategy.

According to David Ogilvy, “If it doesn’t sell, it isn’t creative.” Creative efforts should be true to the brand promise and compel observers to take action based on the brand’s USP. The ability to execute a highly telegraphic ad that is on point and on strategy requires brand insight, which requires diligent market research and astute positioning. The good news is that once you’re grounded pragmatically, you can soar

## GETTING THE BEST CREATIVE FROM YOUR AGENCY

### GETTING GREAT CREATIVE REQUIRES EXPLORING DIFFERENT EXECUTIONAL APPROACHES.

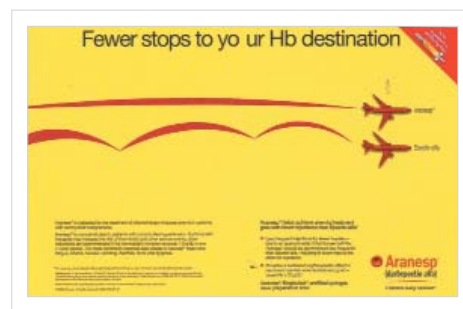
The most commonly used executional approaches include:

- Clinical
- Iconic
- Problem/Solution
- Slice-of-life
- Mechanistic
- Metaphor
- Personification

... as is the case with Amgen’s Aranesp (darbepoetin alfa) campaign.

The positioning here is consistent with Amgen’s overall branding strategy, which is to focus on the key differentiator of Aranesp. Aranesp is dosed twice-monthly, compared with epoetin alfa, the competitor agent, which requires once-weekly dosing.

Since Aranesp was already a widely recognized treatment agent for stabilizing hemoglobin levels before this ad was created, news about dosing provided a competitive advantage and a new reason to believe in Aranesp. The underlying idea is that due to the longer serum half-life of Aranesp, patients can achieve sufficient hemoglobin concentration with fewer visits for titration. The headline “Fewer stops to your destination” combined with the airplane make the case with quiet visual eloquence.



### 3 Great creative differentiates.

Great creative separates itself from the competition and within the marketplace. It is also distinct in its approach and personality. When it comes to the power of differentiation, William Bernbach’s dramatic statement rings true: “In advertising, not to be different is virtually suicidal.”

One key way to differentiate is to observe which executional approaches are being used over and over within a particular therapeutic



niche. If companies competing within a niche use a lot of mode-of-action, it makes sense to step away from that approach and use another tactic. Many marketing executive and advertising professionals like to use people in their campaigns, but there are notable successes that diverge from this approach. For example, with Amitiza (lubiprostone), Takeda took a metaphorical approach instead of featuring individuals wracked with constipation-induced discomfort who find explicit relief after treatment. In this ad, the metaphor of origami-like blocks becoming birds that take flight perfectly expresses relief from intestinal discomfort and stricture with an almost Zen-like calmness.

#### 4 Great creative is single-focused.

Bill Cosby was not joking when he said, "I don't know the key to success, but the key to failure is trying to please everybody." Great creative should be single-focused, meaning it should be built around a single compelling brand promise. Trying to focus on too many things at once will only dilute the core message.

Despite the valiant efforts of marketing teams, the reality is that an ad can really only do one thing and do it well. Positioning gurus Jack Trout and Al Ries explained why in their groundbreaking industry primer, *Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind*. They explained that a person can really only hold one thing in his or her mind.

Staying focused is difficult, especially considering that most positioning statements have multiple areas of focus (efficacy, tolera-



bility, ease of administration, etc.), but staying focused is absolutely necessary. The payoff for being disciplined and staying focused is being able to create a profound connection with your audience.

In the case of the UK campaign for Viagra (sildenafil citrate), the intimacy conveyed by the black-and-white close-ups of canoodling couples with the simple blue pill in the foreground embodies a stripped-down, single-focused approach that speaks volumes to Pfizer's target audience.



#### 5 Great creative is simple.

Great creative should be uncomplicated, uncluttered, and make its point easily and without too many layers. Almost 500 years ago, Leonardo da Vinci, the archetypal Renaissance man, said, "Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication." Even for someone whose broad interests and celebrated accomplishments in painting, sculpture, architecture, and inventing seemed to rest on complex ideas, simplicity was the hallmark of his most successful creations.

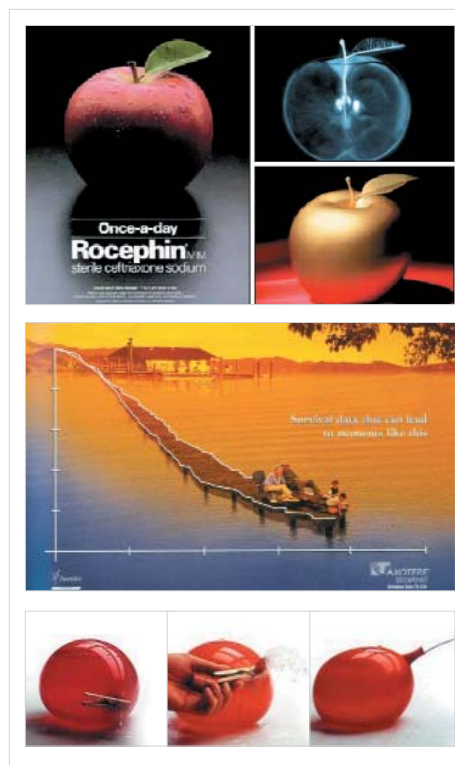
And for that reason, the Mona Lisa continues to be one of the most widely recognized paintings in the world and has been used in various incarnations in marketing and advertising for decades.

Simply put, simplicity has been and always will be the highest form of intelligent, well-informed creativity.

In Takeda's campaign for Rozerem, the use of "zero" both as a symbolic figure and in large-font, headlined text is the height of sophistication, precisely because of its simplicity. The copy differentiates Rozerem from other insomnia products based on "zero evidence of abuse or dependency." At the same time, the "0" suspended in a relaxing green landscape represents the ultimate respite and opportunity for carefree slumber. It's simple: The ad makes you think that because of Rozerem maybe you don't need to think too much about how to achieve a good night's sleep.

#### 6 Great creative is branded.

When it comes to great creative, ads should be branded and readily identifiable as being part of or belonging to



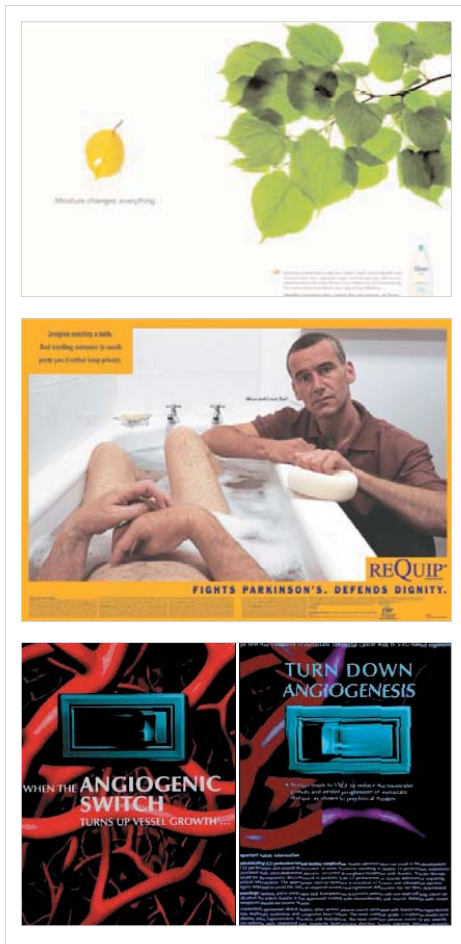
the brand and its campaign. Brand image and long-term recognition is such a valuable asset that it makes sense to stay with a brand image and evolve it over time.

An outstanding example of branding is Roche's iconic Rocephin (ceftriaxone sodium) once-a-day ad. By using the symbolically obvious, yet elegant, apple, the creative team created a hallmark campaign that evolved starting with Rocephin's 2003 launch. Because of the ironclad branding associated with the Rocephin apple, creative teams have been able to capably draw on this imagery with very simple and spare textual support.

Using the great creative approach with various executional styles, marketers for Aventis' Taxotere (docetaxel) were able to use the clinical executional approach without being too heavy-handed. This visually compelling imagery is relaxing and at the same time is able to support the simple tagline "bringing data to life." It has several of the elements of great creative in that it is simple, on strategy, and employs a subtle metaphorical approach. The underlying message is continuity of life, conveyed by placid water, a green canopy of leaves, blooming hilltops, late-afternoon sunlight, and in the forefront, an active, multi-generational family.

In the case of Hytrin (terazosin HCl), the water-filled red balloon represents a well-executed iconic approach, in which the red balloon represents an uncomfortably full, leaky bladder. The imagery is very simple, yet evocative, and the use of red carries the iconography as far as possible without resort-





ing to gimmicks. This approach combines three panels and a sense of mounting tension that finally leads to complete (and controlled) relief as the water escapes the balloon.

The problem/solution approach used by the team that created the Dove Moisturizer ad seen above used a simple metaphorical presentation of a single yellow leaf — dehydrated, sallow, and disintegrating, next to a branch of healthy, well-hydrated green leaves. With this visual approach, the leap from leaf to skin is easy to make.

This above slice-of-life ad for GlaxoSmith-Kline's ReQuip (ropinirole) is not just dramatic and poignant, but painstakingly so. The combined portrait of skin, porcelain, two sets of clenched fists, and a bewildered, exhausted expression paint a stark picture without the comfort of soft-focus photography.

This ad helped GSK carve out a differentiated space in the area of Parkinson's disease treatment.

The seemingly simple concept of inhibiting angiogenesis as a way of stopping the growth of cancerous tumors lends itself to mode-of-action (MOA) advertising. In an ad illustrating the MOA of Genentech's Avastin (bevacizumab), a vast network of capillaries and veins covers the entire first page of the



spread. The dimmer switch is used to illustrate the process of being able to “turn down” vessel growth in the second page of the spread. The MOA is clearly and succinctly explained in the bulleted text. This ad is simple, well-designed, and on strategy. In the case of Avastin, a first-in-class vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) inhibitor, Genentech was able to own this therapeutic MOA, so using this executional approach made sense.

In the Vesicare (solfenacin succinate) ad, which was created using a metaphorical approach, the strung-up pants communicate a sense of dynamic, restless, barely controlled discomfort — a perfect visual metaphor for the experience of urinary urgency and frequency. The final panel aptly conveys relaxation and “the relief of unbearable urges.”

As comarketers of Byetta (exenatide injection), a first-in-class therapeutic agent for the treatment of type 2 diabetes, Amylin and Eli Lilly have been faced with the opportunities and challenges associated with introducing a novel therapeutic approach. This Byetta ad, which conveys B-cell responsiveness, efficient MOA, and dependability using cartoon-like personified beta-workmen works because it is eye-catching and humorous, but also clinically astute and relevant.

### CREATIVE FREEDOM

These six executional approaches serve as excellent examples of great creative, but there

### DOES YOUR CREATIVE DO THE FOLLOWING?

- Connect on an emotional level to make your audience feel something about your brand.
- Compel the target audience into action to make a purchase, find out more, or change their thinking.
- Communicate its intended message clearly, quickly, and credibly.
- Campaign over multiple executions and across media to become stronger and more memorable over time.

are many other potential approaches that can be used. Regardless, an executional approach should never limit a campaign's greatness and the great creative criteria should be integrated into the approach.

There are many talented creative professionals working in our industry, and with good input, great creative can happen on a regular basis.

Five ways to foster great creative include:

1. Provide clear, focused direction,
2. Factor in enough time,
3. Be flexible,
4. Recognize that qualitative market research is directional not definitive,
5. Be brave — don't be afraid to listen to your gut.

The British actor/comedian and screenwriter, John Cleese, best known for his roles in Monty Python, once said, “If you want creative workers, give them enough time to play.” With enough direction and information to ground them, creative professionals should have the freedom and time needed to come up with great ideas and execute those ideas. Even Leonardo da Vinci, who was sometimes accused of being a procrastinator, needed time to play.

Adhering to the six great creative criteria provides a structure in which to execute approaches, concepts, and ideas. But adherence to a structured creative approach must be accompanied by a willingness to pay attention to gut reactions. Often, those responsible for judging creative efforts have a gut feeling that the creative effort in question will be ineffective, yet they can't verbalize why. Often, it's much later, and sometimes too late, before they recognize that the “smart” ad that made them so uncomfortable at first glance is too busy or text-heavy, poorly designed, or has some other problem and now-obvious flaw that renders it off-target and ineffective.

Great creative should be intuitive, assuming of course, that the creative team understands the product, its USP, its brand mission, and what makes great creative great. Armed with fundamental knowledge, the only thing left to do is let the creative team go to work.

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