

CREATIVE DIRECTORS

BY TAREN GROM

PharmaVOICE is pleased to publish this special feature **SHOWCASING THE INDIVIDUALS WHO INFLUENCE THE LOOK AND FEEL OF THE INDUSTRY THROUGH THEIR CREATIVE EXECUTIONS** and insights, strategic thinking, and mentorship of up-and-coming talent.

More than 25 of the industry's creative directors reveal their personal philosophies related to developing good, strategic creative campaigns; what to look for in up-and-coming talent; how to keep teams motivated; and supporting strong creative executions that reasonably push the envelope.

GETTING PERSONAL ABOUT CREATIVITY

We asked our distinguished group to reveal their creative secrets: where they draw inspiration from; their preferences for particular artists; their creative outlets — outside the office; and their definition of what constitutes the creative process.

▶ WHERE DO YOU DRAW INSPIRATION FROM?

STEVE HAMBURG. WISHBONE. We live in a culture that's constructed of information, images, and messages, so it's easy to find inspiration just by looking around. The proverbial walk down the street, pausing at the newsstand, browsing through stores, and taking in the energy of the streetscape are all reliable ways to get the juices percolating. Of course, movies, TV, books, and the Web offer endless sources of stimulation, too. Interestingly, one type of TV show is particularly inspiring to me: the infomercial. And not just any infomercial: the cheesier the better. The pure, crass, skillful salesmanship of these shows is, in a sense, a thing of beauty. It awakens me to the reality that advertising, fundamentally, is about persuasion and selling. So, while a stroll through MOMA nourishes my higher creative skills and instincts, listening to Ron Popeil hawk his Showtime Rotisserie is no less inspiring.

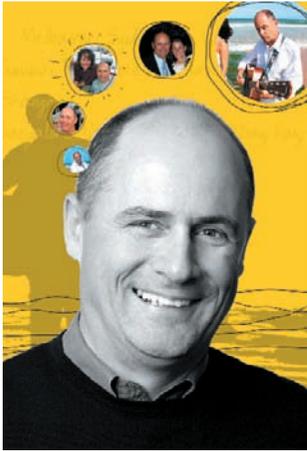


▶ **CHRISTOPHER BAUGHMAN**

PointRoll

If something doesn't inspire you every day, than you're just not paying attention; be open to daily inspiration.

KEN THORLTON. HEALTHED. Inspiration comes from the inner silence of focus and observation and the "ah ha" of comprehension. Sometimes, the best design ideas come effortlessly and are their own inspiration. Personally, I am thrilled by innovative projects that help people better manage their daily lives, and more specifically, empower patients to understand, treat, and manage their own diseases. Innovative ways of "seeing" can change our environment on a huge scale — like the redesign of prescription bottles that permit easier reading and understanding. I am moved by unique and memorable designs that are simple and easy to grasp. Good design principles, along with adherence to health literacy guidelines, go a long way to promote better understanding and compliance. Innovative ways of getting patients to really see information and understand concepts allows them to have their own "ah

**ROB ROGERS**

Sudler & Hennessey

I have always distinguished between inspiration and creativity. Inspiration to me is like fuel for an engine that produces overflowing positive feelings, and creativity is the practical application of all that energy.

**RAFAEL HOLGUIN**

Palio Communications

Although many would argue that we are in the business of changing behavior, I would say we are in the business of medical awareness and informing people about healthcare solutions.

ha” moments — moments that can make a big difference in their being able to better care for themselves.

CHRISTOPHER BAUGHMAN. POINTROLL. So many things inspire me to create. From pop culture, to television, movies, books, what kids are wearing and their “lingo,” down to music. What I listen to greatly affects what I create. Also I follow old, as well as new, trends to see how things change, shift, and evolve, and then I ultimately come back again but in new ways.

ROB ROGERS. SUDLER & HENNESSEY. I have always distinguished between inspiration and creativity. Inspiration to me is like fuel for an engine that produces overflowing positive feelings, and creativity is the practical application of all that energy. To be more specific, I think to be inspired one needs to be moved emotionally. Art, music, writing, plays, movies, speeches, noble actions, acts of kindness, anything that touches the soul and lifts one up. Ideally one should be inspired at least once a day, although it’s not always a practical feeling. It can be so powerful that it ends up being a distraction, but it certainly gets you going. I believe the best kind of creative ideation occurs through connectivity; one idea attached to another can produce a third, more differentiated idea. But it’s inspiration that causes the idea to occur in the first place.

BRUCE NICOLL. S&R COMMUNICATIONS. Heretical as it may sound in this forum, I am always inspired by the integrity that physicians bring to research sessions. Taking time out from

a busy day or coming in late in the evening, they are unfailingly prepared to make an effort to understand what some offbeat concept or obscure design is attempting to convey. With them having to view every patient as a potential litigant, you’d think they’d be furiously against anything ambiguous or overly conceptual, out of sheer self-protection. But no, physicians seem intent on giving those behind the glass the very best of their professional opinion. So I try to respect that and tell the truth in as stimulating a way as possible. I’m also inspired by foreign movies; a glass or two of good Irish whiskey; and dreams, of course — that trippy, interstitial time between sleep and wakefulness is especially productive.

RAFAEL HOLGUIN. PALIO. Many fine artists, musicians, and poets can afford to be inspired by external circumstances because there is room for personal and individual expression. When entertainment is the focus, they don’t have the same accountability as we do when delivering relevant information that can mean life or death for an audience. Great communication design work doesn’t come from self-imposed inspiration. It comes from deeply understanding the objective and knowing human historical behavior and psychographics, as well as from a well-defined need being rightly met. By understanding the audience, we are not simply trying to please them and give them the expected solution; we are challenging them to complete the picture and pique their curiosity.

Although many would argue that we are in the business of changing behavior, I would say we are in the business of medical awareness and informing people about healthcare solutions. My approach to this type of problem-solving is thinking and communicating simply and logically. I design according to what I would like to see as the viewer. So many times, we end up being attracted to things because they were just interesting enough to make us dig deeper and want more. In other words, I try to put myself in the place of the consumer and ask what would provoke me or get under my skin, what stops me, and what pleases my senses. Everything that is designed should trigger a real emotional response. Creative inspiration lives inside all of us, that is, we all have God’s imparted inspiration innately. The key is to reach outward and inward and pull it out. This is hard work and involves submerging yourself in information and having a visual and verbal debate before anything gets put down on paper.

BRIAN CROOKS. AVENUE A | RAZORFISH. I am intrigued by things that range from the sublime to the absurd. Everything from art films to a cereal box can launch me in an unexpected direction. I’m always after the third new thing — take any two or more ideas and rub them together to see if it gives rise to a novel idea. I’m inspired to turn an idea into a tangible experience that people can feel. A brand is, at its heart, an idea that needs to constantly be held up against new thoughts to evolve and to engage people. Linus Pauling once said, “The best way to have a good idea is to have lots of ideas.” The creative community is a place of many ideas and I am often delighted by the clever, beautiful, and engaging creations my colleagues create. I love great creative treatments but it’s the thinking they’re built on that truly inspires me.

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BRIAN CROOKS

JONATHAN MALE. INTERLINK. I draw inspiration from humanity; on the surface, this answer may appear trite, but for me it is the underlying philosophical approach to all creative ideas for several reasons. First, I start with the fact that the pharmaceutical field provides medicine for humans, from the superficial to the sublime. If we look at inspiration merely from that perspective, every product has a great story. A story can inspire or, at the very least, attract interest; beyond this, people and their stories, the good, the bad, and the ugly are fascinating — not only for me, but for most of us as well. I find this to be true whether it is a

▶ **JIM JOHNSON**

Stonefly Communications Group

I draw inspiration from the art world ... galleries and events. I view this as the R&D of human communication.

heart-wrenching story of survival, or the heroic effort to save a life, or the latest technology breakthrough, or the funniest,

quirkiest, coolest thing out there. People and their stories are colorful and interesting. Look, see, and record — and reveal it in a unique way.

DAVID RAUBE. GOBLE. I draw inspiration from the guy on the bus talking too loud on his cell phone; from the kids in my basement pretending to be Hollywood movie stars; from the security officer at the airport; from people living their lives and commenting on their day-to-day experiences. I'm inspired by real-life situations and solutions. The best form of communication is to reflect another person's relatable environment and evoke a realistic response. I can talk about efficacy and safety until I'm blue in the face, but unless I can inspire someone to take action, on an emotional level, the communication is useless.

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DAVID RAUBE

GRACE ERIKSEN. GREY HEALTHCARE. If I need a better headline, I go for a walk, get on a bus, take a ride on the subway. Ideas are everywhere — particularly in New York — but sometimes it's hard to find them when you're sitting staring at an empty screen. On weekends, I think it's particularly important for creatives to "fill their wells." A few hours in the Metropolitan Museum of Art on Sunday or at the Village Vanguard for jazz on Saturday night can yield a week's worth of fabulous ideas. It sounds like a paradox, but I find it much easier to come up with original thoughts when I've been immersing myself in the creations of other artists.

JIM JOHNSON. STONEFLY. I draw inspiration from conversations and observations and from discussions about issues that people face,

whether they're professional or personal issues. Dialogue is essential in finding out the fundamental truths in any situation. I also draw inspiration from the art world — galleries and

events. I view this as the R&D of human communication. I was a fine arts painting major in college. It provided a great foundation for fresh thinking.

▶ **ARE YOU A FAN OF ANY PARTICULAR TYPE OF ART OR ARTISTIC MOVEMENT?**

BRUCE NICOLL. S&R COMMUNICATIONS. I don't think you can really be in this business without some appreciation of Dadaism — the passion, the craziness, the attempt to overthrow all convention. Disembodied horse heads draped across pianos — doesn't that remind you of some of the briefs you've had to execute against? And even some of the work out there right now? This business is pure Dada, most days.

CHRISTOPHER BAUGHMAN. POINTROLL. I'm a huge fan of Japanese graphic design and the Super Flat movement. I was also heavily influenced by the Dada and Pop Art movements of the previous century, as well as most of non-western traditional fine arts.

DONALD MARTINY. DORLAND. Anyone who knows me knows this is the type of question that could have you cornered in my office for hours. I have been fascinated by art for as long as I can remember. For many years I was a licensed art appraiser. I've worked at important New York galleries and have been involved in the sale of some significant artworks, including works by Piet Mondrian, Joseph Bueys, and Alexander Calder. My area of interest/expertise is American art post-1945.

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S&R Communications Group

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JIM JOHNSON. STONEFLY. I'm a big fan of the collaborative movement among artists, especially the work that invites the public to participate. A group called The Graffiti Research

Laboratory does innovative work. And I've always wanted to attend "The Burning Man" festival. I also appreciate environmental sculpture, especially the work of Andy Goldsworthy. This is a great example of using existing material in a creative way.

▶ **OUTSIDE OF THE OFFICE, ARE YOU CREATIVE IN ANY OTHER AREAS OF YOUR LIFE?**

ROB KIENLE. ABELSON TAYLOR. I find that, as a creative individual, one's professional and personal interests tend to intertwine. The only class I ever failed was high school chemistry, yet I've spent more than 20 years writing copy that has an awful lot to do with chemistry. To try to reconcile this disconnect, the solution was to become an avid brewer of home-made beer. Calculating the conversion of proteolytic

enzymes into fermentable sugars and nonfermentable dextrins seems to have brought my personal appreciation for science to a new level. Plus, my wife insisted that I take my hobby out of the kitchen and into the basement, which meant buying a complete 15-gallon brewing system to facilitate the process. And by the way, it also helps with the late-night inspiration of the next headline or two.



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2

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SYNVISC
HYALURONIC ACID
A STEP AHEAD

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LIFE HAPPENS

Commit
LOZENGES

CRAVING CONTROL FOR THE REAL WORLD

Excess Success

AccuNeb
Inhaled Corticosteroid Solution
BUDENESONE Inhalant Suspension
Success Without Excess

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ZOLMITRIPTAN

FASTER THAN FAST

Zomig oral
ZOLMITRIPTAN

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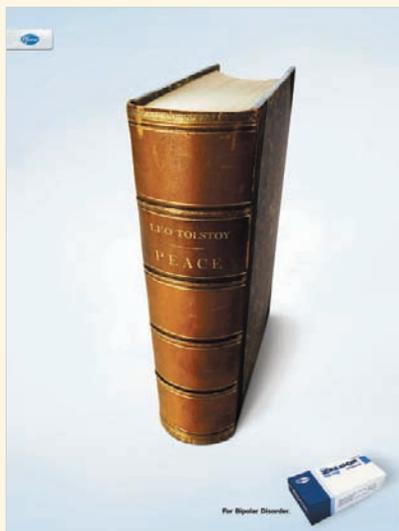
Avoid the knockout

sonata
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CAPSULES

Just Enough!

THE GALLERY

A SELECTION OF ADS DEEMED MEMORABLE BY OUR PANEL OF CREATIVE EXPERTS, OR IN OTHER WORDS, ADS THEY WISH THEY HAD DONE.



HELEN BOAK
CREATIVE DIRECTOR

THE HAL LEWIS GROUP INC.

► When you see this book, with “Tolstoy” on the spine, it takes no time to connect with the novel *War and Peace*. It’s a great metaphor for bipolar disorder. But look again and discover the surprise. The epic here is simply called “Peace.” The “War” is a bipolar experience that the patient is missing. It’s a great metaphor for a drug that treats bipolar disorder. In a crowded market, the message has to be simple,

compelling, and delivered with exceptional execution. But it also must make an emotional connection. This made one with me!



KEN THORLTON
VP, CREATIVE DIRECTOR

HEALTHED

► The recent campaign for depression awareness by Eli Lilly titled, “Because Depression Hurts” inspired me with regard to the promotion of a totally unbranded, purely educational initiative and how it morphed over time into a

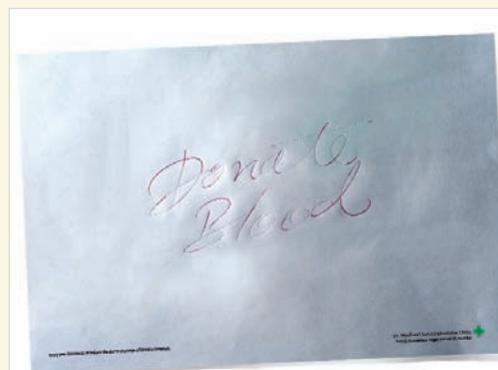
branded campaign that helped to foster brand loyalty. I remember hearing the haunting melody of the commercial’s score and rushing to the television to see how it was being used. What I saw was a unique type (graphic) treatment with statements that seemed to evaporate into a desolate background.

“Who does depression hurt? Depression hurts everyone.” “How does depression hurt? Depression hurts both emotionally and physically.” “Physically? Who knew that depression could have physical symptoms? The commercial presented the background of scientific facts and glimpses of everyday lives from several people afflicted with the disease. It instructed viewers to visit depressionhurts.com, which provided important information and tools to help people who may be suffering from depression. I felt that the ending, “Because depression hurts...but you don’t have to,” was a great way to tie in with the physical nature of the disease and, therefore, dispel the stigma attached to people living with depression. A great, unbranded approach.

Six months later. I’m in the kitchen and, once again, find myself drawn to the television when I hear that haunting melody. Only this time, the commercial

instructs the viewer to visit cymbalta.com. Same commercial, same content, but now the Website is associated with the drug.

I thought this was an innovative way to provide patient education to those who may not be as receptive when promotion of the actual drug is involved. In pharmaceutical advertising, patients are well-served when brand loyalty is earned as a result of high-quality, unbiased, educational information and not just repetitive commercial spots.



ROB ROGERS,
CHIEF
CREATIVE OFFICER
SUDLER & HENNESSEY

► I saw this ad on the desk of Sudhakar More (Creative Director, S&H, Mumbai) during my first visit to our Indian office. It was shortly after we had

hired Suda, and I wanted to check him out. The first thing that struck me about this idea was its wonderful combination of simplicity and directness. The idea of using a pen running out of red ink as an uncomplicated analogy for blood shortage was so clever and eloquent, I knew we’d hired the right person.

Conceptually this ad breaks new ground by being able to quickly communicate its message in a surprising way without resorting to the clichés seen in so many public-service announcements. Bravo.



GRACE ERIKSEN
SENIOR VP,
CREATIVE DIRECTOR, COPY
GREY HEALTHCARE GROUP

► Why do I wish I created this ad? Because it communicates instantly — and it makes me smile. It also drives home the

benefit of this drug without relying on a lot of words; by the way it’s for a cardiovascular product that can help extend life. This one image and the single, strategically placed sign tells a very compelling story. Perhaps loving an ad for its lack of copy is strange coming from a writer, but my favorite ads contain an embedded idea that doesn’t rely on a great headline — although I love those too. In a powerful concept, the idea is right there — you can’t miss it. It doesn’t require labels on a switch, a 15-word subhead, or worse yet, a 15-word eyebrow. I look at the ad, and instantly I know what’s being sold, without it being explained. And I feel compelled to take action and to learn more. And that’s what this wonderful concept does to me. I want to know more about this drug — and this man.



BARBARA HUBER
VP, ASSOCIATE CREATIVE DIRECTOR, COPY

FLASHPOINT MEDICA

► “Survival data that leads to moments like this.” This ad has a beautiful tranquil feeling of life moving forward — thanks to Taxotere.



JENNIFER ALAMPI
SENIOR VP, CREATIVE DIRECTOR

TORRE LAZUR MCCANN

► This ad has all the elements of what we consider to be exceptional creative work: it has stopping power, it is incredibly differentiating, it has great branding, it is on strategy, and it is obviously campaignable. The headline clearly communicates the purpose of the campaign — to raise awareness of the link between uric acid levels and gout attacks. The cactus foot is telegraphic imagery at its best. It quickly conveys the pain and suffering of the patient while creating a sense of urgency. We are always looking for that simple, recognizable image to convey a message quickly, and GSW and TAP have found it.



► **STEVE HAMBURG**

Wishbone/ITP

For a person who lives in a world of words and ideas, switching to the nonverbal language of music is somehow edifying and even therapeutic. It's my brain's way of clearing its pipes.

GRACE ERIKSEN. GREY HEALTHCARE. I play the flute; I write and perform a one-woman show; I design and sew my own clothes; and I paint my apartment crazy colors. If I'm not creating something every day, I start to get sad. The act of creation keeps my soul happy.

RAFAEL HOLGUIN. PALIO. Parenting is one of the most creative assignments we can have. Because so much of our world is about instant gratification — prefabricated and electronic gadgets and games that don't inspire creative thought — I always try to show my children how to make or create something out of nothing. Having been born and raised in the Dominican Republic, where slick toys were

hard to come by, I developed a knack for creating what our family calls “precision” games out of the most ordinary objects like spoons, rubber bands, bottle caps, and paper clips. Using this ordinary stuff I make up unexpected games, mazes, and races that teach them patience, balance, physics, and ingenuity. These homemade toys/games don't come with instruction manuals, but they do tickle kids' imaginations and entertain in a way that television and video games don't.

ROB ROGERS. SUDLER & HENNESSEY. I've played the guitar since I was 13; I managed to quit smoking, but after 37 years the guitar remains an ongoing addiction. It's either funny or terrible that ad agencies are full of musicians who didn't quite make it, musicians who chose not to keep going, or those who are still out there trying. At least music gives us plenty to talk about. Painting is also a terrible distraction and requires an amazing amount of time, and I am almost to the point now where I cannot commit to a large canvas, because based on my current schedule, it will never be finished.

STEVE HAMBURG. WISHBONE. I've played the guitar almost every day since I was about 14 years old. For a person who lives in a world of words and ideas, switching to the nonverbal language of music is somehow edifying and even therapeutic. It's my brain's way of clearing its pipes. Sitting with my guitar, noodling through some pattern or tune, I can unconsciously work through any number of problems or challenges. Not surprising, a lot of my best ideas will bubble to the surface during these practice sessions, which is why I always try to keep a guitar within grabbing distance in my office.

► WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF THE CREATIVE PROCESS?

STEVE COLDIRON. JOCOTO. The creative process defies definition. It starts with understanding, which leads to insight, which leads to creation.

STEVE HAMBURG. WISHBONE. The creative process is like an aircraft: built of mechanics and logic, but possessed of something mystical and magical too.

BRIAN CROOKS. AVENUE A | RAZORFISH. The creative process should start out fairly chaotic and end very orderly. The beginning is when ideas in all their half-baked glory get bandied about — lots and lots of ideas. When a concept begins to emerge from this sea of ideas the madness should begin to wane but excitement for the idea and experimentation should continue. The concepts begin to take on a

▶ **STEVE MARTINO**

Vox Medica

Beautifully executed irrelevancies will not create a blockbuster brand. On the other hand, even a potentially market-making message can become hopelessly garbled by poor execution.

▶ **STEVE COLDIRON**

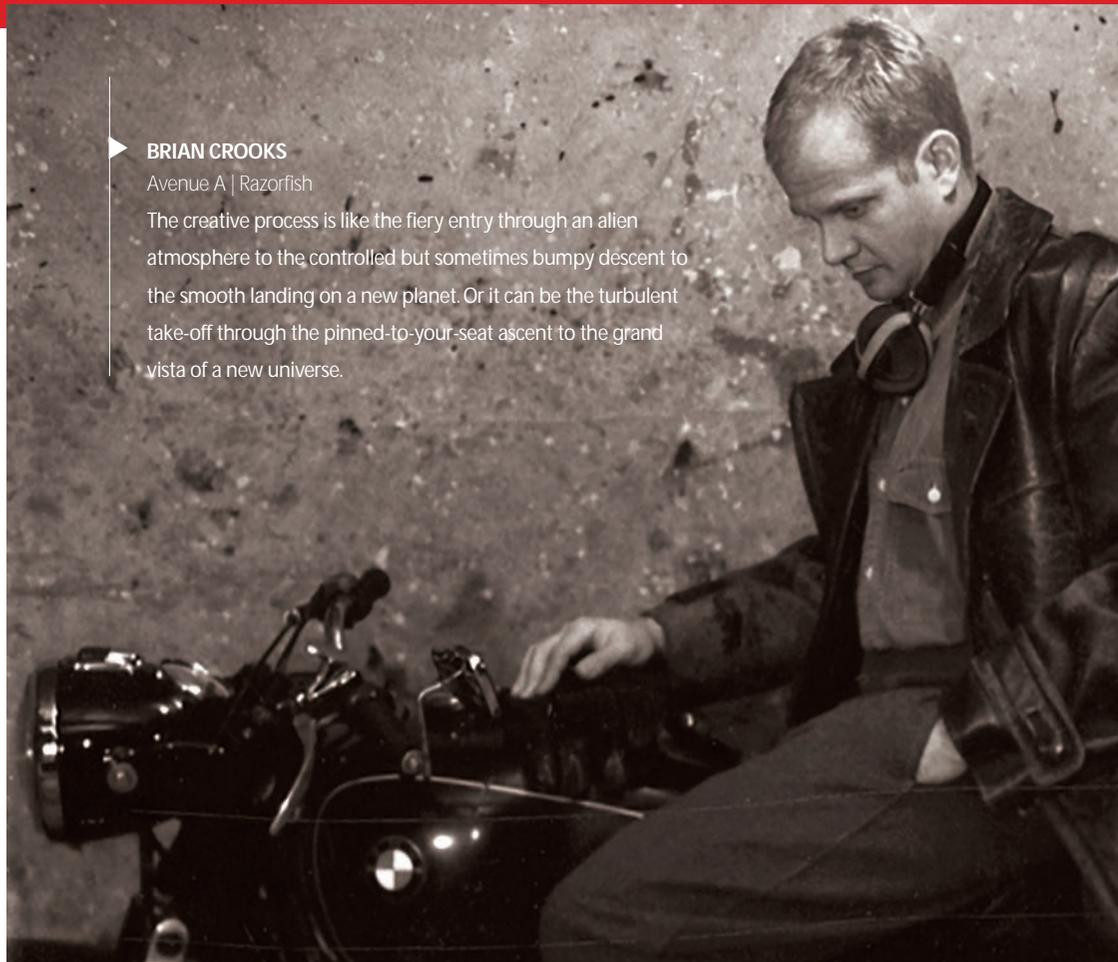
Jocoto Advertising

The creative process defies definition. It starts with understanding, which leads to insight, which leads to creation.



tone and manner but are still in a moldable stage and will assume a variety of shapes and sizes. At each stage the concept becomes more manifest, and the continuous thinking and tinkering ensure that it is the best it can be. The process works whether you're inventing something brand new or coming up with a brand-new take on something already invented. It's like the fiery entry through an alien atmosphere to the controlled but sometimes bumpy descent to the smooth landing on a new planet. Or it can be the turbulent take-off through the pinned-to-your-seat ascent to the grand vista of a new universe.

MELISSA CAHILL. EURO RSCG LIFE CHELSEA. The creative process is what happens in the subway when you miss your stop because you came up with a great concept. First, though, you have to immerse yourself in the brand, bond with it, learn about the competitors, painstakingly define a strategy and a differentiating key promise — and then let the information gestate for a bit. At this point, it helps to look at other ads that inspire you or billboards on the New Jersey Turnpike without directly focusing on the creative challenge. Often, an idea will spring up out of the blue, when you're in the shower or when you're

▶ **BRIAN CROOKS**

Avenue A | Razorfish

The creative process is like the fiery entry through an alien atmosphere to the controlled but sometimes bumpy descent to the smooth landing on a new planet. Or it can be the turbulent take-off through the pinned-to-your-seat ascent to the grand vista of a new universe.

having drinks with your art director. Sometimes, it is not that easy, and the birth of a concept is painful and scary. I don't know if it is a "process" as much as an act of chipping away the nonessentials until we create something beautiful.

STEVE MARTINO. VOX MEDICA. In my opinion, the creative process is comprised of two simple things. First, figuring out what to say — strategy. Second, figuring out how to say it well — creativity. Successful communications depend on getting both right. Beautifully exe-

cuted irrelevancies will not create a blockbuster brand. On the other hand, even a potentially market-making message can become hopelessly garbled by poor execution. Weak strategy with great creative or great strategy with lousy creative are both an equal disservice to the client, the physician, and the patient. The creative process is about nailing both.

JIM JOHNSON. STONEFLY. Find the most relevant truth then bring it to life in an engaging and memorable way.

STOKING THE FLAMES OF CREATIVITY

Our creative directors were asked to identify the areas they tap to find new talent as well as the creative traits they look for in others.

▶ WHERE DO YOU LOOK FOR CREATIVE TALENT AND WHAT DO YOU LOOK FOR?

LYNN MACRONE. JUICE PHARMA. When it comes to creative talent, we have found that the following traits are common among great creatives: an insatiable curiosity, a passion for their craft, and an innate love of problem solving. This combination of attributes is extremely attractive and can be found in individuals with varied backgrounds, both cultur-

al and across different industries. Their unique backgrounds can transcend the experience in the industry mantra, which allows a fresh perspective that would otherwise go untapped. From a global standpoint, their contributions can impact the veracity of the work. This approach of including individuals outside of the pharma industry does require a

Life is global



That's life—Euro RSCG Life.

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certain forgiveness in terms of the learning curve. Yet it is well worth it, because the solutions you can provide for your client can be relevant — and truly unexpected.

PATRICIA MALONE. STRATAGEM. No. 1, I look for passion; No. 2, I look for qualifications. It helps if the person has experience, but if he or she doesn't and yet has potential because of pure desire and ideas, this is an intriguing person for me. That's how I started; no experience, just a little spec book and a real desire to be in this business. I was a nurse; who would hire me to be a creative? Someone did and I will never forget that person. I think of this experience with every prospective person who comes in to interview. You can teach many things, but the ability to think out of the box and to give it everything you've got isn't one of them.

ROB ROGERS. SUDLER & HENNESSEY. One of the issues we face as a creatively driven industry is the increasing specialization of people. I believe this leads to a narrowing of perspective that adversely affects imagination, whilst diversity is one of the key contributors to creativity. So while we interview many candidates from the agency scene, I also encourage our people to look for those outside of the agency/ad school area. This may be someone who may not be an obvious fit, but who can add something new to our environment. I look for something I've come to call creative intelligence, this a natural ability to put ideas together. I'm not sure it can be taught, but the best creative people have it. If you can combine this with a little attitude and an appetite for great work, you've found a winner.

HELEN BOAK. HAL LEWIS GROUP. There is no

one source for creative talent. I look everywhere. The lead may come from a colleague, a recruiter, or a photographer. Company referral bonus programs also yield results. When I come across a great piece of creative work, I may simply follow it back to its originator. The root of the word creative in English comes from the Latin *creatus*, which means "to have grown." I look for talent who show an ability to grow ideas, to solve familiar problems in brand new ways, and who demonstrate a collaborative approach. I look for someone who is passionate about execution as much as about ideation. A designer or art director who can sketch a thought in a few minutes is of great value. The search is not limited to those with professional healthcare experience, but candidates should be capable of speaking knowledgeably about their work, while demonstrating shrewd customer and client insights.

▶ HOW DO YOU INSPIRE, AND/OR STIMULATE, YOUR CREATIVE TEAM?

ROB KIENLE. ABELSONTAYLOR. I take them all out for drinks during the holidays. Just kidding, though I do. I think I've always found it to be a matter of managing three things: accountability, individuality, and teamwork. Accountability means making sure everyone on the team knows they're expected to contribute to the creative process and that their contributions are valued and valuable. Individuality is important because everyone's different, each deserves to be treated as an individual. And teamwork, which, interestingly, is really the opposite of individuality, but is also the result of working effectively to blend individuals together to function as a highly motivated group that is respectful of everyone's needs, opinions, and capabilities.

KEN THORLTON. HEALTHED. Knowing there are always options available — that there is no set right or wrong answer — helps me to foster creativity and cultivate originality in our art directors. I strive to provide an open environment where no idea is discounted, even if it may appear unusual or even bizarre. In patient education, it is imperative to continually be on the lookout for new ways to help patients understand, treat, and manage their diseases. My team is not only motivated by a passion for cutting-edge design and communication, but my art directors are impassioned with purpose: their designs will help patients live healthier lives. Collaboration with dedicated

health educators gives us a distinct advantage through a better understanding of patients and their needs.

PATRICIA MALONE. STRATAGEM. My favorite thing about being a creative director is to see how other creatives think. I am inspired when my creative teams sit down to discuss concepts, and I always find it amazing what they come up with. I evaluate their concepts from a pure strategic level and make sure the brand concept pays off. If it doesn't, it's important that I don't step in and solve the problem, but rather I have them look at the challenge at hand and address it in their way. If I'm not crazy about an idea, it's stimulating for myself and my creative team to debate the pros and cons. They need to defend their idea, and again, that's where the passion becomes evident. If they are truly passionate about an idea for good reasons, and it is on strategy, far be it from me to eliminate it — we'll show it.

DAVID RAUBE. GOBLE. I provide support through encouragement and positive feedback. I believe in taking an "angel's advocate" approach to the creative review process. It's too easy to sit in judgment and tear work off the wall; it's harder to find the one concept that we can't live without. How we make the other concepts better is an entirely different attitude and approach than saying, "Let me tell you why this idea doesn't work." I believe that the talented, trained, senior professionals that I am

lucky enough to work with have great ideas every day, every time. It's not my job to squash what could be a nugget of a better idea. It's been said the only power a creative director has is to make sure that bad work doesn't leave the agency. I agree. But the responsibility of the creative director is to ensure that the environment exists where great work can be created. Bottom line, if you walk into a creative review meeting expecting to see subpar work, chances are you will. But if you bring a team together based on trust and collaboration you will never cease to be amazed by what is possible.

SCOTT WATSON. COMMONHEALTH. I support the teams' creative efforts by giving them challenging creative assignments, praising them when it's deserved, and also by being honest with them when the work just isn't good. Most of the time creative teams are assigned to a specific piece of business and, after a while, anyone on the team can tend to get tired and need added stimulation. I'm constantly looking for new and exciting conceptual assignments for my teams to keep them fresh and energized. And I routinely push back if I feel our creatives can do better. I also have one hard and fast rule: no stock images. I urge them to show sketches, don't "label the elephant" with copy, and by all means, come up with original ideas. Chief creative officers often get an unfair amount of the glory. It's important that acknowledgment gets shared with those who are in the trenches, doing the work, and are truly deserving of the praise. If I help one of my creative teams with concept-

MY FAVORITE THING
ABOUT BEING A CREATIVE
DIRECTOR IS TO SEE HOW
OTHER CREATIVES THINK.
PATRICIA MALONE



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ing on a given project, there's no need for anyone else to know about it. I don't need the glory and, really, the creative process is all about collaboration. I will fight hard for the work my creative teams do and I make certain to mix the teams up periodically to keep it interesting so they always have fun creating.

BOB FINKEL. KANE AND FINKEL. I impress upon my creative team the need to resist ideas that may be acceptable and accomplish the job, yet are nonetheless ordinary, overly simplistic, or not ownable. I'm not easily impressed and I believe that clients want to be "blown away" by the creative thinking as well as the creative execution. I set the creative bar higher and higher for each project and refuse to settle for mediocre work. Our creatives are used to being in the hot seat or they wouldn't choose to be here. They want to be pushed. They want to know that they should take risks. At the same time, it's important to be clear about the assignment and communicate expectations to improve the likelihood of success. As a creative director, I believe it's wrong to toss an assignment at the creative team and then walk away. I like to inspire people by participating as an equal member of the creative team. It's healthy competition. Needless to say, my ideas don't always get chosen or shown to the clients, and that's okay. But it sends a message to the entire agency that I care enough to spend my time generating ideas alongside them, not just evaluating what they conceptualize. That's key to building a team environment.

ROBIN SHAPIRO. CORBETT. I believe the process starts with a smart, insightful, and most of all, focused brief. Next, it's important to motivate and inspire teams at creative briefings. There is nothing more uninspiring than a "group reading" of the creative brief. We have been known to bring patient videos, ethnographies, and competitive work into the room. The objective is to stimulate ideas right from the start. Excellent creative direction is also a must along the way. I can't just say, "I don't like it" or "I don't get it." I try to give the creative people very concrete feedback on what's working and what's not. Finally, it's vital to have the highest standards in place. One weak idea in a client presentation is one too many. No one will ever remember the ideas that didn't sell; they'll only see the one that did.

DONALD MARTINY. DORLAND. First and foremost I try to lead by example. I love this work and I hope that my enthusiasm is infectious. I also find it very important and valu-

able to hold regular creative meetings where we bond as a team and everyone gets a chance to talk about what they are doing. By encouraging all of the creatives from every level to participate and offer suggestions and ideas, we really tighten up our sense of being a team. Because I love to share and to communicate my enthusiasm, I often make presentations about topics that are interesting and possibly even inspirational to the creative team. Some past topics have included the history of type, the golden section plus Fibonacci numbers in design, copywriters on copy, and visual literacy.

BARBARA HUBER. FLASHPOINT. The best way I know to inspire or stimulate a creative team is to help them have fun. I find that peo-

ple become less creative if they are stressed or scared. That doesn't mean that they shouldn't be pushed a little further or a little harder, but criticism works better when offered with encouragement. Encouraging creatives to learn something different, to see something different, to share something different that they've done is also important. In this business creatives don't always get to stretch or do the most creative stuff.

JIM JOHNSON. STONEFLY. First, I try to find out what the person's passion is; why did he or she get into this business. Then I try to provide an opportunity to pursue that passion in a way that benefits our clients and our agency. The creative drive is part passion, part obsession.

THE NEW DRAWING BOARD

We asked these accomplished creative directors to discuss how technology is changing the process and identify what their favorite tools of the trade are.

▶ HOW IS TECHNOLOGY CHANGING THE CREATIVE PROCESS?



▶ **KEN THORLTON**

HealthEd

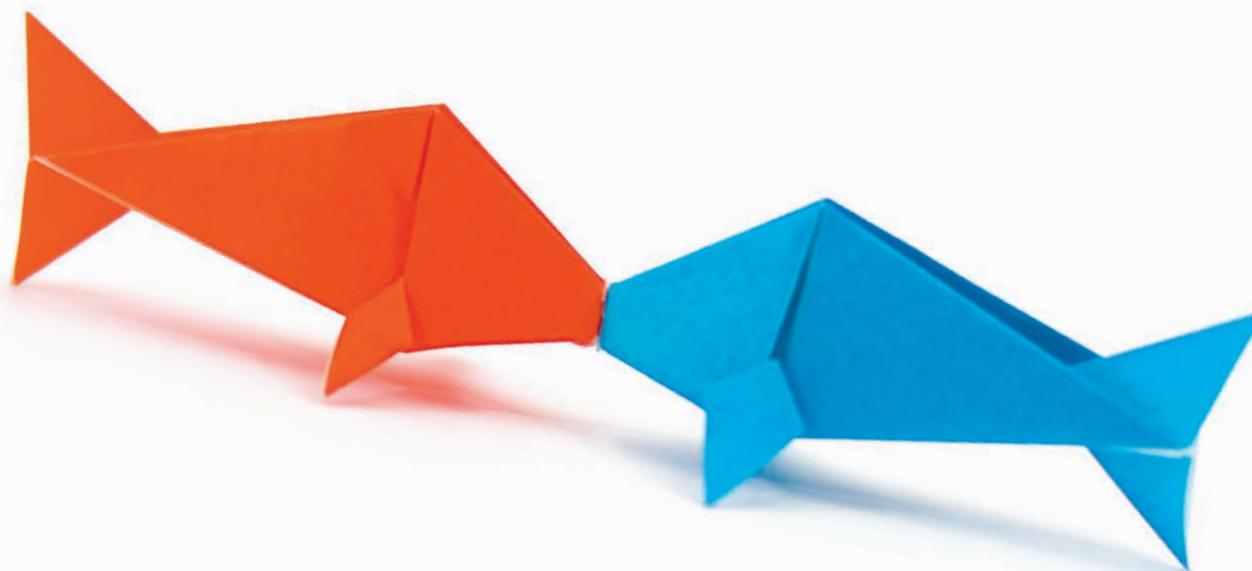
Serving up informative and engaging materials for print, Internet, Podcast, PDA, and other communicative devices requires that teams stay current with the latest cutting-edge hardware and software.

STEVE COLDIRON. JOCOTO. In my opinion technology isn't changing the process. It may affect the deliverable or the way that we communicate, but technology doesn't drive or alter creativity. We need to communicate our message in a compelling, engaging, and emotional way.

REID CONNOLLY. EVOKE. As an interactive creative director, I believe technology is of crucial importance. Advancements in technology help us break down the barriers of what is thought

possible from a creative standpoint. Too often, however, I believe technology is seen as a strategy, as opposed to that which allows us to look at a problem from a new perspective and create solutions that may never have been possible before. Video and animation, for instance, can be extremely powerful when used appropriately online, however, employing their use in a nonstrategic way results in a frustrated user and poor engagement levels. The key is to not employ new technologies simply because we can, but rather use them to bring a fresher perspective where just about anything is possible. With fewer barriers in place, it becomes that much more important for the power of the creative idea to resonate across media.

KEN THORLTON. HEALTHED. Patients are increasingly more technologically savvy and



ideas should
connect

to your brand, to your customers, to the
behavior you hope to change or reinforce.

At GSW Worldwide, we believe the best way to make those connections isn't through DTC, but with CTC, an approach called Connect-To-Customer.™ By understanding the connected dialogue between the HCP and the consumer, we can create more efficient, more effective communications and make your brand the point of understanding.

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▶ **DAVID RAUBE**

Goble & Associates

There is certainly a growing responsibility to stay current with the changing digital environment. But no one is developing a “plug in” to make you a better thinker.

plugged-in. The whole world seems to be tied to a cell phone, BlackBerry, or iPod. PDAs and computers are equally ubiquitous. Savvy patients use the Internet to research diseases, evaluate hospitals and doctors, and access pharmaceutical product information. As technology changes, our target audiences’ means of accessing information also changes — sometimes drastically. Creative teams must design materials for today’s technologically evolving world. Serving up informative and engaging materials for print, Internet, Podcast, PDA, and other communicative devices requires that teams stay current with the latest cutting-edge hardware and software. Staying current means that we cannot rest on time-honored laurels, but we must continually educate ourselves to dance along the cutting edge. Creative teams need to take an active role in pioneering these new health information delivery systems.

JENNIFER ALAMPI. TORRE LAZUR MCCANN. Technology impacts our work and our brands immensely. Conceptual thinking must be able to move off the printed page and into video, digital, and interactive experiences. Although our initial thinking is usually generated and sold from a print perspective, it is crucial for creatives to be able to sell and execute their concepts in all mediums. Developing printed materials for the salesforce is now just the beginning of our process — and what we con-

IT IS CRUCIAL FOR
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MEDIUMS.

JENNIFER ALAMPI

▶ **REID CONNOLLY**

Evoke | Healthcare Interaction

There is a point of diminishing return for concept testing, and that is when clients and agencies need to rely on a very reliable tool known as the gut.

▶ **GRACE ERIKSEN**

Grey Healthcare Group

The fun of this job is figuring out how to use the latest and greatest technology to communicate better, faster, more interestingly, and with greater depth. It's a whole new world, and truly, we're only limited by our own imaginations.

sider to be the bare essentials. The next step is salesforce training and motivation through video, audio, and animation, which truly brings the message and campaign to life. This process is reinforced with physicians through a variety of rep-delivered interactive experiences.

BRUCE NICOLL. S&R COMMUNICATIONS. This is a wonderful time to be a young creative, because new technology presents opportunities to work in so many mediums much more cheaply than ever before. In the nonlinear, disintermediated world of the Web, one can tie together videos, animations, interactive games, ring tones, and loyalty programs with printed pieces playing a dynamic supporting role to drive people to participate in and consume all of this new content. Teams need to think in a much more holistic way about the applicability of their ideas. On the other hand, print remains the mainstay of our industry, and it's increasingly lackluster.

I love my Mac, but DTP and stock art, its evil twin, seem to have caused a crisis of the imagination. Almost nobody concepts with a pencil anymore. That's another challenge, to not let the limits of execution overwhelm the idea-generating process.

MIKE JOHNSON. I-SITE. Restraint in the face of rapid, technological advancement is critical to the design and development process. Seven years ago Flash was being used to deliver whole Websites; today it's integrated in ways to add value and stream media, for example YouTube's video player and MySpace's music player, without distracting users with useless bells and whistles.

BRIAN CROOKS. AVENUE A | RAZORFISH. Technology has become a frightening concept for some people because they imagine mind-numbing complexity. Cameras have been around in various complex forms for a long time but people have managed to demystify them because of what they can do. Cameras have become familiar tools we use to tell stories and not exotic machines best left to the experts. When creative people focus on what a tool will allow them to do and not how it goes about doing it, they embrace the technology and invent with it. Technology builds the tools we use to express ideas. Creativity can get bogged down when technology is used for its own sake and some people in interactive design are so enamored with their beige boxes and flat-panel displays that they relegate invention to the machine and not the operator. The challenge is to discover the genius hidden in most cocktail napkins long before we sit in



Sometimes it seems that your ability to get compelling communications through to your customer is becoming almost impossible. Either the regulatory environment has made it difficult, or what once worked with your customers no longer does—they don't have the time, or have weathered so many promotional assaults they've become numb to the messages and tactics.

In a world grown hostile to brand success, follow the sun



Grow greatness. We find the ways—when it's tough to find the means—to get your customer to sit up, take notice, and get your brand to its goal. Things just aren't the same. Why talk to an agency that is? If you're growing impatient for real success, try growing greatness—just follow the sun.

Growing a Great Wound Care Brand



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the
HAL LEWIS
Group
INC
Growing Greatness



the glow and push pixels. Bad pencil sketches only go so far and technology is enabling us to develop and distribute our concepts in new and engaging ways.

DAVID RAUBE. GOBLE. There is certainly a growing responsibility to stay current with the changing digital environment. No one wants to get left behind. But no one is developing a “plug in” to make you a better thinker. The responsibility of the creative teams remains constant — to produce ideas that inspire. The requirements don’t change because of the tools.

SCOTT WATSON. COMMON-HEALTH. The developments in technology both help and hurt the creative process. I think the computer is a wonderful tool to help execute an idea but during the past six to eight years there has been the slow death of the “original idea.” I see so many portfolios that have beautiful executions without the substance of a conceptual idea to serve as the foundation for the pieces within. It’s disturbing to me that the students coming out of college today have no idea how to sketch out an idea; some of them have never picked up a pencil. Technology has advanced to a point that we are able to turn around concepts and finished pieces quickly, but it’s not without sacrifice. Great designs take time and with technological advances being what they are, the almost universal expectation is that with a few clicks of a mouse out pops a beautiful piece of art. A computer cannot design for you and there are few outside of the creative group who seem to genuinely understand that.

STEVE MARTINO. VOX MEDICA. The benefits of technology have actually created problems for creative teams. We are now capable of producing a finished look almost instantaneously. This has led clients to shorten the amount of time allotted for creative development and mistake “rough” concepts for finished-quality work. It also has led some creative people to get reflexive and spend more time polishing the design than developing the idea. My favorite creative tools will always be a pencil and a sheet of paper. I’d much rather use that limited development time nurturing an original idea than to make a standard approach look pretty. If a raw sketch of an idea along with a few choice words scribbled on paper can cause a flutter of excitement — even in this primitive form — then you know it’s truly a good idea.

ROBIN SHAPIRO. CORBETT. As creative people, we view continuous learning as an absolute mandate of our jobs. And that applies to

technology as well. We are inspired and motivated by all of the changes. Every brand we

work on has begun to integrate digital media into the professional marketing mix.

▶ WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE “TOOLS” OF THE TRADE?

SCOTT WATSON. COMMONHEALTH. My favorite tools are pencils, paper, Sharpies, Photoshop, and InDesign — and in that order. I love Photoshop. That’s where a great idea comes to life. I have an enormous amount of respect for great imaging people — a talented imager can work magic.

STEVE HAMBURG. WISHBONE. We rely on an effective technique called “The Wall.” It is literally a wall loaded with pushpins located in a space of its own. The point is to fill it with ideas; it is the canvas on which we collectively paint our creative thinking. Here’s how it works: “The Wall” receives all the ideas generated by the creatives. On a daily, if not hourly, basis, we edit

the wall, organize it, and refine it. In the midst of all this refinement, miraculous things occur. The headline on the far left suddenly cross-pollinates with the visual on the far right: bingo, a great concept is born. “The Wall” enables us to make creative connections in this leaping, nonlinear fashion. It’s an effective technique for real-time collaboration with all members of the creative department from the most senior to the most junior.

MIKE JOHNSON. I-SITE. I came to my profession well after the computer, but I still rely heavily on traditional tools. I sketch every Website, every e-newsletter, every banner. There’s something very satisfying about translating my thoughts with pen and paper before displacing pixels in Photoshop.

PHOTOSHOP IS WHERE
GREAT IDEAS COME TO
LIFE: A TALENTED IMAGER
CAN WORK MAGIC.
SCOTT WATSON

A SEAT AT THE TABLE — CREATIVE RELATIONS

Creative directors carry weight at the marketing table and while they are in a good position to exude their influence to push edgier concepts through to execution and encourage clients to take risks, they differ in their perspectives regarding the importance of testing concepts to the process.

▶ HOW MUCH WEIGHT AND INFLUENCE DO YOU BELIEVE CREATIVE DIRECTORS HAVE AT THE MARKETING TABLE?



▶ LYNN MACRONE

Juice Pharma Advertising

Because creative directors have a creative-strategic point of view, they have the advantage of bringing great value to the conversation — value that is not in competition with the marketing teams, but rather is complementary.

JENNIFER ALAMPI. TORRE LAZUR MCCANN.

In recent years, as the marketplace has become more competitive, there has been a significant shift in the amount of influence creative directors have. Clients consistently approach us with brands that have little differentiation and challenge us to help them. With that goal in mind, the unique strategic influence creative directors deliver has become even more essen-



I WILL NOT SIT STILL. I WILL NOT STAY PUT. I REFUSE TO BE CONTAINED. **I AM AN IDEA.** RELEASE ME. LET ME FLY.

VOXmedica

Health-Care Communications

▶ **JENNIFER ALAMPI**

Torre Lazur McCann

For clients who have not experienced what creative directors can offer, it doesn't take long before they see our effect. Indeed, at the best agencies, having a seat at the marketing table has become the norm for creatives.

tial to a brand's success. Creative directors need to work with strategic planning departments, the account teams, and the brand teams; this is critical to our philosophy at TLM. We have been fortunate to have brand teams that embrace the creative directors' value. For clients who have not experienced what creative directors can offer, it doesn't take long before they see our effect. Indeed, at the best agencies, having a seat at the marketing table has become the norm for creatives.

LYNN MACRONE. JUICE PHARMA. Assuming

creative directors have earned a place at the marketing table, they should have a lot of influence for a number of reasons. First, they hold a tremendous amount of knowledge with regard to the brands under their leadership in terms of brand history and equity, so their point of view is important to ensure that a consistent brand image is delivered. Second, they bring the strategy and objectives to life, so they are uniquely suited to provide a certain perspective that not every member of the team has. Because creative directors have a creative-strategic point of view, they have the advantage of bringing great value to the conversation — value that is not in competition with the marketing teams, but rather is complementary. They may help to identify new insights or new approaches that could help the brand achieve its goals. The best marketers realize that good strategy may become great strategy with the right copy and design composition. Third, creative directors are probably the only ones who are willing to have the uncomfortable conversations with their

clients regarding where the communication platform should be going. That alone is valuable. Remember the adage: if everyone is thinking alike, no one is thinking.

JAY DONIGER. DONAHOE PUROHIT MILLER. The short answer is creative directors don't have enough influence. Historically, creative directors are invited to participate in the formative stages of the agency/client strategic, positioning, and messaging process as an information gatherer, but rarely are they asked to contribute. Why? My view is that creative is perceived as being unable to bring any data to bear on the process. Obviously, the downside to a lack of access at the table puts us at a disadvantage if we are later asked to build compelling executions for weak or misguided positioning and messaging that we could have influenced earlier. We have worked to open that early-stage marketing process internally to such creative contributions in an attempt to ensure our voice will be represented at a forum where data gurus hold sway.

CREATIVE DIRECTORS
DON'T HAVE ENOUGH
INFLUENCE AT THE
MARKETING TABLE.
RARELY ARE THEY ASKED
TO CONTRIBUTE.
JAY DONIGER

▶ WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE TO GETTING EDGIER CONCEPTS THROUGH TO EXECUTION?

▶ **MELISSA CAHILL**

Euro RSCG Life Chelsea

Breakthrough advertising concepts are supposed to make your hands sweat and your heart pound. But many clients are afraid of that feeling — they want to be comfortable, they want to have a concept that “everyone buys into.” There's no surer way to water down a great idea.

MELISSA CAHILL. EURO RSCG LIFE CHELSEA. Fear is the biggest challenge. Breakthrough advertising concepts are supposed to make your hands sweat and your heart pound. But many clients are afraid of that feeling — they want to be comfortable; they want to have a concept that “everyone buys into.” There's no surer way to water down a great idea. That's why we see so many boring ads. Ads have been relegated to something designed by consensus. Because people are afraid to stand up for “uncomfortable” ideas, ads have lost the power to persuade. But the fact is that if clients want to get the most from their advertising, they

need to break through all the noise and connect on an emotional level with the customer. Getting there takes guts.

BRIAN CROOKS. AVENUE A | RAZORFISH. The trouble with edgier concepts is that they require a large group of people to all have the same amount of involvement, enthusiasm, and imagination. When there is no analogy available to help explain something truly unique, the entire team needs to work together very closely so that members can conjure up some vision of the concept in their minds eye. Edgier ideas always operate somewhere beyond the conventional comfort zone so everyone involved needs to work together and help get through the scarier bits. In the pharmaceutical space the other thing that often kills, or mortally wounds, a new idea is the legal department. They get to see the work well into the project and often have little opportunity to be anything more than disaster checkers. Waiting until the last moment to lob your carefully crafted concepts through the transom of the legal department is a good way to find problems but a bad way to enable a great idea. I think the key is to invite everyone to the party and keep them invested in the outcome.

JIM JOHNSON. STONEFLY. The biggest challenge is convincing people that edgier doesn't mean riskier. If the ad is relevant, motivating, and memorable is it risky? Safe work actually creates more business risk.

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▶ **BARBARA HUBER**

Flashpoint Medica

Clients always say they want out-of-the-box thinking, but then they become nervous if we try something that they haven't seen before.

CHRISTOPHER BAUGHMAN. POINTROLL.

Persuading a client who may be slightly apprehensive at first to go toward an edgier concept requires me to provide examples and demonstrate why the concept works. If clients are willing to take chances and trust their instincts, then producing the ideas that bring it all together is that much easier.

SCOTT WATSON. COMMONHEALTH. This is a multilayered problem and we need to get everyone — account services, creatives, agency presidents, and clients — on board. The kiss of death when showing concepts to clients is to show them the range of ideas. That range always includes a weaker, less edgy conceptual idea to appease them. Unfortunately, the weak one is usually the one chosen because it's safe and no one is going to have to go out on a limb to defend the concept. And we kick ourselves afterward, but we usually will go and do the same thing the next time. For my groups, I have taken a hard stand to never let that happen again. The client is paying us for our knowledge and expertise in the field — not to pacify them

and show them what we think they'll be comfortable with. We owe it to our clients to push things creatively. By agreeing internally to show only edgy, strong creative ideas — ideas that will help our clients' brands stand out in a crowded marketplace — we don't give them a safe fallback. It's our job to push our clients just outside of their comfort zones because that's what we've been hired for and that's where truly excellent creative work begins.

STEVE MARTINO. VOX MEDICA. There is currently a cultural divide between agencies and healthcare advertisers. Agencies value edgy work. It's usually what wins awards. But clients are averse to almost anything edgy. As their creative team, we have to be careful about the presumption that edgy is better. It simply may not be appropriate for certain situations and conservative clients may never support the concept. In those cases, recommending an edgy option is a recipe for frustration for everyone. When used strategically, edginess can help clients communicate clearly and powerfully. Our job is to identify the right time and place. We can't overdo it or we will train clients to resist even in the right situations. But if we selectively choose opportunities to stretch the comfort zone, then we can prove how effective originality can be.

▶ **ROBIN SHAPIRO**

Corbett Worldwide Healthcare Communications

A great idea may very well challenge a current mindset or behavior but it need not put a brand at risk. The real risk is in doing — or choosing — work that may seem safe, but is actually invisible, because it is too familiar, expected, or unremarkable.

JONATHAN MALE. INTERLINK. The pursuit of edgy is considered the preeminent goal for creative. From my perspective, it is a cliché, one that presumes creative for creative's sake. It trivializes outstanding work and what it takes to achieve that work. If by edgy one means the concept needs to be arresting or stand apart, I would say this can be achieved in many ways, the least of which includes going to the edge. It's important to recognize that when it comes to brand communication, the pharmaceutical field more often than not is risk averse. If the brand team finds the product's niche, focuses the communication, and sets the tone and character, then there is an opportunity to create outstanding work — concepts that not only separate but define products so they become great brands. I prefer words like smart, powerful, insightful, and unique, as long as they align with the brand identity.

WHEN USED
STRATEGICALLY,
EDGINESS CAN HELP
CLIENTS COMMUNICATE
CLEARLY AND
POWERFULLY.
STEVE MARTINO

LYNN MACRONE. JUICE PHARMA.

Assuming an edgier concept means "most compelling" but "possibly polarizing" for whatever reason, the challenge then is not only getting the client comfortable with the concept, but also providing the right support for the client, so that he or she can secure approval from all stakeholders. That said, it is the agency team's responsibility to literally build the case, so that proof of the concept's value is ironclad. This means pouring over decks of research to highlight the pearls that may not

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We ask these questions because we're about health.
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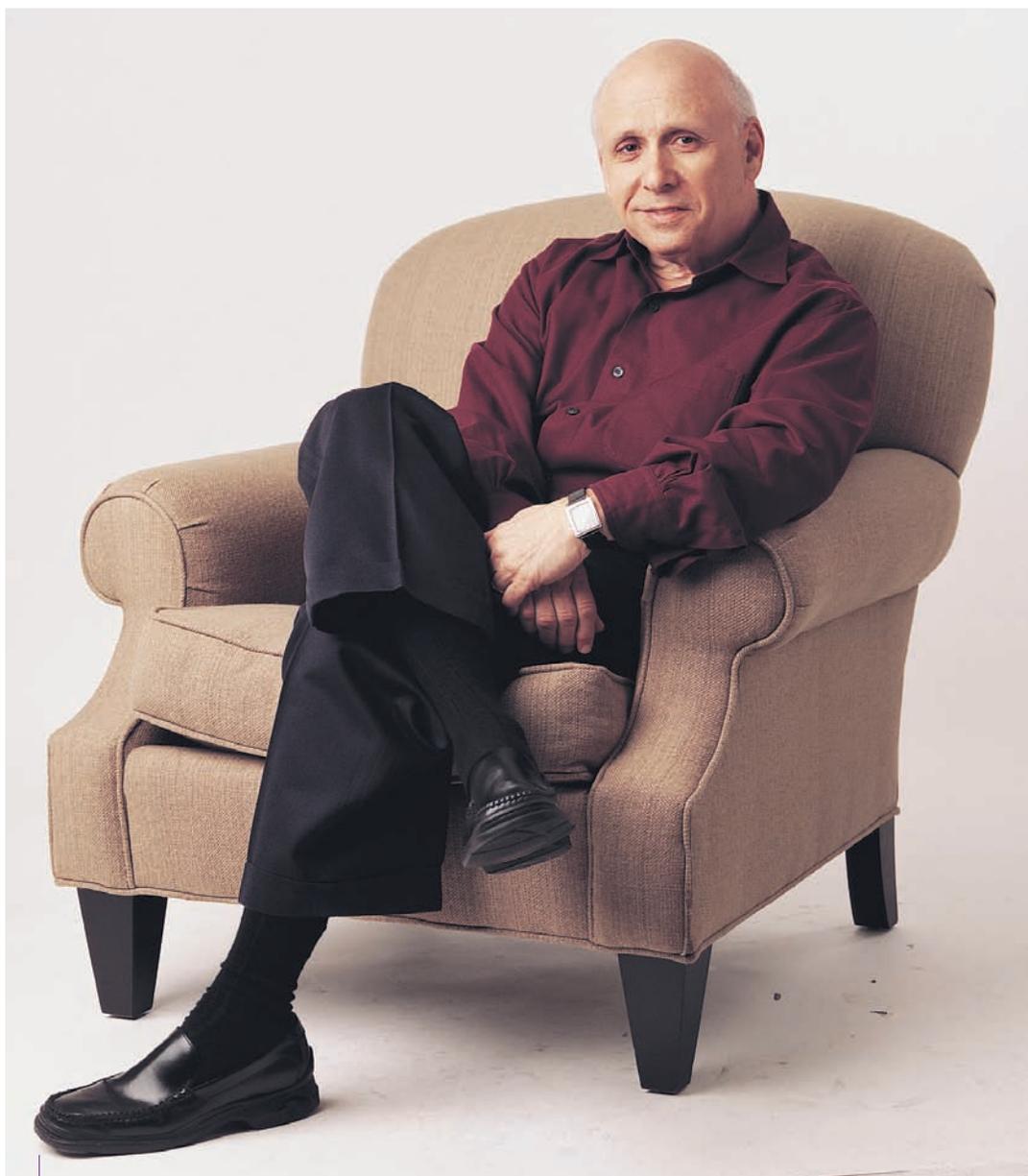
▶ **DONALD MARTINY**

Dorland Global Communications

Sound strategy and business understanding are fundamental to powerful, smart communications, and rule one for successful advertising. An edge without that foundation is no edge, just wasted energy and space.

be glaringly obvious. It means regrounding the team in what the brand must achieve in the marketplace via the brand personality and positioning. And it means generating momentum and passion around doing what is right for the brand, not necessarily what is comfortable. If we can provide airtight proof for why the edgier concept makes the best sense, it will have a greater likelihood of being produced.

JAY DONIGER. DONAHOE PUROHIT MILLER First of all, I disagree with the premise that an edgier concept is the Holy Grail that we should be consciously searching for with our clients. To do so satisfies our egos and not our clients' best interests. But if the creative process produces edgy concepts that we believe should be developed and exposed in the best interest of the brand, the navigation process for ensuring uptake in a corporate culture that may reflex-

▶ **JAY DONIGER**

Donahoe Purohit Miller Advertising

I disagree with the premise that an edgier concept is the Holy Grail that we should be consciously searching for with our clients. To do so satisfies our egos and not our clients' best interests.

ively reject it is a delicate one. Simply stated, the biggest challenge that we must overcome to ensure that such edgy executions see the light of day is to gain the client's trust. I have found that bringing the clients' product teams into a creative exploration process that exposes them to a wide range of very conceptual, loosely developed ideas that includes such edgy options is an extremely useful and unthreatening tactic to overcome instinctive rejection. At such an informal and roughly developed stage of concept execution, the chances are greatly improved for an open discussion where buy-in

can be gained in baby steps up through the approved ranks. Presenting fully conceived, presentation quality, edgy, or challenging concepts to an unsuspecting client marketing team, as if bringing commandments from the creative mount, to my way of thinking is a formula for failure. An agency owes its clients expansive thinking, but needs to manage the acceptance process carefully so the good stuff doesn't fall to the floor.

ROBIN SHAPIRO. CORBETT. We do not look to create edgy ideas as much as distinctive and

memorable ideas — ideas that represent a fresh approach in the marketplace. A great idea may very well challenge a current mindset or behavior but it need not put a brand at risk. The real risk is in doing — or choosing — work that may seem safe, but is actually invisible, because it is too familiar, expected, or unremarkable.

HELEN BOAK. HAL LEWIS GROUP.

A bad idea covered up with edgy execution is like a pig in a tutu. It just won't work. For edginess to be effective for a brand, it must be part of the brand personality. At our agency, we have a tool called

A BAD IDEA COVERED

UP WITH EDGY

EXECUTION IS LIKE A PIG

IN A TUTU. IT JUST WON'T

WORK.

HELEN BOAK

the Creative Contract, which we use to inspire and guide the creative team. It is developed and approved by both the agency and the client before the creative pen is ever put to paper. If edgy is on the contract, the team will expect to produce edgy executions. Reaching a degree of edginess that will do the brand justice, while still showing a positive reflection on the clients' corporate culture, is a challenge. However, edginess is not the Holy

Grail of creative concepts. I believe it's distinctive creative that brings about an emotional connection. People may not always remember what you've said, but they'll never forget how you make them feel. This is true also for the brand experience. It's about intimacy. "Provide hope to the hopeless," "save those confined by therapy," and "change complaints into compliments," are more personally meaningful than "proven efficacy," "many formulations," and "success in many patient types." Unfortunately, words like "hope" and "save" don't appear in product labeling, and are quick to be

rejected even if in an appropriate context. It becomes an art problem. How can the emotional benefit be shown without saying it? That's another challenge.

DONALD MARTINY. DORLAND. The challenge is always to create powerful communications. When the concepts are sound from a strategic and business point of view they are easier to sell. I have heard creatives say, "let's

break all the rules." That is an adolescent and incomplete notion from my point of view. The last time someone said that to me I asked what rules they were referring to. They just stared at me, unable to articulate an answer. Of course advertising needs to command attention. Of course we need to differentiate our clients' offering from that of their competitors. Sound strategy and business understanding are fundamental to powerful, smart communications, and rule one for successful advertising. An edge without that foundation is no edge, just wasted energy and space.

BARBARA HUBER. FLASHPOINT. People are afraid to take risks and they are afraid they will offend someone. Advertising agency executives are afraid that the clients won't like it. Clients will always say they want out-of-the-box thinking, but then become nervous if we try something that they haven't seen before. They worry about their upper management. When concepts are tested in market research, doctors are also reluctant to embrace riskier concepts or to choose things they haven't seen before.

► DO YOU FIND THAT YOUR CLIENTS ARE MORE OR LESS WILLING TO TAKE RISKS WITH THEIR BRANDS' CREATIVE IN TODAY'S MARKET?

REID CONNOLLY. EVOKE. Consumers are bombarded with advertising, including pharmaceutical, and I think more clients now see the importance of breaking through the clutter and really competing for shelf space in consumers' minds. There is no doubt that there will always be more internal scrutiny with a pharmaceutical brand, whether it's the medical, legal, and regulatory review process, or management approval, but this is inherent when the business involves people's health. But I think the days of more timid, slice-of-life ads are on the decline. Brands need to stand for something to their consumers, and today's ads are helping them do that. Customer and audience insights weigh heavily in how we market today, and I think that helps the creative process and helps shepherd what could be seen as riskier concepts to market.

MELISSA CAHILL. EURO RSCG LIFE CHELSEA. Clients today have more at stake than ever before. There's more regulatory scrutiny, more pressure from Wall Street, more dollars on the table. Playing it safe has become the name of the game. Is this understandable? Yes. Is it ultimately best for the growth of the brand? The answer is a resounding no. The challenge from the agency's point of view is to make the

advertising safe in the sense that it won't get an FDA letter, but also conceptually compelling and persuasive. This is not easy, but it's definitely possible. Ideally, an ad can be very safe, yet very creatively edgy. Think about it — Shakespeare was incredibly creative within the confines of the sonnet.

JENNIFER ALAMPI. TORRE LAZUR MCCANN. Many clients seem to be more willing to take risks with their brands' creative because of the fiercely competitive marketplace. With fewer clear differentiators, having edgier, unique creative executions that quickly stop a physician and leave a meaningful impression have become a risk worth taking. We have found that more brand managers are starting to read between the lines of market research results, evaluating ideas on more of a qualitative basis rather than quantitative. Focusing more on emotional responses and some of the intangibles of market research has helped place greater value on stopping power, branding, and strategy. Although a creative execution might be outside the comfort zone of traditional pharmaceutical advertising, if it clearly and concisely

leads back to the positioning, many clients are willing to pull the trigger. We consider these to be very calculated risks on our part — and believe our clients would agree.

BRUCE NICOLL. S&R COMMUNICATIONS. It used to be that agency people were frustrated at clients' lack of risk taking, but increasingly I see clients even more frustrated than we are at their own regulatory environments. The trend toward outsourcing medico-legal judgment calls to self-styled FDA consultants with zero-risk agendas has pretty much eviscerated the ad industry's ability to infer advantage. And isn't that what we're commissioned primarily to do? This Orwellian process might yet make oxymorons of us all. Nevertheless, one does still see beacons of creative brilliance shining through the fog, and it's wonderful to see that there are still clients bold enough to simply tell the truth about their brands, pushing the envelope while staying well within indication and above board. One doesn't have to break the rules to stand out.

DAVID RAUBE. GOBLE. Because of the regula-

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BRUCE NICOLL

tory climate, many clients have pulled back in the aggressiveness of their claims, and perhaps that's good because as an industry we need to demonstrate responsibility, a commitment to the truth, and dedication to helping physicians and healthcare professionals help people be as healthy as they can be. There is a crisis of confidence among the public about the whole pharma industry, with a lot of blame put on advertising and marketing for increasing prices and other problems. We need to show that, as a whole, the industry is filled with good people who have important information for doctors, other healthcare professionals, and patients. On the other hand, that doesn't mean that we can't create stirring, surprising concepts that showcase the benefits of therapies and touch the profound emotions that accompany the important human issues, the issues of life and death really, that the healing professions deal with every day. We owe this to everyone in the healthcare delivery system, from the scientists at pharmaceutical companies to the pharmacists at the corner drugstores.

MIKE JOHNSON. I-SITE. There are more products, more brands, more avenues to broadcast messages. Many of our clients have realized taking appropriate, calculated risks — particularly on the Web with banner creative and mini-sites — is a necessary step to keep from blending into the background.

HELEN BOAK. HAL LEWIS GROUP. Today's market is not yesterday's market. The number of brand voices behind the market noise has increased way beyond the big pharmaceutical companies of a decade or so ago. More than 2,000 biotech companies are vying for brand attention and they market their own novel drugs. The things that worked in the past may not apply today. Some clients recognize their need to differentiate in a crowded market. These clients are more likely to take risks. They know that the real risk is mediocrity. Other clients are terrified to step outside to differentiate and tend to play it safe. It seems that the larger the client, the more likely powerful creative gets diluted in the process. I believe the agency's role is to help clients envision the brand they don't even know they have and to help cultivate greatness with an expanded perspective in problem solving.

BOB FINKEL. KANE AND FINKEL. Most clients express a desire to take calculated risks when it comes to the creative product. They're responsible for making the sales forecasts

come true. But in reality there's increased pressure to play it safe, particularly in light of today's heavily regulated environment. No one really wants to receive a warning letter from the FDA. Some marketers and their agencies once viewed that type of negative attention as a badge of honor. I don't see a return to that mentality anytime soon. In terms of responsible marketing activities, I find that it's possible to be

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BOB FINKEL

assertive and appropriately aggressive with communications without stepping over the line. On the other hand, I will acknowledge that the line is sometimes blurry at best and the rules of acceptance can change overnight. Client regulatory bodies fall somewhere between risk-assessment advisors and marketing police. It takes a strong client to champion the marketing cause, especially when it's unpopular to be taking any risk at all. I have a great deal of respect for clients who don't cave under pressure.

▶ DOES THE TESTING OF CONCEPTS HELP OR HURT THE PROCESS? AND WHY?

REID CONNOLLY. EVOKE. There is a fine line here. There is no doubt that, overall, concept testing is an invaluable asset in the creative process. The ultimate test of any creative is when the campaign is live, and that is not a test we want to fail. Concept testing is really the only way to ensure that the ideas developed by client and agency resonate with the target audience and help build a deeper connection between them and the brand. Some of the greatest insights I have ever gained from testing are answers to questions that were never asked. The information that we receive from people unprompted helps us see their perspective and gain a much deeper understanding of their situation. Having said all of that, there is most definitely such a thing as over testing. Not everyone will love a concept, and I don't think that should be the aim. There is a point of diminishing return for concept testing, and that is when clients and agencies need to rely on a very reliable tool known as the gut.

PATRICIA MALONE. STRATAGEM. This is a loaded question with many diverse opinions and really depends on who we are trying to help. If we know we have a concept that has tested well, many times this is reassuring to clients. The only thing about testing is that sometimes truly startling creative ideas generate polarizing discussions and are eliminated. Strong branding takes time, and we need time to lay the foundation and build the story. A great idea isn't always globally great right out of the gate. It's riskier not to test creative, but I do think that if a brand position is strong and focused, and the creative communicates that position, it shouldn't always be tested. Give the creative a chance to get out there and grow. Where testing can be helpful is in defining a true negative, or something that is alienating for the audience. Agencies can't anticipate everything, so it's good to see if there are any



▶ **PATRICIA MALONE**

Stratagem Healthcare Communications

The only thing about testing is that sometimes truly startling creative ideas polarize the discussion and are eliminated.

unexpected — negative for a good reason — reactions to a bold concept.

LYNN MACRONE. JUICE PHARMA. Testing concepts can be extremely helpful. The question is, will the results of the research guide us to solutions that can truly effect change, or will the research simply steer us to the most comfortable, most subjectively appealing solutions? This marks the difference between effective research and research that fails to inform on the subtleties necessary to move the needle among customers.

ROB KIENLE. ABELSONTAYLOR. I know this is controversial, but in my view, testing, done right, is the foundation of producing a superi-

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▶ **JONATHAN MALE**

Interlink Healthcare Communications

Today's marketers lean more and more on research to build their concepts, delving into every nuance and reaction to create a generic Frankenstein.

or product. I think it's unfortunate that so many people believe otherwise, because it's really just a matter of having a few ground rules and adhering to them. First, don't put an ad into testing just because it's safe and doctors will like it, because they will and then we end up with a likeable but forgettable campaign. That's not the testing's fault; it's our fault. Second, recognize both the role of, and the reasons for, different research phases. Qualitative testing is no place to identify a winning idea, unless the goal is to promote a handful of doctors to marketing gurus. In reality, qualitative testing does just the opposite. It identifies losers, and helps refine those concepts that might become winners. Adding a quantitative phase verifies the true winner, so long as the testing is performed against established norms.

STEVE COLDIRON. JOCOTO. Unfortunately I think that in most cases testing actually hurts, particularly when we are testing edgier concepts. In my experience focus groups and test audiences tend to play to the room, which is usually filled with a host of their colleagues. It becomes a chance to show off and demonstrate how intellectually driven and emotionally detached they are. I think it is extremely difficult to get an accurate impression of the potential effectiveness of a campaign in this way.

SCOTT WATSON. COMMONHEALTH. Overall, I feel testing hurts but it would also be a bad idea not to get a read on what the customer reacts to.

▶ **BOB FINKEL**

Kane and Finkel Healthcare Communications

How can we expect a concept to come out cleanly when we're asking someone to pick it apart? I look to market research to uncover prevailing attitudes and insights that can help improve the idea, not destroy it.

I hear this a great deal: "this concept was the winner at research." That is not the point. Put 100 people in a room and give them a choice of 31 different flavors of ice cream, and I'll bet you the most chosen, winning flavor would be vanilla — and who wants to produce an ad that's the creative version of vanilla? Testing should not be about coming out with a winning concept. We should use testing as a means to see how physicians are thinking, how they are responding, what their is day like, how they communicate with their patients, and how much time they have for the rep. To develop great work we need to know the customers' insights and then create compelling ideas to gain their attention and draw them in.

BOB FINKEL. KANE AND FINKEL. Market research often gets a bad rap and sometimes it's warranted, but not always. I think it's advisable to review concepts for a sanity check with the brand's target audience. But the problem occurs when the people behind the mirror feel the need to react to every comment offered. One person's opinion is just one person's opinion. Physicians and patients know that they are being asked for their point of view and are usually good about freely sharing their thoughts. Physicians in particular are trained diagnosticians and will almost always find something wrong or broken in a concept. I equate the process of concept testing with the notion of asking a mouse to design its own mousetrap. How can we expect a concept to come out cleanly when we're asking someone to pick it apart? I look to market research to uncover prevailing attitudes and insights that can help improve the idea, not destroy it.

JONATHAN MALE. INTERLINK. Testing is a necessary evil. The underlying reason for its

existence is sound, but the over-reliance on its every hiccup and burp is not. As a creative director, I suspect I am not alone in this conclusion. The basics recognize that we are in the business of marketing to physicians and consumers. As such, we need to understand the opinions, habits, and reactions of the target audience. Often, this information is used as a tool to neuter concepts. Today's marketers lean more and more on research to build their concepts, delving into every nuance and reaction to create a generic Frankenstein. If one believes that a core idea represents a brand and that distinctive words and images shape perceptions, then market research needs to be controlled and directional. The concept needs to be broad, clear, and informative. We need to step away from the research data and let the idea breathe.

RAFAEL HOLGUIN. PALIO. Testing is responsible for the "sea of sameness." Very little creative really stands apart in the pharmaceutical category. Excellent thinking is sacrificed in the testing process because six people or doctors in a room with very little time, given a few hundred dollars, make judgments on the visual concepts like one would pick a commodity. They tend to pick the most comfortable and familiar solutions instead of letting a message that has been crafted to challenge their senses get through. Testing has some partial benefits to identify disconnects, but its main problem is that it usually occurs in a vacuum. The moderator isn't accurately informed, the testing methodology and questionnaires are in opposition to the brief, and clients play it safe and lean toward what is expected instead of relying on instinct powered by experience.

JAY DONIGER. DONAHOE PUROHIT MILLER. What a loaded question. This is the classic love/hate relationship that makes creative directors wake up in the middle of the night in a cold sweat. Clearly, we absolutely must test for a number of reasons — the least of which, is that no product manager would stake his and the brand's future on anything short of at least some CYA data that validates the decision to

TESTING IS RESPONSIBLE
FOR THE "SEA OF
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CREATIVE REALLY STANDS
APART.
RAFAEL HOLGUIN

Defining CME

cu·mu·la·tive (kyoom'yə-lə-tīv)

adjective

1 a : made up of accumulated parts

b : increasing by successive additions

2 : formed by the addition of new material of

the same kind (kyoor'ə-De...index>

jective

: capable of being cured or

cur·a·tio (kyoor-ra'she-o)

verb

1 : attention/medical attention,
healing, curing

cure (kyoor)

noun

1 : recovery or relief from treatment

2 : something (as a medicine)

cu·ri·ous (kyoor'ē-əs)

adjective

1 : marked by desire to investigate and learn

2 : arousing interest because of novelty or
strangeness: a curious fact.

cur·rie·u·lum (kə-rīk'yə-ləm)

noun

1 : all the courses of study offered by an
educational institution.

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▶ **ROB KIENLE**

AbelsonTaylor

Qualitative testing is no place to identify a winning idea, unless we want to promote a handful of doctors to marketing gurus. In reality, qualitative testing does just the opposite. It identifies losers and helps refine those concepts that might become winners.

run with any campaign, least of all an edgy one. Gone are the days of managers and agency creative directors saying in unison, "Let's run with it; it just feels right!" The problem is that no matter how well-designed the testing is, there is luck involved to get the type of respondents

who come to the qualitative testing party. And you need a testing organization that is able to help a client understand the true nature of results, which at their worst reading, can kill good and viable concepts, and at their best and most rational reading, help the agency and clients avoid train wrecks. Simply put, we don't have a chance of getting that edgy, groundbreaking campaign in the books without it.

MIKE JOHNSON. I-SITE. Usability testing and focus groups are crucial to interactive design, but smaller projects often suffer from a lack of budget. I've seen several Websites experience irreparable harm from informal testing — asking family, friends, colleagues — in lieu of

EXPERTS

JENNIFER ALAMPI. Senior VP, Creative Director, Torre Lazur McCann (TLM), Parsippany, N.J.; TLM focuses on one core service: healthcare advertising and communications delivered to professionals and patients via print, video, and digital media. For more information, visit torrelazur.com.

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▶ **SCOTT WATSON**

CommonHealth

Put 100 people in a room and give them a choice of 31 different flavors of ice cream, and I'll bet you the most chosen, winning flavor would be vanilla. And who wants to produce an ad that's the creative version of vanilla?

carefully conducting controlled studies with the audience in mind.

GRACE ERIKSEN. GREY HEALTHCARE. I once had a client, while at another agency, who developed his own concept to add to qualitative testing at the last minute. His great idea featured a couple walking hand-in-hand on a beautiful beach with the headline: "Powerful

QD Efficacy." The ad was put into testing, and it was the No. 1 favorite of doctors across the land. Does it matter what the product was? Can you even tell? Of course you can't, because it's completely generic. Ads often win in testing because they tell doctors what they want to hear — not because they're good, memorable, or original. There's nothing sticky about "Powerful QD Efficacy," regardless of how many doctors picked it. It's a bad idea, an instantly forgettable idea. What's the answer? Qualitative testing should be directional, not absolute. ♦

PharmaVOICE welcomes comments about this article. E-mail us at feedback@pharmavoiced.com.

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