## ART-3443

Concepting

Design



## Concepting

- Ideation
- Creative Process
  - You use for almost every creative problem-solving task
  - You've used it in this class many times, sometimes while reaching a more specific objective (AIDA)
  - You've worked *backwards* on many ads in this class unraveling the concept by identifying its strategy, tactics, features, and benefits.

## Concepting

- Great concepts begin with great strategy and great research.
- GARBAGE IN / GARBAGE OUT

objective (AIDA)
- You've worked *backwards* on many ads in this class unraveling the concept by identifying its strategy, tactics, features, and benefits.

- Concepting comes in after Strategy & Tactics, Features & Benefits decided on per group after research.

Altstiel, Tom and Jean Grow Advertising Creative Strategy, Copy, and Design. Sage Publications, Inc., California, 2010.

## Concepting

- Before start scribbling, make sure you've answered the following:
  - *Some of the answers may be "not applicable"*

Altstiel, Tom and Jean Grow Advertising Creative Strategy, Copy, and Design. Sage Publications, Inc., California, 2010.

## Questions BEFORE Concept

- What is the client's real problem?
- Can I solve the problem creatively with marketing communication?

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## Questions BEFORE Concept

- Do I know the target audience?
- Do I know how they feel about my product?
- Do I know the product features/benefits?
- What is the Big Idea (One Thing) I can say or show about this product?

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## Questions BEFORE Concept

- Do I know the competition's strengths and weaknesses?
- Where is this product positioned? Where do we want it to be positioned?

Although there are so many different definitions of brand **positioning**, probably the most common is: identifying and attempting to occupy a **market** niche for a brand, product or service utilizing traditional **marketing** placement strategies (i.e. price, promotion, distribution, packaging, and competition).

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## Questions BEFORE Concept

- How much do I need to say or show? (Do I even need a headline?)
- What should the tone be?

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## Avoid Inadequate Concepting

- Don't "work backwards":
  - Don't adapt the strategy to the creative.
  - Do make the creative fit the strategy.

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## Avoid Inadequate Concepting

- Pitching new business
  - = "We don't know much about your product, but we can do wacky stuff."
- Advertising class work
  - = "This was the only decent picture I could find, so I had to build my ad around it."
- Portfolio padding
- Awards competition



## 10 Tips for Better Concepts

- **Just do it:** Scribble down everything. Key word. Sketches. Stick people. There are no stupid ideas at this stage. One key word or image could trigger an entire award-winning campaign.
- **Write, don't talk:** Keep scribbling. If something works, discuss with partner. If you can't explain it in a few well-chosen words, go back to scribbling.



## 10 Tips for Better Concepts

- **Throw it all on the wall and see what sticks:** Tack your ideas on a wall and stare at them for a while. If you have the luxury of time, come back the next day and see if they still look good. Invite a couple other people to look at them and ask for feedback.
- **If you're on a roll, don't stop:** Once the creative juices get flowing, keep tossing out ideas. If you're lucky, you and your partner will get on a streak and come up with now only a killer theme but enough concepts for a whole campaign.



## 10 Tips for Better Concepts

- **Does this look funny?** During your concept development you'll come up with a lot of silly ideas. Some may make you fall down laughing, either because they're so funny or you're totally sleep deprived. Humor is a powerful force, so if your idea still makes you and others chuckle a couple days later, find some way to use it. With that said, don't set out to be funny. Try to be interesting.
- **Show it, don't tell it:** One picture may be worth a thousand sales. Find an image that grabs a reader. Then develop a tagline or headline that works in synergy with that image, rather than just describing it. Luke Sullivan says, "Try to solve the problems visually if you can. As larger brands become globally marketed, visual solutions will become even more important. Visuals translate better than words."



## 10 Tips for Better Concepts

- **Don't be different just to be different:** To paraphrase Bill Bernbach, don't show a man standing on his head unless the ad sells something to keep things in his pockets. Sometimes an art director will go crazy with backgrounds, weird typography, and other bells and whistles that satisfy his or her creative muse. But if they don't add anything to the concept, don't do it.
- **Keep it simple:** Don't lose sight of the main idea. You've got the concept burned in your brain, but does a casual reader get it? If not, adding subheads to explain the idea or cramming in extra inset photos won't help. Simple ideas break through the clutter; they are easier to remember, and sometimes they clarify the strategy.



## 10 Tips for Better Concepts

- **Don't second-guess the client:** Develop concepts that get attention and sell the product. Then worry about selling them to the client. Don't handcuff your creativity by worrying about what the client will like before you begin. The client hired you to be creative. Otherwise, they'd be doing their own ads.
- **Build a "maybe" file:** Most of your ideas won't work, but don't throw them all away. File the better ones. They may be the best answer for the next assignment. Keep a file of the scrap-stock photos, competitor ads, articles, and other stuff that trigger some great ideas.



## Simplified Concepting Approaches

- **Show the Product**
  - Establish or reinforce brand identity.
  - For example, packaging sometimes better to just show it instead of describe in headline.



## Simplified Concepting Approaches

- **Show the Benefit**
  - What happens when you use it? What does it do for you?
  - Often involves straightforward declaration sentence proclaiming the main benefit.
  - Or implied benefit like soft drink ad with people having fun around can or bottle



## Simplified Concepting Approaches

- **Show the Alternative**
  - What happens when you don't use it or use the competition?
  - Go back to basic wants and needs of target audience, it becomes easier to visualize the alternative concept
  - *Terminix showing outrageous ways people try to keep bugs out of home, like living rooms as ice-covered (more interesting than showing bug-free house)*

## Simplified Concepting Approaches

- **Comparison**
  - To other products or as a metaphor
  - BUT
    - If you are a market leader, do not compare yourself to #2
    - When you compare product claims, make sure you are correct

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## Simplified Concepting Approaches

- **Comparison** TIPS
- Make sure your claims are as factually bulletproof as possible
  - Try to collect hard evidence in advance to support your factual assertions (your lawyer will thank you)
  - Consider the risk-reward ratio – how much incremental benefit will you get from making the specific comparison vs. how much additional risk you court by doing so
  - Consider including a footnote with additional data, perhaps including the:
    a) applicable version numbers of the products in question
    b) date of your data.

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## Simplified Concepting Approaches

- **Borrowed Interest**
  - Introduce something seemingly unrelated
  - (Similar to metaphor)

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## Simplified Concepting Approaches

- **Testimonial/Case History**
  - Still used
  - Done well: Saturn ad OR Nike ad for women

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- Find one ad that expresses each of the following. (6 separate ads)
  - Show the Product
  - Show the Benefit
  - Show the Alternative
  - Comparison
  - Borrowed Interest
  - Testimonial/Case History
- Comment to Facebook post under with name of concept.

## Concept Testing *(Self-Evaluation)*

- **LEVEL 1:** Gut check. Does it feel right? If possible, walk away from it for a few days.

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## Concept Testing *(Self-Evaluation)*

- **LEVEL 2:** Matchbook Test and Billboard Test to find if creative idea communicates quickly and effectively.
  - **Matchbook:** Can you put your idea on the cover of a matchbook and still convey the one thing about your product?
  - **Billboard:** If you have written copy and laid out the ad, cover up the body copy so only headline and main graphic appear. Would it make a good billboard?

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## Concept Testing *(Self-Evaluation)*

- **LEVEL 3:** Honest evaluation. It has to meet objectives:
  - Is this concept doable?
  - Is it on target for this audience?
  - Does it have legs?
    - Will this idea work in extended campaign or is it a one-hit wonder?
  - Can you sell this to the client?
    - Can you justify this concept with sound logic?

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## Concept Testing *(Self-Evaluation)*

- **LEVEL 4:** Consumer interplay.
  - Why will they love it?
    - How can you take their reactions and extend them?
  - Once they fall in love – or not – what will they do?
    - Do I have a plan of how to leverage consumer-generated media?
    - Do I have a plan to address possible negative reaction across social media?

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## The "EDGY" Concept

- "Edgy": An unexpected element of an ad or commercial
- Some say this has become cliché.
  - It hasn't.
- BUT use only if it works for your target audience.



## The "EDGY" Concept

- Finding the edge
  - Recognize the risk of offending the general audience to appeal to target audience
  - Shock the reader/viewer into noticing
  - Drive a wedge between "our customers" and everyone else (us vs. them)



## The "EDGY" Concept

- Before you get edgy:
  - Understand the tolerances of the total audience
  - Really understand how far you can push your target audience
  - Consider the risks (legal, ethical, business)
  - Check your personal moral compass. Are you proud of the work?
  - Be able to defend your idea logically, not just because you think it's cool.
  - Don't try to be different just to be different.
  - Have a backup idea.
  - Get paid before the client goes bankrupt. ;)



## When you're STUCK.

- **Back up:**
  - Find out where you are and you might know why you're stuck.
  - Do you understand the product, the market, the target audience, the competition, the tone?
  - If you have enough information to say it straight, you are close to being able to say it great.



## When you're STUCK.

- **Go back to "the books":**
  - See CA, CMYK, etc.
  - Check out new websites that feature award winners.
  - ADSOFTHEWORLD.COM



## When you're STUCK.

- **Talk about it:**
  - Find a sympathetic ear and state your problem. Don't ask for ideas.
  - Just explain what you know about the assignment and where you're stuck.
  - By explaining out loud, you might find the solution yourself.
  - Sometimes what you think is lame, someone else thinks is great and you just need the encouragement.

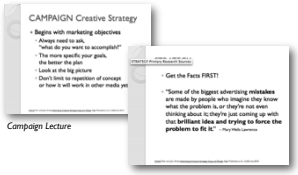


## When you're STUCK.

- **Take a break:**
  - See a movie, watch TV, play basketball, dig in your garden, etc.
  - Do something unrelated to work.
  - **BUT** Don't let it extend to the hour before assignment is due.



## Strategy | Concept




*Campaign Lecture*




*Strategy & Tactics Lecture*

## Strategy | Concept

- Strategy is not exactly a Concept
- Strategizing *can* be the same as Concepting ← this noun has been made into a verb in advertising lingo. ☺
- Both are coming up with ideas and problem-solving
- *Don't overthink that.*
- *Just know that for both, always research first.*

## Concepting

- "At this stage in your career, you don't have to be a great writer or an accomplished art director. But you should start working on becoming a great **idea person**."

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## ART-3443

Concepting

Design



## Design

- Both ADs and copywriters share same goal: create artwork that sells and idea or product.
- Advertising is an **ideas business**.
- Note to a **copywriting** student:
  - "Whether your talents lie with the written or visual expression, if you want to get a job, an internship in the creative department, or even a foot in the door, you'd better learn how to put your concepts into visually interesting layouts. Copy doesn't exist in a vacuum."



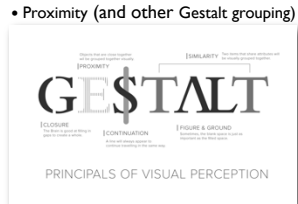
## Design

- Both ADs and copywriters share same goal: create artwork that sells and idea or product.
- Advertising is an **ideas business**.
- As an **art director**, you will have to find ways to visually convey the meaning in your copywriter's headline.
  - You'll have to make body copy engaging and readable.
  - Above all: must learn how to attract attention, create interest, and stimulate action.



## 4 Basic Principles of Design

- Proximity (and other Gestalt grouping)




http://bobbyspirit.com/admin/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Gestalt-Principles.png

## 4 Basic Principles of Design

- Alignment: BE EXACT
  - Each element should have a visual connection to another element and flow from one point
  - Nothing should hang alone – unless intentional
  - *Think grid*



## 4 Basic Principles of Design

- Repetition
  - Repeating some design element throughout layout
  - Not boring, but organizational and intentional
  - Like Gestalt similarity grouping
  - Shape, color, lines, texture, bullets, or particular font
  - Do on both web and print



## 4 Basic Principles of Design

- Contrast
  - Optical weight
    - Not necessarily relative scale
    - Can have a significant effect on read of page, so use strategically
  - White space (negative space)
    - Not necessarily white
    - Has optical weight
    - Never just the unused portion of layout
    - Eyes need a rest or helps to frame something else



## Typography

- Serif/sans serif
- Weight : optical weight
- Size
- Honor margins
- Leading
- Visual Hierarchy

## Typography

- Color
  - Human eye most comfortable looking at warm colors
  - Complementary and contrasting colors should work to visually enhance your strategy
  - *Beware color symbolism per culture/subculture*
  - Colors of brand – relativity
- Beware Reverse type
  - Use sparingly
  - Hard to read



## Typography

- Go beyond legibility and make copy **inviting to read**



## Designer's Creative Process

- Get a clear idea of how many elements might be in your layout, start sketching or collaging
- Body copy is usually the last thing done
  - Lorem Ipsum "Greeking"
  - Placeholder Text (InDesign)



## Designer's Creative Process

- "When you brainstorm a headline, you may create 50 or even 100 ideas. Most of these will be schlock. The same process holds true with layout design. Scribble and scratch or cut and paste 50 or even 100 ideas. In the process, you'll come to see what works best for your specific project."
  - >> Don't start shopping for visual images until you've nailed down your Big Idea.
  - >> PRELIMINARY WORK OFF THE COMPUTER will make or break the quality of your layout.



## Selecting Visuals

- Don't use cliché visuals just because they generated results for the last 50 years



## Selecting Visuals

- More visual, less copy
  - Depends on audience, but usually less copy
    - Soft drinks and gum don't need 200 words of body copy, but a B2B (business to business) might



## Selecting Visuals

- Illustration vs. photography
  - Illustration if you can't show it any other way (sometimes combination of photo/illustration)
  - Create mood
  - Dramatic effect
    - Often these overstatements more accepted as artwork than realistic photography



## Design and Campaign Continuity

- Understand "consistent"
  - Sometimes EXACT
  - Sometimes similar
- Design elements and great copy tie a campaign together
- Use of lines, color, layout style
- Logo treatment and taglines



## Design and Campaign Continuity

- May have to work with variety of executions in different media
- Takes discipline to maintain graphic continuity in long-running campaign, especially when new ads developed halfway through campaign's run
- Understand how various elements interact to form unified whole or the campaign will fall apart

## Design and Campaign Continuity

- Understand how various elements interact to form unified whole or the campaign will fall apart.

Design and Campaign Continuity

- Understand "consistent"
  - Sometimes EXACT
  - Sometimes similar



## Putting it all together

- Anyone on the agency staff should be able to evaluate your design
- You must have some good reasons for your design choices and opinions – and they should **always be tied to strategy**



## Putting it all together

- **Conceptual considerations:**
  - Does your layout convey the Big Idea?
  - Did you design with your audience in mind?
  - Did you prioritize elements?
    - The most important should be the most prominent
  - Do you visuals and headlines work together?
  - Overall, does your design catch the reader's eye?
  - Did you keep it simple?
    - Less is more



## Putting it all together

- **Layout considerations:**
  - Did you consider alternatives?
    - You can never have too many thumbnails!
  - Did you consider the Four Principles of Design?
  - Did you use white space effectively?
  - Does your layout have a pleasing and logical visual flow?



## Putting it all together

- **Layout considerations:**
  - Did you choose a display font that matches the tone of the ad?
  - Is the body copy inviting to read – the right size and proportion?
  - Did you honor the margins – allow enough space around critical elements?
  - Did you keep it simple?
    - Less is more



## Putting it all together

- **Most importantly:**
  - Keep it simple.
  - If you emphasize everything, you will emphasize nothing.