

How to sell off-the-wall creative

By  Sid Peimer

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Great ideas come from somewhere. No one really knows where...

Although neuroscience identifies parts of the brain that 'light up' during creative moments, perhaps great ideas come from the darkest recesses of our minds. Who knows. But that doesn't really matter if you can't sell it.

Brief moments

Most of the time we just take a brief and do what we need to - we answer it, usually using the same vernacular we were given, such as brand values, competitor set and consumer insights, the latter usually being some descriptive nonsense required to fill in that block (you don't seriously still have blocks in your briefs do you?)

When we return with our work, clients will firstly decide whether it meets the brief, and then approve it if they like it. The first thing we need to accept is this: we are not there to answer a brief - we are there to solve a problem! How can you give the client an answer if there is no accompanying problem?

Vital organs

So, how do you sell off-the-wall creative? Just as a rugby ball needs to be well placed before kicking for posts, you need to set up the problem to enable conversion. That simply means phrasing the problem in a certain way.

Say you are asked to prepare a campaign to increase the awareness of organ donation. You could come back with an awareness campaign communicating that you may very well save a life if you register as an organ donor. However, here's the award-winning campaign by Leo Burnett Tailor Made for the Brazilian Association of Organ Transplantation as described by D&AD [1]:



(Image extracted from the [D&AD website](#))

People are not shocked by the burying of organs. But they are by the burying of a luxury car. To change that, we asked a famous and eccentric Brazilian billionaire, Chiquinho Scarpa, to post on his Facebook page that he would bury his Bentley in the yard of his mansion. The impact was huge. People were revolted and the media criticised his decision. An actual burial ceremony followed, with the media broadcasting live to the whole country. After placing the car into the grave, he stopped the burial and the organs donation campaign was revealed - organs donations increased by 31.5% in 1 month.

I have no idea how the agency managed to sell the idea to the client, but this serves as a wonderful example of how it could have been sold - just by reframing the problem: "people are burying their organs, when they should be giving it to us". That makes the campaign seem so logical in hindsight, and not off-the-wall at all.

In hindsight

Strategists might be appalled at this bit of reverse engineering, but I find it quite acceptable - as long as it focuses on the right problem. Clients will often tell us what they need, when instead they should be focusing on what the actual problem is. How often do we see generalisations like increase awareness/trial/usage etc? That isn't a problem to be solved - that's an activity to be undertaken.

Just frame the problem in such a way that your creative work is the answer. It really is that simple.

Reference 1: www.dandad.org/awards/professional/2014/integrated-earned-media/23065/bentley-burial/

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