

Live Local, Think Global

**Regional Advertising
Without
Regional Limitation**



Karin Gottschalk

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0424 723 280

karinangelika@mac.com

1. INTRODUCTION

This document began life as a list and some notes, and then it grew and grew.

I had been thinking about some of the lessons I have learned when working at several excellent advertising agencies, and the negative and positive experiences I have had there.

I care just as much about great advertising as I did then, even more so in fact. But now I have had time to think about what worked and what did not, and how things can be done better.

The field of advertising has changed, due to the state of the global economy, wars and recent events, and the changing nature of communications and what people expect of it. This is now a world where customers want to enter an active dialog with companies rather than passively accepting impersonal messages from them. The means for real dialog are in place with the Internet and the Web.

Some advertising agencies have begun changing to adapt and take advantage of new conditions. The majority have not, and are floundering, and predicting ongoing doom and gloom before an uncertain recovery that is always just somewhere around the corner.

Rather than becoming the victims of fate, I believe it is imperative that we rethink what it is we are doing, and how we are doing it, and begin leading rather than following.

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1.1 ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

P RINT IS TRADITIONALLY LINEAR. You start reading at the beginning and then follow a straight path until you get to the end. Digital documents are by nature lateral. You read part, then you go to another part linked to that one, and then you jump all over the place following the interconnections.

Digital documents grew out of the theories of Vannevar Bush and Ted Nelson about how we think and how the human brain works.

Essentially, all our thoughts form a cloud of billions of smaller units of thought, interconnected by many threads. Some of those smaller thoughts coalesce into clumps called *memes*.

I recommend you start at the table of contents and then jump to the section that most interests you, to begin with. Each listing in the table is a link. Clicking will take you to the relevant page.

1.2 AN EVOLUTION IN COMMUNICATION

The accuracy of Bush and Nelson's observations explains the sudden enormous popularity of the World Wide Web. The Web is built out of *hypertext*, text documents with multiple connections inside and out, analogous to the way the mind works. On the Web, ideas gain a force that turns them into something like living entities—memes.

This document is a PDF, a hybrid between print and digital documents. It is part hypertext, with a hypertextual structure underneath, and part linearly structured print. It contains internal

links, and external links to websites. You can read it straight through like print, laterally like the Web, or both.

Documents are in a state of transition. They are becoming a better fit for how people really think. They are becoming more hypertextual and increasingly multimedia, reflecting the way our brains receive input and make connections.

Our society is in a period of transition, especially in terms of how we communicate with each other. There are major implications in that for advertising, especially.

1.3 THE IMPLICATIONS FOR ADVERTISING

Once upon a time marketing theorists posited that there was a thing out there called the *Mass Market*, inhabited by masses of people with pretty much the same tastes and needs and desires, whom you could address *en masse*, in a thing they named *Mass Marketing* that, despite its name, somehow managed to communicate with each such individual on a one-to-one basis.

I used to have a bookcase full of books on the subject putting forward the same *one-to-one yet in the mass* theory. I chucked them out in the end. Those marketing theoreticians must have seemed pretty damned convincing once upon a time, because there is a fundamental contradiction in what they are saying.

Christopher Locke, *Financial Times* top 50 world business thinker and author of 2 Amazon.com bestsellers, is one writer on marketing whose books I still have in my collection.

Business created mass markets through broadcast advertising, the same stentorian voice of command-and-control it used on workers, but in this case applied to the marketplace. 'Shut up and do what you're told' is not that much different from 'shut up and buy our product'.

The 'shut up' part was built in to broadcast, as there was never any back-channel—never a way to ask questions.¹

Mass marketing has applied its methods and theories to all kinds of media besides TV—cinema advertising, print ads, billboards and posters, and radio. When advertising came to the Web in 1994, mass marketers leapt to the rescue with banner ads. Those old theories of mass marketing are still at work today in traditional public relations firms and marketing communications departments—marcomms.

... mass marketing is in trouble and its practitioners know it.

Let's have an interlude to ask a really obvious question of those old time marketing theoreticians. How is a billboard one-to-one? Or a TV commercial? Do you really expect people to walk past one or watch one and have a dialogue with it? How are you going to talk back?

Today, mass marketing is in trouble and its practitioners know it. They are floundering, and are blaming everyone and everything—the war, epidemics, consumer sentiment, market sentiment. They are

doing everything except what they should be doing—rethinking their commitment to a manner of marketing whose time has passed.

The Web and the Internet work because they really are one-to-one. They are a return to the market in its original sense. Let's listen again to Christopher Locke.

In many ways, the Internet more resembles an ancient bazaar than it fits the business models companies try to impose upon it.

Millions have flocked to the 'net in an incredibly short time,... because it seemed to offer some intangible quality long missing in action from modern life. ...the Internet connected people to each other and provided a space in which the human voice would be rapidly rediscovered.

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Having got a taste for the individual human voice at work, by the hundreds of millions in an incredibly short time, people are now doing what they have always done when presented with a new and more attractive paradigm. They are looking for old media and old marketing forms to take on the characteristics of the new.

1.4 REMEMBERING THE MARKET

It is worth considering what the word *market* originally meant, and still does in some parts of the world, before the era of supermarkets and mass communications.

A market was a gathering in public of people wishing to buy and sell goods and services, communicating with each other one-to-one about the nature and benefits of those goods and services. Markets are regular affairs, held in the same place on the same days, and ongoing communication between individuals is what helps establish a condition of trust.

A market was a gathering in public of people wishing to buy and sell...

With regular communication comes storytelling and mythmaking, as well as the pleasantries and courtesies of real human contact.

Whenever I hear the word market, my memories of the market in the little eastern French town of Ferney come to vivid life. The town is formally named Ferney-Voltaire after the Enlightenment poet, philosopher and tragedian who was exiled there. Voltaire wrote *Candide* in his villa on the heights just above the town centre.

Whatever the season, it was always sunny at Ferney market. Its odours wafted past your nose even before you had arrived, hitting somewhere on the road from Cessy at least a kilometre away. The smells were intensely seductive, a mingling of spit-roasting meat of all kinds with freshly harvested herbs, fruit, nuts and vegetables warming in the sunlight and gently releasing their odours into an almost invisible cloud hovering low above the square.

Arrive early and an extra smell would be added to the mix—the last of the previous night's sourdough bread made by the town's best artisan baker cooling on grey galvanized zinc wire racks outside the store opening onto the market square.

Winter or summer, cold or warm, every stallholder had a smile and a kind word to bestow on every passer-by. The smiles and enthusiasm were infectious. Arrive on a stern mission to grab just a few essentials in the shortest possible time, and after a greeting and a smile or two your pace slowed, your cares seemed less urgent, and you were tempted to stroll about that little square for hours, chatting in fractured French and English, sampling the wares, and gazing at every little vignette bathing in the intense mountain sunlight and the fresh mountain air.

If only every other market was like that one. After my first visit to Ferney, I could never go back to the market at Bermondsey.

2. ADVERTISING AND ITS CRITICS

CREATIVITY ALWAYS HAS ITS CRITICS. Sergio Zyman, former Coca-Cola worldwide marketing director, is one of them.

In his book *The End of Advertising As We Know It*², Zyman writes: “Simply put, the goal of advertising is to sell more stuff to more people, more often for more money.” Fair enough, and perfectly true.

But then Zyman hurls abuse at advertising agencies. “Ad agencies and ad execs lure companies in with promises that they’ll come up with the best ad campaigns anyone has ever seen. They collect big fees, and whenever anyone questions what they do, these creatives act offended and basically say the same thing that the Emperor’s con men did: ‘Advertising is an art, and only artists and creative people get it.’”

Zyman’s outlook is that of a certain kind of self-described hard-nosed businessman. Zyman sets himself up in opposition to creativity and the people who practise it. Avoiding clear research and reasoning, he releases emotional diatribes against the people whom he sees as his polar opposites.

He paints what they do and say as deception and lies. He puts words in their mouths. But he has no new ideas and no real solutions. Even worse is that he seems unable to cope with the truth.

The truth is that creative advertising works. Numerous advertising effectiveness awards and studies by industry bodies like Britain’s Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA) indicate that creative ads are also the most effective. Effectiveness is what sells “more stuff to more people, more often for more money.”

**... effectiveness awards and studies ...
indicate that creative ads are also the most
effective.**

The facts are that the public responds positively to great advertising. The public does indeed “get it.”

The public even enjoys great ads, especially television commercials. The evidence is in the enthusiasm with which many of my non-industry friends collect and swap commercials, the way my English friends would chat about some great new ad on the TV, and the popularity of websites like Adcritic.com. Adcritic.com and its imitators had to begin charging, or shut down, due to the expensive bandwidth that enthusiastic members of the public were eating up.

The reality is that great advertising is always in short supply. The other salient truth is that advertising alone is *not* enough.

By the way, after Zyman published *The End of Advertising As We Know It* Coca-Cola fired him.

3. ME & ADVERTISING

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I LOVE ADVERTISING, despite great advertising constantly being in short supply.

I am passionate about ideas, and excellence in communication, and I believe that creativity is the essential nature of mankind. I think a great deal about all these things, and I have had the good fortune to work at several of the best advertising agencies in the world, with some of the most innovative people in their fields.

I came to advertising later in life, after lecturing in art and design, exhibiting photographs in art galleries, working for most of Australia's biggest publishers, and conceiving, co-founding and being European Contributing Editor for *Black+White*³ magazine.

During a break from advertising, I worked with one of the foremost new media designers in the world—Malcolm Garrett⁴, and was creative director of an immensely successful, albeit short-lived, Web magazine that pioneered new methods of advertising on the Web.

I learned about advertising by working closely with some of the great creatives—Tim Delaney⁵, Warren Eakins⁶, and John Bevins⁷. I have met and spent time with several others—Indra Sinha, Jim Aitchison⁸ and Hugh Mackay⁹. I consulted for Saatchi & Saatchi¹⁰ when they were reforming themselves into an ideas company. I worked on a number of award-winning ads with the younger generation of rising stars, for clients including Adidas, Harrods and Pepe Jeans.

I am a former industry outsider, with plenty of experience of other creative areas. As I did not come up through the system, I perceive it *as* a system, and feel free to question holy writ.

Jim Aitchison, in one of the best in-depth books on advertising, *Cutting Edge Advertising*, also supports the need to question rules.

Kevin Roberts¹¹, worldwide CEO of Saatchi & Saatchi, speaks constantly to industry and academic organizations around the world about the need to question and rethink all our assumptions. (His speeches are archived on his personal website.)

Despite what antagonists of creativity such as Sergio Zyman appear to believe, shouting very loudly and thumping on a tub while presenting a clear proposition about the product does not persuade people to buy. If it did, every store would have a tub-thumper banging away out front. Coca-Cola signalled Zyman's need to re-think his assumptions by sacking him.

3.1 WHAT DO I WANT?

Having experienced a few good agencies, and seeing shortcomings in each, I have been rethinking what I want out of advertising and advertising agencies.

I want to re-enter advertising on more effective terms. I want to do it at an agency that is as close as possible to my ideal, or at least one that wishes to make progress in that direction.

The last couple of years have been a difficult time for advertising as a whole. Many agencies have been questioning how they do business. Innovators like Saatchi & Saatchi, Euro RSCG ¹⁵, St Luke's, Mother, HHCL and some of the best small regionally-based North American agencies have already shown how to successfully re-think yourself.

Some of these agencies were founded in the previous advertising recession. Others reformulated their methods when the Web proved that communication really is a two-way process, and that the mass audience and mass marketing is a myth. Some of them rethink themselves on an ongoing basis.

There are many lessons to be learnt from all of them. There are also *new* thoughts awaiting expression.

3.2 CHANGE & EVOLUTION

This document is the product of my rethinking and ongoing questioning, about advertising, creativity and ideas.

It will continue to evolve as my thinking evolves, and I will release it in many versions, in the new tradition of regular updates established by the Web and digital publishing.

4. LOCATION, LOCATION

A *GOOD LOCATION IS EVERYTHING*, as the saying goes. But what does that *really* mean?

I have lived nearby three major trunk roads in three different cities. In London it was the New Kings Road. In Sydney, Parramatta Road. In Perth, Beaufort Street.

Both Beaufort Street and Parramatta Road have long sections populated by many empty stores. New business owners arrive, set up in full optimism, and then go broke shortly afterwards. Then someone else comes along.

I am sure the agents representing those properties all use the same phrase on their placards: *Plenty of passing trade*. The trade passes by, and never stops. Unless your store is surrounded by carpark tarmac, people just do not get out of their cars.

But those stores that have made the right provisions do very well indeed, and you would think new store owners on both roads would have learned their lesson by now.

... location is relative.

I raised the New Kings Road because it too is a road that people pass through on, instead of stopping in. There is one exception. My former account director on Adidas, Tim Little ¹², set up his new shoe store on one of the least likely parts of it. People stop there, but only if they are diehard fans of beautiful handmade shoes in the fine old English tradition.

Tim does not need to rely on passing trade. He learned his lesson from Adidas. Adidas' two main offices are based in two extremely out of the way places—Herzogenaurach, Germany and Portland, Oregon. Adidas is a global brand, available everywhere.

Tim sells his shoes in all the biggest and best department stores in the world—Selfridge’s, Barney’s, Nordstrom and the like, all over the world.

Tim Little lives above the store in peace and quiet, and travels to meet his clients and customers when he needs to. Tim loves travelling. He rarely got out of the office when he worked for Leagas Delaney. Now you can’t keep him out of airplanes.

The lesson is that location is relative. The facts are that there are such things as air travel, telephones, e-mail and the Internet, and business knows no borders.

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4.1 EDGE CULTURES

In his website *The New Zealand Edge*¹³, Kevin Roberts puts forward the argument that edge cultures have the edge over the competition.

Roberts cites New Zealand as a prime edge culture. He defines edge cultures as those that are far away from the centre. Their primary virtues, he says, are an ability to see and think clearly and unshackled by unquestioned assumptions.

The New Zealand Edge contains news items about New Zealanders such as *Lord of the Rings* director Peter Jackson or war heroine Nancy Wake. There are biographies emphasizing the achievements of New Zealanders through the nation’s history, and there are some real revelations about innovators who turn out to be Kiwis. The site contains many cogent arguments in favour of edge cultures.

Kevin Roberts chose to live and work in Auckland, New Zealand, after a stellar career in marketing and corporate management in London, South Africa and Canada for world famous brands including Mary Quant, Procter & Gamble, Lion Nathan and so on. With his track record, he could have chosen to live anywhere. Instead he picked Auckland. And soon enough, Saatchi & Saatchi picked him, to be their worldwide CEO.

Roberts’ personal website, *SaatchiKevin*, contains ample evidence that he spends much of his time addressing industry groups and educational institutions all over the world. He jets around the Saatchi & Saatchi offices, is officially located in New York, and maintains home base and family in Auckland.

4.2 THE KIWI EDGE

The Wellington office of Saatchi & Saatchi, despite being one of the smallest, is the most awarded. It has been featured in several advertising books, often the only Saatchi & Saatchi office so chosen. Its budgets are mostly tiny, yet its results are impressive.

There is no doubt the quality of the Wellington office’s work is aided by the presence there of Len Cheeseman, one of the greatest advertising typographers ever. (I am a type freak—I notice these things!)

Cheeseman worked in London at Collett Dickenson Pearce (CDP) during its glory days with writers like Tony Brignull and Indra Sinha, and art directors such as Neil Godfrey. Then Cheeseman vanished, to mysteriously reappear in New Zealand.

Such talents aside, there is another factor at work, one common to many New Zealand advertising agencies. I experienced it first hand when I flew in to Auckland to do jobs for DDB Needham in the late 1980s. The agency's clients awarded them with a respect and a creative freedom that was unknown in Australia, the other edge culture in the region, at the time. Essentially we could do whatever we felt would do the job for the campaign, and the client trusted our judgement enough to accept that. None of the work was rejected.

**... a respect and a creative freedom that
was unknown in Australia ...**

New Zealand agencies often feature in international awards, have begun winning Australian clients, and their ads have run in this country. Their agency's Australian branches have sometimes taken New Zealand ideas and developed them further.

Other analysts credit distance and lack of interference as a factor. As the New Zealand market is so small and the budgets are so tiny, the belief is that global marketing directors pay no attention to the advertising being done there. But that does not explain why national marketing people permit such creative freedom.

Another strain of thought is that the quality of Kiwi television programming is so bad that advertisers feel compelled to offer audiences decent ads in compensation.

4.2.1 My Take on the Kiwi Edge

My belief is that Kiwi agencies and their clients fully understand the benefits of creativity and have established a condition of mutual trust.

I do not buy the low budget argument, that they are so tiny nobody cares what is done with them. To a small national division, even low budgets seem like a lot, and there is as much pressure on spending that money wisely as head office feels when presented with enormous figures.

4.3 AMERICAN REGIONALISM

Madison Avenue is the traditional home of advertising in the United States. All national advertising campaigns originate from there, except if they come from Chicago. That is the classical myth.

If New York and Chicago are North America's Sydney and Melbourne, then every other city is the equivalent of Perth or Adelaide. State capitals, but not natural centres of industry on a national scale.

Even Los Angeles, global home town of the movie industry, hardly counts itself as the center of the universe in any other creative field. Silicon Valley may be nominal home to high tech, but no creative industry there registers on the national radar. And as for the Midwest or the Southeast, well, *fubgeddaboutit*.

Yet, some of the most creative advertising agencies are located well outside New York and Chicago, and those agencies often hold national and international accounts the envy of Madison Avenue.

4.3.1 Charlotte, North Virginia

Loeffler Ketchum Mountjoy

In Cutting Edge Advertising, Jim Aitchison quotes Jim Loeffler on geography, fate and self-belief.

It begins with self-imposed standards and disciplines. Harry Jacobs in Richmond, Ron Andersen and Tom McElligott in Minneapolis, Stan Richards in Dallas, Dan Wieden in Portland, all believed first in themselves.

All have proved it's not where your body's at, it's where your head's at.

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Loeffler also shared his insight into the importance of a positive environment outside of work.

An environment is defined by far more than the office. Maybe that's why more young people today, still passionate about work, want a life outside the office. For some it's not The Big Apple. It's mountains, lakes and outdoor adventure just outside their office windows.

4.3.2 Richmond, Virginia

The Martin Agency

The little agency that could. "The Agency was founded July 7, 1965, in Richmond with one account and a lot of ambition," according to The Martin Agency website.

Now their national accounts include United Parcel Service, Hanes, Vanilla Coke, Olympus America, Inc., Seiko Corporation and Olympus Cameras, as well as a number of Federal government departments and instrumentalities.

4.3.3 Portland, Oregon

Wieden & Kennedy

Dan Wieden built his agency with the aid of his first major client Nike, which also has its world headquarters in Portland. Wieden & Kennedy subsequently expanded into Amsterdam and London.

Several notable creatives come from Portland, often having started out at W+K, such as Warren Eakins.

Eakins worked for W+K on the Nike account in Portland and Amsterdam, then was lured to Leagas Delaney to work with Tim Delaney on Adidas. I worked with Warren on many such projects, for Adidas' US office, for Adidas UK, and jointly for all the European Adidas marketing directors.

Warren maintained home base in Malibu, California, flying in for extended work sessions in London. Now that he has moved to Minneapolis agency Fallon, Warren continues to base himself at home, now in Santa Monica, renaming his home office Fallon West Wing.

Leagas Delaney

Adidas' North American operations are headquartered in Portland. Leagas Delaney set up an office across the road.

The office consisted of an account manager from the UK, and a PA. We did all creative and production work for Adidas USA from London and routed it through the Portland office.

Later, when the agency acquired other American clients and staff, it opened a fully fledged branch in San Francisco. However, I continued doing work for the new US creatives from London until they acquired their own infrastructure and support staff.

While Adidas was in the process of restructuring itself into a conventional corporation from a quirky family firm that had licensed off regional and product line rights to other entities, its newly appointed CEO moved between Adidas' Portland office and the new global HQ in the obscure southern German village of Herzogenaurach.

Multinational advertising campaigns were becoming the norm for Adidas, and just like an American regional agency with national and international clients we learned to communicate successfully with our client at long distance.

Commissioning and production had always been a long distance affair for the London office. Athletes signed to Adidas are apt to be available for photo shoots and TV commercials at short notice and in far-flung locations. We were accustomed to sending photographers and crews anywhere in the world and running the shoot by wire and courier.

4.3.4 Minneapolis, Minnesota

Fallon McElligott

Now better known as Fallon, the agency has opened up other regional offices and recently recruited creatives of the stature of Warren Eakins.

National clients include Jim Beam, *Fortune*, Nikon, Miller Lite, BMW, Porsche, *Rolling Stone*, Hush Puppies, Lee Jeans, and *Time*.

4.3.5 San Francisco, California

Goodby, Silverstein & Partners

San Francisco is a big city in most people's terms and the epitome of countercultural cool, but it is small beer when it comes to advertising.

What chairman Jeff Goodby is *not* is small or narrow-minded. He reflects on the role of fun in the home of hedonism.

There's an element of fun here, which we deeply believe in.

Contrary to a lot of Western thinking throughout history, we don't think good things only come as a result of pain, introspection and torture. Study instead your freedom and exuberance each day.

4.4 PERTH & THE TYRANNY OF DISTANCE

I remember it well from the first time I heard it: *Perth could so easily be a great regional city for advertising, just like Portland.* Or Minneapolis or Dallas or Richmond or Charlotte. Name your favourite small to medium-sized North American city containing great ad agencies.

That was some time in the 1980s, when I was getting around the Perth advertising agencies on behalf of *Campaign Brief*. I have heard it and read it again a few times since.

There is another saying some Perth people are fond of trotting out: *Perth is the most isolated capital city on the planet*. Big deal. Compare the distance between Perth and Sydney to that between London and Hong Kong, for example. Get over it.

The facts, as amply illustrated by some of the examples above, are that agencies in many locations around the world have been doing business with non-local clients for decades. I did exactly that at Leagas Delaney just before everyone acquired computers and e-mail accounts, and while it was sometimes difficult then, it was not impossible. How the world has changed since.

There is a *poor little me* strain in Perth culture, whereby its proponents see themselves as the victims of distance, separation, the Wise Men from the East, or just unnameable outside forces. *They won't let me be creative. They won't give me the breaks.* They, they, they.

And let's be honest, there is a strong streak of conservatism and anti-creativity amongst some members of the business community here. Just like there is in Minneapolis, Portland, Richmond, Dallas and you name it. As well as London, New York, Hamburg and wherever else great creativity also finds a home.

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We are responsible for making things better.

Sergio Zyman penned his cynical comments in Atlanta, Georgia. Or he might have first aired them in uptown New York. I have come across a number of Zymans in miniature in Perth, Brisbane and Sydney. And London. There will always be such people in the world.

We are responsible for making things better. We cannot forever dream of some paradise, and then run away to something that looks vaguely like it. If everyone did that, the world would be a far worse place, nothing but a desert surrounding a handful of appallingly congested mega-cities. Blade Runner revisited.

The facts are that Perth provides many advantages. It is a human-sized city that is not too hard to live in. It usually rates high in global surveys of livability. The weather is great, and the landscapes are inspiring. Air flights are not as expensive as they used to be. Foreign currency converts well. There is this thing called the Internet.

There is time to think, and space to dream in.

Room to be involved in other aspects of life than just *work, work, work*. All creativity, and especially advertising creativity, needs to draw on inspirations outside of itself.

4.5 PERTH—THE EDGE OF THE EDGE

If New Zealand is The Edge, in Kevin Roberts' terminology, then Perth is The Edge of The Edge. Australia is also a nation perched on the edge of the rest of the world. Western Australia, as the westernmost state with its capital perched on its far west coast, is on the edge of the edge.

If edgeness qualifies you for greatness through long vision, far sight, and a lack of received or perceived mental barriers to progress and innovation, then we have edgeness doubly in Western Australia compared to New Zealand.

We have a bigger economy than the Kiwis do, an equally high percentage of citizens in diaspora in the other states and scattered throughout the rest of the world, and a large percentage of Perth people are from other countries or have lived elsewhere. Such experience of other cultures and other lives contributes to the quality of life here.

Edgeness alone is not enough, however. As Jim Loeffler implies, we need to do what Harry Jacobs, Ron Andersen, Tom McElligott, Stan Richards, Dan Wieden and Jim Loeffler himself did, and believe first in ourselves.

We need to go in search of several other essentials too.

5. CLIENTS GREAT AND SMALL

THE SIZE OF THE CLIENT is not what counts—it is the nature of your relationship with them, the degree of confidence they have in themselves, and their faith in creativity. Relationships are mutual. So is respect. Before respect comes self respect.

5.1 GREAT CLIENTS, GREAT AGENCY

There is no doubt that great clients make great advertising easier to accomplish. Large budgets coupled with high expectations ensure advertising creatives more often successfully leap to the challenge.

Multinational accounts with global corporations are everyone's dream. It is why I found it so easy to persuade the busiest and most famous photographers (and directors) to work on Adidas projects, even for pitiful budgets.

The British advertising industry often compares the budgets it receives with those of its American counterparts, even for the same products and from the same clients, and complains at what a raw deal it is getting. Yet it manages to get on with the job nevertheless.

British advertising agencies learned long ago that, if you cannot throw a wad of cash at a project, then you must apply your brain power to it. That means ideas assume prime importance. Ideas are why British advertising is so creative, so successful and so imitated.

Leagas Delaney had a mix of great clients and good ones. One of them was, in most agencies' definition, the worst kind of client you can have. Pepe Jeans rarely paid their bills, and their marketing manager was, to put it mildly, eccentric and untrustworthy.

Not so great.

**“Great clients” is ...
subject to interpretation.**

Yet despite that the agency was prepared to take a punt and use the opportunities Pepe, its product line and its profile offered to do

innovative and edgy advertising. Our Pepe Jeans work contributed to the agency's high profile as *the* creative boutique for quite some time.

Great clients is a term subject to interpretation.

All except one creative team at Leagas Delaney subsequently moved on to a succession of agencies in search of the next great client that would allow them to do great work. I have been surprised at how many of them have moved so often. Keeping track has not been an easy job.

First thing you should do on arriving at a new agency is take stock of the clients it currently has, and the opportunities each permits to do good work. Profile the client, its products, its marketing director and its CEO. Let your account service people in on what you are doing. The quality of their enthusiasm will tell you whether they will be allies in your quest or not.

Then do all you can to win over the client and to do that great work you dream of.

Australian advertising creatives tend to be more sedentary in their ways than their British counterparts. I have only known a handful who have moved in search of specific creative opportunities in the British way, usually at agencies with accounts in completely new product categories.

So the onus is on us to seek opportunities where we are.

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5.1.1 Quotes from the Masters

Whether an agency currently has great clients, has good ones that can be persuaded to become great, or needs to go after new ones altogether, is a vexing question. There are, after all, only going to be so many great clients to go around.

Some of the stories circulating about Frank Lowe are about how he has the ability to persuade good clients into greatness. I am not sure just how he does that. Maybe that should be the subject of another book by Jim Aitchison.

But in the meantime here are some more quotes from *Cutting Edge Advertising* on the subject of agencies and their clients.

Jeff Goodby, Goodby, Silverstein & Partners, San Francisco:

We look for smart clients who want to bring their best to this process as well.

Ian Batey, Batey Ads, Singapore:

It's great clients who make great agencies, not the reverse. They've got to take the risk, they've got to buy the stuff and run with it.

If you look around over the last twenty years, and look behind the great advertising, you'll find a great company. And behind the great company will be a great man. If you can find those guys early on, you've struck gold.

5.2 GREAT SUITS, GREAT WORK

At Leagas Delaney I worked with one of the best suits in the business, Bruce Haines. I also worked with some good ones, some average ones, and one mediocre one—*sorry, that's outside my remit*, he would always be saying in response to some perfectly reasonable request.

Great account service people have always been rare, but I believe good ones can be made instead of being born that way. Good account service is an attitude, an acquired skill, and lessons learned, not some accident of birth.

Bruce Haines left Leagas Delaney to head Leo Burnett's London office and take up chairmanship of the IPA. He is from the Welsh working class valleys, went to Uxbridge, and became deeply interested in the arts. He is often quoted in the trade press as saying that *creativity is everything in advertising*, and that the best thing an account manager or agency director can do is support his creatives in every way possible.

I worked with him on a couple of new business initiatives and experienced that kind of trust and respect firsthand. It worked because people willingly gave far more than they had to.

**... good suits
can be made ... that way.**

The IPA chairmanship allows Bruce Haines to further promote what he preaches and practices. He has established the BOB Awards—the Best of the Best. He has commissioned several effectiveness studies which have proven that the most creative advertising is the most effective. He has presided over many other important education and training initiatives.

Frank Lowe is another example of a super suit. I never met Frank, even though my partner had worked for him during the years he lived in his famous house in Glebe Place, Chelsea. My predecessor at Leagas Delaney had gone to work with Frank at Lowe Howard Spink in Bowater House, as had legendary former Leagas Delaney art director Steve Dunn.

Lowe had been in account service at CDP before starting up his own worldwide network of agencies. He has been a legend for years. His friends, colleagues and employees often tell stories about him, and many suits in the business try to model themselves on him. He was even known about in Perth during my *Campaign Brief* years.

I don't know precisely what makes Frank Lowe such an epitome of account service, but there is a clue in what one of his colleagues once said about him to me. Frank Lowe is, apparently, *a creative suit*. In other words an account director who thinks like a creative.

Another similarly creative thinker was the account service guy who recruited me in to the John Bevins agency. He proved his worth as an innovative thinker by doing so. My appointment there allowed me to help the agency win back millions of dollars of lost business, and gained a substantial amount of new business as well as a higher profile in the area of Internet and interactive TV advertising.

**“The responsibility lies with everyone—
agencies and clients.”**

John Bevins recognized this individual's innate creativity by offering to make him a creative. He declined. He knew his own nature, and he had eyes set other goals. Unfortunately he left soon after, when his

desire for more responsibility was denied by the other partners. He went on to join Siimon Reynolds' new firm, and one day, no doubt, will emerge as a force to be reckoned with.

The last word goes to someone else who has proven to be yet another very creative individual, Tim Bullock. Tim is an account director at Saatchi & Saatchi, Sydney. He won Tropfest this year with his short film *Buried*, and was a finalist in two previous years.

Tim taught himself filmmaking during his eight years at Saatchi's, and is now about to leave to become a TV commercials and video clip director, with plans to make feature films further down the track.

Here is what Tim Bullock says on the current condition of advertising creativity in Australia.

There's a lot of room for improvement. The responsibility lies with everyone—agencies and clients. It's a matter of keeping everyone informed where the creative benchmarks lie here and elsewhere in the world.

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5.3 GREAT WORK ON THE BOX

It is not as if we do not see enough highly creative award-winning ads from elsewhere in the world. Next time you turn on the television set, take note of how most of the automobile ads have a line of text in them mentioning that the model depicted may not be available in Australia. They are made by British or American agencies.

Watch cosmetics and beauty products ads closely and you will notice the Australian-accented voice over is just so very slightly out of sync with the models' lips. Ditto with ads for some global brands of food products.

What about those TV shows of TV commercials fronted by failed comedians or one of the Dandos? They may be used as filler when programmers run out of regular programming, but people watch them nonetheless.

And it is surprising how often they turn up at primetime. Friends of mine watch them, even the re-runs, and discuss their favourites with enthusiasm. Each re-run is like being greeted by old friends.

5.3.1. A Lesson from Bud

Remember how popular the Bud Lite *Whassup?* commercials were? As soon as they were digitized into QuickTime movies they were spread around the world by e-mail, clogging up corporate intranets and slowing down Internet access as people went mad for them.

Everyone had copies on their hard drives. Everybody quoted them and re-enacted them. Everyone became a salesman for Budweiser.

5.3.2 An Experiment with Great Ads

As an experiment, I once tried showing marketing directors at a major Australian client examples of great ads in several media. Especially ads of the kind that were appropriate to their own product category and the best aspects of which could easily be duplicated and even improved on.

The marketing directors were uniformly receptive and enthusiastic when they responded immediately and emotionally. When they began applying their minds to the ads, the whole exercise fell apart. Fear and anticipation began clouding their judgement.

They began trying to think and feel on behalf of other people. “Well, I understand and appreciate this, but I’m not so sure about everyone else. Maybe they *won’t* get it? Maybe we’d better not consider doing anything new.”

Suddenly there was a *mountain of maybes* as the marketing people tried to imagine themselves into the shoes of other people, and decided that other people were wanting when it came to wits and imagination. They had decided that it was a case of *Us* and *Them*.

I did not have a great suit with me at the time—the account director who had been looking after the client was no longer working fulltime, and was in the process of training her successor, who was good but had a way to go to achieve greatness. (In the end she upped and quit.)

There is no doubt in my mind that if her predecessor had been there then she would have simply used her understanding and rapport with the clients to persuade them to see sense.

5.3.3 The Analects of Advertising

I have a saying about trying to second guess other people, one of my *The Analects of Advertising*¹⁶.

There can be no more Us and Them. Your customers are at least as intelligent, perceptive and witty as you.

There are a few more (almost 200 analects), including these two that also apply to the question of suits and consumers.

Consumers rise to expectations, if you speak to them with respect. Talk down to them and they depart in droves.

The best account directors are at least as creative as the creatives they work with. Great account directors act as the agents of Creativity as much as of the agency that employs them.

6. THE VISION THING

GEORGE BUSH SENIOR was known to wonder out loud what *this vision thing* was. Evidently he wasn’t too familiar with it. His son also has shortcomings in that area. We await Bush junior’s vision of how the US economy will actually rebound soon. More welfare for the rich is a childish solution.

Vision is the trait that allows you to see that there are other ways of being, other ways of doing things, and then to visualize how to make them real.

Vision requires imagination, a faculty we all share but that is too easily repressed. Exercising the imagination and following one’s vision leads to economic success. Vision and imagination are as essential to advertising as they are to successfully running any business.

Imagination is a faculty we all share, ...

Great entertainment actively engages its audience's imaginations. Entertainment is not the opiate its detractors claim it is. Information coupled with entertainment makes for effective communication. Add an appeal to the imagination, and to desire, and you have a winning combination.

Ex-marketing director and self-appointed advertising pundit Sergio Zyman seems to be against entertainment as well as advertising as such, however. He demands that Coke's advertising agencies "stop entertaining people and start selling Coke."

What would he have them do? Show people a bottle of Coke and then just tell them to go out and buy it?

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6.1 VISION & CREATIVITY

To be creative means having ideas. It is more than possessing finely developed craft skills. While there are few completely original ideas left to discover in the world of advertising, or art and design for that matter, there is plenty of mileage in having a new take on old ideas.

Many new ideas are evolutions of older ideas, applied with wit and imagination.

Tim Bullock, Saatchi & Saatchi, Sydney:

I like the business aspect of advertising as well as the creative.

It's why I've stayed here for eight years. Saatchi's philosophy is everyone is an ideas person, and they live up to it.

Saatchi & Saatchi's very public conversion to an ideas company has done them no harm whatsoever, even coupled with a policy of being paid on results by one of their largest global clients, Procter & Gamble.

6.2 VISION & IDEAS

Myths abound about ideas and the creative process. According to one of these myths, some people have ideas, and others do not. The theory possess a limitless supply of ideas, that pop out of the air at the slightest stimulation. Just like in those 1940s screwball comedies set in Madison Avenue, or in TV shows from the 60s.

In reality, everyone has ideas. Everyone is creative. If you are religious, then you most likely believe that we are made in the image of God and that God is creativity without limits. The evidence is in the universe. Just look at it. Massive, endless, constantly expanding, full of limitless life and variety of forms, even when we narrow our focus down to the Earth. A meteorite or asteroid strikes, a massive extinction of species occurs, and a massive explosion in varieties of new species follows.

We are taught to suppress our ideas and our creativity. We must liberate this pent-up creativity, and thus ourselves. We must not place limits around ourselves, which are limits on who we are allowed to be and what we are permitted to do.

John Hegarty, BBH, London:

Never be afraid of having ideas. They're the most wonderful things in the world.

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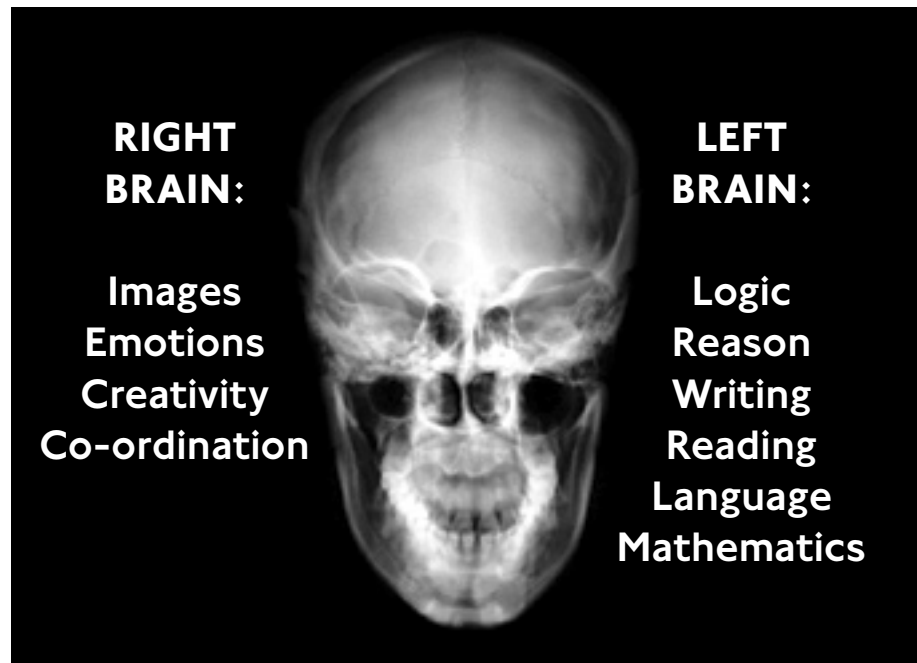


Figure 1: Creatives are left brain *and* right brain people. Few of us rely on just one hemisphere and its faculties.

6.2.1 Ideas & Creativity

Creative individuals cannot help but generate ideas. Constantly. It is our way of being in the world. To see and to question and to imagine other and better ways.

We do it all the time, whether we are asked to or not. We do it when we go to the stores, and observe the way the store is laid out, and study the products on the shelves, and the way people behave in the aisles, and the way people and staff interact, and the patterns underneath it all.

Then we imagine other ways it could be, better ways, and better products, and better and more fun experiences. I know that I do.

And then we leave all that inside the shop when we exit the door, and go back home or to work to apply the same powers of acute observation and imagination to what we have become convinced is our real job.

If we are in advertising, we return to work believing our real job is the business of making advertisements. A client expresses a need and our automatic response is to begin generating ideas about the ads we will make. Ideas about what they will say, and what they will look like, and what their strategy will be, and how their execution will come out, and who we will get to collaborate with us on making them.

Somehow, we have fallen into the habit of being advertising *tradesmen* instead of *thinkers* working in advertising. We make ads, and *that is it*.

**... we have fallen into the habit
of being advertising tradesmen ...**

But what if it isn't? What if we rethought what we do from having ideas about ads to having ideas about business? It isn't such a big leap. We do it anyway. I always have.

Except that, in the past, when I have visited a client and toured their office and had a spin through the factory and flicked through their stacks of existing print material and chatted with a few of the workers and the bosses and then dropped in to a stockist on the way back to my office to check out their point of sale, I have had so many great ideas about how they could be better presented, or about how they could present themselves to their customers, or the public in general, or the new products they could make, or the exciting stories they could tell about themselves, that I can barely contain myself.

But then I get back and close the front door and sit down to think about it all and even begin to make notes, and at a certain point, especially after discussing what I have seen and imagined with a colleague, I stop, and say to myself, "Nah! What the hell am I doing? I don't know anything about all this stuff! I'm not a PR guru and a marketing whiz kid and a business analyst and a point of sale designer! What do I know? Stick to my speciality. Stay with what I do know."

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You Can't Do That!

I had become a victim to the propaganda that if you are creative then you can only practice one kind of creativity at any one time.

That if you write then you cannot paint.

That if you act then you cannot write.

Or even that if you design then you surely cannot also make photographs or films.

And heaven forbid that you should step outside creativity altogether and try to have an opinion on anything non-artistic.

It is amazing just how all-pervasive this nonsensical belief actually is. I was at a party here a couple of months ago, and I introduced myself to a guy who turned out to be an architect. His wife was an interior designer. I had just had some minor success with an exhibition in a gallery in the east, so I introduced myself as an artist. And a writer. And also mentioned that I work in advertising.

You should have seen the look on their faces! Sheer horror and indignation! "But, but," the guy blurted, "You can't do that! You can't write and be visual at the same time! You just can't!"

His equally appalled wife then offered her advice. "You've got to give one of them up," she said. "Just choose one, and let the other go. And as for advertising, you can't be in art *and* commerce."

"You can't write and be visual at the same time!"

I asked a couple of graduate art student friends, younger ones who have been raised on stories of pioneering multimedia artists like Marcel Duchamp and Robert Rauschenberg, and whose own practice bridges many media at the same time, just the same as any number of successful contemporary artists, whether they had come across this attitude themselves.

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“All the time!” one of them replied. “We even get it from our lecturers. They’re always trying to tell us that we’re never going to succeed if we want to make art *and* write about art, or even if we just want to make two different kinds of art at the same time.”

We Do It To Ourselves

These attitudes are not confined to the fine arts. They are just as strong in advertising.

I came across it in Sydney, with a client who ran the national branch of a firm that makes, sells and installs plant and spare parts to architects, builders and homemakers.

They had a real problem, a biggie. They had struck difficulties running their business efficiently across all the state territories in Australia, not to mention in all its various levels—retail, wholesale, direct, to agents, through department stores, as packages, as units, as complete systems for a whole building, or built to custom order.

They had created an unwieldy system that ran on faxes, and telephone calls, and pagers, and a bunch of guys running around in vans full of catalogs, equipped with mobile phones and a satellite phone if they were out in the country. That was pretty much the way it was done in the firm’s homeland. It worked OK for them, but it was a disaster for the Australian branch. They had enormous potential, but much of it was unrealized.

... we came across ... unexploited opportunities in other markets.

We offered to help. We could see it was essentially a cataloging, data-handling and communications problem. Not too difficult to solve with the smart application of digital technology. We had come across a similar situation with our own systems. In the course of solving our own problems, we had learned who the best vendors were and how to get them to work well together. Essentially a production management situation. Coördination. The kind of thing an agency does in TV all the time.

We made our case, backed it up with the evidence, and after a long effort won the client over.

In the course of the consultation process we came across a number of unexploited opportunities in side markets. Better ways of presenting the firm’s products. Revelations about the remarkable things the firm’s Japanese parent was doing in other technologies. Amazing stories that could be made into great advertisements. Or that we could tell in other ways. Our client certainly had the need and the budget.

And their head office was watching them and encouraging them to create a positive example that all the other territories could learn from.

Advertising Must Break Out of Its Barriers

We failed to pursue most of those opportunities because we did not believe in ourselves strongly enough. We had the ideas, in abundance. We were gaining valuable experience in how to implement them, with other clients. We could have pulled it off, and we would have started being a very different kind of advertising agency.

But our lack of self-confidence came from the top. The support the rest of us needed just wasn't coming. Our directors were underselling us, and we were hearing the familiar old *you can't do that* refrain.

An Investigative Journalism of Ideas

One very big thing I learned from that experience is that the best thing you can do is conduct real in-depth research on your clients. It is amazing what you will discover. You will begin to know them better than they know themselves.

You have the benefit of being an outsider who is interested enough to explore every lead, follow every trail. You will become excited about things the staff simply pooh-poo, but that are going to be equally exciting to their customers.

Have you ever visited friends or relatives who live in a foreign city, and discovered that they barely know their own hometown?

That they've never been to those great museums and galleries?

Have never attended a performance by any of those amazing orchestras or groups whose hometown it also is?

Couldn't be bothered dropping in to one of those quaint little bars the other end of town where they serve the most amazing food at damned good prices and the beer is brewed on the premises and way better than that chemical crap the big breweries make?

... to make amazing discoveries, and to have incredible ideas.

Then you know how most employees regard their own firms and their own products. How too easily we turn the remarkable into the humdrum.

In advertising, we have the opportunities to make amazing discoveries, and to have incredible, creative ideas.

I get more excited the more I think about this, because I am remembering some of the situations I have been in myself. Situations that were squandered because I, or someone else, stopped and thought to ourselves "You can't do that."

Traditional marketing, and traditional approaches to advertising, are failing. The world and its people are different now. They have woken up to traditional advertising. Media Studies became a subject in high school curricula a generation ago. Everyone over a certain age already knows all the tricks. They do not want to be conned, but they do want to be told the truth, be amazed, be informed, be inspired, be entertained and above all be respected. And the means to do that lies within you, your clients and their products.

These kinds of thoughts are not new. John Bevens put a new spin on the term *investigative journalism* when he first described how he came across a painting by Rembrandt van Rijn named *Bathsheba at Her Bath* and noticed something funny about her breasts. The rest of the story is in *The Copy Book*.

In *Cutting Edge Advertising* Tim Delaney told Jim Aitchison how he would encourage every agency creative to go out and investigate the client and the product in depth. Tim certainly does that himself.

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Except that in my time with him whenever we wanted the creatives to get out of the building we had to wait until Tim was not there, and then sneak them out. Very odd.

There is Research and There is *Research*

In virtually every presentation Hugh Mackay makes on behalf of the John Bevins agency, Hugh makes a point of defining how he does research, as opposed to how the advertising industry believes research must be done. He has very strong opinions about the subject.

Hugh is an enemy of focus groups. He will tell you everything that is wrong them, to the last detail. And he is right. Because research has become defined as focus groups and little else, most advertising creatives tend to reject research in principle.

Branding specialist Marty Neumeier ¹⁷ attests to this observation.

... audience research has gotten a bad rap from the creative community.... Such views are comforting to the creative crowd because they can absolve one's responsibility to everything but one's own artistic soul. As a creative person, I can bear witness to the seductive qualities of these anti-research arguments.

As Neumeier implies, there are many other ways of doing research, including audience research just as there are a number of ways of doing primary research on the company and their products.

No, *Your Product*

Something else I also believe passionately in is really knowing your product.

The idea of using a client's products seems patently obvious, but I have always been amazed at how reluctant account directors have been to make the effort to obtain them. A handful arrive at the agency, and they vanish immediately. That event is used as an excuse for not obtaining any more. *People will only take them.*

Well of course they will. We want to know what it is that we are working to promote. The creatives need to understand the product. What better way than to have them wear the clothes, use the shoes, or lather up with the soap every night?

6.2.2 Cultivating Great Ideas

It is not that hard to have great ideas, despite the mystification some people in advertising seem to be spreading about it.

Here is one of *The Analects of Advertising*.

HOW TO HAVE GREAT IDEAS.

Absorb the brief.

Thoroughly research the client.

Immerse yourself in the product.

Have all the facts at hand.

Become the consumer.

Daydream, actively and deep.

Put every idea down on paper immediately.

As many people outside advertising will attest, having new ideas and great ideas is no guarantee they will be immediately accepted by your peers. Every field is populated by people who come to work every day, follow the routine, serve their time, earn their money and do their best to avoid creating waves.

But if you want your work to evolve instead of stagnate, and you want to do work you are proud of, then you have to be prepared to take a little flak.

The great copywriter and now novelist Indra Sinha spoke to Jim Aitchison about his own experiences breaking new ground in advertising.

...if you want to do something that no one's ever seen before, then you've got to be prepared that the industry will not help you, because it's full of extremely conservative people who know the way it's been done since the year dot.

Indra goes on to add a positive note, though.

...the people who do follow their own instincts, and fight for them, and prevail, they're the people who break new ground and end up setting the new standards and showing the new way forward. ...they'll be the figureheads of the future.

Indra Sinha should know. His writing for ads has encompassed styles and genres formerly unknown outside advertising. His innovations were rejected at first, then awarded and certified as something to aspire to.

The truth is that *all* creative fields, not just advertising, are dominated by very conservative people who are frightened by the new until it is familiar enough to become acceptable, even mundane. And then the cycle begins all over again with the next generation.

That routine is something I can attest to in my personal work, where I was simply doing something that had been done by others since at least the 1960s. To me, it seemed right and natural. However, a number of influential critics and curators found the work so outrageous, so unacceptable, that it was rejected for a decade and a half.

And then, suddenly, the critics determined that my work had been perfectly OK after all. *Whoop-de-doo.*

6.2.3 What the Public Thinks

It is essential to remember that the public does not share the same conservatism as your conservative co-workers and clients.

The public sees advertising as an opportunity to discover something new, to be informed in an entertaining way, and to have their imaginations appealed to. They have no guilt about it, nor do they believe that all advertising is bunk.

The public does, however, feel that bad and mediocre advertising is intrusive and a waste of their time. They feel that constant repetition of such advertisements is even worse. And they are right.

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6.2 ART & COMMERCE

The irony of advertising is that it has traditionally been a conservative medium, lagging behind advances in other media like film, photography, television and even the spoken and written word. That's kind of silly, considering advertising's role is to stand out from the crowd. Too often it shrinks right back into it.

Here is another of *The Analects of Advertising*.

Until recently, great writers sought refuge in Advertising before chancing the uncertain world of Publishing. People like Peter Carey, Bryce Courtney, Salman Rushdie, Indra Sinha, and Fay Weldon spent years writing copy before becoming novelists. Advertising must continue attracting great writers into its fold if it is to appeal to its audience, and evolve.

There is a creative talent agency in New York named Art & Commerce. It represents many of the most famous creative people of their generation, including photographers like Annie Leibovitz and Steven Meisel.

These people work as much on photographing and directing advertising as magazine editorial assignments. They are not averse to staging gallery shows and producing books of their work, and their images are in many major museum collections. Their work is the perfect fusion of art and commerce, hence the name of their agent.

The world we live in demands that most creative people fund their own work. State-funded grants are available only to a select few. Good teaching jobs are rarer now than ever before, and the romantic Victorian notion of the artist starving in a garret for his or her art is beginning to be recognized as the myth it always was.

That notion as well as the equally silly and romantic Mills & Boon mythologizing that sprang up around figures like Vincent van Gogh have encouraged a belief by some that art is for wimps or weirdos.

Creativity comes dangerously close to art, according to those beliefs, and entertainment follows close behind. There is a Calvinism in this attitude, a commonality with the attitudes of the Taliban. They stem from an archaic doctrine that has crept into many religions, called Manichæism, that believes the world, mankind and all its works are evil and only the afterlife is good.

Advertising is a necessary business that is necessary to business,...

Too many people in advertising feel the need to make guilty excuses about why they do it. I have heard it done so many times. There is nothing to be ashamed of. Advertising is a necessary business that is necessary to business, and can be a noble profession if practiced in the right way for the right reasons. There is no need to dismiss it for being neither brain surgery nor an aid to the third world's poor.

If you are going to head in that direction, then you may as well feel guilty every time you go and buy something at the shop. Tear your hair out and wear sackcloth and ashes.

And the notion that being a starving artist instead is somehow pure and noble and good is pure bullshit.

Here are some other people's insights into art and commerce.

Jeff Goodby, Goodby, Silverstein & Partners, San Francisco:

A lot of advertising people are afraid to even think about art, of course. They're proud to say they've got nothing to do with it. In our case, however, art is why we're here. We started the agency, frankly, because we believed advertising could be an interesting conjunction between art and commerce. We thought art could serve business in a powerful way.

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Tim Bullock, Saatchi & Saatchi, Sydney:

The great thing about advertising is that it's where art meets commerce. Lots of people love to be involved in the creative process and not starve. Advertising is a rewarding process.

6.3 COMMERCIAL PROGENITORS

There have been several periods in human history when a number of the creatively-inclined banded together into movements that rejected commonly accepted notions about ideas, creativity, art and commerce.

It happened during times of great change in society, and the effects have lived on long afterwards. We feel their effects now, so much so that their revolutionary ideas infiltrated into mainstream society.

The two such periods I am most interested in are those of the Bauhaus, and the Renaissance. I think it is time to reconsider their legacy. There are some surprises there, and certainly some great lessons.

6.3.1 The Bauhaus

The Bauhaus as an institution attained legendary status, and has come to stand in for many things to many people.

Myth has come to obscure reality.

The reality about the Bauhaus—*the most successful and far-reaching school of design*¹— and its many innovations is that it radically changed all forms of design, advertising and printed communication throughout the last century. It did not just create waves in architecture, as its name suggests. (*Bau* = building.)

The Bauhaus' effects far outlived the short period of its first three incarnations —1919 to 1933. Its masters and students went on to teach at and found other influential schools, and then into industry as practitioners whose work helped shape new movements in commercial design. The Swiss graphic design movement, so admired here in Perth, would have been impossible without the Bauhaus.

**... it radically changed all forms of design,
advertising and printed communication...**

“The Bauhaus was the child of an age that felt itself to be revolutionary,” writes Andreas Haus in *Bauhaus*. In contrast, the

the bauhaus

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Albers

Ballmer

Bayer

Joost

current age is one that does not feel it is in any way revolutionary, but that actually is. Francis Fukuyama named our period *The End Of History*.

By that Fukuyama means an end to the struggle of ideologies, especially of the totalitarian kind. Totalitarianism is now only to be found in obscure backwaters like North Korea and amongst the Maoist guerillas of the third world.

Our revolution is one of networked communications, and the revolutionary fervour vanished almost overnight when the dotcom bubble burst. Yet the revolution continues, regardless. It is simply not popularly acceptable to express enthusiasm for it just now.

The Leaders of the Bauhaus

I am interested in those Bauhaus teachers and students who intimately affected design for communication and especially advertising, and for the lessons to be drawn from their examples. (The Bauhaus' innovations in work and living spaces, and aesthetically pleasing functional furniture and product design, also still have much to teach us.)

Josef Albers Painter, teacher, typographer—Albers spread the Bauhaus' philosophies in the New World when he took up posts as Rector of Black Mountain College and Director of Yale's Department of Design. Albers' *Homage to the Square* series of paintings influenced the Op and Colour Field artists, and his discoveries in colour found their way into all areas of design and advertising.

Theo Ballmer Graphic designer, photographer, teacher, typographer—Ballmer's poster designs from the 20s and 30s were influential in the formation of the Swiss graphic design movement. A number of former Bauhaus people moved to Switzerland when the Nazis came to power.

Herbert Bayer Art director, graphic designer, typographer, exhibition architect, painter, photographer, teacher—Bayer became art director of German *Vogue* after leaving the Bauhaus, then was director of the Dorland advertising agency in Berlin until he left for the United States, where he worked as an art director and graphic designer for major corporations and magazines such as *Harpers Bazaar*.

Max Bill Architect, art director, graphic designer, painter, politician, publisher, sculptor, teacher, typographer—Bill put a new spin on the word *polymath*. He returned to Switzerland before the war.

Johannes Itten Artist, teacher—Itten spent a lifetime teaching artists and designers in all media throughout Germany and Switzerland, and wrote some of the most important books on colour theory.

Laszlo Moholy-Nagy Painter, designer, photographer, publisher, sculptor, teacher, typographer—Moholy-Nagy founded the New Bauhaus in Chicago, then founded and ran the Institute of Design in the same city. The Institute had an important effect on the Chicago school of advertising, many of whose members it trained.

Joost Schmidt Art director, cartographer, graphic designer, painter, teacher, typographer—One of the three great Bauhaus typographers along with Moholy-Nagy and Bayer, Schmidt taught advertising there for many years.

The Lessons of the Bauhaus

Looking back, some of the Bauhaus' work in advertising and graphic design does sometimes look like it is straining after effect. But when people are inventing new ways in art and design their initial results *can* appear odd at first. They often *are* odd—it's the primitivism of the new.

The Bauhaus designers were working in a time when the florid Victorian Arts and Crafts Movement dominated public taste. The Arte Nouveau and Secessionist movements were outgrowths of Arts and Crafts, centred around the philosophies of æstheticism and individualism. So, essentially, was Expressionism.

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...an individual properly trained in art and design could apply themselves in whatever field they chose.

In sharp contrast, the Bauhaus was about accepting the realities of the machine age and embracing industrial production as a medium for bringing quality design to everyone, not simply those who could afford craftsman-made products. It believed in accepting new conditions and adapting its understanding of form, colour and structure to fit, instead of imposing the styles and attitudes of the past onto the new.

Also important was the belief that an individual properly trained in art and design, in a coöperative workshop situation modelled on Renaissance studios, could apply themselves in whatever field they chose. Hence someone like Herbert Bayer, who was equally at ease in commercial and fine art, advertising and painting. Bayer was invited to work for *Harpers* by Alexei Brodovitch, another artist turned designer.

Vogue's Alex Liberman issued the same kind of invitation to painter/typographer/photographer William Klein when he returned to New York from studying with Leger in Paris after the War.

6.3.2 The Renaissance

The Renaissance came about when the State began claiming temporal power back from the Church, when classical learning was rediscovered, when Greek and Roman authors were made available in the original and in translation, and moveable type made mass production and dissemination of books possible.

Masters of handwriting—calligraphy—took up designing roman and italic typefaces for printers and publishers. Artists turned their attention to the new medium of the print. Rulers demanded that artists take time out from working for the Church in order to work for the State. Painters, architects and sculptors were awarded the status of intellectuals, if they demonstrated intellectuality. The days when art was regarded as simply yet another craft vanished almost overnight.

Yet despite that, the medieval workshop tradition and training structure persisted and continued to prove its worth. Many artists continued to run large workshops staffed by apprentices and journeymen, and took on commissions from the Church, the State and members of the middle classes.

The Renaissance

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Michelangelo, da Vinci & Dürer



The same artist who might be asked to paint a series of frescoes in a cathedral one day may be asked to decorate the front of a wedding *cassone*—chest—the next. Members of the workshop were as likely to paint backgrounds for a life-sized portrait painting as prepare plates for a new series of engravings for a publisher their master had just contracted to.

Renaissance artists were the commercial artists of their day. They marketed hope and belief for the Church, strength and power for the State, and advertised the benefits of trade and wealth for the middle classes when they painted signs for their business and painted portraits for guilds and individuals.

So much for the notion of the lone artist facing a canvas in a bare and lonely room, struggling to express some essence of the inner self.

The Bauhaus revived the traditions of the Renaissance and the Middle Ages, considering itself not as a school or an academy but as a group of closely related workshops, each with two masters—the form master and the craft master—and the students, who essentially were awarded journeyman status. The ancient and the modern. Art and commerce.

The Legends of the Renaissance

Here are several of the most significant polymath artists of the period.

Michelangelo Buonarotti Architect, painter, poet, sculptor—Michelangelo was known as the greatest Italian poet of his age, late in life, but it is as a visual artist that we best know him today.

Leonardo da Vinci Anatomist, engineer, painter, scientist, sculptor—Was he an engineer and scientist who was also an artist, or the reverse? That’s a question posed in many a recent book by contemporary art writers. They are missing the point—he was equally at home doing either, and saw no difference between either field of enquiry, because that was simply what art was to him.

Albrecht Dürer Author, painter, printmaker, publisher, typographer—Dürer was the greatest artist of his age to turn his attentions to serial art forms that could be made en masse and distributed all over Europe—woodcuts, engravings, and etchings. He apprenticed as a goldsmith, then studied painting, and wrote a series of books on type design, anatomy and the human figure, and perspective and drawing.

6.4 CHOOSE YOUR PEOPLE WELL

There is a saying that I might have first read in a book by business management guru Tom Peters. It has been repeated by many other authors on the subject since. *Always hire people who are more talented than you.*

I want to add something to that statement. *When you surround yourself by such people, you’ll shine in their light.* There is no need to fear talent. Acknowledging that you do not know everything is an important step on the path to personal growth.

Another saying that rings true is *Talent knows what it needs to thrive.*

Jeff Goodby, Goodby, Silverstein & Partners, San Francisco:

The key is to hire incredibly intelligent people and create an environment in which they treat each other, and each other's ideas, with respect. People have to feel free and secure to be as smart as they can be. The rest is just procedure.

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6.5 PROVIDE THE RIGHT RESOURCES

Ideas do not come out of the air. Insight does not come without research. Inspiration does not come from staring at the pages of advertising awards annuals.

An important part of my job at Leagas Delaney was to provide informative and inspirational materials to the creatives. Especially important considering policy was against them exiting the office during daylight hours.

6.5.1 Libraries

A good reference library is essential to any creative organization. It is surprising how quite a few do not have one at all. Or how what is there is often private property belonging to individuals, and not for loan to everyone who needs it.

A good advertising agency library should certainly consist of books, CDs, DVDs, brochures, picture library catalogs, posters, awards annuals and the like.

But don't pass on the chance to grab anything else you fancy and add it to the collection. It was amazing how a few call girl cards found in telephone boxes inspired some of the racier double page spreads for Pepe Jeans!

Bates Dorland, London

After Leagas Delaney went through a period of tearing itself apart, people began scattering to the winds. Or more properly to other agencies.

I often visited former colleagues at new workplaces and got a good look at how other agencies work. Bates Dorland in particular has a very good library, and the room was equipped with computers connected to the Internet at a time when most other agencies did not have computers for creative staff or 'net access. (Although art directors in Australia have done their work in QuarkXPress for some years, that was not the case in London.)

Leagas Delaney, London

When I arrived at Leagas Delaney there were hardly any books or reference materials of any kind. The previous incumbent, an agency co-founder, had taken everything with her.

So I started from scratch, scooping up anything and everything I came across that was free and might be inspirational, as well as buying books, magazines and other material when I could deduct the price from a project budget.

I added filing cabinets, bookshelves and databases. My assistant told me she knew many people in the music business, so we placed our name on record company new release lists, to receive new CD albums

and singles. We installed a video editing suite, and I asked the guy in charge to begin collecting videos and films, from the Web and other sources, and to place them on file.

The library was available for use by anyone, but mostly it was used by the creatives. A couple were in there all the time, almost taking up residence. None of the creatives had computers at the time, although one of them, a former science researcher turned art director, asked for advice in choosing one for his home office.

He began to learn graphics programs, and that in combination with his training in scientific inquiry and the library's resources spurred him to explore the nexus between design and advertising, with some intriguing graphics-intensive ads for an electronic games company that have since been featured in advertising books.

6.5.3 Giving Your Best

I once sneaked in to George Patterson's new office building in Sydney on a quest to work out why all the agencies were moving from the north side. I found myself in a huge room furnished with long benches filled with the latest Macs and the biggest LCD monitors available at the time. Every machine was networked and had broadband 'net access. People were working away in various corners, coming and going. The room was a-buzz. It felt great to be there.

You do not need the very best and the very latest, but giving them what they need without asking them to beg is a sign of respect. And smarts. I have been at other agencies where the equipment is always breaking down, and the staff grumble, complain and feel let down by management.

Ask for the best from your people and give them the best in return.

6.5.4 Giving unto Others

Leagas Delaney was desperately short of meeting spaces, and there was a problem with the building being heritage-listed. Only certain floors could be renovated and the creaky old elevator could not be touched.

Someone hit on the brilliant notion of turning the ground floor area behind Reception into a private café. Pale wooden flooring, amber spotlighting, beautiful Eames chairs and tables, a wonderful kitchen and the *pièce de résistance*, a magnificent steel and chrome Gaggia espresso machine.

All of us received training in making great coffees. The refrigerator and the bar were always kept well-stocked. Suddenly nobody wanted to go out for lunch, and everyone we worked with outside the agency wanted to come to our place for meetings. There were quiet social gatherings every evening after work, for those who worked 10 to 6.

We learned the value of service and entertainment, and we gained a different outlook on our clients and one another.

6.5.5 The Subtle Seductions of Habit

There *is* such a thing as being too comfortable. It is just too easy to fall into a daily routine.

Arrive at the office, make your greetings, grab a cappuccino or two, settle in front of the computer, hit your favourite news sites, check the e-mail and answer the ones that seem to be urgent, and before you know it half the day is gone. Do your morning round of meetings. Time for lunch at 1PM. Come back at 2.

Whoops, you've just lost the best part of the day, the one that's great for thinking. Work the rest of the day and into the evening in order to catch up, and feel your brain cells stretching thinner and thinner.

Habit has its good and bad sides. I have always felt its negative side was a little too strong.

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6.5.6 One of the Good Habits

First week I arrived at the agency I set up an open door routine. Twice a week, Mondays and Fridays, in the mid-afternoon I set aside an hour to see creative talent and their agents, often at short notice.

When I was contributing editor for *Black+White* I had often heard from photographers established and new about how hard it was to see advertising agency art directors. Stories of appointments six months hence were common.

My role included introducing the agency to photographers and directors in my magazine editorial little black book, as well as finding and encouraging promising new talent.

This open door habit paid dividends many times.

6.5.7 Bringing the Client to You

Adidas' English office was situated well outside Greater London, like many corporations that did not need a visible presence in the inner city. But that presented problems for their sponsorship program.

They were always signing up new athletes, and supplying shoes, clothes and accessories to up and coming pop groups. Adidas could not ask people to come to them, so we supplied Adidas with the means to do the opposite. We gave the Adidas sponsorship program manager her own office and store room in the building.

She was not there all the time, but I made the most of it when she was. I met some of the people Adidas was sponsoring, chatted about their view of the products and the brand, learned more about coming new styles and lines, and began to understand the people for whom I was commissioning so much work.

Having her there made it much easier to grab products as props for shoots for other clients. Cross-fertilization of the best kind.

6.5.8 Cube Farms & Castles in the Air

The renovations continued at the Leagas Delaney office in Shaftesbury Avenue, and it was the turn of the basement dwellers.

The airless and dirty old basement was where all the production people had been consigned to, as well as our 8 or so Mac operators. I was ensconced on the creative floor second to the top, the one where Tim Delaney had his distant corner eyrie and beyond the creative teams' closed-door offices.

In time I gained a second perch, in the renovated basement between the editing suite and our new library. The production people each had an undersized cube, Dilbert-style, within a mass of them that filled all available space between the staircase down from the café through to the Mac operators' glass-encased air-conditioned tomb.

I was always on the move, on the principle of management by walking around. I got to see the effects of all the different kinds of spaces on how people worked.

The good and the bad—closed offices, cube farms, the creatives' and website designers' castles in the air on the very top floor, the warmth and the friendliness of the café, and front of house where our two receptionists held court.

**The good and the bad—
closed offices, cube farms,
castles in the air...**

One of them was a German-Australian blonde goddess from Melbourne with a design background, and who eventually returned to Australia to head up the marketing department of a major energy corporation. The other was actually a tag team of two who took it in turns, and both of whom were supporting their other careers as fine artists until they each began selling enough of their own work to quit.

(So many of my co-workers outside the creative department were creative in their own right, but outside of the agency.)

My assistant went on to work in the art world, my two interns were Courtauld Institute graduates who went on to run galleries in Mayfair, Production's administrator was a painter, the oldest Production guy was an excellent classical guitarist who kept his instrument under his desk, and there were novelists, poets, and a journalist or two working in other departments in jobs unrelated to their avocations and previous positions.

My theory is that this continuous presence of creativity in all its various forms boosted the creativity on the top floor eyries by osmosis.)

6.6 NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT

Now is probably the least likely time start up a new agency or launch a radical new initiative within an existing one. Or at least most people seem to think that way. Times of economic trouble are when we generally sit on our hands, pull our heads in, and wait it out.

That is the last thing we should do.

Nick Cohen, Mad Dogs & Englishmen:

There was a recession. Nobody was starting ad agencies. They were downsizing them.

(Mad Dogs & Englishmen started up operations in New York in 1991.)

It was 1999, the height of the dotcom boom, and Euro RSCG was winning all the awards in Sydney, with the Creative Director of its Interactive division the rising young star. He soon rose up the ladder to Creative Director of the whole agency.

AdNews published this comment during one of Euro's award-winning runs.

Euro RSCG is in a league of its own, having successfully transformed itself into one of the most forward-looking ad agencies in Australia.

Many other Sydney agencies pondered Euro RSCG's success across all advertising media then, wondering just how the agency managed to win so much of their business, and are still pondering it now.

Few agencies have begun to follow the same course that ensured Euro's success—full integration of the Interactive, Direct Marketing, Promotions, Media and Recruitment disciplines. Strategy as an essential function of each. An engagement with their clients' business to the extent that they have become partners in word and deed, taking the relationship well beyond that of client and supplier.

Euro RSCG now is a far cry from Euro RSCG when I first encountered the group via their London office. They were the furthest from techno-literacy of all the London agencies at the time. Their 180-degree turnabout is an object lesson in that fact that it can be done and in record time.

Their 180-degree turnabout is an object lesson...

St Luke's advertising agency in London was another rethinking success story. Former chairman Andy Law has shared their tale in his book *Creative Company*. He resigned recently, just after completing a second tome bombastically titled *Experiment at Work: Explosions and Experiences at the Most Frightening Company On Earth*.²⁰

From *The Guardian* of March 27th.

The founder of St Luke's, the mould-breaking advertising agency, has resigned after criticising the company for becoming too conservative under new management.

"St Luke's was at its most successful when it was at its most radical, and the challenge is to keep that innovative streak going," he said. "It's got all the component parts for success but it is a case of whether it retreats from innovation or pursues it."

St Luke's founders left Chiat/Day to start an independent agency after the early 1990s recession struck Chiat/Day hard. The new agency aggressively adopted idealistic principles that many in the industry decried as completely impractical, becoming a coöperative with each staff member receiving a share in the business and a say in its running.

The agency immediately began picking up large accounts and winning awards. By 2000 their turnover was £90 million.

... the agency dictum that everyone has creative ideas,...

One of St Luke's most famous campaigns was *Chuck Out Your Chintz* for Ikea. In line with the agency dictum that everyone has creative ideas, the idea for the campaign was suggested by an accounts clerk.

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(I always wondered what St Luke's was up to, whenever we had a barbecue up on the roof at Leagas Delaney. St Luke's was a couple of streets over, and we would see faces pressed up against the glass, watching us, we thought. It was not possible to see in to their office though. What they were doing at the time might have been instructive.)

Chiat/Day had originally explored another concept St Luke's continued with enthusiasm—the abolition of strictly personal workspaces and their replacement with fluid spaces that adapt to teams working in fluctuating size and compositions. Each staff member received a locker, and had the cost of a portable computer partially underwritten by the agency.

The relentless progress of technology makes this idea even more feasible. With the latest 17-inch PowerBook being as powerful as a mini-tower workstation, with a screen as big as the average desktop machine, and larger keyboards and monitors easily plugged in at work, you really can carry your ideas and their executions around with you, working on them wherever your fancy takes you and wherever inspiration is to be found.

Oh, brave new world! ;-)

Better yet, an end to deadening routine in a conventional office and the avoidance of being sidelined rather than focusing on what we are there for—the generation of ideas.

7. ADVERTISING IS MORE THAN ADS

SOMEHOW, OVER THE LAST COUPLE OF DECADES, the advertising industry forgot that it was in the business of communicating and marketing, and fell into a groove of habit and repetition. It began to believe that it was about crafting advertisements. In reality, making ads is the least of what an advertising agency is capable of.

It is, of course, perfectly legitimate to believe that ads are what it is all about, and to continue to jump straight into ad-making mode when a client comes in the door. *What kind of ad will I be making today, I wonder?*

Habit and repetition are comfortable and safe. Habit and repetition are dangerous. They might sustain a small business with few ambitions or overheads, but they do not do much to aid the more ambitious to survive and grow in times like this.

So what else can an advertising agency do?

7.1 STRATEGY

I worked at one agency where each staff member was expected to be a strategist as an intrinsic part of their job. Another considered strategy the joint product of specialists, account directors and creatives. I consulted at a third where the belief was essentially the same as the first.

Since then I have visited several where strategy is held to be the province of specialists with a specifically business background.

If advertising agencies are not in business, then what are they doing? Advertising is a creative business, but it is a business

nonetheless. Businesses outside of advertising must aggressively pursue innovation and creativity.

How better to do that than partner with a business whose reason to exist is creative innovation, to pursue that not only in advertising but in business itself?

This morning's (29th April 2003) copy of *The Australian* includes a program for The Australian Innovation Festival in May. It's *Introduction* opens with these words:

Australians take pride in our national genius for invention and improvisation. Now it's time for us to adopt innovation—recognized as capturing the value of our newness. This year's Australian Innovation Festival... will point to new levels of partnership in Australian society.

There's opportunity going begging. Partnership in innovation.

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7.1 BRAND & BRANDING

Brand and branding have been written about a great deal lately, although it is still a reasonably new concept to designers and a surprising number of businesspeople.

Advertising agencies are still best qualified to act as brand custodians on behalf of their clients, especially as the concept of brand guardianship is still a new one in most Australian corporations.

Marty Neumeier, in *The Branding Gap*, writes of the need for companies to appoint Corporate Branding Officers—CBOs. Currently there are very few, and their function is usually subsumed into Marketing. Branding officers may slowly appear and make their way into the corporate hierarchy, but until then ad agencies are best positioned and skilled at providing and leading branding services.

7.2 LOVE & LOVEMARKS

Kevin Roberts is dead on target with his Lovemarks theories. The exclusive focus on brands has to be supplemented if not replaced by the next real thing—Lovemarks (I hope the word is not a Saatchi & Saatchi trademark).

Lovemarks are super-evolved brands that forge lasting emotional connections, goes the statement on the SaatchiKevin website.

Anything can be a Lovemark—a product, a service, a person, an institution, an experience, even a country, the Lovemark website elaborates.

The mere fact that a company has a strong brand does not mean that it is highly regarded, or loved, by its customers. More than strong branding is needed to ensure brand loyalty.

Brands themselves have been under attack since Naomi Klein's book *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*. She most memorably criticized Nike in the book, and Nike continues to be under attack by law suits around the world.

Adidas on the other hand has the ingredients to be a Lovemark rather than a brand. I have no idea if it adopts the same kind of child labour manufacturing outsourcing practices as Nike, but whether yes or no, Adidas has attained a special feeling amongst consumers.

Just try asking your colleagues, as I just did, *Nike or Adidas?* Chances are the majority will favour Adidas.

7.3 CONSULTANCY & PRODUCTION

Creative people in advertising, curious and thoughtful by nature, have accepted the received wisdom that they should stick with what they know—advertising. Their naturally unconventional insight and thinking eminently qualifies them to apply it to other areas—business.

What is holding them back, but a failure of nerve or a lack of self-confidence? Or perhaps it is lack of support from management.

Another skill advertising agencies have in abundance is project and production management—coördination. Most agencies have television departments or at least in-house television producers. A core skill is production management. This can be turned to other purposes.

Likewise, people in other departments such as Pre-press, Interactive, and art buying also have production experience. These are valuable skills that can be contracted out clients.

Creative business ideas, and their execution on behalf of clients, are as much a core aspect of an advertising agency's business as creative advertising. This may still be a new concept, but so is the nature of what an advertising agency actually is. We cannot afford to be hidebound by a tradition that is only a few decades old. Especially when that tradition mitigates against our survival and growth.

7.4 INTEGRATION & COORDINATION

All advertising agencies need access to the full range of core and related disciplines, so they can offer their client the full range of services.

Advertising, Brand & Branding, Business Ideas & Implementation, Direct Marketing, Interactive, Media, Public Relations, Sales & Promotion—if the agency cannot offer them from under the one roof then it should form strategic alliances with outside partners who work so closely that they are, in effect, simply another department.

Even where an agency has an in-house department that handles a given discipline, say Interactive, then it should seek to form alliances with outside collaborators who can offer a broader skill set and a different perspective. You should not hamstring the quality of the work you can do for want of enough skills and deep enough understanding.

Branding especially is an area where collaborators must be sought in order to have a complete offering. Major branding projects can include the following sub-disciplines, and there are very agencies indeed that can supply them all under the one roof.

Annual Reports

Brand Strategy

Direct Response
Events
Exhibits
Graphic Design
Identity
Interactive
Naming
Packaging
Point of Sale
Product Design
Promotions
Public Relations
Publications
Web Design

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Coördination of all these services is a function that advertising agencies can easily handle for their clients. Few clients have the wherewithal or specialist knowledge to do it themselves right now, and there are few freelance brand management consultants available.

8. THE IDEAL REGIONAL AGENCY

NOW THAT MY INITIAL LIST AND NOTES have grown and grown, the question is what is it that I am looking for in the ideal regional advertising agency?
Here is a list based on my conclusions.

I believe that implementing as many of these items as possible will help to create a strong, healthy and profitable agency that can adapt to suit changing conditions.

Attitudes & Procedures

An advertisement should *not* be the automatic solution to a problem.

There should be no barriers to the agency's application of creativity, whether in relation to business or to advertising.

The agency should be a truly integrated cross-disciplinary entity.

When planning campaigns, *all* media must be considered from the onset.

Work should be fun, and staff should enjoy coming in to work each day.

It should be recognized that everyone has ideas, that everyone is creative and that everyone can think strategically.

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Projects should be understood as the collective products of teams, and that *everyone* involved in a project should receive recognition, even when the core idea has been generated by one specific individual.

Teams should extend beyond the two-person creative pairing.

Creative pairings should be fluid.

Creatives should be able to work solo if that better suits their style.

Teams should include clients and representatives from *all* departments.

Art should be seen as having a natural synergy with commerce. (Thus erasing the decrepit Romantic notion of art as a quasi-religious pursuit by the individual rather than the product of artifice in the service of humanity.)

There should be no class distinction between Production and Support and all the other departments.

There should be mutual respect between creatives and account service people.

Staff should be encouraged to take sabbaticals in order to study subjects of personal interest, especially if they may also be of value to the agency.

Each staff member should be assigned a mentor within the agency, or one outside the agency if needed.

The agency should offer an internship scheme, and it should not be restricted just to school or university students and graduates.

Clients

Clients should have the status of partners. They in turn should regard the agency in the same way.

Clients should be encouraged to drop in to the agency outside of formal meetings and briefings, being provided with some kind of work space if needed.

Creatives should be encouraged to drop in on clients outside of formal meetings.

Collaborators

Suppliers should be accorded the status of collaborators.

Doors must be open to potential collaborators., and they must be sought out and encouraged

Collaborators must be seen as part of the ideas generation process, with the idea in continuous evolution until completion of the execution.

Teams should include outside specialists whenever needed.

The agency should build special relationships with the relevant departments and research institutes of universities, as well as independent experts in relevant fields.

Management

The chairman, CEO and directors must be seen, be approachable, and be available.

Management structures should be as flat as is practically feasible.

In hard times, all staff should be polled on accepting pay cuts all 'round in preference to specific staff members receiving the sack if seen as surplus to requirements.

When it becomes clear that directors have lost interest, they should be encouraged to move on, assuming an emeritus role that brings them back when needed.

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Resources

The agency should have the reference materials and hardware and software that people feel they need.

The agency should have an underwriting scheme for the purchase of portable computers by staff, and assistance with setting up Internet access at home.

Telecommuting should be encouraged.

Cubicle farms *and* closed offices should be eliminated in favour of flexible and mutating open plan spaces with secure private storage places and larger open spaces where cross-discipline teams can work in collaboration.

There should be sound-proofed rooms where people can think in silence or work in surround sound.

The agency should have the facilities for workers to be as comfortable as possible when they must work long hours week nights and weekends, although efforts should be made to allow them to work from home whenever possible if working outside of regular hours is necessary.

Especially if the agency is not located near restaurants and cafés that are open long hours, then it should provide food and beverage facilities of a high standard.

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COLOPHON

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Think Global**

I have used this document as a practical learning exercise in using InDesign to write long well-designed PDFs that can be read onscreen and printed out for reading.

It is also an excuse to exercise my love of type and typography. Hence this overlong colophon about those subjects. I make no apologies for my enthusiasms.

The typeface I have used in this document for body text is Legacy Serif, a Lyrical Modernist design by Rudolf Arnholm that was released in 1992 by International Type Corporation (ITC). The subheaders are various weights of Legacy Sans.

According to Robert Bringhurst, in his excellent book *The Elements of Typographic Style*, Legacy “marries a redrawing of [Nicolas] Jenson’s roman with a redrawing of one of [Claude] Garamond’s italics ...the only revival of Jenson’s roman that exists in both serified and unserified forms.”

The typeface I have used on the cover and the running side headers on each page is New Johnston, an updated version of the typeface designed by Edward Johnston in 1916 for the London Underground.

New Johnston was released by the Red Rooster foundry, and is a welcome addition to and improvement on the P22 foundry’s Johnston Underground. The borders and graphic flourish on the cover come from Johnston Underground’s Extras font.

Johnston’s typeface was one of the first well-known and accepted Humanist sans serifs, a considerable leap beyond the then more common and uglier geometric Realist sans serifs characterized by Akzidenz Grotesk (or *Odd-job Sans Serif*).

The most well-known and rather over-used Realist face is Helvetica, recently expanded as Helvetica Neue, designed by Max Meidinger in 1956. “The heavy, unmodulated line and tiny aperture evoke an image of uncultivated strength, force and persistence,” writes Bringhurst. “The very light weights issued in recent years have done much to reduce Helvetica’s coarseness but little to increase its readability.”

I am no fan of Meidinger’s design, especially now that so many other talented type designers have released a multitude of excellent sans serifs with real character, readability and usefulness.

Gill Sans is a far better-known sans serif typeface than Johnston in either of its modern variants. Gill Sans, a thoroughly British face, is often mistaken for the one that has become so emblematic of the Tube. Eric Gill’s early 20th century design is used extensively in Perth’s transport system, and although it was influenced by Johnston’s original, Gill Sans has eccentricities that make its look slightly disturbing at times, especially in the heavier weights. Those traits are not aided by the way much of our transport system’s posters and signage is so poorly typeset.

I set the sidebar text *The Bauhaus* and *The Renaissance* in Type-O-Tones Joost Bold and P22 Da Vinci Forward respectively. Joost was designed by Joost Schmidt, a Bauhaus student and then teacher, and Da Vinci is modelled on the handwriting of Leonardo da Vinci.

The surnames of the four Bauhaus students and teachers are set in typefaces that they each designed—Albers Architype, Ballmer Architype, Bayer Universal and Joost Medium. The three Renaissance men are set in Tagliente, a face modelled on the handwriting of renowned 16th century calligrapher Giovanni Antonio Tagliente.