

J.G. Griffiths.

HOW TO GET YOUR FIRST JOB IN ADVERTISING

Please return

DUNCAN

(Part One)

You don't know anything

99% of people trying to get jobs in advertising believe they are whizz-kids. The 1% that know they aren't (and are desperately trying to learn) are the ones who actually get the jobs.

Unless you realize that you don't at present know any more about advertising than your Mother, you are no use to a good agency.

In fact your Mother may be more useful because she at least buys most of the products that agencies are trying to sell.

Where to start.

The most common misconception is that good advertising is clever puns. Everyone trying to get a job in advertising has a portfolio full of puns about products.

All a pun is is a figure of speech (like simile, alliteration, etc.) and it should be avoided as a rule.

Your scintillating personality will not get you a job either because many creative-directors will not see you, just ask you to leave your book (portfolio).

Your book will then be one of up to 100 pun-collections they will be looking through to see who gets the job.

If you believe that your puns are so amazingly original then there's no point in reading further.

Learn to learn.

As you're still reading you obviously appreciate that the book you have at present isn't good enough to get you a job.

This is every applicants first big lesson: start putting a new book together. You will be asking professionals for a job, so the obvious thing to do is to ask them what sort of book they will be looking for.

See lots of people in the business, learn from them, pick their brains, use them. Don't try to con them into hiring you, the way you'd expect a used-car salesman to behave, because they'll just smile nicely and be polite.

Then next time you phone to make an appointment they'll be out. Don't try to tell them what you know: get them to tell you what they know. Forget everything your teachers told you, unless of course you want to be a teacher. The quicker your progress in the business will be directly related to your willingness to learn.

You are not doing everything right at present.

Therefore the quicker you learn what you are doing wrong the sooner you can correct it. This is the second big lesson: if you want to be patted on the back all the time and told how clever you are then advertising is the wrong business for you. If you think you are more intelligent than the people who are criticising your work, if you think 'they just don't understand' then you should become a poet or a painter. Advertising is all about communication, and if one person doesn't understand what you're saying then you have failed.

It is no good arguing them into it, because if that ad went into the papers you couldn't run around to everyone who bought a copy and argue them into it.

#### In summary

So now you're wiping the blackboard clean, you're starting with a blank mind. Just three things to remember from now on: always use the truth, always use logic, and always be eager to learn.

(Part Two)

The Product will sell itself

There are certain products (colas, soap-powders, chocolate-bars etc) which are all more-or-less the same.

This makes them very difficult to advertise, so they're best left alone until much later.

At present you're trying to put a book together that will make you look good, so pick products that have something different about them.

USP

The thing that makes any product different from any other product is called its USP.

That's short for Unique Selling Proposition.

When you pick a product to advertise look at its competition, then find what makes yours different.

It doesn't matter if it's small, or even if it seems like a negative, just so it has something different.

Something that you can turn into an advantage.

The first thing to look at is that is is your product cheaper than the competition? Is it bigger, or smaller?

Can it save your life, is it safer than its competitors? Do you get more of it? Does it last longer?

If it doesn't have any of these (or similar) advantages than forget it and find a product that has.

You're going to have enough difficulty making up a good portfolio from products with advantages. If a product doesn't have at least one advantage, leave it alone.

Think of yourself as Perry Mason

When a lawyer takes a case he may be trying to make a man appear innocent (if he appears for the defence) or guilty (if he appears for the prosecution). Either way he will only mention the facts that say what he wants to prove.

For instance: If you are selling a cheap-inferior product you say 'WHY PAY MORE?' If you are selling an overpriced expensive product you say 'BUY THE BEST'.

This is simple rhetoric.

In the same way that if you are selling a glass of water that is half empty you say it is half-full.

A product which is 'Common' becomes 'popular!'

If you tell an absolute lie no-one will believe you.

Therefore you must always tell the truth, but only the parts of it that work for you.

When does this not apply?

As with all rules there are times to break them, but not until you have learnt to use them properly first.

For instance Volkswagen had nothing to make it different except that it was a small ugly car.

The ads then became about how much petrol and money you saved (because it was small), and about how all their effort went into making it better not prettier (because it was ugly).

Like any good argument it only works because you can believe it.

You can only believe it because it makes sense.

You can work your way up to this sort of stuff but until you know what you're doing keep it simple.

Don't pick anything as difficult as Volkswagen yet.

(Part Three)

Everything is comparative

The best and simplest way of selling a product is to say: 'It's better than what you are about to buy.'

So that you are not actually talking people into buying something they don't want: you are talking to someone about to buy one thing, and converting them into spending their money on your product instead.

The most obvious (and 'obvious' is usually also the best) way to do this is to compare both on the page in front of the reader.

If you are selling a cheap shirt for, say £1 each, then you find a similar looking shirt for about £5.

Put them side-by-side and write the price under each.

This is the simplest way of selling.

People looking at this don't think 'What a clever advert;' they think 'What a great product.'

Which is why the man who makes the shirts is paying you to do his advertising.

Next step

Now let's take that a step further.

Put five of those £1 shirts (in different patterns) on the left, and the single £5 shirt on the right.

The headline then becomes: THE SHIRTS ON THE LEFT COST THE SAME AS THE SHIRT ON THE RIGHT.

Or, place a £1 shirt on the left, along with £1 tie, £1 cufflinks, £1 belt and £1 aftershave. And place the £5 shirt on the right.

The headline then becomes: THE OUTFIT ON THE LEFT COSTS THE SAME AS THE SHIRT ON THE RIGHT.

Or the £1 shirt on the left (with the price-tag still on) and the £5 shirt on the right (with the price-tag still on).

The headline then says: WE GIVE YOU SOMETHING THEY

DON'T: £4 CHANGE.

Next step

Or lets say you're advertising the expensive shirt.

Put the two side-by-side with the price tag still on.

The headline then says: IF YOU CAN'T TELL THE DIFFERENCE, BUY THE CHEAP SHIRT. Or put them side-by-side, the cheap shirt on the left looking a bit faded and shabby (maybe even frayed), the expensive shirt looking nice and crisp on the right. The headline then says: PAY FOR A CHEAP SHIRT AND THAT'S JUST WHAT YOU GET.

Summary

You'll never sell a £1 shirt to someone who wants a £5 shirt, and vice versa, so don't worry about trying.

Just get out of the way of the product.

Express its benefits as simply as possible and let it sell itself.

Don't write 'clever' little puns like: WE'RE NOT ASKING FOR THE SHIRT OFF YOUR BACK. Or: YOU WON'T GET SHIRTY ABOUT THE PRICE. Or: GREAT PATTERNS, OFF THE CUFF. You can see they're not selling any shirts, they're certainly not funny, and they're not particularly 'clever' either.

All they are is wasted effort on your part.

If you stop trying to be clever, and just be logical the product will end up selling itself.

(Part Four)

THE MECHANICS OF A CAMPAIGN

As well as a portfolio-full of puns, the other thing everyone else who applies for a job is going to have is lots and lots of unrelated ads.

They may have a dozen different ads on the same product but that doesn't make it a campaign.

What does make a campaign is unity of thinking throughout everything.

So before you even think about writing any ads think about what you want to say.

How to start

As you've already seen nearly every product has some benefit (if it didn't it would have gone out of business).

Your first job is to find this.

See why people are buying it at present.

When you have found its benefit this will become your campaign thought. This thought when written into a catchy memorable phrase will become the strap-line. It's called the strap-line because it is always the last thought that you leave your audience with. Whether on T.V. or press.

Let's go back to the shirts, and suppose first off we're selling the cheaper one. Our benefit is our price, all our advertising is directed towards telling people how much sense it makes to buy a cheaper shirt, so that is the thought we want to leave them with.

The strapline might become: AN ATTRACTIVE SHIRT AT AN ATTRACTIVE PRICE.

Every headline we write must then fit in with this thought, because all we're actually doing is expressing the same thought in lots of different ways. So if the headline is: IT'S HARD TO DECIDE WHICH LOOKS BETTER? THE SHIRT OR THE PRICE.

The strapline goes on the bottom: AN ATTRACTIVE SHIRT AT AN ATTRACTIVE PRICE.

Or if the headline becomes: AT £5 IT LOOKS GOOD, AT £1 IT LOOKS BEAUTIFUL. Then the strapline: AN ATTRACTIVE SHIRT AT AN ATTRACTIVE PRICE still goes on the bottom.

However if we changed strategy and decided to talk about how well our shirt fits, for instance a headline that said NOT EVERYONE WITH A 15½" NECK HAS THE SAME LENGTH ARMS (showing that we come in different arm lengths) then the strapline: AN ATTRACTIVE SHIRT AT AN ATTRACTIVE PRICE doesn't fit on the bottom, does it?

#### Summary

If you decide to say you are different in some way then that is your campaign-thought. Each headline is then an expression of the different benefits of this campaign thought (strapline).

If you are selling a mini, and you decide the benefit is the size then the strategy becomes: WE'RE BETTER BECAUSE WE'RE SMALLER.' Then ad 1: (Headline) SMALLER CARS USE LESS PETROL. (Strapline) MINI: WE'RE BETTER BECAUSE WE'RE SMALLER. Ad 2: (Headline) SMALLER CARS ARE EASIER TO PARK. (Strapline) MINI: WE'RE BETTER BECAUSE WE'RE SMALLER. Ad 3: (Headline) A SINGLE PERSON DOESN'T NEED A SIX-SEATER CAR. (Strapline) MINI: WE'RE BETTER BECAUSE WE'RE SMALLER. and so on ...



### PUTTING A BOOK TOGETHER

What you will need for a book is 4 to 5 campaigns, consisting of 3 to 5 press ads each.

(Forget T.V. at this point, it's a whole other discipline, and you shouldn't need it to get your first job).

#### What to pick

The best products to pick are those with consumer literature easily available. If there is something you already know a great deal about, this is good too.

The reason for this is that you need all the information you can get.

Before you even think about writing ads you should find out everything you can about the product.

That way the benefit will make itself known to you and save you having to invent something that no-one will believe anyway. Motorcars are always good, go to the showrooms and get pamphlets, or read the road-tests in the motoring magazines.

Wallpapers and paints, you can get leaflets from a decorators shop.

Makeup and skin-care, shampoos etc., these usually have a product benefit (ask someone you know who uses them).

Medicines (aspirins, etc;) usually have leaflets in the box telling you why they're better than other stuff.

#### What sort of book

If you're a writer you might want to put in a bit of body copy. It's good to learn the best way of writing from either the New York Art Directors Annuals (1960 to date) or the New York One Show Annual. The Design and Art Directors Annual is also good and has a copy section (1970 to date).

You can probably order them at any library

Remember if you are doing copy to write the way people talk, not the way you think advertising people write (it's greasy, slick and old-fashioned).

If you're an Art-Director your book will look similar but you'll need roughs. Roughs are a good idea for Art Directors and Writers where possible.

Pictures always make things easier to look at and less monotonous than page-after-page of typed paper.

But remember roughs should be just that, quick and simple.

You're not being hired for an ability to draw (the agency hires artists for that). You're being hired for an ability to think, beautiful drawings are no evidence of that. People that can draw earn a lot less than people that can think.

#### What looks best

The best kind of book, I think, is about 2' by 3', it's a black zip-up plastic-portfolio with a spiral binder for acetate pages (cost about £10). That way your work's kept clean, it can't fall out, it's always neat, it looks nice and simple and not messy. Put campaign ads together. Don't put ads from separate campaigns side-by-side.

#### Summary

The rule for putting work in a book is the same as for body copy: the best stuff goes at the front and the back. That way you get people interested as soon as they start, and you leave them on a high-note at the end.

Summary

Once you've learnt all this it's as much as anyone can teach you, and if you've done it all properly you should have a job in a good agency.

After that you have to learn yourself, by watching other people. Keep questioning what they're doing, why does it work, why doesn't it?

Ask people what's wrong with your work.

It's a waste of time asking them what's right with it, if it's right move on and do something else, then find out what you're doing wrong on that, and how to correct it. When you go to an interview ask them what's wrong with your book, use them. Use every interview to improve your book.

Not only will it give you a better book but you'll find people want to hire a junior who wants to learn.

Not someone who already thinks he knows it all.

A person like that is only going to be a lot of problems later.

How to make yourself better

The only way to learn how to do good work is to continually expose yourself to it. Read the annuals, go to the shows.

There is another very good book to read its called: 'FROM THOSE WONDERFUL FOLKS WHO GAVE YOU PEARL HARBOUR'. by Jerry Della Femina.

Questions to ask when you look at an ad.

Another thing is that when people tell you what their favourite ad is see if they can remember the name of the product.

No one's going to pay you to do an advert that just entertains people.

Also your work should shock people where possible.

Watch people reading a paper or magazine, just flipping pages.

You have to stop them turning the page, then make them read it.

Of course unless your shock is relevant to the product it's pointless.

There's no point in having a huge headline that screams DO THIS OR DIE.

Because people will stop and begin reading it, then as soon as they find it's a con they'll flip the page and forget about it.

Summary

If you don't want to go to the effort to put a new book together now then you may still be able to get a job in a 'big-bad' agency on your present book.

You will however find it's a lot harder to put a new book together later than it is now.

It will also be a lot harder to get into a good agency later than it is now.