

December 2, 1991

SECTION: VIEWPOINT; Forum; Pg. 24

LENGTH: 749 words

HEADLINE: 'New advertising' is just pre-'60s revisited

BYLINE: By Bob **Lauterborn**; Mr. **Lauterborn**, former director of marketing communications and corporate advertising at International Paper Co., is the James L. Knight Professor of Advertising at the University of North Carolina's School of Journalism, Chapel Hill.

BODY:

Is everybody ready to practice -- and teach -- "the new advertising?"

Let's see how it works.

Suppose we have the assignment to sell (not "do some ads for" -- that's lesson No. 1) a luxury automobile.

Step one: Figure out who's likely to need or want a spacious, elegant car like ours, made by a company with a reputation for good engineering.

How about . . . people who own their own companies? Particularly companies where the owner might personally entertain clients who themselves have money and taste. Particularly companies where the principal might have not only an eye for design but a nose for engineering.

Sounds like . . . the heads of architectural firms, maybe.

Step two: Decide what we want 'em to do. (Lauterborn's Third Law: "All good advertising has a behavioral objective.")

How about . . . take a test drive?

Terrific! We'll just run some ads saying how great the car is and . . . Wait a minute. That's the old advertising. (Actually, the old advertising would probably have run spots featuring M. C. Hammer -- Hammer, get it? Like in building? -- rappin' "The design is fine!" on "Monday Night Football.")

But the objective of the new advertising isn't a day-after-recall score, it's action. So. . . .

Step three: Figure out how to start a conversation with this person. (Lauterborn's Second Law: "All good advertising is to *someone*, not just *about something*.")

How about . . . call him or her up? Good idea. But who's going to talk to a car salesman on the phone? What secretary would ever put the call through?

How about . . . write him or her a letter? Well, maybe. Better yet, why not send a personal, engraved invitation to take a private test drive. Let's not even call it that. How about a "personal evaluation?" Or a "thorough comparison-tour?"

And let's not expect this person to come into the showroom. Let's deliver the car by appointment, right to his or her office or home. And leave it. No hovering salesman, no

unseemly pressure.

O.K. The list? Easy. Out of 6,500 top architectural firms, we'll select owners or partners, in localities where we have dealers, who own luxury cars 2-to-5 years old.

Step four: Create the plan. When does the mailing go out? What's it say, what's it look like, what's the response mechanism, how do we test it? Who's going to train the dealers; what do they need? What about follow-up? Evaluation? Next group? Young Presidents, maybe?

How do we get the mailing opened? How do we cover the prospects whom we missed, or who don't see it for whatever reason?

How about . . . ads in *Architectural Record* or *Architectural Digest* or whatever else most of the prospects read, talking to them as architects and successful business owners, starting out "In your office mail this week . . ." and offering them a headquarters phone number to call if they don't see their invitations. (Also, can we get this effort covered positively as "news" where they'll read it?)

The new advertising at work, right?

Except that everything I've just outlined was done 30 years ago to introduce the 1962 Imperial, by Chrysler.

What happened? (To advertising, that is. See David Halberstam's "The Reckoning" for what happened to Detroit.)

It's simple. Just about then, the "creative revolution" occurred. Advertising became fascinated with itself, and lost interest in the client's businesses. Building a portfolio got divorced from building sales. Awards proliferated, but most celebrated clever art and copy, not the ringing of the cash register.

Clients were willingly deceived by the Potemkin village they'd paid to create, which was propped up by an expanding economy, rising personal incomes and protected domestic markets.

But the revolution turned out to be an aborted coup.

A stagnant economy squeezed consumers. Fresh competitors came in who responded to their pain, rage and frustration. Selling became hard work again, and the "sweaty" parts of the business -- direct marketing, sales promotion, trade PR -- suddenly became more than collaterally important.

The emptiness behind the creative facade was exposed, and "the new advertising" was born.

But perhaps all we're really talking about is getting the old, old advertising back. When George Batten (the first B in BBDO) started his agency exactly 100 years ago, he said, "I am after success -- my clients', which is my own."

Not a bad motto for "the new advertising."