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The Neurology of Branding

People who refer to the earth as round are technically wrong, but directionally accurate. Technically, our planet is an oblate spheroid. But to explain that subtle difference just wouldn't be worth the trouble, so we usually say, "The earth is round," and leave it at that. Likewise, what you are about to read is technically wrong, but directionally accurate.

For each of our senses, the brain offers short-term and long-term memory. Short-term memory is electrical. Long-term memory is chemical.

The objective of "branding" is to cause your product to be the one customers think of first and feel the best about when their moment of need arises. Therefore, branding must be accomplished in long-term memory.

You say, "No problem, it's just a matter of repetition, right?"

Wrong. The brain, you see, is a very smart organ. It knows better than to transfer data into long-term memory when that data is flashing a "soon-to-expire" message in neon letters.

Sleep is the eraser of electrical memory. As the mind is purged each night, the memories that are the most quickly and completely erased are those that are no longer relevant.

No ad with a deadline is relevant after the deadline has passed.

When an advertiser insists on trying to "whip people into action" with the urgency of a limited-time offer, he can be certain that his message will never make it into long-term memory. At best, the message will stay in short-term memory only until the expiration date has passed, and then it will be forever erased from the brain. Consequently, you cannot make a series of limited-time offers and call it a "branding" campaign.


SOME OF US
RESPOND TO
"BRANDING" BY
VOWING NEVER
TO BUY THE
BRAND.
PLEASE...
TRY NOT TO
MAKE YOUR AD
OFFENSIVE.
-JEFF MORRIS,
EDITOR



* The bottom line is that you can't have your cake and eat it, too. So which kind of advertising will you do? Short-term or long-term? Will you have a little piece of cake right now, or a series of larger pieces later on? This is the choice every advertiser makes, either consciously or unconsciously. I want you to make it consciously.

Yes, limited-time offers, when they work, cause people to take action immediately. The downside is that limited-time offers don't work better and better as time goes by. In truth, they work worse and worse. When an advertiser makes a limited-time offer, the only thing that goes into long-term memory is "This advertiser makes limited-time offers." In essence, that advertiser is training his customer to ask, "When does this go on sale?"

Will you invest your ad dollars in a long, slow, tedious branding campaign that will work better and better as time goes by? Or will you do short-term, high-impact, grab-for-the-brass-ring advertising and hope for a quick-hit payoff?

Will you bet on the tortoise or the hare? 



See ch. 43,
"BrandingBrandingBranding."

