

CHAPTER 9: ADVERTISING AND IMC CREATIVE STRATEGIES

Chapter Objective

To describe the importance of establishing a solid creative strategy as the basis for the development of marketing communication messages.

Chapter Key Points

Chapter Outline

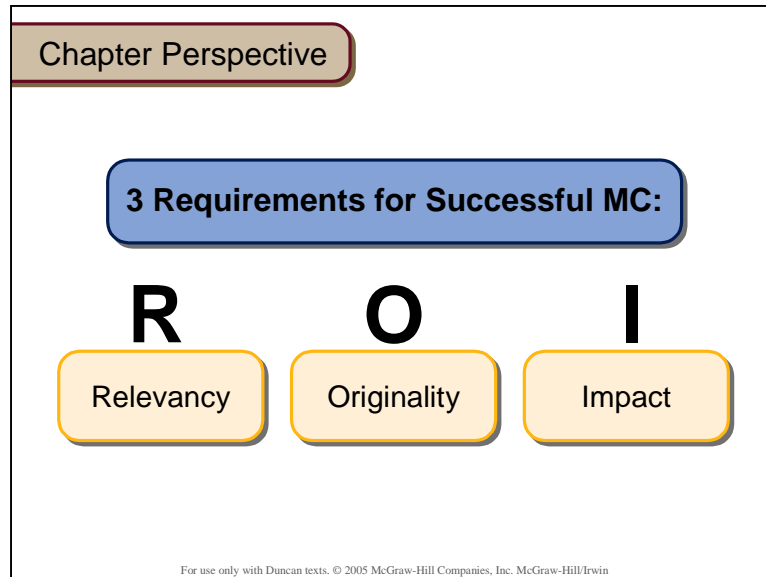
- What marketing decisions need to be considered in planning IMC messages?
- What are the key elements in an IMC message strategy brief?
- How does the creative process work to develop big ideas?

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This chapter addresses three fundamental issues:

1. What information needs to be considered in planning IMC messages?
 - The chapter explains the need for a unique strategy to guide the development of creative messages.
2. What are the key elements in an IMC message strategy brief?
 - The chapter identifies the three key steps required for the development of a solid strategy brief.
3. How does the creative process work to develop big ideas?
 - The chapter identifies four critical steps that are helpful in making the “creative leap” between the message strategy brief and a creative “big idea.”

Chapter Perspective



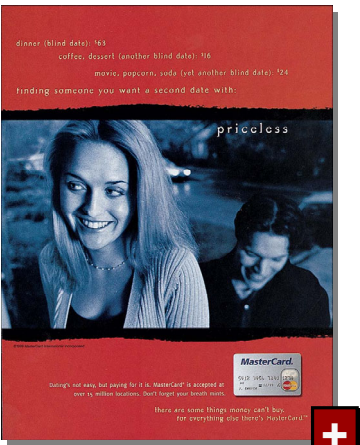
To paraphrase the words of Keith Reinhard, long-time CEO of the DDB Worldwide agency: Today, more than ever, if marketing communication is not *relevant*, it has no purpose. If it is not *original*, it will attract no attention. If it does not strike with *impact*, it will make no lasting impression. In the DDB approach to developing message strategies, the initials *ROI* (for relevant, original, impact) are equated with the investment made by clients in marketing communication. To be effective, the message strategies must also deliver bottom-line ROI (return on investment).

Relevant messages that speak to the head and the heart connect with the target audience on a personal level. The message strategies that really ignite consumer responses, however, contain the big O—the *originality* dimension in Reinhard’s ROI formula. The originality factor first springs to life in the “big idea.” How this creative concept is developed and executed determines to a great extent how effective the ultimate brand messages stemming from the message strategies will be in having an impact.

Linda Kaplan Thaler, head of the Kaplan Thaler Group, explains, “Advertising awards are nice, but the real victory is making a dent in the culture—part of what we call our Big Bang philosophy. It’s why our AFLAC duck is an answer in the Times crossword puzzle, there’s a greeting card about our Herbal Essences organic experiences, and Saturday Night Live does send-ups of both of them.”

Opening Case: MasterCard

Opening Case: MasterCard



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Opening Case: MasterCard

Challenge: → Reposition a brand that had become ordinary

Answer: → An IMC program featuring:

- “Priceless” advertising campaign
- Cross promotion with World Cup Soccer and Universal movies and theme parks
- Contests and sweepstakes promotions

Results: →

- 5 years of increasing market share
- Improved brand image and excitement

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Challenge: Reposition MasterCard brand which had become “ordinary”

Answer: An IMC program featuring:

- “Priceless” advertising campaign
- Cross promotion with World Cup Soccer and Universal movies and theme parks
- Contests and sweepstakes promotions

Results:

- 5 years of increasing market share
- Improved brand image and excitement

Discussion Starters:

- 1) As an icebreaker, ask how many students are aware of the “priceless” campaign, and if they can recall any of the commercials.
- 2) An interesting test of the effectiveness of the campaign would be a poll of the students to see what percentage already have a MasterCard. It would also be interesting to poll them regarding competitive cards in order to calculate a rough market share breakout on the board.
- 3) Another interesting discussion starter would be to ask current holders of the card why they chose to carry it—and to ask non-holders why they chose a competitor over MasterCard.

Lecture Outline

I. How To Develop a Creative Message Strategy

A. Message Strategy

- i. *An idea of how to creatively and persuasively communicate a brand message to a target audience*
 1. Connects with customers in a relevant way
 2. Uses an appeal
 - a. *An idea that motivates an audience to respond*
- ii. A unique appeal is critical in today’s environment
 1. The message must be able to break through the commercial message clutter

II. The IMC Message Strategy Brief

Key Elements In An IMC Message

Message Strategy Brief:

A statement that summarizes the research and the insights for the creative team, and which helps the team identify the direction and focus for their creative (and media) ideas

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Figure 9-1: One Type Of Message Strategy Brief

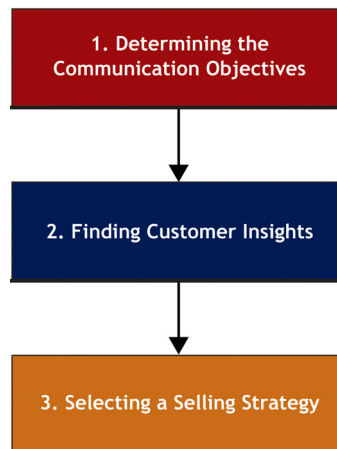
Positioning Statement	Mercury Interactive is the leading provider of comprehensive Internet growth solutions for eBusiness		
Value Propositions	eBusiness growth	Rapid, global scalability	Brand integrity
Key Messages	Our services, technologies and expertise are critical enablers of eBusiness growth	We help companies scale their Internet businesses quickly and globally	We create trust in our customers' Internet brands
Sample Proof Point	2,500 growing businesses outsource website monitoring to Freshwater	Freshwater measures website availability from 11 global networks	Freshwater helps meet unique eBusiness brand requirements, including 24-hour availability
Sample Sound Bite	"We have time and resources to build other areas of our business when Freshwater monitors our Web environment."	"As we add customers around the world, Freshwater makes sure they can reliably complete transactions on our website."	"Freshwater makes sure my website is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, so it can support my overall business brand."

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A. Message Strategy Brief

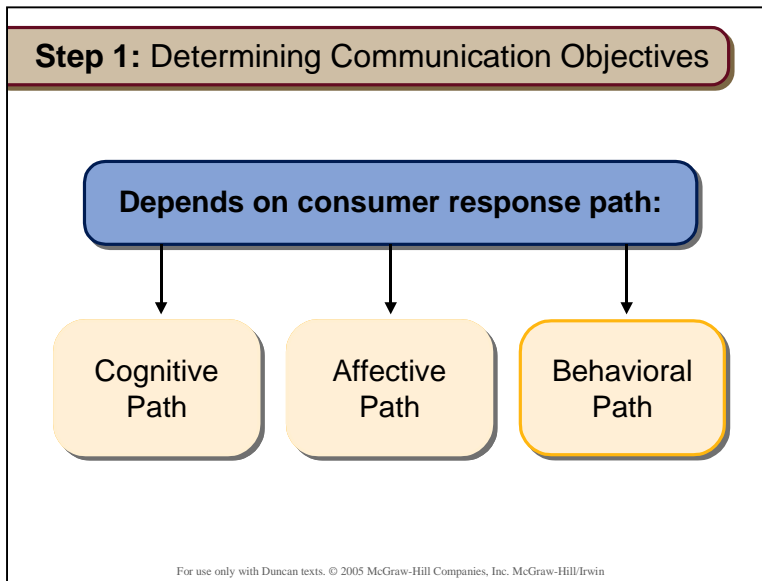
- i. A statement that summarizes the research and the insights for the creative team, and which helps the team identify the direction and focus for their creative (and media) ideas
- ii. 3 steps in developing a message strategy brief

Figure 9-2: Message Strategy Brief Steps



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Step 1: Determining Communication Objectives



a. Depends on consumer response path:

- Cognitive Path
 1. Example: Create awareness, educate, etc.
- Affective Path
 1. Example: Create a brand image or personality; create or change attitudes and brand liking; ignite a desire; strike an emotional chord.
- Behavioral Path
 1. Examples: Increase trial; increase purchase and repeat

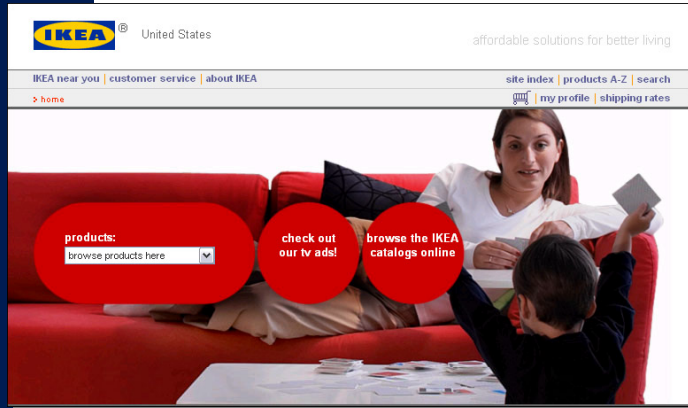
2. Step 2: Finding Customer Insight



- a. Customer insight
- *Identifying below-the-surface attitudes and beliefs that influence behavior*

IMC In Action: IKEA

IMC In Action: IKEA



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IMC In Action: IKEA

Challenge:

Encourage consumers to replace their aging furniture

Answer:

An IMC campaign featuring:

- “Unboring” theme with a Swedish spokesperson
- Integrated campaign using TV commercials, catalogs, and a dedicated website

Results:

The campaign has helped IKEA continue its expansion in America

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Challenge: Encourage consumers to replace their aging furniture

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Results:


- The campaign has helped IKEA's expansion in America

Discussion Starters:

- 1) IKEA is a company that is probably very relevant to many college students. An ice-breaking question could be to poll students to see how many have at least one IKEA item in their dorm room.
- 2) Another interesting question would be to ask students to identify the sources of other furniture in their dorm room.
- 3) Then, ask how the IKEA items are different? Is it their quality? Or is it IKEA's image?

3. Step 3: Selecting a selling strategy

Step 3: Selecting a Selling Strategy



Bad news. Your toothpaste won't make it past the soup.

Unless you use Colgate Total. New toothpaste can't fight plaque after you eat or drink when teeth become more vulnerable to bacteria. But Colgate Total is different. Its unique formula has an antibacterial ingredient that attaches to teeth to protect for 12 hours, 4 times after eating and drinking.

Colgate Total
12 Hour Protection

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- a. Often based on the customer benefit...
 - *The good, improvement, or advantage that a product brings to its user*
- b. ...or unique brand features...
 - *An attribute of a product that gives it a distinctive difference*
 1. Example: its design or engineering
- c. ...or a brand's value
 - *A perception of what something is worth in terms of the two dimensions of quality and price*

IMC In Action: Saturn

IMC In Action: Saturn



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IMC In Action: Saturn

Challenge:

Reinvigorate the brand's image

Answer:

An IMC program featuring:

- Advertising focusing on people, not car, images
- Big idea: not showing cars = powerful expression of the idea that Saturn puts people first

Results:

Campaign has been well received

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Challenge: Reinvigorate Saturn's brand image

Answer: An IMC program featuring:

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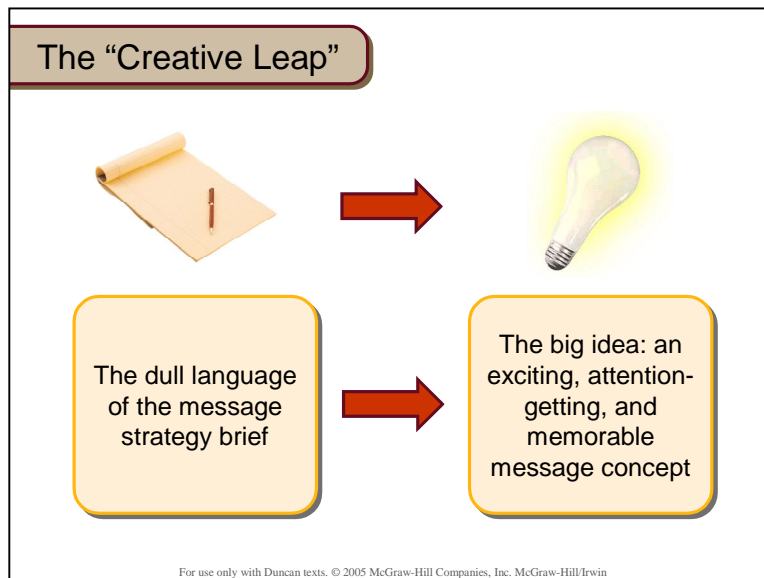
Discussion Starters:

- 1) Discussion of auto ownership is a good discussion-starter. So a good first question would be to poll the class to see if any students drive a Saturn.
- 2) As a follow-up, ask how many students would like to own a Saturn versus some other key brands in order to get a rough preference score to report on the board.
- 3) As an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Saturn IMC program, ask students what makes Saturn different from the other competitors listed in question (2) above.

d. Other common selling strategies

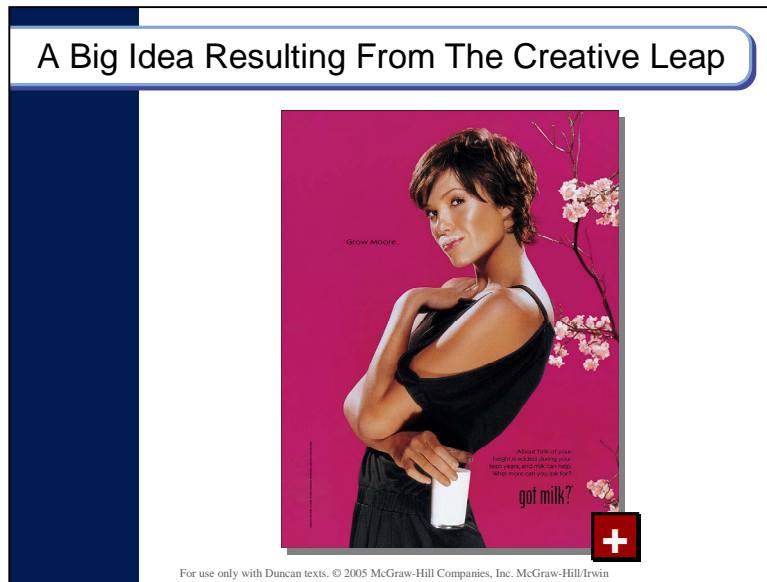
- Generic
- Preemptive
- Informational
- Credibility
- Emotion
- Association
- Lifestyle
- Incentive
- Reminder
- Interactive

III. The Big Ideas Takes A Creative Leap




A. The “creative leap”

- i. The dull language of the message strategy brief is transformed into...
- ii. ...The big creative idea:



1. an exciting, attention-getting, and memorable message concept

 TALES FROM THE REAL WORLD

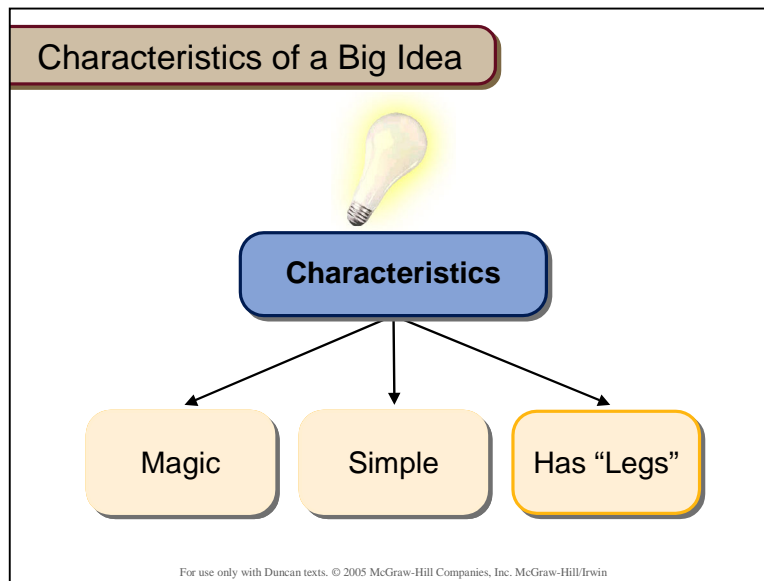
Tales From the Real World

A big idea can come at any moment—in any situation. That’s why it’s important to give creative professionals freedom. Some big ideas have emerged at baseball games, at a movie, or on a lunchtime walk in the park.

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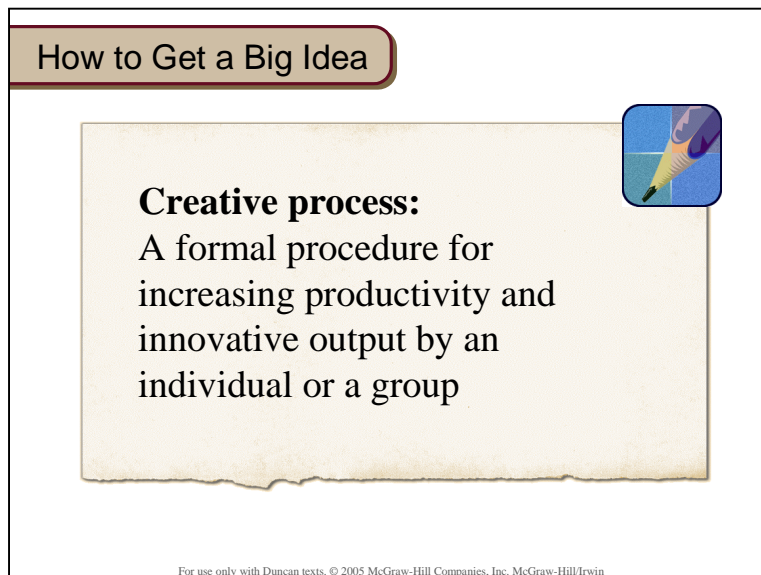
The image shows a slide titled "TALES FROM THE REAL WORLD". It features a background image of a city skyline with a park in the foreground. Overlaid on this is a yellow speech bubble containing the text: "A big idea can come at any moment—in any situation. That’s why it’s important to give creative professionals freedom. Some big ideas have emerged at baseball games, at a movie, or on a lunchtime walk in the park." Below the speech bubble, the same text is repeated. In the top right corner of the slide, there is a small icon of a city skyline.

iii. Characteristics of a big idea



1. Magic
2. Simple
3. Has “legs”
 - a. It can be used for different audiences, in different media, in different versions, and over an extended period of time

iv. How to get a big idea



1. Creative process
 - a. *A formal procedure for increasing productivity and innovative output by an individual or a group*

▷ **INSTRUCTOR IN-DEPTH INSIGHT; GETTING
THE BIG IDEA**

Insight: Getting The Big Idea

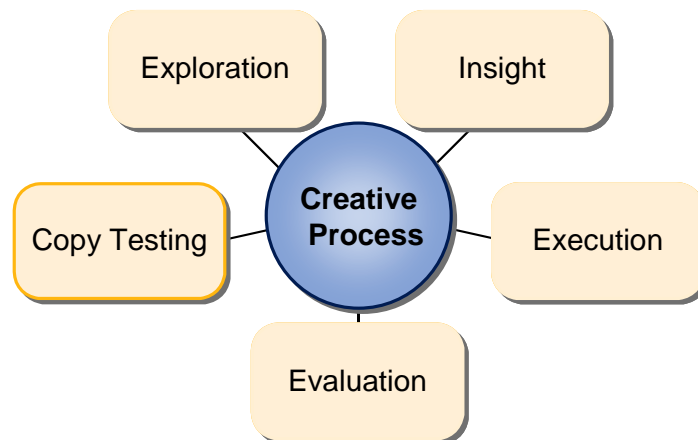


The process of creating a big idea must be carefully managed, otherwise, a variety of unrelated ideas may be produced. Offering a six-pack of beer to motivate people to try on a Rolex watch is not a good strategic idea because it's not consistent with the upscale image of a Rolex watch. Offering a chance to win a Montblanc pen or a Hermes scarf, however, would be consistent.

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2. Steps in the creative process

Steps In The Creative Process




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- a. Exploration
 - Can include brainstorming sessions
- b. Insight
 - Some techniques:
 1. changing patterns—unexpected juxtaposition
 2. looking at things in different ways
 3. adaptation—change the context
 4. imagine—ask what if?
 5. reversal—look for the opposite
 6. connection—join two unrelated ideas
 7. comparison—build a metaphor
 8. elimination—subtract something or break rules
 9. parody—fool around, make fun of it
- c. Execution
 - Composing and presenting the idea
- d. Evaluation...
 - 5 evaluation questions to ask about an execution:
 1. Did it make me gasp when I first saw it?
 2. Do I wish I had thought of it myself?
 3. Is it unique?
 4. Does it fit the strategy to perfection?
 5. Could it be used for 30 years?
- e. ...and copy testing
 - *Testing the effectiveness of brand message, a creative concept, or elements such as a headline, slogan, or visual for creative impact and understandability*

IV. Final Note

Final Note:



- *The key challenge in creating IMC messages:*
 - *Balancing the message strategy and the big idea so they work together*
 - *If the strategy overpowers the creative idea, then the message will be dull and never get remembered*
 - *If the big idea overpowers the strategy, then it may be remembered, but the intended message may be forgotten*

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- A. The key challenge in creating IMC messages:
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Answers to Review Questions

1) A Creative Message Strategy

- a. What is a message strategy and how is it used in marketing communication?

Answer: A message strategy is an idea of how to creatively and persuasively communicate a brand message to a target audience. Basically, it consists of the ideas that the marketer intends to convey in the marketing communication messages. The strategy is simply a piece of paper that serves as a guide to the development of the creative ideas that become television commercials, magazine ads, and other MC messages.

- b. Why is relevance an important dimension of a creative message strategy?

Answer: A successful marketing communication message strategy connects with customers in a relevant way. Another word for relevance is the appeal of a message, an emotional or rational link (or both) between the customer and the brand. If the message strategy is not relevant to the consumer, it is highly likely that the creative executions that result from the strategy will also be irrelevant—and ignored by the intended target audience.

- c. What is an appeal? Choose one of the ads in this chapter or in earlier chapters and explain its appeal strategy.

Answer: An appeal is idea that motivates an audience to respond. Using an appeal of aspiration, comfort, convenience, economy, efficiency, reduction of fear, love, nostalgia, pride, health, luxury, patriotism, sex, or safety will engage the minds and touch the emotions of the target audience, and ultimately motivate a response.

Student responses to the second part of the question will vary widely but at least some are likely to refer to the Target ad (Exhibit 9.6), which uses a parody of luxury as its appeal.

- d. Why does a message strategy also need to be creative?

Answer: The strategy, although often considered a “boring” piece of paper, must be creative itself or the messages developed from it are likely to be boring or ineffective themselves. It’s the “garbage in, garbage out” principal: if the brief contains no relevant and distinctive information about the brand, it becomes very difficult to develop a creative big idea.

2) The Message Strategy Brief

- a. What are the three main steps in developing an IMC Message Strategy Brief?

Answer: The three main steps in developing a message strategy brief are: first, the MC communication objectives; second, the customer insights; and third, the selling strategy.

- b. Study the seven agency briefs in Table 9-1. What elements appear most consistently in them? What elements appear infrequently? If you were asked to develop your own outline for a message strategy brief, what would you include?

Answer: Student answers will vary on this question, but some likely responses to the first part of the question are: some definition of the target audience, some indication of the promise or benefit to the consumer; some notion of proof or “reason why” to support the message; and some indication of the tone the creative should adopt. Some elements are less likely to be mentioned because they are proprietary concepts to particular agencies. Some examples would be: Ogilvy & Mather’s inclusion of a “competition” section; Tracy-Locke’s use of a “brand character” section; DDB Worldwide’s use of their “position” and “media” sections; and Citigate Cunningham’s “sound bite” section.

Student answers to the last part of the question will also vary, but one example of an outline that incorporates the most commonly mentioned sections would be as follows:

- *Target audience definition*
- *Positioning of brand versus key competitors*
- *Unique benefit offered by the brand versus the competitors*
- *Support for the benefit*
- *Tone of the message*

- c. What is a key customer insight? Give an example of how customer insights contribute to the development of message strategy.

Answer: Customer insight is identifying below-the-surface attitudes and beliefs that influence behavior. This insight is often the result of a great deal of research into the attitudes and motivations of members of the target audience.

Student answers to the second part of the question will vary, but some may cite the Marlboro example mentioned in the text. Specifically, that the key insight behind Marlboro's famous campaign is that young and middle-aged men fantasize about the freedom and macho independence of being a cowboy. By linking Marlboro cigarettes with this romantic idea, the brand allowed men to briefly escape into this fantasy each time they lit up. This simple insight is what has made Marlboro one of the top brands in the world.

- d. Find an example in ads elsewhere in this book of a claim, a benefit statement, a reason why, and a USP. Explain the logic behind each one.

Answer: The Colgate Total "Bad News" ad (Exhibit 9-5) provides a good example of a claim, a benefit, a reason why, and a USP (Unique Selling Proposition). Specifically, the ad dramatizes the toothpaste's claim of 12-hour protection, states the benefit that the toothpaste will continue fighting plaque after you eat something, and provides a reason why this claim is true (Total has a "unique formula [that] has an antibacterial ingredient that attaches to teeth to protect for 12 hours"). Finally, its USP is the statement that it is the only brand that offers 12 hour protection.

- e. Write the benefit statements for one of the ads you like from this chapter. Use the following formula:

If I use "_____ (product) _____, I will _____ (benefit) _____
because _____ (support) _____.

Answer: A number of students will again probably choose the Target ad since the brand is so relevant to them. One possible answer would be as follows: "If I go to Target, my friends will think I'm a little more hip because Target stuff is so cool..."

- f. How does the MasterCard story in the chapter opening case exemplify a Message Strategy Brief? Analyze the "Treehouse" ad (Exhibit 9-11) in the MasterCard "priceless" campaign and construct a Message Strategy Brief for it.

Answer: The MasterCard case exemplifies how a consumer insight can lead to a “big idea.” Specifically, in researching the marketing challenges facing MasterCard, agency professionals realized that those consumers are interested not only in tangibles that you can put a price on, but also in “some intangibles that can’t be measured in dollars.” This insight became the anchor of the campaign, and can be seen in the benefit statement for the “Treehouse” ad below:
If I use MasterCard I will feel better about helping keep my kids safe because I can afford to get the things I need to build them a treehouse—and other things in their lives.

3) The Creative Process

- a. Define creativity. What are its key characteristics?

Answer: Creativity could be defined as the ability to look at the world from a different perspective and to use this point of view to develop unique solutions to a problem. Some of the characteristics of creativity include: open-mindedness, imagination, and an ability to analyze two different concepts and blend them together into a new idea.

- b. What are the four steps of the creative process? Describe an experience you have had coming up with an idea for something. How did your experience match this process?

Answer: The four steps in the creative process are exploration, insight, execution, and evaluation. Student answers the second and third portions of the question will be very different, depending upon their backgrounds. But here is one possible answer based on previous classroom experiences with students: “I’m a member of the programming board here at the college, and we recognized that we had to do something to reinvigorate our homecoming weekend. So we did some research to find out what new kinds of activities students would really like to see to make them excited about homecoming again (exploration). Based on these discussions, we came up with the idea (insight) that there really was no big focal point of the festivities on Friday night. A lot of the students we talked to thought it would be cool to have a big kick-off concert that night. So we conducted a poll to determine which bands they’d like to see. And based on the results, we booked the most requested band (execution). We were really happy with the great reaction the students had, and to make next year’s homecoming even better, we even conducted a poll again after the event asking students what they would like to see improved (evaluation).” This type of student answer would match the creative process described in the text fairly closely.

- c. Set up a brainstorming session with some of your friends. Ask them to come up with an idea for a new Absolute ad. Experiment with the brainstorming techniques. Which approach led your group to come up with the most ideas?

Answer: This would be a good homework assignment, particularly given the high visibility of the Absolute campaign on campus. It could also be extended to include brainstorming for creative insights to help complete the IMC Plan assignment below, if you have chosen to use that as part of your course.

- d. Find a marketing communication execution that you believe is highly creative and a similar one for a related product that you feel isn't creative. Critique both pieces and explain your evaluation of them. Are they both on strategy as best you can figure out from the message you see expressed in the materials?

Answer: This is another example of a question that could spark incredibly different responses from students. One suggestion to help focus the discussion would be to identify and secure two executions, one that would likely be perceived by the students as highly creative, and one that likely will not be perceived as creative. Then display them side by side on the board and ask for student comments on each. To help answer the second part of the question, you could even write the creative brief format that emerges from question 2(b) on the board next to each ad and have the class agree to responses to each of the section. The results could highlight how one ad excels because of its superior underlying strategy, while the other ad suffers because its strategy is weak.

Chapter Challenge

Writing Assignment

Find an article in the trade press that describes a new marketing communication campaign or program. Critique the message strategy based on the information given in the report. What is missing? If you were working on this account as a planner, how would you develop the message strategy brief? Prepare this in a memo format and address it to your instructor.

Presentation Assignment

Collect all the MC materials you can find for one of your favorite brands. Based upon what you see, recreate what you believe the message strategy brief would be for this brand. Analyze the creative idea. Is it a big idea that both grabs—gets attention—and sticks—is memorable? Is it also on strategy?

Internet Assignment

Look up the web site for any of the brands mentioned in this chapter and find a site that presents the company's brand strategy. Summarize what you find there in terms of the message strategy decisions and explain how that strategy is made visible on the web site.

Research Assignment

How do books and articles you might find in your library approach and define message strategy? What are the differences? If you were to develop your own version of an IMC message strategy document, based on everything you have read in this chapter and in these other books and articles, what would it look like?

IMC Plan Team Assignment

At this stage in their semester-long project, students should apply the process outlined in the chapter to develop a creative message brief for their client's brand.

IMC Final Project Checklist #9

Due Date: _____

☐ Your Agency Name:

☐ Creative Message Brief

☐ Five required elements:

1) Communication Objective

2) Target Audience Definition

3) Consumer Benefit

4) Reason Why

5) Tone and Personality

☐ Summary Statement:

(Use the format describe in the book, specifically, "The purpose of this MC message is to convince _____ [target audience] _____ that _____ [brand] _____ will _____ [benefit] _____ because _____ [proof]. The tone of the message should be _____ (description of message personality).