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From: John Minck

Date: Dec 2, 1987

To: Laura Rafferty

Re: Letter to the Editor

Thanks for considering this letter for your next issue. The more I thought about it, the more I felt it would be good to ask if there could be enough space for printing an excerpt of the survey data I sent you yesterday. It seems to me that the survey which ranks the priority of copy themes against the various types of people was pretty powerful data. It certainly supports my contention that products and specs are still important to customers and readers.

EDITOR:

I guess one thing I like about Marcom work is that as much as we progress toward scientific testing and measures, the final decisions often have to come down to our best guess on the "art" of communicating and personal judgement. The reason of course is that surveys and testing results are often contradictory and confusing, and depend critically on who and how you ask. My case in point is the thrust of the "Departing from the Next-Bench-Syndrome" article in the Oct/Dec issue. As we look for non-traditional customers, it certainly is an important consideration.

I, on the other hand, think it is crucially important not to lose sight of the fact that HP was built on great products and product-type advertising. Notice I didn't say "great" product advertising. In fact, a lot of our product advertising could have been characterized as dull. But early Marketing VP Noel Eldred knew what engineer-customers wanted, and that was product advantages (benefits) and specs. And Dave Packard wanted price in every ad. So the result often looked like a data sheet; plenty of specs, and price.

But product ads built the company in T&M, and customers came to expect such ads from HP. Even today, it's not at all clear to me that things with our engineer-customers have changed that much. For example, in 1983, under the title of "Engineers are people, too", EDN Magazine (July 7, 1983) surveyed their 125,000 readers, and based on 1418 returns got the following results. EDN is the pre-eminent magazine for circuit design engineers.

Consumer-type ads with no facts, figures or specs are not helpful, and I ignore them.

42.3%

Consumer-type ads with no facts, figures or specs spark my interest, and I send for more information.

5.9

I only respond to ads that include facts,

figures or specs.

51.8

I don't respond to any ads.

0.1

Further confirmation for product and performance data comes from Business Marketing Magazine (Feb. 1984, pp 82-83) which reported on a High-Tech advertising study from "Mainly Marketing". They ranked priority on 24 copy themes for 7 different categories of high-tech executives; Engineers, Purchasing Agents, Top Mgmt, Ad Agencies, Ad Mgrs, Reps and Distributors.

Copy Theme	Engrs.	Top Mgmt
Product Specifications	1	4
Price	2	2
Performance data	3	12
Product Advantages	5	1
Savings in time/money	13	3

The results seem pretty conclusive. Top management and engineers agree on the top 4 copy themes, albeit in different order. I suggest interested marcom persons look at the complete report in the referenced magazine.

Finally, everyone knows that ad writing has as many avenues as there are creative-type-folks. I suppose there is a library-full of textbooks on the subject. The easy part is stopping the page-thumber with an upside-down picture or some other unexpected shocker. But flashy ads and cute headlines don't necessarily create preference or action. This principle is well-known in the business. Witness the Joe Isuzu ads which I think are among the most interesting I've seen in 30 years of watching. Yet ADVERTISING AGE (I think) just reported that Isuzu sales are down.

So, based on all the above data, I for one would like to see some testing between a short-copy etchings ad and a long-copy traditional HP product ad. Thanks for listening. Comments are welcome.

I AM THE MEDIA AD READER, THY CUSTOMER...

- 1) Thou shalt write clear and concise copy with many benefits.
- 2) Thou shalt briefly but creatively describe thy product's performance.
- 3) Remember keep always at the forefront of thy copy thy customer's mindset and needs.
- 4) Thou shalt picture thy product clearly.
- 5) Thou shalt not use cute or clever or cloying headlines with dumb plays-on-words.
- 6) Thou shalt shun "throw-away" words like high-quality, reliable, unless accompanied by proof statements like MTBF.
- 7) Thou shalt never EVER use reverse-type out of colored backgrounds. Thou shalt resist the entreaties of thy Art Director whose profession's love for reverse-serif and black backgrounds is much to be decried. Thee will cause much reader distress.
- 8) Thou shalt include price on every ad.
- 9) Thou shalt show the HP logo in prominent size in legal position, for thy readers derive great pleasure from looking for its products.
- 10) Remember thy creative work hast but 3 to 5 seconds to stop a page-thumber paging through a magazine.