

hp

HEWLETT  
PACKARD

Stanford Park Division \* Palo Alto, CA 94303-0889 \* 415-857-2060  
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From: John Minck

Date: Dec 7, 1987

To: Dick Alberding  
(Eyes only)

Re: Advertising

It may not be obvious at your level, Dick, but it seems to me that HP's advertising program just isn't holding together all that well. It's happened before, with formats and slogans and cuteness running rampant. I guess "What-if" is supposed to be the unifying force, but it doesn't work well. We are trying to shoe-horn What-if into programs like Gary Spear's SURPRISE program with poor results. SURPRISE has won Reader Recall awards for at least 15 years, but now SURPRISE is gone because it won't play with the sidebar What-if. See the attachment of the LED ad.

We've got Agency Art Directors over-riding common sense with reverse-type (serif type no less) out of a mottled 4-color background. See the 12C attachment. Aside from being really dumb copy, David Ogilvy would turn over in his grave with the reverse serif type.

I'm probably stepping on sacred ground here, but I frankly think "What-if" stinks. Aside from the truth-in-advertising factor of whether someone from HP ever really did come out of a shower wet to make a call to the office, what is it saying? I've heard the Burnett rational of trying to personalize HP sales people and showing their commitment to customers. But we seem to be trying to build an HP image around What-if, rather than take the company and its image and build an advertising program around it.

A number of years ago, I attended an AD AGE creative workshop in Chicago and heard two GE corporate advertising people. Imagine GE, a company with 400 Departments (divisions), in at least 12 major business segments and an ad presence that was simply chaotic. They determined to write a company ad platform that was simply simple but was totally flexible for each group and for the multiple agencies they had to use across the world. I've attached a copy of this strategy.

In my opinion, the GE ad examples are quite powerful, and better yet, they emit a consistent presence or image. The GE logo jumps out at you. The ads are clean. The format is flexible. The thrust is set by formula of the strategy statement. And, they are product ads, the kind that built HP.

Seems to me that it's time for HP to invent a new ad platform. Why don't we just blow up What-if and be done with it? Why not recognize that to all our customers from top managers to design engineers to accountants who buy our calculators HP means innovative products and a heads-up company with bright people who are trying to help solve problems. We sell solutions and are committed to it from John Y to the lowliest order clerk.

HP is consistently held in high esteem by customers of all types. I realize that there are some new market areas where we may not have great recognition. But most customer executives wish they could emulate HP on production processes. R&D managers wish they had HP's semiconductor

expertise and production capability for unique components. Most customer workers wish their companies had personnel policies they read about at HP.

Personally, I think we need to get back to more product advertising. I've enclosed a copy of a "high-tech" ad copy theme table which says that product specs and performance data is desired. Eldred knew what he was doing with the heavy concentration on products, specs, and Packard always insisted rightly on price on every ad. Sure, the ads looked a lot like data sheets, but customers came to expect and desire the grey ad formats from HP. We built a lot of the company on product ads.

I think you could sell computers by having John Young leaning across a 3000, and saying, "Let me tell you how we run HP with 453 of these computers in x locations around the world. We send xxx million messages, accounting data, orders every day. We .....". You get the idea. John is well-known and highly-respected, maybe better in his own way than Iacocca. I can see that as much more powerful on NFL football.

The cleverness of the HP guy on the beach talking What-if to his dog reminds me of the Joe Isuzu ads, some of the funniest I have ever seen. Problem is I read in AD AGE I think where Isuzu sales are down.

I think HP ought to project Innovation. I think we ought to project solutions (innovative products). I wish What-if would go away. I wish we would never have to see bad judgement on reverse-type formats. I just wish....

And you probably WISH I would GO AWAY? Understand me Dick, I wouldn't want your job for a million dollars. Every expert in the world telling you what to do. I'm not an expert, but I hope you don't mind my sending along some observations, and a few specific examples. Thanks for listening. My advice is probably worth just about what it cost you, nothing.

Cheers,