

## 12.5: The Creative Team

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this section, students should be able to do the following:

1. *Characterize* the members of an advertising creative team.
2. *Explain* how copywriters use various literary forms and devices to construct the advertising message.

Ads use both words and images—indeed, all the senses. Achieving this result requires close cooperation within the creative team between copywriting and art direction.

### Copywriting

**Copywriters** create memorable and motivating text that will be spoken or written within the ad. Because short headlines and copy are generally more effective, copywriters must make each word contribute to the ad's goals.

### What's in a Word?

The copywriter works with the art director to develop the concept for the ad. Copywriters must understand the meanings (both plain and hidden) behind words. For example, words like “new” are used a lot in ads because they capture our attention and pique our curiosity. Other words, such as “don’t miss” and “urgent,” arouse fear, while “how to” promises practical advice.

Words can convey facts, create musical poetry, re-create history, command action, plead, and paint pictures. Copywriting makes use of the language centers of the brain to instill emotion and create memories. “Fundamentally, I value a good combination of image and message in an eye-catching way. You want something that makes you say: ‘What’s going on here?’ The visual itself can be simple,” observes one marketing director.

Copywriters also work on the pacing and sounds of words to reinforce the message and emotional tone. For example, Apple Computer’s three-word “Rip. Mix. Burn.” campaign used a staccato of short imperative verbs that resonate with a fast-paced youth culture and create a subtext that Apple’s computers let you do these tasks very easily and quickly.

### SS+K Spotlight

Sam Mazur, the copywriter on the msnbc.com campaign, worked very closely with the art director, Matt Ferrin, on each concept. While they collaborated on the overall vision, the tasks required to complete that vision are clearly split. Sam would scour the msnbc.com headlines and pair them together; he and Matt would choose the brick colors for each; and Matt would set up the art layout accordingly.

### Literary Forms and Devices

Advertisers structure commercials like other art forms; they borrow conventions from literature and art to communicate. Two important structures are dramas and lectures (you’re certainly familiar with that one!). A **lecture** is like a speech; the communicator addresses the audience directly to inform them about a product or persuade them to buy it. In contrast, a **drama** is similar to a play or movie. Whereas an argument holds the viewer at arm’s length, a drama draws the viewer into the action. The characters only indirectly address the audience; they interact with each other about a product or service in an imaginary setting. Dramas attempt to be experiential—to involve the audience emotionally. In **transformational advertising**, the consumer associates the experience of product usage with some subjective sensation—like the feeling you get when you watch a silhouetted actor on TV dancing energetically to his iPod.

Advertising creatives also rely (consciously or not) on literary devices to communicate these meanings. For example, characters like Mr. Goodwrench, the Jolly Green Giant, and Charlie the Tuna may personify a product or service. Many ads take the form of an **allegory**; a story about an abstract trait or concept that a person, animal, or vegetable stands for.

A **metaphor** places two dissimilar objects into a close relationship such that “A is B,” whereas a **simile** compares two objects, “A is like B.” A and B, however dissimilar, share some quality that the metaphor highlights. Metaphors allow the marketer to activate meaningful images and apply them to everyday events. In the stock market, “white knights” battle “hostile raiders” using “poison pills” (unfortunately the knights don’t seem to be winning, at least for now) while Tony the Tiger equates cereal with strength.

## Art Direction

The term “art direction” goes beyond choosing or creating images that go into marketing communications. It is more encompassing and holistic; a good art director blends the elements of an ad into a powerful message that strongly resonates with the viewer.

The **art director** is the chief designer of the ad. She is responsible not only for creating the visuals but also for deciding how the message will communicate the desired mood, product qualities, and psychological appeals. In addition to the illustrations in an ad (photo, cartoon, drawing), the art director uses principles of design to unify the elements of the ad and direct our attention to the point of emphasis.

Art direction has grown in importance as advertising has become more visual. Pictures tell a story more quickly than words, and they let advertisers put the brand in a social context, which links the brand to certain “types” of people or lifestyles. According to Marie-Catherine Dupuy, vice chairman and chief creative officer, TBWA/France, “Art direction is crucial. You can find the best idea—but if it’s not well art directed, it’s killed. I say that even though I’m a former copywriter. For me, art direction is 80 per cent of the effectiveness. That’s also the place where artists from every side can express themselves and bring their full talents to the ad.”

## Key Takaway

Copywriters and art directors turn intangible ideas into tangible realities. The messages they create that use words or images capture the essence of the advertising strategy and translate it into something that the target understands—and hopefully resonates with.

## EXERCISES

1. Describe the copywriter’s responsibility in advertising.
2. List and describe the literary forms and devices that can be used in advertising.
3. Describe the art director’s responsibility in advertising.

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