What is advertising?

The word advertising is used to describe the whole creative process of communicating a message. This message can be about the social or commercial benefits or the characteristics of a particular product or services.

Different types of media can be used to deliver these messages, including newspapers, magazines, television, radio, posters, mobile phones or social media (such as Facebook, Myspace or online chatrooms).

The process of advertising (or marketing communications) is used to create a customer, to keep the customer, and to satisfy the customer's need (want or desire) for the particular product or service.

Advertising is part of the bigger creative industries and along with fashion, film, performing arts, graphic design, video and music, contributes to the running of the UK. Advertising alone generates £1.46 billion every year and is made up of a young, competitive and high-earning workforce, with nearly half of its employees being under the age of 34 years old.

David Ogilvy, often referred to as the father of advertising is quoted to have said;

> "I do not regard advertising as entertainment or an art form, but as a medium of information."

Two must read books for anyone interested in working in the advertising industry are[1]:

'Ogilvy on Advertising' by David Ogilvy,

'Behind the Scenes in Advertising' by Jeremy Bullmore,

The advertising process

The process of advertising is a creative process (although it is worth noting that there is no one process to achieving the final product). The process begins with the communications brief.

The Brief (also known as the communications brief)

The brief is the tool used by the client to describe in detail what they want to get from the advertising process. It may be that they want to:

- Increase sales
- Create awareness of their product or service (e.g New iPod)
- Communicate a social message (e.g. Don't drink and drive)

[1] For a more comprehensive reading list please check the IPA website www.ipa.co.uk/DisplayContent.aspx?id=4585

- Change attitudes
- Increase their share of the market (e.g Pepsi versus Coca Cola)

In order to make sure that the advertising agency who receive the brief have all the information they need to do the job correctly, the client needs to give them all the relevant background information they have about their own company, their target audience and any information about previous adverts/activities and their results. The brief is prepared and developed by an advertising agency planner[2] from the information provided by the client.

The brief needs to include information about the company's business objectives (mission, values, global leader, etc) and their communication objectives (what they want to say about themselves and to whom).

The better the brief the better and more accurate the results, so it is important to spend time at the beginning of the process making sure that everything is agreed and understood by both sides. There is nothing worse that starting a job only to get half way through to find out that you have taken the wrong direction and have to start from scratch.

Research

The first step after receiving the brief is for the agency to conduct some research. In addition to the information laid out in the brief the agency needs to get a better picture of the client's product/service. This includes an examination of:

- Who are its competitors and how does it compare to them?
- What is their position in the marketplace (first, second or new/only entrant?)
- What do consumers think, say and interact with the product/service?
- Who is the target audience/customer?

Plan

The next step is to create the marketing plan – this is the detailed plan of who, what, where, when and how to reach the target audience(s). To be able to do this properly, the agency needs to have an understanding of how the target audience thinks, acts and feels. The agency needs to also think about the macro (bigger and external) issues that could possibly influence/hinder the 'message' getting through to the end customer. Conditions such as:

- Distribution of the product (e.g postal strikes)
- Pricing (customer, retailer, wholesaler)
- Media channels
- Copy (text) and creative used in the different channels
- Amount of money to be spent in each channel (if appropriate)

Execution

After the plan has been agreed by the client and the agency it is time to convert the concepts, ideas and plans into the end product whether that is a television

[2] See Section on – Who does what?

commercial, radio ad, web page, viral or sponsored (ambient or experiential) event (e.g Orange RockCorps http://www.allourbestwork.com/Work/11176.RockCorps or Nike Secret http://www.allourbestwork.com/VideoWork/12972.Nike%20Secret)

Who does what in an advertising agency?

This section presents a broad overview of some of the job functions within an agency. For a more in-depth view please look at the IPA website www.ipa.co.uk/careers.

Client Service or Account Management (The Suits)

The account handler acts as the 'middle-person' in the client/agency relationship. They represent the agency when dealing with the client, and the client when dealing with the agency. These individuals build their own personal and the agency's relationship with the client, which is very important as they deal with the clients on a day-to-day basis.

Account handlers need to have an in-depth understanding of the business objectives, marketplace and competitors of the client organisation, which helps them to work closely with the agency's planners to make sure they have a full understanding of the client's brief which is then translated into a creative brief for the agency. They also work closely with most other departments within the agency and so being a 'people person' is very important to the role.

Strategic Planning

Planners in an advertising agency are the people who understand the 'who, what, where, when and how' about consumers. They need to understand who the target audience are, what are the trends/patterns in their behaviours, where is best to reach them (and at what specific time), and how to do this effectively and efficiently. All this they do by working closely with the client and having an interest in the psychology and sociology of people. Strategic planners come up with the tactics/strategies to make the creative idea work.

Media Planning & Buying

The role of media within advertising is so important that there are some agencies set up specifically to take care of this part of the process, although some agencies also take care of this role within their own organisation.

Media Planning

The media planner is more focussed on the 'how, when and where' of the relationship with the consumer. They are able to read, understand and eventually predict consumer media trends (buying, interaction, preferences etc). The word 'media' defines an ever increasingly complex landscape (TV, radio, social networks, internet, Web 2.0, mobile) that the media planner is constantly learning and adapting their decisions based on new and emerging trends. Along with the strategic planner, the media planner develops the media plan for the campaign, which

outlines the best channels to be used to maximise the potential for the communications message to be heard, understood and acted upon.

Media Buying

The media buyer essentially 'does what it says on the tin'. Armed with the agreed media plan and the strategic plan, they negotiate with the media owners (eg ITV, Channel 4, SKY, Granada, Tyne Tees) identified in the plan, to buy the best position, timing and at the right price for their client's in order to get maximum value and impact from the budget available. An example of this would be the difference between a commercial break spot between Coronation Street and one between a televised FA Cup final match. Each would be targeting quite different audiences and so would have different pricing levels and levels of impact on the target audience. This is such an exact 'science' that the impact of these decisions (both positive and negative) can be analysed after the campaign, and used to plan the next campaign.

Creative

Within an agency the word 'creative' usually refers to the team of people who help make the campaign 'real' in relation to how the end consumer will receive the communications message (examples of this could be visual – TV, audible – radio, or experiential – a sponsored event).

Probably the two most 'famous' roles within the creative department are the copywriter and the art director. The roles of copywriter and art director are usually recruited as the result of an existing partnership between the two individuals. The art director starts with a blank piece of paper and creates the mood, feeling (and in most cases the visual). The copywriter will work with their partner to create the 'words' to be used to communicate the message.

Creative Services & Production (Project management and Traffic)

This is the department where the ideas become 'real', ie they are made (and paid for). This department is also about quality control and an eye for detail, every stage of the process must be run smoothly, on time, on budget and be of the highest quality.

Some of the roles within this department include:

- Creative Services Director
- Creative Services Manager
- Art Buying
- TV Production
- Studio
- Project Management
- Traffic Management
- Print Production

Finally, not forgetting one of the probably most overlooked but as essential functions within the agency – that of Internal Services. This covers roles such as - Finance, IT, Legal, HR & Admin

These key functions are like the engine of a car, without a fully functioning, smoothly running, economical engine it doesn't matter what colour the paintwork is or if it has leather seats, if the engine is second-rate there will always be problems.

Resources

Trade/Member Associations, Regulatory Bodies and other useful organisations

The Advertising Association (AA) - www.adassoc.org.uk

The only organisation that represents all sides of the advertising and promotion industry in the UK - advertisers, agencies and the media. The AA promotes and protects advertising. It communicates its commercial and consumer benefits and seeks the optimal regulatory environment for the advertising industry.

The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) - www.asa.org.uk

The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) is the independent body set up by the advertising industry to police the rules laid down in the advertising codes. The strength of the self-regulatory system lies in both the independence of the ASA and the support and commitment of the advertising industry, through the Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP), to the standards of the codes, protecting consumers and creating a level playing field for advertisers.

Creative Choices° - www.creative-choices.co.uk

Creative Choices° is the first online service to provide the tools, knowledge and networks to support every individual and business to get in, and get on, in the creative industries and cultural sector.

The Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA) – www.ipa.co.uk

The IPA is one of the world's pre-eminent trade bodies for marketing communications agencies. The IPA have over 260 of the UK's brightest and best agencies in membership, from a broad range of disciplines, who between them handle an estimated 85 per cent of all UK advertising spend.

D&AD - www.dandad.org

D&AD is an educational charity that represents the global creative, design and advertising communities. Since 1962, D&AD has set industry standards, educated and inspired the next generation and, more recently, has demonstrated the impact of creativity and innovation on enhancing business performance.

Diagonal Thinking: - www.diagonalthinking.co.uk

The Diagonal Thinking Self-assessment is an online tool, designed to help recruitment into the advertising and communication industries. It tests the theory that the most successful individuals working in the business are both Linear and Lateral Thinkers – they think 'diagonally'.

Linear Thinkers are people who are able to follow step-by-step processes to get to the answer.

Lateral Thinkers are people who take a different approach to problem solving, that look at it from different ‘sides’ instead of head on (eg they come up with lots of different possible reasons for why something can happen).

People who sit on the diagonal are able to switch between the two, depending on the situation and skills needed for the task at hand.

The online self assessment tool also allows people to highlight their own skills, characteristics and behaviours and link them to different roles within an advertising agency.

As mentioned in the earlier section, there are many different roles within an advertising agency, each needing people with different skills and characteristic. There are no right or wrong answers, just an indication of which roles an individual may be more suited to.