

# HOUSTON BUSINESS JOURNAL

Strictly Houston. Strictly Business.

Vol. 34 No. 27 Week of November 14–20, 2003

houston.bizjournals.com

## Combine creativity with smart thinking for winning campaigns

Creativity has been defined as “intelligence having fun.” Conveying a positive image can have powerful results and be fun, too. Conversely, a less-than-wonderful or even negative image can have damaging effects. That’s no fun. Communication and image go hand-in-hand when it comes to appealing to the masses in a persuasive way. Creativity is the spark.

When times are robust and especially when they are in the dust, the simplest idea creatively executed to reveal its marketability is what’s needed to differentiate.

That creative spark is needed in abundance — here and now.



**CREATIVE  
MARKETING**

**JOE  
FOURNET**

### ISSUE OF TRUST

Whether it’s promoting the City of Houston, its surrounding attractions or convincing local corporations to spend their marketing and advertising dollars locally, a new kind of passion is needed. A renewed commitment along with education as to how to attain a higher caliber, smarter level of creativity must occur within the community.

Why have key pieces of advertising business left town? Was it something the creative community said? Or perhaps did not say or do? Regardless, we must give good and viable reasons for businesses to spend their money here.

So, how does the creative community accomplish this? Education, a keen understanding of their business and creativity is a good start. However, we must raise the bar on creativity to remain competitive. And, we must do so more vigorously.

Clients must be willing to trust their creative consultants, yet the consultants should demonstrate through professionalism and marketing savvy why

this trust is well earned. And folks, it does have to be earned.

Respect is lost for the “dearly-loved” creative product when it is too cute, too complex or just plain dumb. There is no excuse for presenting creative that makes no sense or doesn’t follow the marketing strategy behind it.

Of course, that strategy, often client-developed, must be clear, concise and on target.

Speakers at an American Association of Advertising Agencies conference said agencies must still deliver what clients need most — creative solutions to business problems.

The current frame of mind, however, seems to focus on more than just advertising. There needs to be more creative business thinkers or suffer the consequences, i.e. continue to settle for the status quo and erosion of client trust.

Creative solutions arise in part from a thorough knowledge of the client’s business and from being the designated “devil’s advocate,” the trusted resource with an outsider’s perspective.

Even the thought process or the approach one takes in soliciting a prospect and how one presents an idea should all have a creative bent.

### OVERCOME OBSTACLES

Raising the creative bar and remaining competitive means meeting various obstacles and creatively overcoming them. The creative community must be frank and honest with companies to grant the freedom and flexibility needed to portray their product or service in a truly unique, interesting and memorable way.

Unfortunately, mediocre creative seems to be accepted way too often. A watered-down compromise is produced to satisfy client-side folks who only think they know what their customers want or need.

When the client and/or their “creative vendor” fail to convey a central message because someone did not do his homework well or thorough enough, everyone loses.

Politically-correct creative is another challenge that can often be quite uninteresting. Trying to satisfy everybody never got anybody anywhere. Convey the message as straightforward and innovative as possible.

Unrealistic parameters can hinder creativity, but can be overcome. Education as to what viable options exist within the accepted and realistic time frame is paramount to achieve results-worthy creative.

Involving creative folks earlier in the development process will help lessen the problems of extremely tight deadlines with little input.

### CREATIVITY NEEDS TO BE FUN

Creativity shines when a focused and simple message is conveyed in a visually and mentally stimulating form that gets results. That’s when the creative idea and execution kick butt!

Creativity needs to become more synonymous with “fun!” Ideas foster creativity and vice versa. When imagination is thrown into the mix, ideas can be nourished through the creative process so they will resonate with personality.

Will there be mistakes made? Sure. Is the creative community up to the task? Those possessing courage, vision, passion and imagination are. The creative bar must be raised to remain competitive. The credibility and livelihood of the creative community depend on it. ■

**JOE FOURNET**, Sugar Land-based freelance writer and creative director, owns Ideas & More. He can be reached at [j4net@earthlink.net](mailto:j4net@earthlink.net).