

DATA IS THE NEW CREATIVE

Whatever Happened to People?

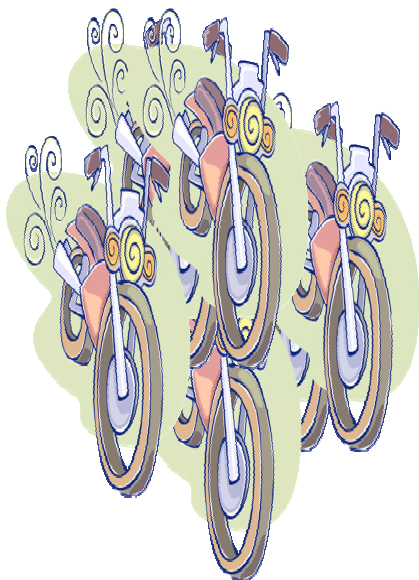
Why has the program Mad Men so enraged advertising? The staid One Club, keeper of the Creative Hall of Fame, just opened a counter-exhibit at the NY Public Library. They want to correct the idea that the only thing admen do is drink, scheme and lust by showing they also pose for pictures.



Mad Men is set in the 1960's, the decade of the creative agency. I visited the One Club exhibit out of nostalgia and curiosity. Nostalgia because I ran media at two of the 60's most creative shops, Papert, Koenig, Lois, the first agency to go public. And Carl Ally the only agency that fired clients. As I remember the experience, it was like being Accountant to the Mob.

THE WILD ONES

PKL was the product of Fred Papert, a brilliant account man who later managed the 42nd Street Redevelopment Corporation, Julian Koenig, a gifted copywriter who prized horse racing and George Lois the remarkable art director who liked to start new agencies.



I don't remember who hired me at PKL. I only remember arriving and being chased down the halls by a pack of angry motor bikes. The agency had just become US representative for the European manufacturer. PKL thought -- it was probably civic minded Fred -- that inexpensive motor bikes could help solve New York's growing traffic problem.

Unfortunately PKL didn't realize that New York required a motorcycle license to operate a motor bike. So it became the only agency with a fully funded in-house transit system.

IT WASN'T EASY

It wasn't easy being a creative agency. PKL made Xerox, Dreyfus and Wolfschmidts famous, but it crashed and burned with P&G.

Unilever hired Doyle, Dane Bernbach, then famous for the first ethnic ad campaign. It was a feather-hatted Indian with the headline "You don't have to be Jewish to Love Levy's." Procter & Gamble countered by hiring PKL, which had made Dilly Beans, the pickled Vermont delicacy, a household name on radio. The irreverent campaign was "Music to eat Dilly Beans by" interrupted by messages like "If your neighborhood grocer doesn't have a jar, knock something off the shelf on the way out." I was hired by PKL as a P&G interpreter because I wore a tie and spoke Media.

SUDS DON'T CLEAN, THEY CLOG

The PKL and P&G marriage was made for Saturday Night Live. The agency was assigned Dash, a dying low-sudsing detergent



brand. Julian Koenig, on vacation, insisted on writing the first ad. I remember standing at the teletype (there were no faxes then) and slowly reading the tape with Julian's copy to the account man.

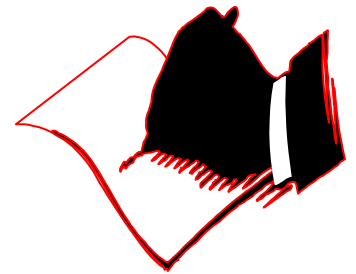
PKL's first ad for P&G, the company that floats to the bank on soapy bubbles, began "Suds don't clean . . . they clog." Both the tape and the account man crumpled to the floor.

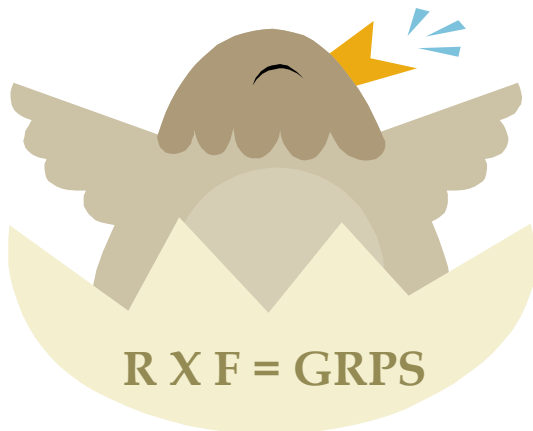
TV came next. One of the agency's triumphs was bringing Cinema Verité to television with a series of celebrated documentaries done for Xerox. PKL was determined to bring the believability of this new technique to commercials. They didn't realize how jealously brand managers protect their brands.

REAL VERSUS SLICE OF LIFE

The agency story-boarded a stunning spot for Dash, to be shot by Robert Drew the documentary film maker. It was not at all like a commercial. It had real people, real situations, real product in use. And real client problems.

"The product package is torn open. Can we use a fresh one?" "The dirty laundry looks soiled. Can we clean it up a bit?" "There's water on the floor of the laundry room. We can't have that." Frame by frame, all verité was edited out of the cinema leaving a familiar slice-of-life commercial.





PKL CREATES THE MEDIA AGENCY

Counting Despite demanding clients, PKL prospered. Even the media department left its mark. When George Lois defected in 1966 to open Lois, Holland, Calloway, he'd apparently had enough of not talking to media and didn't want it around. He convinced Dick Gershon to leave Benton & Bowles and start the first independent media agency, with Lois, Holland Calloway as a client.

A CRAZY KIND OF CAMELOT

I felt sad as I left the One Club exhibit. Even for dull media people those creative agencies were exciting. Full of talented, odd, fun people who did great advertising. It was a crazy kind of Camelot that's gone. David Verklin says now data is the new creative, and I'm afraid that's true.

But what a terrible loss.

Erwin Ephron

