

Campaign – 30th May 2008

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OPINION 1

Commercial deals in our schools do need scrutiny

Nobody will take issue with the Government's review on the commercialisation of childhood looking at whether or not companies should be allowed to sponsor school activities. The matter is highly contentious. And not just among the pressure groups that regard marketers as the barbarians at the school gate and demand they remain locked out.

Indeed, there are those within the marketing industries, particularly those with children of school age, who believe any links between marketing and education are fraught with risk. However, such stances are hard to sustain given the stiff challenges with which today's education system has to contend. Schools that cost millions of pounds a year to run cannot afford to discard any opportunities for extra funding. And should schools isolate pupils from the commercialisation they will have to confront soon enough?

Against that background, it's right that the Government's review should look at the policy of letting companies sponsor school sport, music classes and homework clubs or setting up sponsored academies. However, advertisers have had a foothold in schools for some time and removing them now would not only be almost impossible, but would create a new set of funding problems.

Moreover, as the educationalist Professor David Buckingham, who is leading the review, points out, children are not the easily manipulated innocents that some would have us believe. Far better to accept the realities of the situation and devise a clear set of proposals for managing the relationship between education and the business sector.

The most important thing is to strike a balance. What's needed above all is a system under which the commercial opportunities offered to schools are carefully scrutinised before they are allowed to proceed. It's in the interests of nobody – marketers, teachers or children – that there is a major outcry if a school accepts an inappropriate tie-up.

Brand nostalgia is making a comeback

What are we to make of Nestlé's relaunch of its Drifter brand, Cadbury's reintroduction of the Wispa bar and the move by Mars to relaunch Starburst as Opal Fruits as a three-month limited edition?

Perhaps the fact that they begin to bear out what the marketing prophets have been forecasting – that an ageing population will give well-established brands unprecedented levels of loyalty, but that new products will find it harder to succeed in a market increasingly resistant to change.

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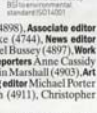
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR 174 Hammersmith Road, London W6 7JP, or campaign@haymarket.com

Green agencies have an ever important role to play

Dear editor,
I'm writing in response to "Are green agencies really necessary?" (Campaign, 16 May) and in particular to Richard Exon, the Rainey Kelly Campbell Roalfe/Y&R chief executive, who questions the role of green/ethical specialist agencies, having been handed a green brief from its client Marks & Spencer.

Specialist green and ethical agencies fulfil the same role in the communications framework as any other specialist agency. Financial and ethnic agencies have operated on this basis for years with both small and large marketers relying on their specialised knowledge, research and insider status to impact strategy and effectiveness of a communications campaign.

Any agency which feels it can simply use its already developed expertise to take a concept forward and create a compelling brand is not only missing the point of green and ethical marketing, it is potentially leading clients down a dangerous path.

If branding expertise was all



Exon...questioned the future of specialists after being handed M&S brief

there was to green and ethical specialist work, then presumably we wouldn't be seeing so many large advertisers falling foul of the Advertising Standards Authority's guidelines for misleading consumers with campaigns created by mainstream agencies.

To think green and ethical agencies are out there to "green-up" above-the-line campaigns is to

miss a trick. Our great skill is to act as a "greenwash filter" for marketers and for mainstream agencies who may lack the background, research, contacts and – most importantly – the perspective to assess and sell a green or ethical benefit of a product or service.

Tyler Moorehead
Director
Satellite – The Green Agency

Rankin's Dove pictures did capture real women

Dear editor,
After seeing my picture numerous times since the launch of the Dove firming range in 2004, I thought it was time to hear things from the horse's mouth.

Reading Campaign on 16 May, the article on page 16, "Unilever denies Dove airbrushing allegations", was slightly misleading. The picture used was from the launch of the original firming lotion campaign, which was shot by Rankin, not Annie Leibovitz.

So, are the allegations of airbrushing against that ad or in the ad that Leibovitz shot?

I can assure you that I'm very familiar with my own body, and seeing myself super-sized on the side of a double-decker London bus, I have analysed the pictures many times and I can confirm that the images of the girls in that particular ad were not retouched or airbrushed.

None of us are perfect, we are just normal girls with damn good skin and who happen to be very photogenic. Women relate to us because of our sizes, heights and complexions. We are curvaceous and, most importantly, natural. We are real women!

I do not see any alterations with my image... if anything did have to be adjusted, I can imagine it could only have been very, very slight for professional reasons and certainly nothing major or noticeable.

Any doubters are welcome to come and visit me at 750mph and see for themselves.

Syleste Molyneux
(the one with the afro)
Producer/studio manager
750mph

Was Fallon thinking of our Party Poker work?

Dear editor,
We really liked Fallon's "brilliant for everyone" campaign for Freestat, which featured in The Work section on 16 May.

We liked it almost as much as when we did it for Party Poker two years ago.

S Sparks, A Smith and M Partridge



Freestat (top) and Party Poker

DLKW's deal illustrates golden takeover rules

Dear editor,
The nature of the end of Delaney Lund Knox Warren & Partners' earn-out from its sale to Creston is further proof that it is perfectly possible to manage the acquisition and subsequent integration process without threatening the continuing health of the acquired business.

Like making a cake, the success of an agency merger or acquisition depends on the mix and suitability of the ingredients. The acquisition

process itself is fundamental to the outcome. Buyers need to understand that owner/managers of independent agencies are entrepreneurial. They have a different DNA and motivations to those who have never "stepped off the cliff".

As for the "ingredients", buyers are very focused on the ability of the founders to grow and develop their agency. To grow an agency that is successful and sustainable the more "institutionalised" it becomes, the more it can take on a life and personality of its own beyond that of its founders. This model greatly mitigates risk for the buyer.

The majority of agency founders are not looking for a quick exit and a fast buck when they sell. To be seen as successful through having built a business with passion and energy that is taken seriously by clients and peers is a massive driver, as many acquired companies such as DLKW demonstrate.

Creston's Don Elgie understands what motivates the entrepreneurs behind agencies. He represents a buyer who provides almost parental support without interfering.

The success of a smaller group like Creston, or for that matter the recently acquisitive private company Iris, which has just bought the management consultancy Concise, lies in a skill in convincing prospective vendors that they will be joining a group whose relative scale means that the vendors are effectively able to buy in to the success of the combined entity. The acquired party can feel they are a material contribution to the buyer's vision and business, rather than simply a percentage point on someone's P&L in New York.

Graham Beckett
Chief executive
Results International