

By Bill Guertin

The 800-Pound Gorilla

WHY YOUR ADS AREN'T WORKING (WELL)

One day they're lovin' it at McDonald's, and the next day they're grossed out by fast food.

They're raving about a new supermarket one day, and they're cussing out the poor stock boy the next day.

They love you today, and ignore you tomorrow.

They're customers. Who can figure 'em out?

We used to think of customers as one-dimensional creatures. We gave them labels like "soccer moms", "active seniors", "Gen-X'ers", "yupwardly mobile", and we thought these groups would think and behave in one certain way.

The truth is that each of us is a complex blend of several different people.

If you need proof, take a look at your music collection at home. My iPod has music from Miles Davis and Madonna, Green Day and the London Philharmonic, Travis Tritt and Led Zeppelin. I don't like just jazz or just rock; I enjoy listening to different things at different times based on my moods, the time of day, and a hundred other factors.

I'm the same way when it comes to buying things.

And so are you.

Sometimes I put my iPod on Shuffle, and I hear a random sampling of my whole music collection. It's fun because it's all my music, and I never know what's coming up next.

People love to be surprised and delighted.

And that's what your ads aren't doing.

In survey after survey, the #1 thing that people say they don't like about Radio is commercials. What people really meant to say is that they don't like **interruptions**.

It's the incessant, blah-blah-blahness of commercials that people don't like.

But what if commercials weren't interruptions? What if commercials surprised and delighted each listener? What if they were informative, entertaining, and continued the flow of the station in such a way that they were considered good programming, just like the music, the news, and all the other elements?

There's already one program like that.

The Super Bowl is the only program where people talk about the commercials after the game more than they do about the game itself. Why? Because those Super Bowl commercials are now part of the culture of the game itself, and the ad people spend millions of dollars on each one to be sure it's their best work.

Imagine a radio station that worked like that. A station whose commercials were as interesting as the programming.

Most commercials on radio suffer from mind-numbing predictability and sameness. “The friendly folks at...”; “Hurry, sale ends _____”; “For all your _____ needs.” No wonder we mentally tune it out.

The best commercials are ones that you actually don’t mind listening to. They engage the mind in such a way that its message is more interesting than that thought you had just prior to the ad.

Your ads aren’t working as well as they could because they sound (or look, in the newspaper) like ads.

Challenge your ad rep to create something that causes people to stop and think. Something that doesn’t look or sound like an ad. Something that could be mistaken for good radio programming, but is clearly an attempt to persuade on behalf of the sponsor.

By the way... when you ask this, your ad rep should ask you several questions about your business and your goals. This is the clay from which great ads are created.

Next month, I’ll share with you some of the best examples of these kinds of ads.

Bill Guertin, Chief Enthusiasm Officer of The 800-Pound Gorilla, works with companies of all sizes to improve their sales, marketing, service skills, and profitability.