



A summary of

The Idea Writers

Written by Teresa Iezzi

This is a summary of what I think is the most important and insightful parts of the book. I can't speak for anyone else and I strongly recommend you to read the book in order to grasp the concepts written here. My notes should only be seen as an addition that can be used to refresh your memory after you've read the book. Use my words as anchors to remember the vitals parts of this book. I know I will. If you like this free summary you are more than welcome to send me an email just to say thanks. That would make my day. Or if you like to have a chat about the content of the book or things within the same area I am up for that as well.

Enjoy.

Summary by Kim Hartman

This isn't Bill Bernbach's media landscape anymore. That gives you, the copywriter, an incredible opportunity to push brand narrative to interactive, dynamic places it's never been before, to actually create something that generates its own audience, but it also means that many rules of the past – while exceedingly worthy of study – are insufficient alone to guide the modern copywriter.

Today, there are much more stuff to sell. There are 50 of everything, story becomes key.

One of the challenges of today's copywriter is telling a story across multiple platforms, and involving the consumer in that story.

Whatever medium you end up writing for, you are creating something that takes a brand truth and makes a reader or viewer or passerby care about it, makes it mean something in the impossibly complicated scheme of her life.

At certain times, people were always looking for functional advantages, a unique selling proposition. A few products have that, they have functional superiority. But I think Rosser would have struggled to find the USP between Coke and Pepsi. There is ten of everything. Today it's about figuring out the story of your thing. Successful brands have that story built right into the design of the thing.

The most important element in success in ad writing is the product itself – (Bernbach).

A copywriter is almost helpless unless they build the idea into the product. The product is always the most powerful brand-building and marketing tool.

Brands are best when product and communication share a narrative, when the product, and the whole brand experience, are created through an insight-driven marketing process.

If storytelling is the essential job of the copywriter, design is the starting point of the story; design can inform how a story plays out and how a brand touches people at every stage in their interaction with it.

Is your idea a big enough idea that the mainstream press would write about it? A copywriter has to articulate the idea in a press release, that's how the idea starts.

Live in the real world. Make real things that real human beings care about and want to interact with.

Nobody read ads. People read what's interest them, and sometimes it's an ad.

Only the best content will rise to the top.

Create a social currency – feel cool when you telling your buddies about it. Create something that is customizable, fun and social.

Emotions aren't just stuff of classic narratives, of commercials. The best digital experiences play to emotions. When we say interactive, you think oh, I got someone to do something. But the more basic part of interactive is to make people feel something.

The best new ads experiences are those that harness the power of digital and apply it to the real world.

Some people think in stories, some think in systems. Both are part of the overall brand experience.

When writing, ask yourself: is what I'm creating adding something to someone's life? Is it useful, entertaining or beautiful?

If communication is about saying, product/services are about doing. Ad agencies have mostly been about saying but needs to be also about doing.

Study what your favorite companies do from a complete user-experience perspective, from product to the way their web sites work, through service. You might not be able to architect a customer service infrastructure, but you'll start orienting your work toward what speaks to people and away from just broadcasting slogans.

As a post-digital copywriter you should be (pp. 69>):

- A creator of ideas
- A master of the craft
- A conversationalist
- A dealer in emotions
- An analog human being
- A utilitarian
- An explainer, a clarifier

The starting point is not to figure out how to make a formulaic thing called an ad that stands out among 5000 other ads. It's how to connect with a person who is dealing with you on his own terms. How do you make that person want to interact with your creation, how do you matter to him?

What matter is if a brand fits into my life somehow.

One of the essential messages to take away from this book is that your job isn't to create an ad. It is to create something useful, entertaining or beautiful on behalf of a brand.

At its root, your challenge is to make a connection with a human being.

Consumers don't mind being advertised to, as long as these ads are interesting enough for them.

Find an idea that is interesting to the consumer, where a brand can play a role, and then find the best way to include the product there somehow.

Once you latch onto something that's true and interesting, that is the starting point for the creative process.

This has helped me more than anything in my career – write down on a piece of paper:

1. What to say
2. How to say it

That's it. That's advertising right there.

You should not just know the product intimately, but also:

- how its distributed and sold
- its competitors, what kind of marketing that have been done in the past,
- the market conditions that are affecting the company and the sector
- how people have used and are using the product
- know about your brands past ad campaigns

Book tip: Zen in art of writing by ray Bradbury, confessions of public speaker by Scott berkun

A lot of great communication happens in the audiences heads when they can figure out an ad or figure out a story or between the clicks on the site. That's the second story you writing; what happens in people's brains when they read. In between the lines is as important as what is in the lines.

You set up a conflict and then provide a solution. Any piece of effective communication has to have that.

It's not just about writing headlines, it's about writing an entire back story for this experience that's so interesting that even if I as a viewer don't ever know that, it affects the work I see.

What we do is about delivering an emotional story combines with a functional value. I have this new equation. The idea = emotion X function.

Do interesting things and interesting things will happen to you.

If marketing is a conversation, agencies need people who can talk to other people, who can say things that don't sound like ad copy, and who respond when engaged.

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A consumer relationship to a brand is built from a series of interactions. What is not only said, but learned at the first date informs the dialogue on the second etc. this is an emerging skill.

We don't need one big execution of a big idea. We need one big idea that can be used in a multidimensional, multi-layered and multifaceted way.

Geeks don't listen to advertising, they listen to other geeks.

"I'm not entirely sure what advertising should be now. I watch lots of TV but almost no commercials, I read lots of magazines but I can't remember a print ad I've seen lately... I don't think I've ever clicked a banner on purpose... I read several corporate blogs, follow several brands on Twitter, I use Groupon and Yelp and I try to support and talk about companies that make great products. So brands have plenty of ways to reach me, and I'm more than willing to be an advocate for brands that win me over. If the ad industry thinks I'm the future of media consumption, then we as an industry are going to have to do better about reaching people like me."

Ideas can and often should be iterative, evolving, interactive and nimble.

How do you join people's conversations instead of just shouting messages?

How do you ensure that you're and welcome addition to the conversation?

What can you makes that's, beautiful, entertaining or all of those things?

"I honestly think you need to start with a relevant and engaging idea. It can't be an advertising idea; it needs to be a consumer idea. Axe help guys meet girls... that is an idea based around a consumer. It's not something that brand is pushing on consumers about itself, it's an idea about how they can help consumers in something consumers find relevant and appealing. If you have an idea like that as a starting point, you're log way ahead."

"People talk about a target audience, but you also have to figure out what your targets target is. Who are they talking to? Fans talk to other fans and they're our actual target. The first target is bounced to the next one. Before, when you created a message, you figured out who was receiving it and then, OK, you check them off. But that's not enough now. It's great that someone saw it, but how do you make them want to promote it or be a part of it?"

I think all great tag lines are a call to action; they're a call to something bigger. It's not just "hey, buy this product", but a call to something more transcendent or philosophical. That's the way I think great tag lines work.

We're offering you customer service; you may use it and then go buy somewhere else. There's a certain generosity there that people ultimately reciprocate; they want to work with you.

A lot of brands try and reconcile their product to the reigning culture; if it's something small, they would say, "Well, it's bigger than you think". That's why it's important to create your own culture, to make an effort to change the way people thought about things, rather than say "hey, we fit into your culture, you just have to look at us differently.

To me, tension is what attracts attention. It's really about creating a clear line between two things that forces discussion. The way we attempt to resolve that tension is to talk about it. The important part of tension is that it is relevant to your culture. You have to uncover what the relevance of a product is, why people are going to talk about it.

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ECO Drive (USB):

The key to eco drive's success has been its human approach to an engineering idea. Making environment information easy, even enjoyable, to understand. It uses technology that people are already familiar with and it helps by showing how they can improve their driving. It shows them how better driving translates into lower emissions. And lastly, it demonstrates how much money they are saving by following eco drives advice.

What are agencies looking for?

- Writers who go past big ideas and have sense of, and interest in, execution.
- Writer who are already doing creative things under their own steam.
- Collaborators, people who wants to share their ideas and work.
- A writer's writer, someone who can write more than a couple of sentences in a row.
- Good writers that write good dialogue and good scripts.
- Writers who have a real skill in writing and who is interested in knowing about how their idea will become real.
- Smart, big-ideas people who want to expand those skills
- Baseball players – not just people who can hit but also people who can run, etc.

- People with the willingness to learn as much as possible about the issues and skills that affect the work beyond writing.