

# Brainstorming

Brainstorming is the application of free association to a conceptual problem.

By Tom Lenon

**Before you brainstorm**, you MUST research the product. What does it do? What is it for? WHO uses it? How? What does it look like? What's its name? What does the client say about it? What do consumers say about it? The more information you get, the better your ad will be.

**Brainstorming** is the application of free association to a conceptual problem. It can be done alone and by pairs or groups of people. With a simple idea in mind, begin to write down all words or phrases that come to mind. This simple idea is usually brought to you from the client: "We need to sell more glue! People are using tape instead of glue! Get people to this of glue!" As best you can, do not edit your thoughts, not yet. Write down everything! Anything goes: original thoughts, cliches, song lyrics, movie titles, half-remembered formulas, recipes, street signs, etc. If an idea gets you sidetracked, follow the sidetrack wherever it leads you, eventually you will come back to the main road.

**Visualize the product.** Toss it around in your mind. Put it in unusual places. What do people look like when they are using the product? Where do they use it? Turn all these visualizations over, see them from different angles, near and far, have people talk about them in your imagination, do a little make believe. Imagine a realistic scene, then imagine a surrealist one. Let your mind run, see what it comes up with.

When you have brainstormed for minutes, hours or days, verbal and visual ideas will begin to take a useful shape. Sometimes you will surprise yourself with originality, humor, intrigue or emotion. Sometimes you will realize you've come up with an idea someone else has used before. Unless you've found something good, i.e. original, fascinating, useful, funny, etc - start brainstorming again.

**When you have something good, become analytical.** What does your idea mean? Does it solve the business problem your client has set before you? Does it engage the target market (the reader-viewer)? Is it delightful? Frightening? Beautiful? Does it make anyone feel anything? Is the style mature rather than sophomoric? Will it stand up next to the other ads out there? Finally and most importantly, will it pay off in action by the consumer that will benefit the client?

**Warning!** Do not believe that something that merely sounds like familiar advertising is enough. It is usually a cliché. You know the clichés- "For all your household needs!" - "Excellence in insurance services!"- "Fast, fair and friendly!" My advice is to

drive a stake through any cliché you find written down. You are trying to communicate with real people' the more real- emotional, funny, exciting, honest, direct- your ad is, the better it will be.

Daydreaming, pondering and musing are also good solo techniques. Lie down for a nap, but keep your pencil and paper handy for thoughts that might come just before you drift off or when you wake.

Sometimes our personal desire to be pleasant and uncontroversial keeps us from having original ideas. To overcome this write down insulting things about your client's advertising goals. Don't hold back. Try to be nasty and fearless with your venom. Insult the client, too. Feel better? Find something funny or intriguing in what you wrote? A kernel of a concept? Turn it around, reverse it, upend it, modify it, mold it. You have gone as far as you can go over the line, now step back a little. Even if you didn't write a keeper you may now feel less reticent about being forceful with words.

**Your mind is a limitless resource**, it cannot be depleted. Keep a pencil and a piece of paper nearby at all times. If you get stuck, take a break and watch a bird fly, ride your bicycle to the park, chase the dog, put your clothes on backwards, recite the preamble to the Constitution, sing the worst song you can remember, eat stinky cheese, read the phone book, tweeze your nose hairs and put the garden hose down your pants. Then get back to brainstorming. institute an early warning system for students at risk. ✧

# Advertising concepts

Objective: Identify the conceptual approaches used in contemporary ads.

By Tom Lenon

Steps: Using the list provided for reference, bring examples of magazine and newspaper advertising and share in class. Write a short explanation of the elements you have found, print on letter-sized paper and attach to the ad.

## What's the emotional/social/personal appeal?

Anxiety  
Inferiority  
Superiority  
Identification  
Sexual Attraction  
Social Aspiration  
Envy  
Practicality/Utility  
Beauty  
Novelty/Innovation  
Mystery  
Romance  
Personal Improvement  
Social Awareness  
Safety, Security, Protection  
Warm & Fuzzy  
Infantile  
Fantasy Fulfillment  
Domesticity  
Nostalgia  
Adventure

## What's the literary method?

Irony  
Humor  
Boast  
Verbal Cliche/ Familiar Quote  
Information/ Demonstrative  
Borrowed Interest/ Celebrity Endorsement  
Wordplay  
Incongruity  
Surrealism  
Storytelling  
Pun  
Personification  
Metonymy (one thing represent another)  
Synecdoche (a part represents the whole)  
Parody  
Hyperbole/Litotes  
Allegory

## What's the visual method?

Image alone  
Image Alteration  
Image Exaggeration  
Combination  
Montage  
Camera Angle  
Cropping  
Graphic Support Elements  
Language  
Type as Image  
Text as Image  
Environmental Image  
Type Plus Image  
Type Alone  
Image Alone  
Space

## How do forms utilize graphic space?

Alignment  
Continuation  
Proximity  
Correspondence  
Completion  
Symmetry/ Assymetry  
Grids/ Modules  
Dynamic Tension  
Repetition or Rhythm  
Scale or Hierarchy  
Motion

## What's the cultural resonance?

Style as Message  
Modernism  
Visual/ Verbal Cliche  
Post Modernism  
Historicism  
Eclecticism  
Reinvention  
Vernacular  
Art Movements  
TV/ Movie culture  
Pop Music Culture  
Age group culture  
Subcultures (cultural self identifiers) ✧

# Steps in art direction

You are in a position of authority and responsibility.

By Tom Lenon

It is important to learn to deal with other professionals when you are art directing. After the concept is decided and the copy is written, you must take charge of production until finished work is delivered to either a publication (ads) or a printer (collateral). Visual quality and accuracy is completely dependent on you. Working on your own and with photographers, designers, illustrators, production artists, writers, printers, your supervisors and your clients, you are in a position of authority and responsibility..

**1. Research.** The creative team finds out everything that it can about its client, the client's needs, the client's problems. The results of this search can be collected in a document called a creative brief, that is then shared with the client. Steps that follow research are not possible without this information.

**2. Conceptualization.** Copy, visuals and meanings are determined, based on the client's needs and other realities including the size of the budget. Several solutions to the client's problem may be devised. Usually this work is done in close collaboration with a writer. Brainstorming is common, but sometimes a writer doesn't need or want collaboration.

**3. Layout.** A proposed solution is produced and presented. The degree of polish depends on many factors but may be indistinguishable from a printed piece, or may be rougher. In any case, what you sell to the client must also serve to show everyone else what you have in mind, therefore it ought to clearly indicate content, style, color, size. Appropriate methods include hand rendering of photographs (photo indication), digital or traditional photography, professional photography, stock imagery, rough illustration, professional illustration.

**4. Approval.** The client signs off on all aspects: concept, cost, deadlines.

**5. Photography.** You choose a photographer or buy a stock image. Photographers or their representatives may show you examples of work. Fees and deadlines are discussed and agreed. When you hire someone, you decide the schedule, any need

for props, whether location or studio would be best, style, content, and the scope of the photographer's role. He or she may have ideas that help. The photographer aims to please the art director, but may also be a creative force. It is up to you to determine if the image a photographer is producing for you is right for your ad. An art director **MUST** be present at all photo shoots. You will look at polaroid test shots and you will probably look through the camera's lens to evaluate images in progress.

**6. Illustration.** Hiring an illustrator is much the same as a photographer. You may look at several rough versions of an illustration before approving a final one. Again, what an illustrator gives you must be right for your purposes, but they may be able to add quality to your layout. Discussion is essential.

**7. Designers.** May be hired to add content to an ad. A logo or mark may be added to a campaign, a type treatment, an insignia. Rarely, a designer will actually design the layout which the art director will later produce.

**8. Production.** You or a production artist may use QuarkXPress, FreeHand, Illustrator or InDesign to assemble the pieces that will eventually become either the film or digital file the publication uses to reproduce the ad. Measurements, raster image resolution, typography, bleed, import formats, color models must all be accurate. Production specifications for any periodical where this ad is intended to run must be strictly observed. Proofs often accompany the files wherever they go. ✧