

# Content Evolves. Insights are *Everlasting.*

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When I began my career as a copywriter many years ago, a marketing campaign generally would include a TV spot or two, a couple of print ads, and maybe a radio spot. We didn't think about it this way then, but the ideas we created in those media *were*, in essence, brand content. At their best, they were creative expressions of the DNA that make a brand a brand.

Then and now, everything a brand is, says, or does is brand content.

Think about the Heinz ketchup bottles we see on restaurant tables that substitute a fun message for the famous Heinz 57 logo. They created a new way to look at an old brand.

The world has drastically and permanently changed from the days of print ads, TV, and radio carrying the weight of the message. Today, we have so many more ways – more “colors on the palette” – to bring our ideas to life. When I was Chief Creative Officer of DDB Worldwide, one of the things I encouraged our people to do was not to think about being “media neutral,” but to be “media inventive.”

Today, we're not just competing with other advertising for attention; we're competing with every other form of entertainment out there. We're competing with the hundreds – if not thousands – of messages and images our customer is bombarded with every day.

Call it content marketing, or whatever you'd like; we're “inventing” new media daily. In fact, in so many ways, our customers are creating our brand along with us – or maybe it's the other way around. So we have to find fresh new ways to engage and involve people in our short attention-span world.

It can be a short film – I think we used to call those commercials!

It can be a long form narrative like the Chipotle series on Hulu.

Like so many big ideas today, it can be an interactive experience like the game DDB London created for our client Hasbro, “Monopoly City Streets,” to help reinvigorate the brand for its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Our team used Google Maps as a foundation for the biggest game of Monopoly ever played, which became an online social experience played on city streets throughout the world. In three months, total visits to the site were 17 million. Best of all, Monopoly's sales volume jumped 14 percent in a single year.

It can be creating a movement like Secret deodorant's brilliant

campaign, “Mean Stinks,” which built a community, provoked conversations, and issued challenges to fight girl-to-girl bullying.

It can even be Oreo's perfectly timed tweets.

We can literally do anything today. We are only limited by our imaginations, and that should be no limitation at all. When we were developing ideas, two of the questions I'd put in my mind and our team's minds were “What if?” and “Why not?” What if we (use your imagination to fill in the blank)? And when told that something wasn't possible, ask why not? Good ideas come from that kind of thinking.

Whatever we do, our ideas and executions must create what I used to call “Talk Value.” It has to get people *talking* about your brand in person, online, and in the media. “Talk Value” used to be important. Today it's critical. Our job today as creators of communications is to engage and involve our customers with ideas that they will want to participate in, play with, and pass along to others. Today, as always, *people* are the most important media of all.

But with all that said, I'd argue that the more things change, the more they stay the same. The fundamentals haven't changed.

The most powerful, motivating, and involving communications – the brand content with the most impact – have always been based on insights into human nature. That always has been and always will be true.

Bill Bernbach, arguably the father of modern advertising, said that while we talk about the *changing man*, we should really be concerned with the *unchanging man*. The real motivations that drive a man and a woman today are the same as they've always been – the drive to be admired, to succeed, to love, and to take care of his and her own. I wish I could take credit for that wisdom!

In the end, the single most important question we can ask ourselves is: What's the big idea and how does it spring from an insight into human nature?

The communications that touch us and motivate us have always been simple ideas based on simple insights brought to life in simple, yet surprising, ways.

So I'll go back to Bill Bernbach, who, over 50 years ago, said, “Execution becomes content in a work of genius.” It's as simple and as difficult as that. 