

// webworks:

# advertising

ROCKPORT



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ROCKPORT  
PUBLISHERS

GLOUCESTER MASSACHUSETTS

Thom.Forbes

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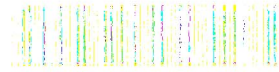
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# Foreword

by **Andrew Jaffe**

>> The first thing about Web design we all need to learn—or re-learn—is that even though the Web is something completely new and wonderful, communication isn't. That sounds pretty obvious, but you'd be surprised how few Web designers have fully absorbed this simple truth. As a result, a lot of what's going on today on Web sites is downright silly or—worse—confusing, misleading, and hurtful to the brands they represent.

Designers will tell you the first thing they do with a new client is try to “understand the brand.” But sometimes the client may not be the best person to answer that deceptively simple line of inquiry because while clients “own” the brand and probably have the trademark hanging on the wall, they don't possess it. Brands are ephemeral rascals that only exist in people's hearts and minds.

Take my Honda CRV. It's a wonderful vehicle that in two years of ownership has never broken down or coughed or required a tune-up. As a result I'm as passionate about it as someone driving a Range Rover or bulky Navigator at three or four times its price. So I have begun projecting, as psychiatrists say, my feelings about my truck onto the brand—describing it as if it were a person or friend who is “reliable,” “ready to go,” “pretty good looking,” “hearty.” I also attribute many of these characteristics to the people who build and maintain the CRV. This may be rubbish, considering that I know very little about automobile engineering and have never visited a Honda factory or met anyone connected with Honda other than the dealer who sold me the car and one of his mechanics. But as a consumer, the positive attributes I attach to my truck also extend to the brand and everyone associated with it.

When you start playing around with brands, you find they are most powerful critters indeed. Follow a brand onto the Web and see what happens. The first thing you'll find is that the techie who designed the Web site was probably in a hurry to make it up-to-date with the latest technology. He or she may have activated the site with Java and Flash and streaming video and audio. Games are offered on the site or on ad banners leading to it, as well as prizes, treasure hunts, little movies or icons to be downloaded, pieces of music or sounds, and so on. However, the ordinary user of the brand may not be interested in flashy interactions, but really wants an experience much like driving the CRV—boring but dependable.

So before getting too excited about designing new sites for the Web, we need to go back and discover what is so compelling about commercial communications in the offline world. What makes that little Chihuahua with the funny attitude such a charming salesdog for Taco Bell? Why does a picture of Albert Einstein or Maria Callas make us inclined to buy a Macintosh PC? In some ways, communication on the Web is no different than other communication; we, the audience for communication, haven't changed much in the last 50 years. However, the media by which we receive data and information has changed.

I've had the opportunity to look at Red Sky's Interactive CD-ROM prototype for what their Web site might look like in two years. You meet a cowboy named Gus Gilroy who welcomes you to the Red Sky corral. He lets you play around with your cursor until it becomes a pistol that allows you to shoot various icons in the corral as you look for a dangerous varmint called Dirty Dan.

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Now why would a company as capable as Red Sky construct a graphical interface that looks like the set of a 1950 cowboy movie—in black and white no less—in order to begin a dialogue with sophisticated marketers like Lands’ End, Absolut Vodka, Nike, and Procter & Gamble? Tim Smith and his colleagues at Red Sky have never lost sight of the fact that their first job is simply to welcome you to their corral and entertain you—and for that there is no reason to create new formats and ideas. In fact, they’re a lot better off drawing on familiar images associated with their brand.

Even for the most advanced techies, the Web can still be an intimidating encounter. There are millions of Web sites out there, all accessible with a flick of the wrist. That’s an experience mankind has never had before. The closest we’ve come, I suppose, is the telephone, which enables you to call anyone almost anywhere in the world. But the protocols of telephony are not nearly as fast or as easy as the Internet. Now you’re able to zap through cyberspace with virtually no introduction or delay and begin talking to people and companies you don’t even know. And you can do it all without divulging your identity.

At first, the Web seems so vast it’s hard to comprehend. When users get accustomed to moving about in it, they pitch up on someone’s doorstep and begin asking questions or looking for something on the Web site. That provides Web techies another set of potential interactions with the visitor, and communication rapidly gets much more complex. Should the brand say hello, or should it ask some information of the visitor, or simply give the visitor a map and let him or her roam at will through the site? After segmenting the visitor according to purpose or address, then what? Should the brand deliver an experience

consistent with the qualities of the brand that have been established in the physical world, or should the brand begin to provide a different experience for the visitor—and with what anticipated result?

Trying to provide guidance for advanced Web design involves complex questions; before we know it, we’re lost in a quagmire of our own making. But after four years of hosting and attending conferences about Internet advertising and commerce all over the world, after endless sessions with fellow publishers, editors, and information specialists on the board of the Internet Content Coalition, after writing and lecturing about marketing on the Web, I’ve learned one lesson: it’s still just another form of human interaction enabled—and sometimes disabled—by technology.

The Web is not only a very young medium, it’s also still very crude. Most computers can’t download and view 30 frames a second without delay; therefore, transmitting any kind of animated communication is still pretty difficult. The resolution of an image on your computer screen doesn’t yet approach that of looking at an ad in a copy of *Men’s Journal*, making it challenging to deliver images with the clarity and excitement of print. But we’re getting there. The pioneers of this magic new medium—the agencies selected to showcase their work in this fascinating book—are beginning to carve out certain principles and basics of the art of interactive design that will serve us well as we develop more bandwidth, widen the pipeline, and allow more interesting, vibrant kinds of communication through the Web.

As my good friend Tim Smith would say: “Understand physics, but believe in magic.”

Andrew Jaffe is executive director of the Clio Awards and publishing director of Adweek Books. He was founder of the Adweek Forum at Internet World Expo, executive director of @d:Tech and a founding member of the Internet Content Coalition.

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# Introduction

by Thom Forbes

>> Creative tension probably dates back to when our ancestors were hunting woolly mammoths. I imagine a hunter scratching on the wall of the communal cave a representation of the beast he has just slain. A primordial creative director sidles up and suggests that he move the pictograph down six finger lengths, make the outline a little bolder, and smudge it all with some indigo. And guess what? Sometimes—not always, but often—the creative director’s carping would actually improve the artist/hunter’s work.

Creative tension permeates advertising. Art director and copywriter thrash out a concept, leaving blood on the floor. The executive creative director picks apart the resulting execution and puts it back together again, tauter and clearer. A few accommodations are made at the behest of Nervous Nellie, the account supervisor whose mortgage payments depend on knowing just how far the client can be pushed. Finally, there’s the do-or-die struggle to get the tamer but still clutter-busting work past the Guardians of the Hallowed Brand at corporate headquarters. Less often than is desirable (but immediately recognizable when it happens), a brilliant piece of informative, entertaining, and effective advertising emerges from all this turmoil. Advertising that informs. That evokes laughter, tears, or nods of empathy. That sells.

Interactivity has introduced a new player into the drama of creating advertising, and she’s stealing the show. She’s the consumer. The interactive consumer is the embodiment of creative tension, a mixture of experience and passion ferociously expressed. She knows what she likes—whether intuitively or rationally—and will not hesitate to act on her desires. The interactive consumer will also fail to act on her desires; indeed, that is what she does most often. The click rate on most banner advertising is less than one percent and steadily declining. But in the pages that follow, you’ll find Web advertising that has been remarkably successful, whether the measure is click rates, branding, or sales. Because Web advertising is interactive and measurable, creatives know almost immediately which executions are effective, and which are not. Colors can be changed immediately. Typefaces altered. Elements shifted on the page. Ineffective copy lines tweaked, or dropped.

Although consumers have had a say in how ads are crafted—through copy testing and focus groups—for decades, those are artificial environments. There is nothing artificial about e-commerce through the Internet. And advertising, in forms that will undoubtedly evolve from the fin de millennium samples you find here, will surely play a major role in making the Web the dominant

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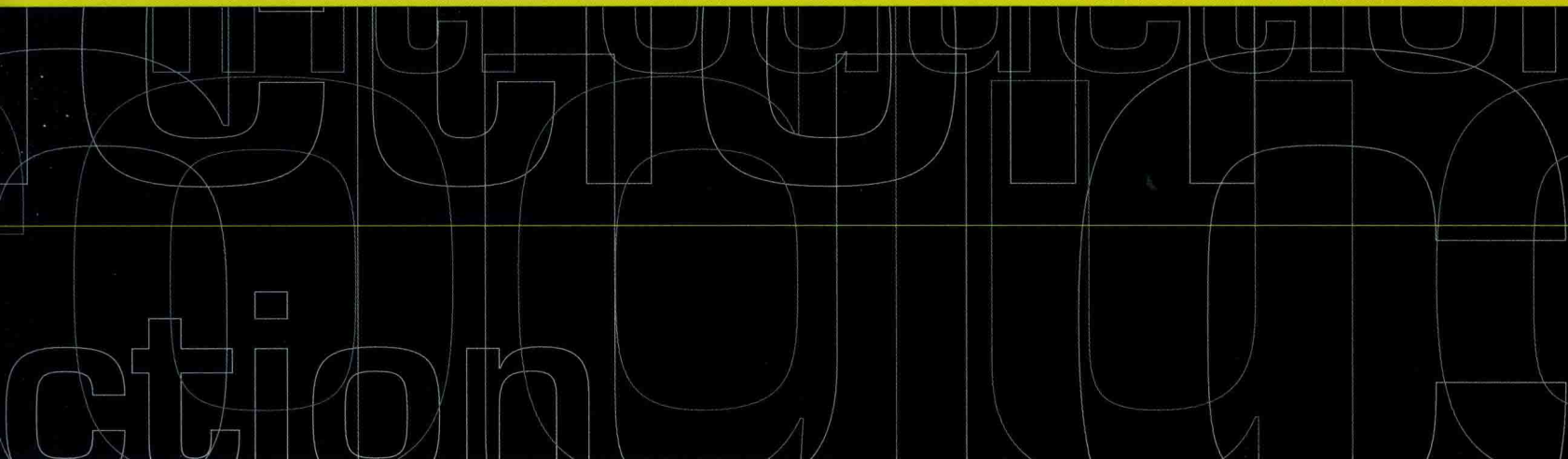
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source for marketing information and transactions in the 21st century. If you readers of this book are who I think you are, you'll be firmly at the reins of the evolution—harnessed to the driving force of the consumer.

The creators of interactive advertising in this book represent a wide array of styles and philosophies. They range from techno-boutiques thrown together by self-described geeks to divisions of the most august mainstream advertising agencies. All share the understanding that “the user is in control on the Web,” as Erwin Jansen, interactive managing director of LDV BATES points out. On the Web, it's much easier to determine exactly what the user likes and dislikes—what makes her accept or reject a sales proposition, read more about a product or click to a competitor's site. “You can't put a camera behind somebody's eyes and know how they really read an ad, or know how they really look at a television commercial,” says iDeutsch's Adam Levine. “But the click of a mouse tells you a shitload.”

Many verities of design remain true on the Web, but some new rules are being written, too. They're not like the old saws of print, handed down by geniuses like Ogilvy and Bernbach, who ruled their agencies through intuitive points of view. The new rules are being served up by the consumer.

The folks at sinner+schneider interactive marketing will tell you that the funnier a banner is, the shorter its life should be. That's because they've quantified that funny banners generate high click rates, but only for a short time. Because users laugh at a joke only once, sinner+schneider changes some very effective banners after a mere week's run on the Web.

Historian Daniel J. Boorstin points out that people in democratic societies talk to each other in the language of persuasion. It's how we try to convince each other that our ideas—and products—are better than the other guy's. Many persuasive ideas are expressed in this book. Freestyle Interactive tells us that the GIF banner is dead and that rich media is the future of interactive advertising; Brand Dialogue cleverly makes the point with some mock porn banners that you need to aim for the heart, not the eye. There's no right and wrong here. The whole industry is learning. This book offers a smorgasbord of approaches to a craft that's taking its first baby steps. Great advertising sells, no matter what form it takes. And what sells—from a design and copy standpoint—will become clearer and clearer as you creatives delve deeper into the interactive magic of this medium.



## >> Introduction



>> **LDV Bates**—This banner for Studio Brussel, the top youth radio station in Belgium, ran only on the launch date of its Web site and was downloaded thousands of times as a collector's item.

>> **iDeutsch**—This three-frame animated GIF banner for IKEA promotes a free brochure for businesses and home-office workers in need of furnishings.

>> **sinner+schrader**—Promising fun and entertainment in an effort to make the brand likeable, a series of banners feature a broad variety of smiling faces that ask questions such as, "Online auctions, what's that?"

>>> In and of itself, a banner advertisement may never sell the likes of an automobile. Nonetheless, you'll find a lot of advertising for automobiles here. Mercedes, BMW, Peugeot, and all the other automakers have extensive Web presences through which they brand and build relationships.

"Interactive provides something you can't buy in any other medium, and that's the ability to interact with, and around, the brand," says Tom Beeby, creative director at Modem Media . Poppe Tyson. "You can demonstrate for yourself the relevance of that brand in your life." Banner advertising clearly has its place in this mix. Sprinkled around the Web in appropriate spots, banners for automakers are like the calling cards that ladies and gentlemen left behind them when they called at finer residences of the last century. "Here's how to get in touch with us, if you'd like," they say.

If that analogy sounds a bit highfalutin, let's not forget that the Internet itself is highfalutin. To marketers, the Net represents a virtual gold mine of educated, affluent consumers who not only have the ability to talk back but are extremely articulate when they do so. Globally, they are the crème de la crème of sophisticated consumers. That's why it's so critical to respect their time and intelligence. "Design should not try so hard, and not say too much," says Peter Jin Hong, creative director at Palmer Jarvis DDB Interactive. "We

are given a privilege of being in the audience's personal space. Hence, we should be brief, entertaining, natural, and say it with sincerity."

I just asserted that banner ads can't sell automobiles. But I can envision a banner where you type in a particular make and model and get back price quotes from a dozen dealers almost instantaneously, similar to the way that the John Hancock Portrait Planning Tool offers financial information (see page 152). If such an ad existed a few weeks ago, I might have leased my new van from a different dealer. If a banner existed that analyzed several makes and models and made a recommendation, I might have purchased instead of leased, or gone to a different nameplate entirely. Just thinking about the schemes and possibilities that Web advertisers are no doubt developing fires up the inclination to begin typing my credit card number in a shopping-cart form. But first we need to establish a relationship. Please let me know what you're creating by e-mailing me at [tforbes@tforbes.com](mailto:tforbes@tforbes.com).

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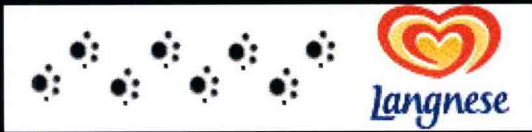
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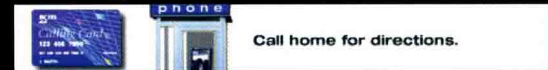
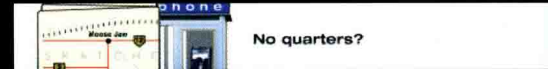
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>> **Brand Dialogue**—Users follow the footsteps of a polar bear from the Langnese ice cream print campaign through the banner and onto the Web site.

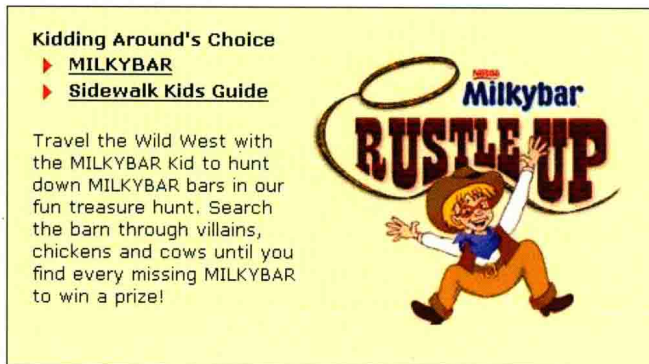
 I'm  years old, and I make \$  a year.  
 What will I need to retire? 

>> **Modem Media . Poppe Tyson**—Designers felt that to be effective, they could only use two fields to gather data. They worked with John Hancock to limit the required data-entry points accordingly.



>> **Palmer Jarvis DDB**—From frame to frame, there is a purposeful, rhythmic coordination to the flow and order of information, much like a strong bass beat keeps other instruments synchronized.





>> To promote Nestle's MILKYBAR, APL Digital conceived and built the MILKYBAR 'Rustle Up' online game, which was promoted via sponsorship of the Nine MSN 'Kidding Around' chat room.



>> A screen shot from a flash presentation about APL Digital.

# Building Powerful Online Brands

- > *"Inspired creativity. Brilliantly executed."* -Martin Puris
- > *Online advertising should not just grab your attention; it should keep your attention by providing a meaningful, interactive brand experience.*
- > *Online advertising creative must think outside the rectangle and provoke a Net result.*



>> Banners promoting the "Iridium Global TimeConverter," a free desktop application that allows users to determine the current time in major cities across the world.



>> APL Digital uses metaphors for protection, repair, and specialty care in this launch campaign for Compaq's CarePac services.

