



CONFERENCE NOTES

ON THE DEVELOPMENT, OPERATION, AND MANAGEMENT
OF PRIVATE OUTDOOR RECREATION ENTERPRISES

Promoting Small Outdoor Recreation Businesses

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We're in a business where there are really no absolutes. We find that out when somebody like Bill Bernbach from Doyle, Dayne, and Bernbach advertising agency goes to his research people and says, "I have an idea for a campaign and I want to find out if it's going to work." Researchers spend thousands and thousands of dollars and conclude that the campaign would not work. He shuffles all the research papers off his desk and says, "But, I've got a gut feeling it *will* work." We are all familiar with the "Avis—we try harder, we're number two" campaign. The research behind the campaign, and we have been told that it was good research, indicated that Americans do not identify with being number two. While they will applaud the underdog at sporting events or relate to the underdog in human terms, it is very hard for the American public to relate to a corporate underdog and feel any kind of empathy. And yet, the Avis underdog psychology became one of the classics in advertising of the last decade. So, as I say, there are no real absolutes. There is, however, one thing this afternoon we should consider. Call it a guiding light. Whatever you do in an advertising campaign, keep it honest. Don't try to be something you're not. We'll start with that point and go from there.

About ten years ago, when I was a lot smarter than I am today, when my partner and I knew everything there was to know about the advertising business, we were contacted by the Washington State Hop Growers Association to see if we would be interested in putting on a program for the hop growers at a meeting they were having in Yakima. In fact, not just a program; they were asking us for an advertising proposal. They were a little worried. Some of the chemical companies had been experimenting with and coming very close to being able to manufacture an artificial hop. Now, it would not be

the same thing as a true hop, but the hop growers were very concerned for two reasons. Number one, they did not believe anybody could chemically produce a hop as good as a naturally grown hop. Secondly, if this artificially produced hop did become successful, laboratory controls and production procedures would enable a manufacturer to produce a hop product which would be the same year after year, because they would not be subject to the varying climatic conditions and so on. The farmers were concerned.

Armed with more enthusiasm than good sense, my partner and I thought "WOW" and we jumped in with both feet. We and one other advertising agency were going to be making the presentation for the business. We were excited because in the back room we already had a campaign that had really been created for them. We had, up to that time, been handling the advertising for a Montana brewery. In the meantime, the Montana State Highway Department had decided to run a freeway right through the big vat. So they paid the brothers who owned the brewery a sizable sum of money, demolished the brewery, and built the freeway. Rather than go back up in the hills somewhere, start again with the first brick, and rebuild the brewery, the brothers took all their money and spent the rest of their lives hunting and fishing in Montana, which doesn't sound like too bad a way to go.

Prior to the closing of the brewery, we had created a campaign that never really got off the ground. We referred to this particular brew as "the beer with the happy hops." We had an artist create a little buglike character with a big smile on his face. He had drawn all these neat dotted lines to show how this little

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weevil-type thing hopped around. We had the new labels designed for the product. We had newspaper ads. We had point-of-sale material to go into the supermarkets—the whole campaign. And it was about that time that the bulldozers came through the brewery.

So the campaign was locked in the back room. It had gotten kicked around through a couple of moves, so when the Hop Commission called, we said "EUREKA." We have just the art style for the whole campaign. So we got together with the artist and had him update the thing a little bit. We did some sample ads with this little hoppy character on the thing, business cards with the hoppy character, letterheads with the hoppy character—the whole works. My partner packed everything up and took off for Yakima. The day after the meeting, he was back in the office.

"How did it go?"

"Not too swift. The plane got there about two hours before I was to start. (He and the other agency's representative were last on the agenda that day.) I wandered into the hotel where they were having the meeting, sat in the back corner, and listened to them talk. Finally, it came time for me to get up and give the presentation. Armed with all the hoppy art, I got up and was ready to lay the whole program on, when someone in the audience said, 'Mr Chairman, one moment.' I stood there in horror as I saw this guy get up from the audience and say, 'There was one more thing that we were supposed to talk about at this meeting.'"

Somehow it had not gotten onto the agenda. It related to pesticides, to a certain kind of pesticide the hop growers were very concerned about. They wanted to test its effectiveness against a small, hoplike, little weevil that hops from crop to crop, hop to hop, and wipes you out.

Well, we learned a very painful lesson. The first thing we should have done, and the first thing that you should do any time that you're planning any kind of an advertising program, even if you've been in business a long time and you think you know exactly where you are, is take an inventory. Let's start out from that point.

Decide who you are, what you are, what kind of resources you have to work with, what you know, and equally important, what you don't know. I don't think we'd have the same experience now with the hop people,

because right now we have a 14-page information inventory we use when interviewing a prospect. We go through this inventory process very carefully. We use it first of all as a basis any time we're talking to a prospect or client, so that we can get basic information about his product or his service. We feel that we honestly need this information before we can begin talking intelligently to him about any kind of an advertising program.

Once that prospect becomes a client we sit down with him and go through this information inventory. The questions are rather far-reaching. We start out by asking him for information about his field or industry, such as the present status of this field, the result of growth in this field, legal implications, and trade association. There are up to 20 questions a page on this inventory. We ask about competition, main selling points, product or service uniqueness. We ask the client about the share of the market they have today, what share of the market they had ten years ago, and what share they had five years ago. We ask if the demand for their product is seasonal, what the average size of the purchase is, what the total sales in his territory were last year. We also ask how the salespeople are paid: commission, draw, or salary plus commission. Analysis of competition: What are the competitors' advantages over your client's products or services? Do they have better terms and discounts? Are they more extensively advertised? Have they been in business longer? Do they offer lower prices, and if so, why is their price lower? How does the client's product stack up against competition? And you can go right on down the line.

Those of you in the outdoor recreation business may not think that this kind of an information inventory applies to your business. It does, because you are in competition with other industry people, and the outdoor recreation business is more than that. You're competing with everybody who's out there after the disposable dollar—that all-important discretionary income. You're competing not only with other resorts and other kinds of recreational establishments, but also with color television sets, mountain cabins, and boats, all those things and ways to spend money, even in the days of inflation.

The first thing you should do is take an inventory of what you have. Sometimes we have found that clients find out things about their business they had long since forgotten. Once you decide who you are and what you

have to sell, you can start doing the things Peter¹ was discussing. It can start to give you a priority listing of the parts that will make up the total of your advertising. (And I heartily agree with Peter that the parts will be remembered and those sums of the parts will become your total program.) Take the advantages that you have and work on them. Spotlight them and don't try to be all things to all people because it just does not work. I don't know how many times in this business we have seen it. We have seen it with other states: the big kind of advertising where they say swim, hike, horseback ride, canoe, blah, blah, blah, all in equal parts and it just kind of lays there and dies.

Now the state of Nevada uses a campaign which takes specific parts and adds them up to a whole campaign. You've probably seen it appearing in many magazines. All the ads have a little wheel down in the corner that refers to all that can be done in the state: exploring, skiing, hunting, hiking, the whole works. But they're not trying to sell all these things in one ad; they're focusing on one single thing. Is Nevada great for skiing? Bet on it. Is Nevada great for exploring? Bet on it. When you send in the coupon to obtain information back from this specific ad you can also mark any other information that you may want to have. Well, the campaign goes on and on. Is Nevada great for ghost towning? For fishing? For hunting? Now, the person who is not interested in rock hounding or hunting, but is interested in skiing is going to respond to the skiing ad. The person who is interested in hunting will be a ready audience for that hunting message, but if you lump them all together and try to be all things to all people, it just isn't going to have any effect at all. Like Peter said about the warm and friendly bit: everybody is warm and friendly.

Okay, take the inventory and decide what you are. Now how are we going to market what you are? First, divide the market into two basic parts: the geographic market and the people market. They're both important. When I'm speaking of the people market, I'm not talking about masses of people. I'm talking about the person out there you hope to interest. There is a temptation to think that you should go to the geographic market first. With the geographic market we have to think of people in terms of masses located within geographic areas.

For example, you have a facility with the capability of housing 40 people. You think, "If I do my advertising in New York where there are millions of people, I will have a better chance of attracting 40 people than if I advertise

across the mountains in Seattle." Well, it won't work. There is a formula developed by a gentleman named Dr. Crampon when he was with Stanford Research Institute. It's complicated, but essentially it says that there is a mathematical way to measure the ability to draw tourists from a point of origin to a destination area. It's related to two things: the distance from the point of origin to your destination area, and the point of origin's population density. Sun Mountain Lodge, for example, is approximately the same distance from Seattle as from Spokane. You are more likely to draw people out of Seattle, because there are more people in Seattle than Spokane. But between Spokane and Portland, even though Spokane is much smaller, the chances are you will draw more people from Spokane because it is closer.

So just remember that there is a definite correlation. You are more likely to attract people that live close by. If the distance from the market to the destination area is the same between two places, you are more likely to attract people from the more populous area. If we were only going after people we would do all our advertising in New York, London, Chicago, and Tokyo. But the West is our primary market. If you own a business here in the Methow Valley, the Northwest is still your primary market. Think about satisfying the urge for recreational experiences people have right here in your own backyard before you start to reach out too far.

That covers the geographic part of the market. Let's talk about people. First, how do you reach the people you're interested in? You've taken your information inventory and you've decided that what you have is a beautiful fishing lodge located somewhere up near Tonasket with fine fish in the lake, nice facilities, boats and motors. You've got the whole works and you want to go after the fishermen. You know that in the Seattle area there are a lot of people that like to wet a line. So, Seattle is a prime target area. You decide to take all your advertising dollars to Seattle and put them on television, knowing that television is not only going to raise the fishermen here in Seattle, but along the Olympic Peninsula, down the coast, and all the way up to the mountains as well. You are wasting your money. Unless you have carefully selected the shows you are going on, you are, generally

¹Peter Hemp, "Advertising for Small Outdoor Recreation Businesses," Travel Marketing, Inc., Park Place, Sixth at University, Seattle, Washington. (Also in Conference Notes, Cooperative Extension Service, Washington State University, Pullman, E.M. 3912.)

speaking, in this particular instance, wasting your money with a television spot or a series of television spots. It would make some sense to do some selective buying. For example, you might want to pick up a spot on "Exploration Northwest," or on a show like Jim Conway's "Hunting and Fishing," or around the "Wide World of Sports." You would want to do the same thing if you used the newspaper. Again, you have a mass market with the *Seattle Times* and *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*. If you bought an ad in the paper, you would want to make sure your advertising would go on the sports page, not on the society page, and not in the food section. You are trying to reach the sports people.

What we're talking about now is defining that market peoplewise in terms of whom you're after. But let's think about it for a minute. Is it necessary to take the mass media approach? Why not use a publication like *Hunting and Fishing News*? This is a publication that reaches right out to those people who are interested in that specific kind of activity. You're going to find a lot of fishermen reading the sports section of the paper, but as well, you're going to find a lot of people who are more interested in reading about tennis, golf, automobile racing, football, baseball, and basketball. You get into a publication like *Hunting and Fishing News* and you've narrowed your scope even more. You are talking to the person who wants straight, factual information. He wants to know what happened at Banks Lake last week, and up in the area where you have your boats and your lake. You're trying to reach him. This is the kind of thing that we're really talking about, using the media to reach specific audiences.

Let's look at it another way. Let's say that you have a dude ranch and you are interested in appealing to people who like to ride horseback. You'd like to do some magazine advertising in some of the publications that you know reach people who are interested in horses. Well, there are quite a few. There's *The American Horseman*, *The Arabian Horse News*, *The Horseman's Journal*, *The Horse Trotter*, *Quarter-Horse Journal*, *Bridle and Saddle*, *Thoroughbred Record*, *The Western Horsemen*, and so on. But you don't know where to go to get information on advertising rates. Go to the public library and ask for a copy of the Standard Rate and Data Service *Consumer Magazine*. It lists about 2,000 consumer magazines that cover, among other things, travel, outdoor recreation, hunting, fishing, and horses—the works. You can find out what kinds of audiences these magazines reach, the publication's

mechanical specifications, deadlines, and advertising rates. You can find out whether or not it is possible to buy the magazine just in one region or nationally. Most magazines have regional breakouts which cover specific areas such as the western region, the central region, or maybe an east-central region, or an eastern region. Again, find out where your market is. Using SRDS is a good way to find out where some of the other publications are. They also publish for business publications. For immediate information and markets not in your own backyard, it's a good place to go to get the information you may be looking for.

Incidentally, while we are speaking of narrowing down your audience, zeroing in on who you want, and particularly regarding dude ranches, Kay Kershaw and Isabelle Lynn at the Double K Dude Ranch at Goose Prairie have defined their market very well. They are looking for serious horseback riders who like to ride in the mountains. Their advertising specifies that they are looking for serious horseback riders. Their ranch is not the kind of ranch that you would take a family to. There is no swimming pool, no television, no tennis courts. In fact, after 10 o'clock at night there are no lights because they have their own generator. If you are not ready to go to bed at 10 o'clock, say you want to stay up and read, you better have your own flashlight with you. They have the meal schedule all planned. The wrangler has the horses ready to go right after breakfast and you're gone for the day. There is some beautiful country up there and some real serious riding. They don't want children at the ranch and in their advertising they have specified "No small children." This prompted one doctor in Santa Barbara, believe it or not, to write them a letter saying, "My seven-year-old daughter is 42 inches tall. Is she too small?"

From time to time people ask, "What's the best medium to use?" We have clients using them all—television, newspaper, radio, outdoor advertising, direct mail; you can go right on down the line. We do skywriting, we do matchbook covers, we do specialty advertising; there is no best medium for everyone. If there were, there would be only one advertising medium today. We have to base that evaluation on our client's objectives. What are the goals the client is trying to achieve? What kind of advertising program can best achieve those goals? I cannot stand here now and make a blanket statement that, for all of you, newspaper advertising would be better than radio or better than the *Hunting and Fishing News*. Incidentally, we're getting into some regional

publications that you people should consider. There's a new publication coming out on the eastside that will cover the Bellevue-Kirkland area, another market right there. There are a lot of specialty publications that can be used. But to make a blanket statement that says to put all of your publicity into one medium, and that this medium would be better than another, we just can't do it.

What I'm trying to suggest here is that you must take a careful look at the kind of person you are trying to reach. If you've done your inventory and know what you're going to sell, you know the kind of person you're going to try to reach. You're going to have to make the final decision on what medium is best. The one thing to watch out for, though, is don't get conned just by sheer numbers, because your waste circulation can be absolutely phenomenal. Don't spend \$700 to get a spot next to Monday night football when you're trying to sell fur coats. Only a small segment of that audience is going to be interested in fur coats. If you're having a special on Spalding footballs or football uniforms, you're going to have a bigger segment of that market. They're tuned in to watch the football game because they're football fans, not fur coat fanciers.

How do you put all of this together? This sometimes becomes the most terrifying part of all. We have seen this happen over and over again. You decide you are going to build a resort complex somewhere. You pay somebody to do a feasibility study, hire an attorney to do some checking on land and deeds, etc., consult with a banker and/or professional in the real estate business. The architect you hire will, in turn, subcontract carpenters, plumbers, and electricians. All of these people are pros right down the line, and you've shelled out a lot of money to have this done. You finally have your facility ready to go. After all of the money you've spent on attorney's fees, architects, construction, and the price of lumber, and everything else, you think, why not save a little on advertising? You suddenly remember your long lost nephew who is an English major at WSU and the friend down the street who is a photographer and editor for his high school yearbook.

Before I go any further, this is not a plug for using an advertising agency. Ninety percent of you do not have, have not had, and never will have the need for the services of an advertising agency as such. But I do urge you at least to hire a professional to do the writing and

the photography. Your nephew's copy may be grammatically pure, an English teacher's dream, but it reads with as much excitement as a manual on how to operate a diesel engine. Likewise for the photographs.

One fault we frequently find with photographs is that they have no people in them. The excuse we hear is that clothing styles and hair styles change. Indeed they do, and your photography styles should change concurrently. Even the printer's styles are going to change; the typeface you used ten years ago will appear out of date now.

If, in your photographs, you are not showing people enjoying your facility, all you are showing is meaningless tables and chairs. To you they may mean something, but to someone else who picks up the brochure it may look like an empty dining room. One might think, "Food must not be too good there. I wonder what it's like down the street." So get a good photographer who knows what he is doing. Have people in the pictures participating in an activity. The deadliest thing you can do is play the Eastman Kodak game where you frame the person in the bright red jacket with beautiful mountains. It comes out looking framed.

We're talking about participatory photographs. We hired a guy here a few years ago to get some salmon fishing pictures for us. We did not want just the smiling pictures of people holding their catch. We wanted some action shots, shots which to the viewer would taste of the sea. We hired a particular photographer to do this job. Not only did he take pictures on the boat but he dressed in his scuba gear and, from another boat, took pictures under water of the salmon fighting once they were hooked. You can find people like this, and they are available. It's expensive; the current rate for most photographers is around \$350 a day plus film and expenses. But it can be the best \$350 a client ever invested.

Where do you go for help when you don't live in a major market where there are a lot of people available? We suggest that one of the first places to start is with your local newspaper. Many newspaper people do additional writing on the side. Some newspapers don't allow this, but it's a good place to start. If no one on the staff can help you out, perhaps someone could refer you elsewhere.

Peter² talked about going to your local radio station. Put some pazazz into your advertisements. Work with the people at the radio station and see if you can develop some kind of creative concept using the audio medium to help you sell. Sound can sell as well as print and sight. Use the people in your own backyard and use them well.

I play a very nasty game from time to time. I stop in at visitor information centers to see what is happening out there where they actually have all these brochures. You always wonder how much information you are really going to get. Not only in our own state, but in other states as well, I pull into a visitor information center and walk in just like the average tourist--often I am. Even if I know where I am going, I ask questions. The last experience I had happened at the World's Fair. I was talking to a very helpful young woman about the Omak Stampede. She had some information in the Washington State Special Events folder. Although she herself did not know very much about it, she knew where to find some information. Next I asked her about salmon fishing on the coast. The only brochure available was one from Larson's Charter Service in Westport. I queried her about other areas, but she had no information about fishing possibilities at Ilwaco, Seiku, Port Angeles, Neah Bay, La

Push, or Ocean Shores--only one place, Larson's Charter out of Westport. That is how important that one sales piece can become. If I were a real prospect, interested in doing some salmon fishing and had no other information, the first place I would head would be Larson's. Incidentally, it wasn't a bad brochure. But the brochure is a selling tool that can become all important, and it's something we should never forget.

The last thought I would like to leave you with goes back to the first thing that Peter³ was talking about; the large bar of soap instead of the warm, friendly welcome. Once you have gone through all these things, established an inventory, identified your market both geographically and peoplewise, and developed your program, never lose sight of the fact that it's that one little, tiny, sometimes overlooked detail that could become the most important selling point that you have to offer.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

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