



**JEFF GOODBY &
RICH SILVERSTEIN**
**TEACH ADVERTISING
AND CREATIVITY**



INTRODUCTION



Jeff Goodby and Rich Silverstein started Goodby Silverstein & Partners (GS&P) with Andy Berlin in 1983 and won their first award from the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity for the Mill Valley Film Festival. Jeff and Rich went on to win Lions across every award and brand category, bridging an unprecedented variety of styles. Their work has included advertising campaigns like “got milk?,” the Budweiser lizards, Hewlett-Packard’s “Invent,” the E*Trade chimpanzee, Polaroid’s “See what develops,” the NBA’s “I love this game,” Nike’s “Skateboarding,” and SEGA’s “SEGA!”

Since 2000, GS&P has excelled at creating work that transcends media. In 2019, Jeff and Rich were honored with the Cannes Lion of St. Mark—the organization’s Lifetime Achievement Award. Most recently the agency received Cannes Lions for “Lessons in Herstory” (an AR project that rewrites history to include women), “Dalí Lives” (a deepfake experience that brings Salvador Dalí back to life), “I Am a Witness” (the first emoji for a social cause), the “Dreams of Dalí” VR experience, Chevrolet’s Chevy Sonic launch with the rock band OK Go, and the Cheetos Museum.

Jeff and Rich have been named *Adweek*’s “Executives of the Decade,” and their effect on advertising can be particularly felt in the leaders they have created and mentored, many of whom have successfully started their own agencies. GS&P creative alumni include Fred Raillard and Farid Mokart (founders of Fred & Farid), Paul Venables (founder of Venables Bell & Partners), Jamie Barrett (founder of barrett^{sf}), and leaders like Chris Beresford-Hill (CCO, TBWA\Chiat\Day New York), Gerry Graf (founder of Barton F. Graf), Steve Simpson (CCO, PayPal Creative Lab), and Karen Onsager-Birch (CCO, Foote, Cone & Belding West).

In addition to being named “Agency of the Year” multiple times by many publications, GS&P has been repeatedly recognized for its ingenuity and innovation and was the first to be named “Interactive Agency of the Year” by both the Cannes Festival and *Advertising Age*.

* Connect With Your Fellow Ad Geeks *

Want to gab about the incredible Super Bowl spot you just watched? Or maybe bounce some copy off of a few like-minded writers? Then head to community.masterclass.com, where you can meet Jeff and Rich’s other students and talk all things advertising.

Over the years, it has also been among *Creativity's* “Most Innovative” agencies, *AdAge's* “A-List,” *Campaign* magazine’s “Most Influential” agencies, and *Fast Company's* “Most Creative Companies.”

Jeff grew up in Rhode Island and graduated from Harvard University, where he wrote for *The Harvard Lampoon*. He worked as a newspaper reporter in Boston, and his illustrations have been published in *Time* and *Mother Jones*.

He began his advertising career at J. Walter Thompson before moving to Ogilvy & Mather, where he met his mentor, Hal Riney. It was with Riney that Jeff learned his reverence for surprise, humor, craft, and restraint.

He also met a guy named Rich Silverstein at Ogilvy & Mather.

Rich grew up in Yorktown Heights, New York. After graduating from the Parsons School of Design in New York City, he moved to San Francisco against his father’s wishes.

He worked as an art director in one-year increments for *Rolling Stone*; Bozell & Jacobs; McCann Erickson; Foote, Cone & Belding; and Ogilvy & Mather, where he met Jeff and finally settled down. Since doing so, the pair have won just about every advertising award imaginable.

Welcome to Jeff Goodby and Rich Silverstein’s MasterClass.

WHAT IS ADVERTISING?



“We actually hate advertising.” —RICH SILVERSTEIN

The history of advertising is a pretty bleak landscape of lame humor, insulting jingles, and questionable claims. Over the years, however, a handful of practitioners have created things at the highest level—things that are fondly remembered, things that have become part of popular culture, things that could even be called art.

In the largest sense, Jeff says, “advertising is massive, long term, corporately-funded research into what we love, what we think is funny, what we find beautiful.” And in the current media environment—one in which you can switch things off, change the channel, or navigate to another website—advertising has to be something that interests you and maybe even be something you want to share.

That’s the kind of advertising Jeff and Rich aspire to make. They’ve done it with great storytelling, elegant design, and unforgettable words. Their motto, “Art Serving Capitalism,” has led them to create things that are often happy additions to the pop culture encyclopedia.

“Like architecture,” Jeff says, “a lot of advertising is hard to ignore. It comes at you in public and private spaces. The makers of it all have a moral obligation to create things that are provocative, memorable, even uplifting.”

Jeff and Rich are not like most advertising people.

Mad Men: Jeff and Rich's Advertising Mentors

Jeff and Rich are students of advertising as much as they are innovators of advertising, so you'll often hear them mention famous ad men from the *Mad Men* era. Get to know a few of the originators of modern advertising:

HAL RINEY

Founder of: Hal Riney & Partners
(now Publicis & Hal Riney)

Strength: Copywriting

Standout accounts: Saturn Corporation, the Ronald Reagan 1984 presidential reelection campaign, First Union Bank, E.&J. Gallo Winery

In his own words: "Whatever success I've achieved has come from pretty much doing the opposite of what I've been told or expected to do."

DAVID OGILVY

Founder of: Ogilvy & Mather

Nickname: The Father of Advertising

Strength: Copywriting

Standout accounts: Shell Oil, American Express, Rolls-Royce, Sears, Hathaway Shirts, Schweppes, Dove

In his own words: "The consumer isn't a moron; she is your wife. You insult her intelligence if you assume that a mere slogan and a few vapid adjectives will persuade her to buy anything. She wants all the information you can give her."

DAN WIEDEN

Founder of: Wieden+Kennedy

Strength: Copywriting

Standout accounts: Nike, Coca-Cola, Instagram, Delta, Honda, Netflix, Tinder, Old Spice, Geico

In his own words: "Our most valuable assets as individuals and agencies and society is our ability to lead a creative life and a life that cannot only adapt to change but that can influence change."

HOWARD GOSSAGE

Founder of: Weiner & Gossage; Freeman, Mander & Gossage

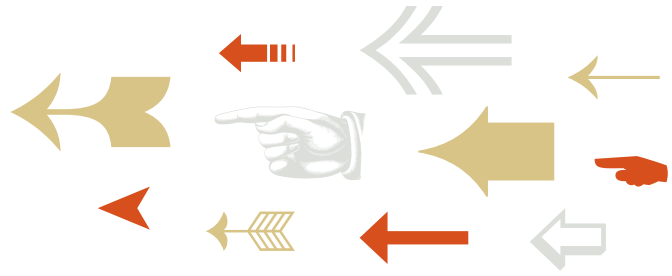
Nickname: The Socrates of San Francisco

Strength: Copywriting

Standout accounts: Fina Oil and Chemical Company, Qantas Airlines, Heileman Brewing Co.

In his own words: "Nobody reads advertising. People read what interests them, and sometimes it's an ad."

WHO WE ARE & HOW WE GOT HERE



The paths that brought Jeff and Rich to advertising aren't atypical. While there are now very popular schools and programs that teach the fundamentals of advertising and certainly help young creatives develop portfolios that will likely increase their chances of landing a big agency job, it's just as common for creative thinkers to almost stumble into advertising by accident (or desperation)—the latter of which happened to both Jeff and Rich.

In a lot of ways, finding success in advertising is dictated by the way you think and the person you are. The ways in which Jeff and Rich absorb and assess the world give them a unique perspective when it comes to their work. Jeff's thought processes are a confluence of his parents': His mother is a painter and his father is a businessman. Because of this, he accidentally cultivated a natural balance between the logical side of his brain and the creative or conceptual side of his brain. Rich discovered he was dyslexic, which led him to consider text from a visual standpoint rather than a comprehensive one: When he sees type, he's more interested in the relationship each letter has with the other letters near it than the meaning of the letters or words as a whole.

While Jeff and Rich both went to highly respected schools (Harvard University and Parsons School of Design, respectively), it's very clear that the way they view their education is less that it was preparatory, and more that it softened their minds and encouraged a broad curiosity that set the foundation for how they think today. General education like an English or Philosophy degree is sometimes frowned upon as an overly broad, difficult to apply choice for a major, but in advertising, it is incredibly valuable to have a passing understanding of a wide array of topics and ideas. In the same way, it's important to have learned from the environment where you were taught. Isolation and ignorance are the death of a good advertising creative, and both Rich and Jeff learned that early on.

Learn More: Breaking Down the Roles at an Ad Agency

Jeff and Rich mention all kinds of different jobs you might hold at a typical ad agency, including both creative and less creative posts. Which is good—if “creatives” were the only hires, no one would ever show up to meetings on time. Luckily, for every right-brained oddball at an agency, there are at least four left-brained logicians to make sure that work is actually being done—on time, in order, and exceptionally.

Job titles and requirements vary from agency to agency, but generally speaking, most places have a similar departmental structure. Here are a few of the roles you can expect to see at an ad agency, with each one requiring a unique skill set to keep the trains running on time.



THE CREATIVES

These are the people you typically think about when you think of the meat and potatoes of an advertisement. They are the ones tasked with coming up with the creative ideas who then follow the ideas through to completion by ensuring they sound smart, look good, and convey a concept. Jeff and Rich are both creative types; Jeff rose through the ranks as a copywriter, and Rich came up as a designer/art director. Within the creative department, you'll typically see the following roles:

Copywriters

People who generate the words for audio scripts, ad slogans, and any other text that appears on or with advertising visuals.

Art Directors

People who set the visual tone for—and ultimately direct—all visual aspects of an ad campaign for the client.

Creative Directors

The leaders of the creative department. People who manage the visual and narrative aspects of creative campaigns and make sure that all assets ultimately align with a greater brand message that is being conveyed.

Graphic Designers

People who assist the art directors and copywriters by designing the materials for an ad campaign. Some help craft the visual concept of the campaign; some stay focused on the end product.

Depending on the kind of agency (digital, product-specific, social), the creative department may also include motion graphics designers, creatives who come up with social ads, or creative people who have certain skill sets that don't fall so gracefully into a certain bucket (in-house directors, photographers, etc.).



THE STRATEGY DEPARTMENT

You may hear Jeff and Rich mention “planners” when they discuss the insight behind the ideas. In general, the term refers to the strategy department, which is primarily responsible for helping craft the insight and the roadmap to the creation of the idea. If a creative is the quirky wild child of an agency, the strategist is more like a bookish, brilliant nerd (in a good way). The strategist’s job is to help identify a human truth that creatives can then use to craft an idea that resonates with real human behavior. Strategists use a combination of quantitative and qualitative information to help create the insights—focus groups, in-field market research, internet sleuthing—and sometimes they create a road map for the media itself, identifying where the completed video, banner ad (which you see running across websites), or billboard will ultimately live.



THE PRODUCTION DEPARTMENT

Once an idea has been approved, the production department is in charge of bringing it to life by literally assembling the pieces needed to create it (whether that’s scheduling a photo shoot for a print campaign or booking talent for a commercial). Producers typically have strong relationships with directors, production companies, and third-party vendors to whom much of the work is outsourced, although it’s recently become more common for agencies to bring production services in-house (meaning that they may edit their own commercials or develop their own digital assets instead of hiring outside production companies to do so). Within the production department you also see roles that help with any legal and financial implications of the production process.



THE ACCOUNT TEAM

The account team is the direct liaison between the ad agency and the brand or client. It’s a crucial part of keeping the lines of communication with clients open and sometimes even protects the agency from over (or under) involvement from the brand in order to not only protect the client but the work itself.



THE CULTURE DEPARTMENT

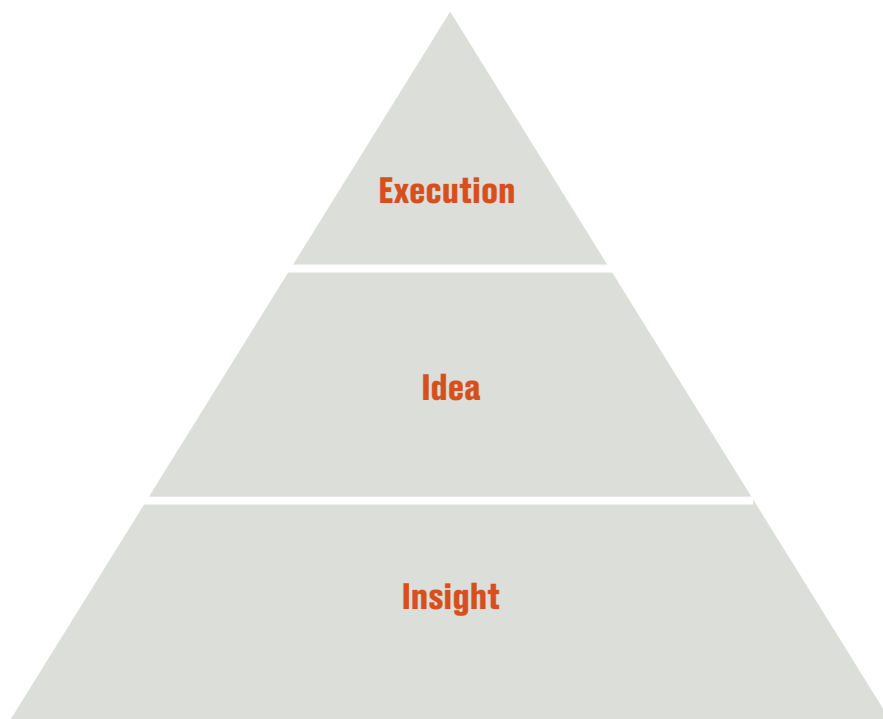
You won’t see this department across the board, but since ad agencies are known for being especially fun and unique places to work, there are often teams whose responsibility is keeping the creative energy high. This might mean that your role is to bring in speakers, musicians, and artists for events. A lot of agencies will have baristas on staff. Others might have someone responsible for organizing intramural sports teams. It all depends on the kind of culture that an agency wants to create.

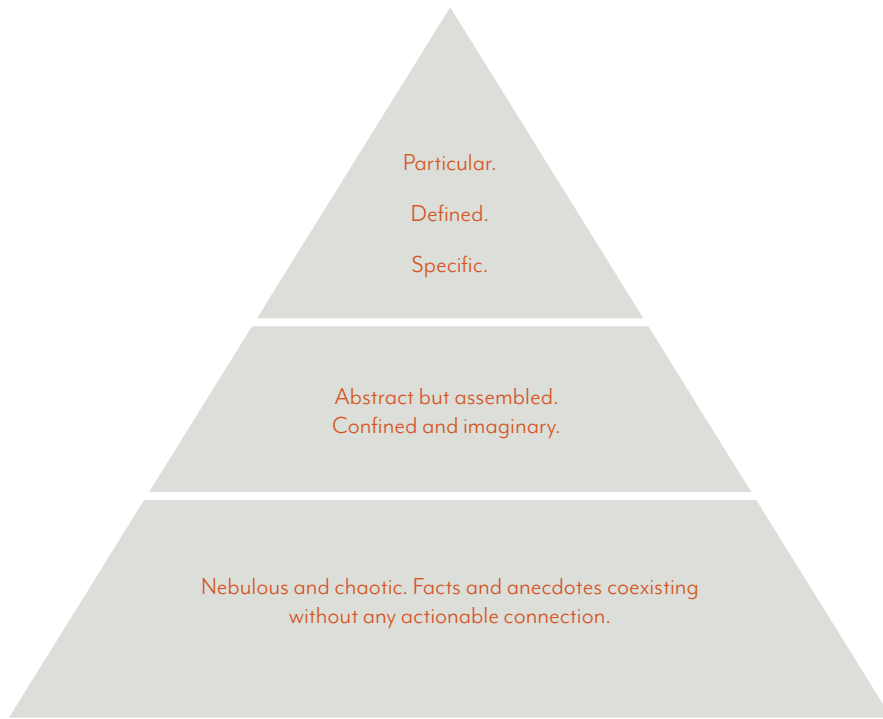
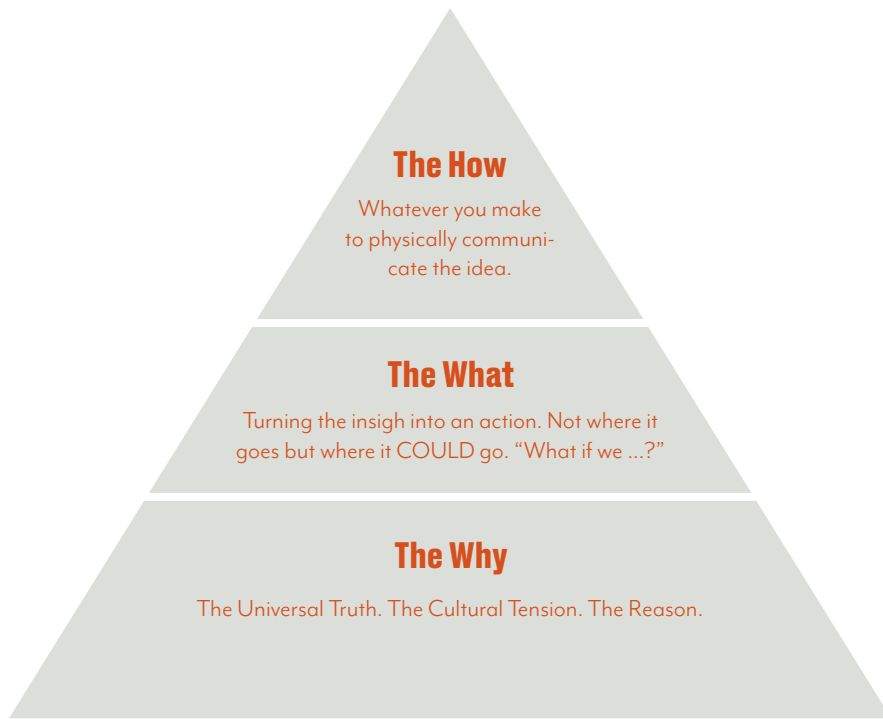
THE INSIGHT, THE IDEA, AND THE EXECUTION



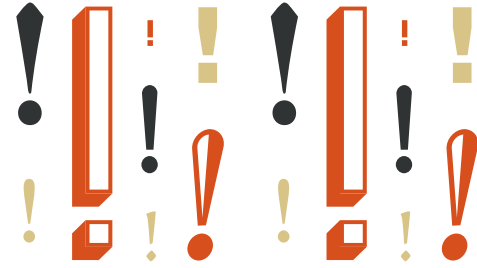
The **insight** sets the foundation for the **idea**. The **execution** turns the idea into an advertisement. Sometimes the idea is the insight. Sometimes the idea is the execution.

However, understanding each phase, how they differ, and the relationship they have with one another can turn a creative thought into a creative ecosystem. Take a look at the below diagrams to give you a better sense of how these creative concepts interact:





MAKE SOMETHING OUT OF NOTHING



Having a Film School Mentality

When you've got a lot of ideas but not a lot of money to make those ideas a reality, you've got to come up with creative solutions. Whether you're in art school, or film school, or, say, the Harvard English department, you may have to rely on your friends to help you make the things you want to make when you're just starting out. Jeff and Rich don't divulge much about their pre-professional career, but they do talk about how their careers began. With Jeff, for example, it took guts and a certain level of creative naivete for him to create a false autobiography and present it as a résumé. If you're just starting out in advertising, you might as well go big—because why not?

More Money, More Problems

When you don't have a lot of money to spend, you don't have a lot to lose, either. But being broke doesn't mean you can't be ambitious: If all your focus is on communicating an idea in the most clever way you can, the lack of resources—and the lack of a big-budget client breathing down your neck—can actually result in thinking that feels fresh. In Jeff and Rich's case, their early days were spent creating what ultimately became award-winning work for small clients. That's not to say they wouldn't have also created award-winning work with bigger budgets, but there is a noticeable creative charm in their early work that stems from the absence of money. Take their spot for the Mill Valley Film Festival. The town comes to life because Jeff and Rich featured the real residents of Mill Valley throughout the commercial. Since they knew they had to rely on talent that wouldn't cost money, they developed an idea that maximized the residents of the town in a way that created a world beyond the film festival and advertised the town itself.

If you're lucky and you spend enough time in the advertising industry, bigger budgets will start to come your way. But be aware: With bigger budgets come bigger agencies, bigger clients, and more creative cooks in the kitchen. It'll get harder and harder to hang on to the mental and physical dexterity you exercised in your early days.

CASE STUDY

CHEVYS FRESH MEX

Chevys Fresh Mex was a simple chain of restaurants whose secret to success was making their food fresh that day. In the crowded landscape of Mexican restaurants in California, this was a novel concept and an interesting insight that Jeff and Rich could create around. Their brilliant idea was to replicate the daily freshness of Chevys Fresh Mex in their commercials by making a new commercial every day.



THE INSIGHT

Chevys Fresh Mex makes its dishes from scratch every day so that you, the consumer, have something truly fresh.

THE IDEA

What if Chevys Fresh Mex's commercials were as fresh as its food?

THE EXECUTION

Jeff and Rich made a program of Chevys Fresh Mex commercials that only ran on the day that they were created. The next day the commercials were thrown out, just like the leftover food at Chevys. To pull this off, they used a lie detector test and asked people on the street about things that were happening that day, then cut the spot together quickly and hand delivered it to TV stations around town. It was a credible and simple solution to a complicated idea.

GOT MILK?



Landing on a Gazillion-Dollar Idea

Like Jeff says, the “got milk?” campaign, crafted for the California Milk Processor Board in 1993, is a perfect example of an idea that stems from research. There was an interesting conundrum with milk in the early '90s: Sales were on the decline despite a general consensus that milk was good for you. This was problematic since the beverage’s health benefits had always been its primary selling point. Jeff and Rich had to figure out how to get consumers to reengage with it.

Enter Jon Steel. Steel was the planner (or strategist) on the campaign, and he was holding focus groups to gauge the public’s perception of milk. One woman said something that stuck with him: She only noticed milk when she was out of it. Milk had become such a ubiquitous part of the American consumer landscape that the absence of the product was actually the thing that sold the product. Steel found that idea so unique that it essentially *became* the strategy of the campaign rather than a strategy informing an idea.

The Best Solution Isn’t Always Complicated

The genesis of the tagline “got milk?”—now one of the most famous taglines of all time—is pretty *unremarkable*. Jeff suggested it as a placeholder for the pitch presentation, and it just stuck. The first lesson here is that the best solution isn’t always the most complicated one. The tagline’s success stems from its colloquial nature. And because it was rife with so much punchy personality, it was clear to Jeff and Rich that it needed an equally punchy aesthetic sensibility. That’s where Rich came in with the typographic treatment. This campaign is one example of a very successful relationship between copy and art direction.

The Pitch

Sometimes the only way to sell an idea is by selling a client on the human truth that the idea is based on. The notion that milk’s absence was its best asset was a novel strategic backbone, but chances are it sounded peculiar to clients. So Jeff and Rich created a short film to demonstrate the strength of the strategy. It’s important to note the creative care and consideration that Jeff and Rich put into the details of the pitch (like painting milk mustaches on their mouths). Personal touches will always make a brand feel taken care of.

CASE STUDY

THE CALIFORNIA MILK PROCESSOR BOARD, THE “GOT MILK?” AARON BURR COMMERCIAL

The first (and what Rich would consider the best) “got milk?” spot was inspired by a bit of history: the deadly duel between Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr. The idea for the Aaron Burr commercial came from Scott Z. Burns, who saw Jeff reading a biography of Aaron Burr at the time. This goes to show that great advertising is sometimes a reflection of your personal experience. Who knows, if Jeff was reading a biography of Rasputin at the time, then maybe the commercial would have starred a Russian mystic with milk in his beard.



THE INSIGHT

The absence of milk is its biggest selling point.

THE IDEA

Let's play up this concept of a world without milk.

THE EXECUTION

Michael Bay—yes, *that* Michael Bay—directs a surreal and hyperdetailed commercial centered on an Aaron Burr scholar who blows his chance of winning \$10,000 in a radio contest because he has no milk with which to wash down a peanut butter sandwich.



HOW TO MAKE ADVERTISING THAT LIVES IN CULTURE



Good Ideas Can Come From Anywhere

When working in advertising as a creative, it's your job to come up with good ideas that solve business problems. But don't fall into the trap of thinking that ideas are your responsibility exclusively. Instead, think of your job as maximizing the potential of any idea, whether it was your idea or not. This might mean taking a verbal insight from a client and turning it into something creative.

When Jeff and Rich say that good ideas can come from anywhere, they certainly mean that ideas can come from coworkers, bosses, and clients. But those people can't—and shouldn't—be your only creative resource. As an advertising creative, you need to always be on what Jeff and Rich call “the listening side” of life, meaning you actively look for inspiration in any and all scenarios. For instance, Jeff mentions the genesis of the NBA's “I Love This Game” campaign; a member of his team overheard a fan say the line in real time during a basketball game. Sometimes simple statements can be the genesis of a huge idea.

Creating Mass Intimacy

How do you get a single message to resonate with 1 million people from different countries, socioeconomic backgrounds, and cultures? First, it's important to understand what *you* want to see when you look at an ad and—maybe even more importantly—what you don't want to see. You'll always be the best case study of what does or doesn't work, meaning mass intimacy starts with you.

Second, you must understand that traditional advertising is almost always uninvited. The least effective advertising in the world is the advertising that doesn't respect the individuality of the consumer on the other side. So when Jeff and Rich discuss mass intimacy, they're talking about respecting the consumer by giving them something that adds value, not annoyance.

CASE STUDY

NIKE, “NIKE SB”

Nike has famously been with Wieden & Kennedy for most of the brand’s lifetime, but there was a time when Jeff and Rich did some work for the company’s skateboarding brand. Nike had to tread lightly in the skateboarding world so that skaters didn’t feel like a brand was overriding the rebellious nature of the sport. Nike had to prove that it not only made high quality skate shoes but that it deeply understood the world of skateboarding.

**THE INSIGHT**

Skating might be an Olympic sport now, but it wasn’t always so highly respected across athletic communities. But the fact of the matter is that skaters spend as much time practicing and perfecting the nuances of their sport as other athletes do. So why, then, do we treat skaters different from any other athlete?

THE IDEA

What if every athlete were treated the way skateboarders are treated?

THE EXECUTION

A series of surreal commercials starred athletes, including runners, golfers, and tennis players, who were treated like delinquents for practicing their sport (as skaters often are). In one of the most pointed 30-second commercials, tennis players on a tennis court are approached by a cop as the camera pans to a number of “No Tennis” signs posted at the very place tennis is meant to be played. In another, a cop gives a ticket to two runners out for a jog.

CASE STUDY

SEGA, “SEGA!”

At the time Jeff and Rich made this spot, SEGA was a massive gaming powerhouse looking for a way to highlight the rebellious, youthful nature of its brand and distinguish itself from family-friendly Nintendo.

**THE INSIGHT**

What says recklessness, overabundant energy, and youth? Loud sounds, fast movement, and indiscernibility.

THE IDEA

What can SEGA say and do to articulate its entire brand in five seconds or less?

THE EXECUTION

Rich tasked an animation house with making the most expressive three- to five-second commercial possible, which resulted in a funny visual ad and snippet of audio that features one of the most iconic screams (“SEGA!”) in pop culture history.

WORKING WITH BRANDS



When Jeff and Rich talk about brands in advertising, they're generally talking about a company. But the terms aren't entirely interchangeable: The company is the entity that produces the product or service that then generates the revenue. It's transactional, literal, and taxable. The brand, on the other hand, is the personality of that company. It's the thing that we use to identify and explain to ourselves the value system behind the physical entity itself.

Take Coca-Cola. When you read the name Coca-Cola, you probably don't think of the company part of Coke—brutalist manufacturing plants where glass bottles are filled with soda. Instead, you think of the color red with swooping white letters. You might recall childhood summers spent at the public pool, where Coca-Cola vending machines flickered to life as the sun went down. You might think of a jovial polar bear wearing a red scarf. All of that is a carefully crafted brand identity designed by people like Jeff and Rich so that Coca-Cola (the company) is always associated with the likable personality of Coca-Cola (the brand).

You Are a Brand

As you explore how to create a clear brand identity for companies, particularly as you're trying to create a portfolio of work that might land you a career at an advertising agency, it's important to remember that you yourself are a brand, too. Whether you have tattoos, wear thick black glasses, or rep that Death Cab for Cutie 2003 tour shirt, you're telling people something about your value system. For other people who spent their high school years listening to Transatlanticism, they see your brand and immediately feel like you're speaking to them. You're relatable on an intimate level that feels inviting and kindred. You present yourself as someone worth investing in to those specific people who share that brand identity. The more you can think about your own brand as a communication device, the easier it will be to consider a company's brand in the same way.

Refining Brand Perception by Creating a New Narrative

In the same way that people experience personality shifts over the course of their lives, company brands also go through phases of personality. As the world changes and people decide what they do or do not want from that brand, it's important for the company to adjust its messaging. On a philosophical level, that's the whole point of advertising: knowing how and when to change the public perception of a brand by reestablishing the brand's value systems.

One way to do this is through heritage, which can be valuable or disadvantageous for a company. Jeff and Rich talk about how the "got milk?" campaign was partly about ditching milk's most popular selling point—its health benefits—because it was no longer an effective part of the brand message. As new health crazes started entering the culture, the simple message that "it's healthy" felt dated, which is why the "got milk?" campaign pursued new avenues rather than relying on old ideas.

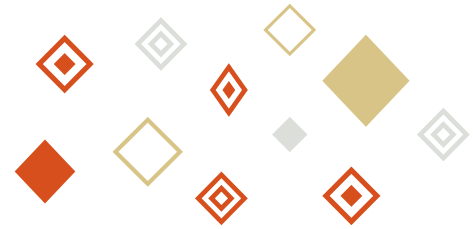
Strategists: The Brand Scientists

Jeff and Rich talk a lot about how strategic insight is crucial for developing ideas that can live in culture. In advertising agencies, strategists are in charge of developing these insights, meaning they're responsible for quantifying and calculating a brand's perception in the real world. Strategists research the way in which audiences interact with messages, trends, and cultural movements, then help explain how and where a company's brand fits into these cultural waves. As campaigns develop, strategists gather information on how the brand story is spreading.

Using Your Talents for Good

The concept of a brand isn't just affixed to physical entities. Ideas, movements, and agendas are all built on brand messaging, and as advertisers, we have the tools to help promote these kinds of brands, too. While the bulk of advertising has to do with promoting companies—because, let's be honest, that's where the most money is—the same skills and processes can apply to more nebulous but incredibly important causes. Hopefully you're someone who wants to do good in this world. In the advertising community, this can be achieved by creating a bigger megaphone for the causes that you believe in. This in particular is where the concept of mass intimacy becomes so powerful because it allows for an empathetic experience on a global scale. These are the spaces in which advertising can change our human behaviors, not just our consumption behaviors.

GOODBY'S RULES FOR CREATIVE VANDALISM



Advertising should feel like you're constantly hacking and rearranging culture—it's thrilling to see something familiar suddenly look alien. Jeff likens advertising to vandalism because both are loud, in your face, and still there the next day. The only difference (well, maybe not the only difference) is that vandalism is super illegal. Here are a few of Jeff's tried-and-true rules for creativity.

1. **Don't Copy. Steal.**

There's a common theme that runs through Jeff and Rich's advice: The best creativity is born out of a curious mind that is attentive and ready to listen. To explain this whole "Don't copy. Steal." idea, Jeff uses Nike's "Just Do It" tagline. Wieden+Kennedy's Dan Wieden landed on the slogan, which has morbid roots: It was similar to the last sentence uttered by Gary Gilmore, a murderer who received the death penalty and who, in 1977, chose to die at the hands of a firing squad. Gilmore's last words were reportedly "Let's do it"; Wieden changed it slightly, landing on the now-famous Nike line. Wieden took something darkly powerful and used it in an unexpected way. As a creative person, you are charged with reinterpreting the things you hear every day.

2. **Part of Your Job Is to Not Do Your Job**

If you, like Jeff, are a writer, you're going to do a lot of writing. But if you don't have a boots-on-the-ground mentality—meaning you don't get out of your cubicle, experience the world, and take the time to refuel your cultural curiosity—you're going to run out of things to write about. So it's important to take the time to surf the internet, see movies, travel to foreign lands, and get beat up at punk shows. It may sound crazy, and good luck ever explaining it to your parents, but living your life is as much of your job as your craft.

3. **Run Toward Fire**

When Jeff talks about the vandalistic spirit that shapes his perspective on advertising, part of what he's saying is that disruption and chaos are exciting. They encourage new thinking, experimentation, and, most importantly, emotional reactions. If you're not trying to make advertising that elicits an emotional reaction out of your audience, then you're adding to the stream of interruptions that consumers hate. If you explore the things that most people are too afraid to explore, you're going to find insights and ideas that could be both novel and transformative. Don't be boring. Be dangerous.

“The worst thing you can do is to do the right thing and have no one notice that you did it.” —JEFF GOODBY

4. **Seek Out Fame**

You should want people to see the things you're proud of. When they do, it's good for your career, it's good for the health of the agency, it's probably good for your clients, and it will open up more doors to help you do the kind of work that you want to do. Granted, you shouldn't ignore your clients' goals in favor of fame (which does happen in advertising from time to time), but good work should be shared, publicized, and envied. Plus, when you seek out fame and recognition, it pushes you to find the opportunities to create rare ideas that would then generate that kind of notoriety, ultimately making for a more interesting body of work.

5. **Share the Chief Marketing Officer's Foxhole**

What's good for your CMO is good for you. You need to understand his or her problems so that you can empathize with what has to happen to solve those problems (which is what you were hired for). CMOs want to be surrounded by people they trust who are working to make their lives easier, and he or she can be an ally when new problems arise. Life is just easier when you and the person who hired you are on the same page.

HOW TO TELL A STORY IN 30 SECONDS



A good story always has a beginning, a middle, and an end. There's still going to be tension and resolve. There are still going to be characters and movement and a delivery cadence. It still needs to elicit some sort of emotional reaction out of its audience. In a two-hour movie, a director has plenty of time to hit and complete all of these steps. It's a little harder when it comes to a 30-second spot—but it's not impossible. If you're in the throes of mapping out a commercial, keep these pointers in mind:

Start With the Ending

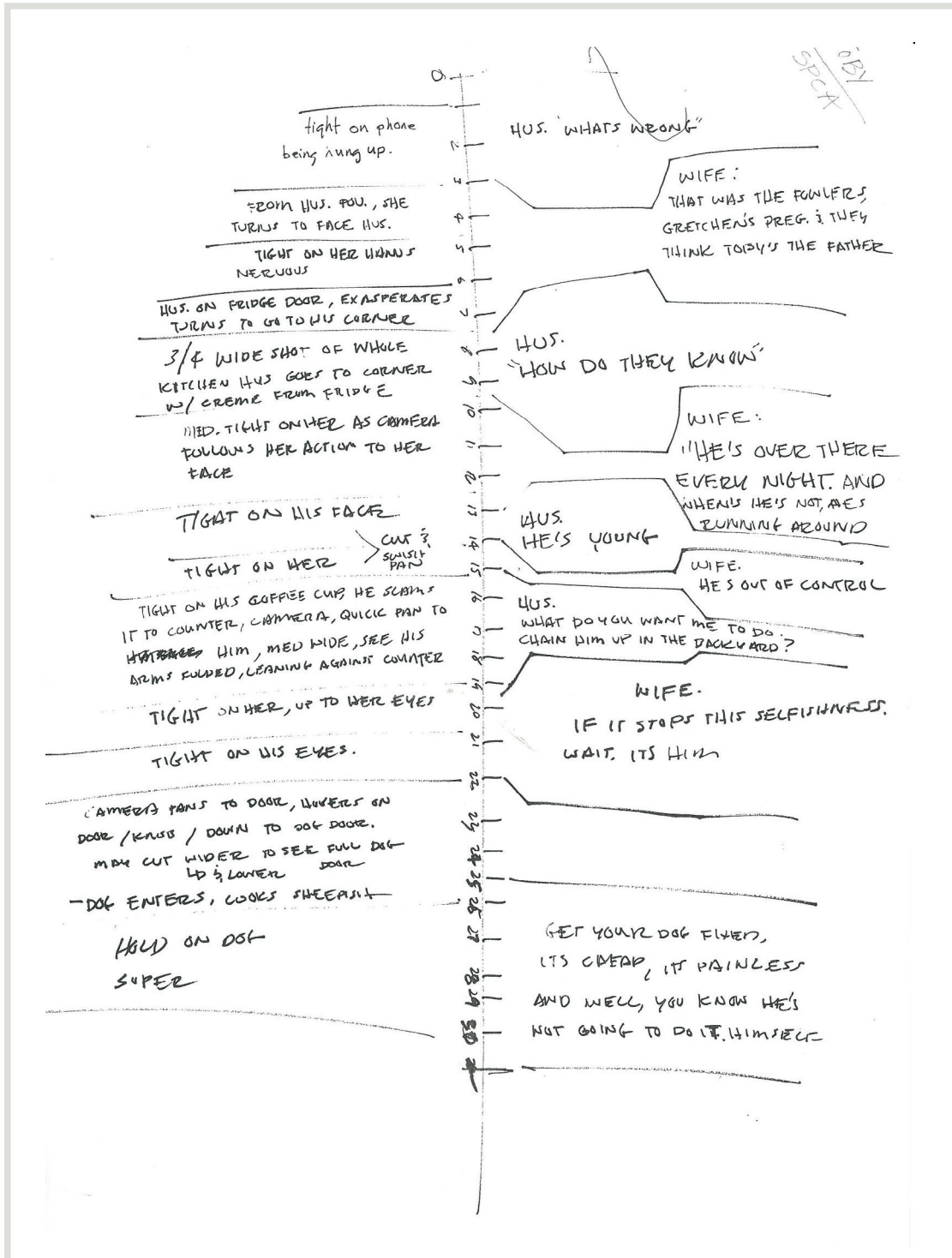
In order to make the road map for a compelling commercial, you need to know where you're ultimately going to end up. Jeff and Rich suggest starting with the ending so that you know what the commercial's payoff will be. Then you can build everything around delivering on that payoff. You have a finite amount of time, which means that the development of the narrative is entirely built to serve the conclusion.

Plan Everything Down to the Second

Jeff diagrams his 30-second and 60-second commercials, a habit he picked up from his mentor, Hal Riney. As Jeff says, Riney had impeccable timing when it came to writing commercials. Part of this had to do with his methodology of creating a diagram that shows exactly where dialogue and action will be, how long each individual moment will last, and, ultimately, how the story arc will deliver on the brand message in the perfect time. Preparation is crucial, and keeping things compelling in their most minimal form will really help the director, producer, editor, and creatives understand how the end product should ultimately feel.

Sketch It Out

One example of how Jeff has diagrammed a commercial:



ON CRAFT: WRITING, DESIGN, AND GIVING DIRECTION



Ask Jeff and Rich and they'll tell you: That which differentiates a garden-variety creative person from a professional advertising creative is craft. Even though the strengths and abilities that you need in advertising fall into the insecurity-inducing category of "soft skills" (as opposed to hard skills like programming or accounting), they are skills nonetheless. And some people are more adept at certain things than others—that's why you can differentiate between a good writer and a good headline writer, or a talented doodler and a talented designer. Advertising straddles the line between raw talent and honed craft, but you'll need both to advance in this world.

Copywriting Craft: Understand Language Both Literally and Culturally

When it comes to the copywriter's job, it's all in the name: They're the ones who write the copy. If that's you, Jeff notes it's important to have a deep grasp of the language you're using to communicate. In this case that language is English, and you're responsible for using it to communicate whatever it is that the brand wants to say. To do this effectively, you must study and understand the language. Jeff famously was an English graduate at Harvard University, and he wrote for *The Harvard Lampoon* before becoming a copywriter. Needless to say, this gave him a real and practical knowledge of grammar, plus it expanded the vocabulary with which he could convey ideas. Saying something correctly is as important as saying it at all.

That said, a bookish mastery of English isn't how you become a really good copywriter—it's how you become a really good proofreader or editor. Copywriting requires a fluid mastery of the cultural language around the brand and the platform, too. For instance, Jeff mentions that he gets in a lot of trouble for writing "got milk?" because people question its grammatical efficacy. Despite the fact that it wouldn't technically hold up under grammatical scrutiny, the tagline became effective and revolutionary because of its shorthand. Sure, the tagline could have been "Do You Have Milk?" or "Have You Got Any Milk?," but the formality of the sentiment was contradictory to the tone of the rest of the campaign. Copywriting is about understanding the implications of the tone and the way the tone is conveyed in the place that it's meant to be received. As Jeff says, "If you're going to take liberty with the language, have a reason to do it."

At an agency, taking liberties with the style of the copy is as common as taking liberties with the language. But part of honing your craft as a copywriter is knowing when and how to take those stylistically. When Jeff says, “Don’t have a style,” he’s not saying you can’t have a voice or tone that’s unique; rather, he’s saying that great copywriters can reflect the stylistic needs of the brand while also integrating voice or tone. Many agencies have a range of clients across industries, so chances are you’ll need to be able to write copy for a sports brand immediately followed by a car brand immediately followed by a brand that sells feminine products. To do this, you’ll need to be able to stylistically adjust your tone, vocabulary, and perspective to serve the client (not yourself). This will inevitably mean killing a few of your darlings, whether those are lofty ideas or brilliant lines of copy.

Design Craft: Seeing the World as a Perpetual Expression of Design

Even Rich finds it tough to explain how a designer might hone his or her craft. It’s complicated because, as he says, the best thing you can do is look at the world around you and observe how good things are already designed.

But what exactly is “good design?” Well, first of all, that’s subjective. But if there was one word to sum up Rich’s take on what makes for good design skills, or at least refined design craft, it would be *informed*. That doesn’t mean your only skill should be making typefaces, concert posters, and billboard ads look nice with the Adobe Suite. While it’s important to know how to do those things in the same way that it’s important for a writer to have a handle on grammar, what Jeff means when he says you need to be “informed” is that you should be able to recognize and understand how visual cues and representation are used to explain something’s identity.

Everything in the world was designed to look the way it looks, whether it was for tactical reasons, creative reasons, or, in many cases, neither. When Rich says “design is everything,” he isn’t only trying to pitch his craft in a friendly competition against his fellow chairman. Design informs the relationship that the world’s objects have with one another (and yes, people, too). So Rich’s advice to “observe the world around you” means to see it as a constant expression of design.

So how do you become a better designer (other than learning how to use the hot keys in Photoshop)? A big part of it is understanding how you express your own design sensibilities and creating a personal environment that nurtures that perspective (i.e., the way in which you choose to decorate your desk, studio, or office). You should also be constantly consuming design inspiration, whether that means following incredible visual artists on Instagram, holing up in a library with a stack of design tomes, or sitting on a street corner and committing the architecture there to memory. Adopt a posture of curiosity, and allow yourself to use that curiosity in ways that make you feel good.

“Find avenues where great design is happening, and soak it up.”— RICH SILVERSTEIN

Creative Direction: Attention, Deduction, and Empathy

Honing your craft as a creative director means taking all of your observations of design, language, and the world around you and using them to understand and take care of people you work with. Because of this, the craft of creative direction is hard to develop (and, honestly, even harder to explain). Just as great writers become great by reading voraciously, great creative directors become great by studying their contemporaries. The more you learn about the field, the better equipped you'll be to live it out.

That being said, creative direction isn't a skill that can be entirely taught. The role is an amalgam of many skills, including leadership and management: The best creative directors listen to people, interpret their behavior, then help them progress in their creative careers. Your biggest concern should be empowering the creative you're leading to do the work by himself or herself. Good creative directors know what has and has not worked on previous projects, but they also recognize that all projects present unique issues.

Like most facets of advertising, creative direction is about communicating with other people in the way you would like to be communicated with. As a creative director, you should talk to a junior- or mid-level copywriter in the way that you would have wanted to be spoken to at that point in your career. Try to remember what you didn't know and how you eventually learned, then help creatives get to that point on their own by mentoring them.

IS IT FUNNY ENOUGH?



At this point, you've probably noticed that Jeff and Rich are fans of funny commercials. Why? Because most things in life are *not* funny—war, disease, paying your bills. When you think of it like that, 30 seconds of funny can go a long way toward putting someone in a convivial (aka buyer-friendly) mood. When a brand can make fun of itself, it almost makes consumers feel like that brand is, in the parlance of Instagram, more “authentic” and “engaged” with its audience. That’s not to say that serious ads can’t be good—take American Legacy’s “Truth” ads, which fight Big Tobacco. But funny or satirical spots are almost always the best way to land yourself in pop culture’s advertising hall of fame.

CASE STUDY

LOGITECH, “KEVIN BACON”

“Six degrees of Kevin Bacon” (otherwise known as Bacon’s Law) is a parlor game that aims to connect any actor to Kevin Bacon through no more than six mutual acquaintances. Bacon’s Law has replaced its namesake, “six degrees of separation,” as the ultimate shorthand for global interconnectedness. All of this has nothing to do with advertising, but the Kevin Bacon game is a viral part of pop culture, which goes to show that pop culture might be your best source of inspiration when it comes to creative advertising.



THE INSIGHT

The Logitech Revue was a device meant to integrate PCs and TVs, making it feel like you were always only a few degrees separated from content online.

THE IDEA

What if Kevin Bacon, the unofficial mascot for global interconnectedness, was the spokesperson for the Logitech Revue?

THE EXECUTION

The “first-level idea,” as Jeff likes to call it, would have been hiring Kevin Bacon as a spokesperson. This would have been clever but maybe not memorable. Since Kevin Bacon represents the phenomenon, the next step up would have been a commercial featuring a Kevin Bacon superfan, someone who craves connectedness with his idol and who takes comfort in knowing that his idol was always just six degrees away. The execution that won out was a combo of these two ideas: What if Kevin Bacon plays a superfan of Kevin Bacon’s? It was unexpected. It was funny. And because it was so wildy unique, it was memorable.

CASE STUDY

BUDWEISER, “WEIRD WITHOUT BEER”

You probably have fond memories of a few specific beer ads (Dos Equis’ “Most Interesting Man in the World,” Budweiser’s “Wassup,” Bud Light’s “Real Men of Genius”), but the rest of them are almost identical. The “Weird Without Beer” ads created a very strange, very unpredictable commercial that poked fun at the category’s biggest brand.

**THE INSIGHT**

All beer ads basically resolve in a completely expected shot of ice cold beer. They’re so predictable now (“now” being 1996) that they’re basically a genre in themselves. If you’re going to show people that you’re not just another beer, you need to change up the format.

THE IDEA

What if we took the most stereotypical ad for beer and replaced the final glorious product shot with a different product?

THE EXECUTION

The final ad was a prototypical beer commercial with an absurdist twist. The dialogue was so mindless and masculine that you may not have even realized that the narrator was reading off boilerplate facts like, “The more you earn, the more you keep.” Then, right when the beer reveal was set to occur, the mariners are all toasting over...corn. As a viewer, you feel the absence of the beer, even though you’ve seen that beer ad a million times. In effect, the commercial is highlighting the fact that even if beer commercials are played out, they’re still weird without beer.

SELLING A CRAZY IDEA



It's Great, but They'll Never Buy It

Just because something is a great idea—and maybe the right idea—doesn't mean that it's the best idea for a client. It's important to understand the short- and long-term strategy for how to sell a client on the kinds of bold ideas that make brands famous. It's also important to understand why the best idea isn't always the right idea.

How Do You Sell a Crazy Idea?

Everyone wants to make work that becomes famous. The goal is always to create advertisements that are going to live and propagate in culture so that the brand is always at the tip of any consumer's tongue. To do this, you need to create ideas, executions, and insights that feel unique and unexpected. But the last thing that most clients want to do is create something that's unproven or risky. There's far too much money on the line and far too many jobs at stake to do something that feels unproven, even if that's the whole point of the advertising in the first place.

So how do you convince a client that your crazy idea is the right idea? Here are a few pointers:

1. MAKE SURE IT'S NOT ACTUALLY CRAZY

If *you* feel like the idea is crazy and you're the one who came up with it, chances are the client will definitely feel like it's crazy, too. One way to counteract this would be to prove the idea won't be a flop. Sometimes the proof comes from research and data, but it can also come from a persuasive pitch. When Jeff and Rich talked about their pitching process for "got milk?," they told the story of how they filmed the real reactions of people searching for milk. They turned what was an unconventional or "crazy" idea into an undiscovered nugget of truth. Suddenly the crazy idea was just an idea that no one had thought of yet.

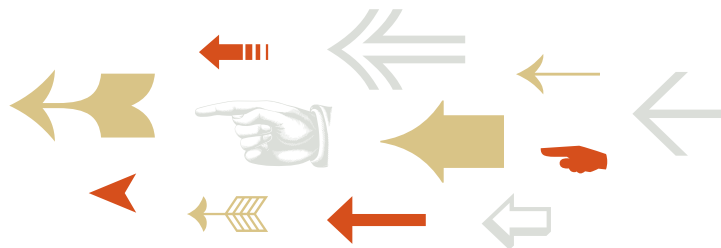
2. BRING IT TO LIFE

Part of taking the “crazy” out of your crazy idea is taking the mystery out of the execution. Jeff and Rich talk about creating videos that aren’t designed to replicate what the commercial might be but are rather meant to illuminate the mood and tone of the concept. The goal is to convey as much of what you believe in about the idea as possible using whatever tools are available to do so. The idea you sell is rarely the idea that gets made, so you can present most anything, as long as it communicates what you love about the idea. Rich points out that music can be a massive part of selling an idea, as can clips from famous films, memes, and relatable imagery. Don’t tell the brand how to feel. Create something that shows them how to feel.

3. READ THE ROOM BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER THE PITCH

Sometimes pitches are won or lost based on nothing other than likability—aka whether the client likes you. It’s your job to be as likable as possible so that your idea has the best chance of survival. This doesn’t mean that you have to sacrifice your own authenticity in favor of contrived conversation and presentation, but it does mean that you need to be sensitive to the client’s habits and behaviors. How you dress for a meeting in Chicago might look very different from how you dress for a meeting in Los Angeles, and the more you understand the subtle culture of the company you’re pitching and the city it calls home, the better chance you’ll have at forming a sincere relationship with the company and, ultimately, win the job.

THE SUPER BOWL



Even if you've spent your entire life hating everything about advertising and you're watching Jeff and Rich's because you lost a bet, you probably still know that the Super Bowl is like...well, the Super Bowl for commercials. It's a bizarre business phenomenon: Ostensibly, the Super Bowl seems like it would be one of the worst times to show world-class advertising, what with all of America drunkenly yelling at their roommates to stop double-dipping the chicken wings into the ranch. But it's also a tradition that has become a career-defining opportunity for advertising creatives.

Here's why:

1. IT'S REALLY EXPENSIVE

The cost of a 30-second slot during the Super Bowl is truly baffling. On one hand, this can be attributed to basic supply and demand. The Super Bowl pulls in some of the biggest viewership numbers of any broadcast all year, so every brand wants exposure to those eyeballs. But there are only so many ad spots available, which means that media companies can charge whatever the hell they want. As such, there's an expectation for agencies to spend a lot of money in order to justify the opportunity to reach those eyeballs.

2. IT'S LIVE

Super Bowl commercials typically air for the first time on Super Bowl Sunday. This collective understanding that commercials will air for the first time during the game makes them feel like something you need to catch in real time. Once the game is over, the commercials feel like commercials again, and then they're just reruns. Wah-wah.

3. THE PUBLIC JUDGES TOGETHER

If you work in advertising, you get used to working hard for months, only to drop a commercial and forget that ordinary people aren't typically trying to consume advertising. But on Super Bowl Sunday, the dynamic is completely different. Not only is the public eager to watch the commercials, it's also eager to judge and opine on them. It's a global talent show in which every contestant (aka ad agencies) has 30 seconds to impress.

NEW BUSINESS: THE MACHINE AT MAXIMUM SPEED



Pulling Out All the Stops

There's pitching campaigns to an existing client, and then there's pitching your agency and ideas for new business. Each has its own unique methodology and strategy, but pitching for new business is where all of the inventive anarchy of advertising really comes out. It is both the most gratifying and most exhausting period you'll ever face in advertising.

An Opportunity for Reinvention

Jeff says that pitching new business is the most important part of a company. When you win the business, especially when it's to be the agency of record (AOR), you bring in a lot of new revenue, responsibility, and work. When an agency is the AOR for a brand, it means that the agency is the sole or primary creator of all brand assets and is in charge of all brand campaigns. This ensures a certain level of stability for the agency, which brings with it the opportunity to hire new people and create a new culture built on the creative needs of the client. The goal with a new client is to launch a message that changes the message that once was, and this requires a whole new style of thinking and process. In the end, this will inevitably send ripples through the agency.

Pitching the Whole Package

When you're pitching for new business, you aren't just pitching ideas. You're pitching a long-term relationship. Because of this, a big part of the pitching experience is taking a look in the mirror and deciding how you and your agency want to be perceived throughout the course of the pitch. Every agency has its own personality and its own message for what it is and how it wants to function. You don't always have the chance to focus on this part of the business, so when these big pitches come up, you suddenly get to consider your own brand perception and whether that will work for the business you are trying to get.

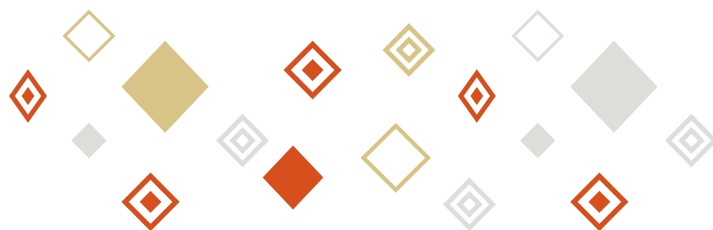
Get Weird With It

When it comes to a new business pitch, it's important to go big or go home. You should be going out of your way to prove that yours is the best agency to accomplish the brand's goals. With their Sega pitch, Jeff and Rich brought their whole agency along to show that every single one of their employees was an expert at one of the games in Sega's portfolio. These kinds of tactics don't just prove that you're serious about wanting a company's business; they show that you're so crazy and creative that your approach will be unlike anything else another agency could offer.

Brand Affinity vs. Product Awareness

In this digital world, it's hard to make people pay attention for a long period of time. Usually you hear this gripe when it comes to long-form content, but the same can be said for brand campaigns. Where one-off ads are primarily designed to highlight a seasonal product in six-week cycles, the intention of campaigns is to create long-term brand affinity with a narrative, aesthetic, or intention that stretches for sometimes years. Campaigns are where you see characters develop over time, meaning they extend beyond commercials and into popular culture. A perfect example is Jeff's Budweiser campaign that starred those two lizards. Others include Geico's gecko ads, the Flo from Progressive ads, and Dos Equis' "The Most Interesting Man In the World" campaign. Once college kids start dressing as your brand's commercial for Halloween, you know that your message is hitting the mark.

CREATING YOUR PORTFOLIO



Every advertising creative has a portfolio that not only shows the work they've done but also the type of personality the agency can expect to see when they hire you. Portfolios are an important part of the hiring process and offer an opportunity for you to hone your personal brand. Here are a few tips for creating a portfolio that works hard for you:

Show Who You Are, Not Just What You've Made

If you've been in the industry for a long time, you might be tempted to let your work speak for itself. But the creative field is deeply competitive, not to mention filled with people who would commit more than a few crimes for the chance to work at a place like Goodby Silverstein & Partners. Your work alone might not be enough to get you an interview, particularly if you're just starting out. So use your portfolio as a piece of work itself to advertise the brand that is you. When Jeff tells the story of how he got his first job in advertising, he talks about how he created a fake autobiography. Don't be afraid to do something similar—as long as it's a sincere expression of the way you look at the world.

Prove That You Were Born to Make Ads

Maybe you've made a whole library of zines and comic books, or maybe you're in a *Star Trek*-themed rockabilly band. All of those things sound super fun, and you can definitely put that sort of info in your portfolio. But don't bury the lede. Your first priority is to prove that you were born to be an advertising creative. Remember that when a company hires you, they're investing in you, and investing in any person is a lot of work that shouldn't be taken for granted.

Bring Your Personality to the Table

If you're a copywriter trying to get a job in advertising, your portfolio is the ultimate opportunity to show off how you write. Be expressive. Have a personality. For the love of God, use proper grammar and spell-check your work. Show that you're capable of writing headlines *and* that you can create compelling copy that will capture even the

most disinterested customer's attention. If you're a designer, make a logo for yourself. Illustrate characters that interact within the thumbnails of your work. Use an interesting color palette and a custom typeface. Be interesting. People in advertising like that.

Learn More: Portfolio Templates to Get You Started

When it comes to your portfolio, you don't have to start from scratch. (That said, if you want to go completely custom, super.) There are plenty of tools available to help you create a beautiful and comprehensive portfolio. Below are some templates to get you started, and you can find some incredible examples of portfolio inspo [here](#).

Cargo

Squarespace

Fabrik

Format

Carbon Made

FolioLink

PARTING WORDS FROM JEFF AND RICH



When it comes to cultivating a successful career in advertising, keep these words from Jeff and Rich at the front of your mind:

JEFF

“You’re selling stuff, of course. But in the end, you want to be remembered for things that are human. You want to be remembered for things that are funny and beautiful. You don’t want to be remembered for numbers.... If you are appreciating the things around you and communicating that to people, people will listen to you. They’ll care about what you say.”

RICH

“We want to be artists in a business world. How am I going to solve a problem today? How am I going to touch someone? And then when I hear scripts or stories, I want to feel it. I only want to work on a communication that I care about—that I can relate to.”