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Remember the Gold Fish song? You know, the one still stuck in your head? How about that “Make 7 Up Yours” T-shirt that you still wear to the gym?

Let’s talk about those Schick commercials you stumbled on while surfing YouTube—the one you emailed to your brother under the subject “Schick is off the Heezy!”? Yeah, Schick *is* off the heezy and it’s not just because of its titanium razor blade: it rocks because in a society cluttered with advertisements, it manages to hold your attention for more than five seconds. Perhaps these advertisements are the reason you don’t change the TV channel during a commercial break. Hell, they might even inspire you to go out and buy their products. But do you ever stop and think about the people behind the scenes? They work for advertising agencies and conceptualize multiple ad campaigns every year. These people are creative directors.

Billy Faraut, the brains behind the Schick campaign, moved to New York from Paris in 1991 and has taken on the advertising industry with full force. He has worked for powerhouses such as DDB, Ogilvy, and currently J. Walter Thompson. As a creative director, Faraut has developed campaigns for Hershey, Volkswagen, Rolex, Kleenex, and Schick, just to name a few. Whether working on an ad for print, TV, or the web, he administers each project from the client’s initial brief all the way through execution. Faraut is responsible for generating ideas, overseeing creative teams, finding actors, photographers, directors, and finally selling his vision to the client. How does one man manage to juggle all these responsibilities while banging out some of the most cutting edge and profitable ads of our time?

The Art of Juggling

"There is no methodical way to conceptualize and produce a successful ad, so time management is always a concern. I work on five accounts at once, with deadlines ranging from a tight six weeks to as long as six months. I've learned it's best not to micromanage. The trick to juggling is to let a couple of balls drop. I delegate accounts to my creative teams, while reserving a couple of key accounts for myself. I am never totally void of hands-on responsibilities. I love to draw up sketches and think up crazy ideas with my partner. The task of balancing my duties as a creative director while conceptualizing new ideas for my clients keeps me busy, but it's an invigorating busy."

Will You Go Out With Me?

"You've got to woo the client. As most clients admit, they need to see it to believe it. I can't just make a presentation by explaining my idea, especially when it's something eccentric or risqué. When presenting a new idea for an ad campaign, I bring in necessary visuals, potential actors, music, and a little charm of course: anything to ensure the client will believe in my vision. Sometimes they don't, so it's important to have a back-up plan. At times I come into a presentation with five ideas just to be safe. Once I've earned the client's trust, I take them on a wild ride."

I Will Back Down

"I'll do ads for alcohol, but not for handguns or cigarettes. There's no shame in passing on an account in order to stay true to your beliefs. JWT is a big agency, and if you're Mormon and don't want to work on campaigns for products that have caffeine, someone else will. Besides, if you can't relate to the product, it's likely your ad will lack heart. I have found that the most successful ads don't talk down to the consumers. You have to show humility in order to connect your product to people. It's hard to do that if you are opposed to the product."

Increase the Peace

"At times, clients don't see things my way even after I've done everything in my power to illustrate my point of view. I've learned that in this industry it is best to choose your battles wisely, especially when it comes to dealing with a new client. I cross my fingers and hope that over time they will trust my vision. I've also learned it's important to consider the opinions of others. If I'm working on a commercial and the director has an off-the-wall idea, I will put the project on hold and share it with the client. Collaboration and compromise are key in this industry: they're the best way to ensure your ads stay creative while still appealing to the masses."

TRICKS OF THE TRADE : Creative Director

By Heather Simon | Photo by Roman Meisenberg

Making Headlines

"A good ad grabs the viewer's attention. A great ad gets the viewer to spend time with it. A killer ad makes news headlines. You want people to drive miles to see your ad like a national monument. Brands today are a part of pop culture. I want the brands I develop to be as controversial as the celebrities in the tabloids. With the uproar of new media advertising, I am constantly on my toes thinking of new ways to attract consumers. If I'm stuck, I jump to another account and work on that for a bit. When I begin to get bored with an account, it's time to push the envelope further. I have fun with the challenge of bending the rules while still pleasing the client."

Why Don't We Do It On The Road?

"In the elevator? Poolside, maybe? Ideas come when you least expect them. One moment I'm having a drink in a pub in Prague and before I know it I'm tipsy and brainstorming a multi million-dollar ad campaign. Advertising is about honesty and relating to people, so it's impossible not to find inspiration in everything. In order to be successful in this industry you have to think outside the box while still appealing to the consumer. The best work doesn't always happen in the office. You've got to step outside of your comfort zone and get creative. Just have fun with it!"