

KEVIN ROBERTS IN AMERICA



Kevin Roberts

Today's hot topic in many US boardrooms, procurement departments and marketing war rooms is Deutsche Bank's tome on *Commercial Noise: Why TV Advertising Doesn't Work for Mature Brands. Death of a Salesman* revisited. You need a handy supply of pain relievers, stress absorbers and worry beads before leaping into its extensively rational deconstruction of the glowing screen in the corner.

Advertising on TV is written off by Deutsche Bank as wasteful, ineffective, unmeasurable, outgunned, bypassed, mechanistic, unsophisticated, obsolete, a black hole. I dare not imagine what it thinks of paper and ink.

Bruce Springsteen's *57 Channels* are more than with us today — not just new channels but new frequencies, speeds, modes, media, shifters and filters. I enjoy the ability of the human personality to engage with all media, from ATMs and DVDs to SMS and LMX. We are immersive by nature. We want involvement and immediacy. We seek new ideas. We love humour. Contact is vital. So is control.

This makes the gems hidden in Deutsche Bank's gloomy headlines all the more prescient. TV advertising is a \$55 billion industry with a 40 per cent share of marketing spend. That's big. TV advertising is effective 50 per cent of the time. That's better than even David Beckham (must improve). TV advertising works best with brands that are in growth mode. No shit. TV advertising is critical to sustaining consumer-brand awareness and maintaining brand equity. Rather important. TV works when a brand brings new messages. Yes. This is why brands need to focus constantly on inspirational equities, fresh ideas, commercial innovation and cut-through. And how many big brands have pulled all their TV in a competitive market and flourished?

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But this is jousting and misses the big picture. There is a new marketing landscape and the new model stretches onscreen, online and in-store. This is what holistic looks like to me.

The gregarious ubiquity of the screen today is the driving force of marketing. Today's digital revolution is driven by three anchors: microprocessors, memory chips and displays. For a consumer, it all comes to life on the screen: sight, sound and motion. This is exactly what the digital developers had in mind toiling away in vacuum-sealed optic labs and chip fabs. Sight, sound and motion are irresistible elements for both producers and consumers; for telling the story and getting the feeling.

Advertising's first job is to sell. Because of sight, sound and motion, TV has been the greatest selling medium ever invented. Today, the landscape is more diverse, more challenging and, I would argue, more rewarding. The screen, in all its forms, is the medium of our time.

Our challenge as advertising creatives and media planners is to be relevant and engaging across the full suite of screens. In the home, in the office, on the go. In my experience, clients who are winning in the market have their agencies in their boardrooms, not down the corridors. Being consumer-led means being connected and inspired. Creatives will continue to have a critical role in the flow of big ideas and new stories for consumers to engage with at all points of connection.

Don't let a banker tell you otherwise.

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