
IF WE BUILD IT, WILL THEY COME?



Disdaining the cost and complexity of using research to foresee the future, some marketers choose the "Field of Dreams" approach, assuring senior management that "If we build it, they will come." In fact, one can cite several successes generated with that risk-taking, "Market-Maker" strategy, but we can also list myriad failures. Faster than you can say, "Take the Euro-Tunnel from Canary Wharf to Euro-Disney," we can come up with a lengthy list of products and services that failed to find ready customer acceptance.

As stockholders have grown increasingly accustomed to frequent dividend increases and upward bounding stock prices, "long term" has come to be considered one or two quarters. Capitol investments that fail to offer a prompt return must offer exceptional potential for long-term returns. Under today's market conditions, the "Field of Dreams" is not a desirable playing field for businesses.

Major league baseball franchises have found a way to take the risk out of starting, or moving, a franchise. They secure commitments *upfront* from fans and business supporters for multiseason tickets to boxes and seats. The franchise owner has to do a lot of selling in the new community and, in the process, a lot of listening to fan needs. This is not a "Field of Dreams" approach. Franchise owners are

building more than a franchise; they are building a consensus.

In my interview with ARF President Mike Naples, he shared two keys to his successful tenure at the helm of the ARF. First, build member-sponsored research projects that demonstrate the value of advertising—not just the value of advertising research, but of *advertising* itself. Secondly, build on the expertise of the members of the ARF Councils and Committees to produce valued products like guidelines and industry-focusing research programs. Mike offers a constructive vision for the research industry along with his tips for developing successful research initiatives.

Whether you are building a research enterprise or a business enterprise, a critical component is the *vision* that you build in the process. The 1990s have seen the United States undulate from cautious headiness to recession-driven self-doubt then back to interrecessionary guarded optimism. Our vision of the limits and potency of "yankee ingenuity" has wavered, but it appears that we will end this millennium on a high note.

With NAFTA-related strikes in Mexico, Euro-union strikes in France, and American troops in Bosnia, we need no more reminders of the growing importance of the global stage. Building global brands is a critical initiative for marketers of all sizes and types. Stuart Agres and

Tony Dubitsky argue compellingly that we meet the "Changing Needs for Brands" by properly leveraging the strength of our brands on three key dimensions. If we look at our brands' strength relative to only a small competitive set, we may misinterpret the strengths and vulnerabilities of the brand. To fully leverage a brand in today's global marketplace we need to see it in a multidimensional and multireference "big picture."

Getting the big picture is difficult for many of us who spend a lot of our time performing analyses and in getting the details right. But it is critical today that we frequently step back and get a glimpse of the forest along with the trees.

In his essay on "Changing Demands," Watts Wacker, consulting futurist for S.R.I. International, challenges us to identify the new issues that will have the most impact on marketing decisions. Then he notes, "Once we identify the issues, we can create tools and new approaches for evaluating the directions people are taking." Watts also points out the importance of the shifting emphasis from information production to information access.

Paul Donato, senior vice president, media and communica-

tions research at Audits & Surveys Worldwide, reminds us that the media research tools that we develop change the currency by which media are bought and sold and, in so doing, research shapes the media. Paul reminds us that our interpretation of what we mean by the Internet and interactive TV is changing every year, and our research agenda must change too, whether we see research as the chicken or the egg.

The growing interest in the Web and in interactive TV will catapult researchers into uncharted waters awash with new sources of information and competitors. There are several fundamental issues that must be addressed even after the more basic definitional issues are settled. The framework and rudimentary model set forth by Berthon, Pitt, and Watson can be helpful in prioritizing the issues that arise from efforts to define and assess traffic on the Web.

Ted Dunn, technical consulting director for the ARF, and I report the results of the ARF Copy Research Council's Advertising Research 2000 survey on the changing research needs of advertisers and advertising agencies in the next millennium. Copy pre-testing is being used

more and more in conjunction with other research and for more than "go" or "no-go" decisions. Both trends promise to increase the value of pre-testing research. There are a few points of agreement between agency and advertiser research directors. Both show an increase in research to support copy development, though the advertiser is more confident in quantitative research and the agency researcher in qualitative approaches. Both agree that new advertising venues are going to grow in importance to researchers as they grow in relevance to marketers.

As we commemorate the 60th anniversary of the ARF with this special issue of the *Journal of Advertising Research*, we offer a unique collection of perspectives on media, marketing, and advertising research in the next millennium. You will find this an issue that you will want to revisit again and again as you plan for your business and your career in the year 2000 and beyond. In here are several keys to building research initiatives that will garner strong and continued support. If you develop a vision founded on a solid understanding of the key issues in your markets, and communicate that vision effectively, you will build and they will come. ■