

A new age

The future of planning and the future of agencies are conjoined. Their future lies in the speedy execution of ideas with "real planning" at the heart of this process

By Simon Clemmow, *Clemmow Hornby Inge*

One of the many seminal articles by the late, great Stephen King, co-founder of account planning, is titled 'Has marketing failed, or was it never really tried?'

He identifies the failure of what he calls 'marketing department marketing', where the marketing department is simply bolted on to the standard company organogram and concerns itself with its own partial objectives, rigid processes and jealously-guarded techniques. He contrasts this with what he calls 'real marketing', which is a matter of harnessing all the company's resources to link what the customer wants with what the company is (or could be) uniquely able to provide, so that it can prosper by doing so.

There is an instructive parallel here with the development of account planning - the discipline most concerned with tackling the thorny question of how advertising works. And how it works has changed fundamentally. It used to be that consumers were passive receivers of advertising. It worked in a linear, sequential way. Models like AIDA were developed, which said that first you had to get Awareness, then you could generate Interest, then you could create Desire, and then trigger Action. And your consumers would follow you like sheep along that path, responding dutifully in the way your communications required them to. That was the first age of advertising.

The second age began with the realisation that it wasn't what advertising did to people that made it work; it was what people did with advertising. They used it actively, in different ways, to find out more, to relate to a brand, to confirm or make a shortlist, and to confirm or change their attitudes or expectations. Adver-

tising became less rational and simplistic, and more complex and emotionally engaging.

Now we're in the third age of advertising. People aren't just engaging with the messages; they're interacting with the media. Brand communication that fails to get consumer participation is increasingly wasted. It has to be so powerful, so entertaining, so useful, that people won't skip it. It's even better if they want to hunt it out and pass it on. Ideally, they should want to be part of it, talking about the brand and interacting with it.

THE POWER OF PARTICIPATION

For agencies, creativity no longer means just big TV. The smarter ones know advertising works by unleashing the power of participation at all brand touchpoints, almost certainly these days putting digital at the heart of the communication. But this is hard to do. Participative communication is only of value if it builds on the big idea behind the brand and advances consumers' relationship with it. It must be 'integral' participation. If it's just bolted on, it remains outside the brand context and lacks meaning and power; brands just become game show hosts, and have to incentivise people to act. Instead, they should inspire people to act. Inspiration to act can come from different motivations: people might be attracted to something they can use, contribute to, play with, create or join.

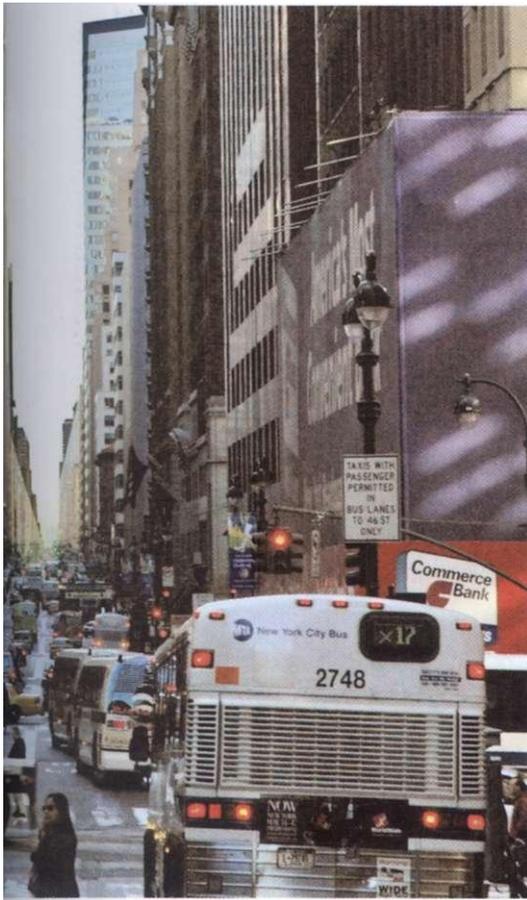
There's a great deal more to think about these days when planning an ad campaign. And the ads could take the form of a TV or radio commercial, a press ad or poster, a direct marketing piece, a PR programme or experiential event, sponsorship, a packaging or in-store redesign, an internet viral, a brand blog, a website or app and many other things besides. And it's



not just advertising that has changed: what we understand a brand to be, distribution, availability and shopping patterns have also shifted, and the business world has become faster and more competitive than ever.

Despite all these changes, there have been only two significant developments in ad agencies: the loss of the media buying function (and media planning with it) to media agencies (bad); and the invention of account planning (a step in the right direction, but not a big enough one). The result is that, today, most ad agencies lack the appropriate competencies and structures to meet clients' needs properly,

agency model



on the basis of which advertising could be developed, executed and evaluated. 'Creativity' could be explained and rationalised to both the marketing objectives and the client's satisfaction. Planning heralded a brave new world in which agencies could become all-round experts in effective marketing communications, going to the top in client contact and getting paid handsomely for the work.

The problem was that planning was confined to a separate departmental function, doing 'planning department planning' in the same way that Stephen King's bolted-on marketing departments do marketing department marketing. The debates raged over the years about what planning is and how it's done, as planners huddled together for warmth, navel gazed and came under fire. Many good ones left agencies because they had all the responsibility for advertising effectiveness but none of the power required to achieve it.

Looking at the titles of some articles from *Admap* and *Campaign* in the 1970s and 1980s gives an idea of what was going on. 'Account planning - threat or promise: what it should involve as a separate agency function'; 'Account planning: today's concerns, tomorrow's dangers and planning myopia'; and 'Account planning - has it a future?'. These articles considered questions such as: is account planning a threat to account management?; does account planning swamp creativity?; is account planning too expensive?; and what are account planners for?

These debates created a sideshow that distracted ad agencies from making real change, prevented them from fulfilling the potential that planning had promised, and all but lost them the industry high ground. To remedy this, they have to stop thinking of planning as a separate department and start considering it in terms of what the whole agency does and how it goes about doing it. The real question is not: 'What are planners for?' but: 'What are advertising agencies for?'

The answer is that advertising agencies are in the business of applied creativity; they have a company-wide responsibility to find

creative solutions to business problems. They are all about the conception, execution and management of ideas that are creative, effective and fast (speed to market being a source of competitive advantage). The idea is king; not one department or another.

NEW AGENCY STRUCTURE

So the agency should be structured as a series of ideas teams centred around its clients' businesses, each team consisting of a partnership of three directors - business, planning and creative. The business director should be responsible for both the team's input to the client's business and the account as a piece of business in the agency; the planning director should come from a traditional advertising, media, digital or design background; and the same applies to the creative director - depending on the nature of the account and the client's requirements.

The ideas teams should have centralised resource pools to draw on: managing, planning, creative, production, buying, finance and administration, for example. The role of agency management should be to populate, manage and quality-control both the ideas teams and the resource pools to ensure workload is properly allocated and prioritised across the agency, and also to work hands-on in the teams and pools - the agency should have a structure and a lack of hierarchy that makes it a genuine creative partnership.

The future of planning is inextricably linked to the future of agencies - if we're clear about what advertising agencies are for, what they do and how they do it, the future of planners and planning becomes equally clear. 'Real planning' is a matter of harnessing all the agency's resources to link consumer insights and motivations with the benefits the client's brand is (or could be) uniquely able to provide, so that it can prosper by doing so.

leaving them vulnerable to other agencies and consultancies. So what went wrong? Well, planning went wrong.

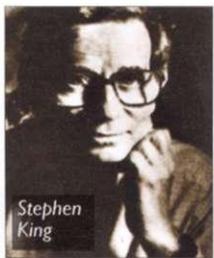
Account planning was invented to help the agency get the advertising right more often, more consistently, as it became apparent that advertising was less of a science and more of an art. ('Art' was seen as bad for business, since the agency could not sell an effective campaign with any degree of proof, and the client could not buy one with any degree of certainty.)

Planning's function was to provide the discipline of process and the input of research

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A History of Planning

James Best, who has personal experience of the history of account planning, traces key events in its development,



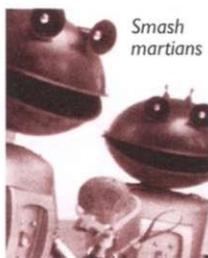
Stephen King

1968 King sets up his account planning department at JWT, hiring Judie Lannon from Leo Burnett Chicago to start in-house qualitative creative research. Boase Massimi Pollitt launches with account planning baked-in as a discipline and department of equal weight and

1966 In 'swinging London', Stephen King and JWT colleagues including Jeremy Bullmore are frustrated with US-style quantitative ad research being imposed on creative work and look for alternative approaches and better advertising models.



Judie Lannon

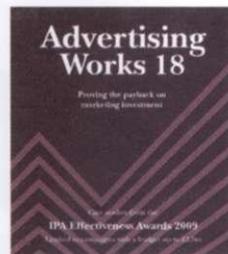


Smash Martians

1970 Pollitt hires his first graduate planning trainees, starting a new breed of agency talent. Subsequent BMP planning alumni include agency founders John Madell, Leslie Butterfield, Adam Lury, Damian O'Malley, Gary Duckworth and Will Collin.

1975 Planning is questioned by agency managers ('how do we afford it?'), creatives ('why should our work be messed up?') and clients ('how can agency planners objectively test their own ads?'). That it succeeds is thanks largely to BMP's creative director, John Webster, whose famous TV work – Smash Martians, Cresta Bear, Courage Tavern, St Ivel Prize Guys – is credited to his working with planners.

1980 The IPA launches its first Advertising Effectiveness Awards under Simon Broadbent's chairmanship. They set out to prove the business value of advertising, and the significance of an 'effectiveness culture' is introduced to the agency world. JWT, Davidson Pearce and BMP dominate the early awards; all are 'planning agencies'. The IPA launches the series *Advertising Works* (now in its 18th edition) to bring the winning cases to a wide business audience.

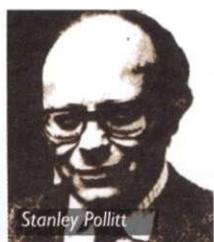


1985 The rapid growth in computing power enables the science of econometrics, or statistical market modelling, to be introduced to the agency planning armoury, first by Simon Broadbent at Leo Burnett and Tom Corlett at JWT. Planners can now manage mountains of data.

60s

70s

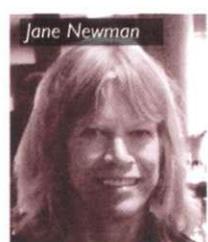
80s



Stanley Pollitt

authority to creative and account management. Pollitt's account planners are charged with strategic thinking, advertising research and media planning. Yes, it's integrated. They will 'pre-test' all the agency's creative ideas with consumers in 'group discussions'. Few notice the revolution begin.

1967 Stanley Pollitt at Interpublic agency Pritchard Wood introduces new working methods and a new discipline, soon labelled 'account planning'. The first 'planner' is Peter Jones (later to become chairman of the Tote), plucked from media research to combine the four previously separate research functions – desk, quantitative, qualitative and media.



Jane Newman

1973 Two start-up agencies, SJIP and TBWA London, follow BMP's lead and build in planning. TBWA is led, alongside Nigel Bogle and John Hegarty, by John Bartle, ex-Cadbury researcher and early client champion of Stanley Pollitt and BMP.

1977 BMP planner Jane Newman exports the discipline to the US, first at Needham Chicago. She moves in 1982 to the explosively successful Chiat Day, where planning makes its US breakthrough.

1979 The Account Planning Group is founded by Charles Channon and Don Cowley to be a forum for the growing population of UK account/strategic/creative planners.

1982 Bartle Bogle Hegarty is born, with John Bartle establishing its highly successful planning model; BBH's subsequent fame confirms planning's value.

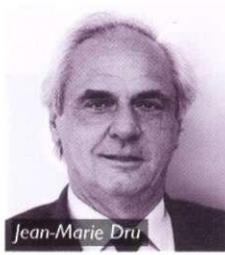


BBH's 'Laundrette' Levi's commercial

1987 Howell Henry Chaldecott Lury bursts on to the scene. Lury's planning leadership is a strong element of its rapid success, with break-through creative strategies such as the AA's 'Fourth Emergency Service' campaign.

from its incarnation in the 1960s by Stephen King and Stanley Pollitt, and adds some predictions for the future of the discipline

1990s As planners become increasingly concerned with 'insights' and strategy, the less sexy business of number-crunching and creative research gets outsourced. Media planning is also removed from creative agencies, along with qualitative research and audience understanding. Consequently, agency planning starts to lose credibility.



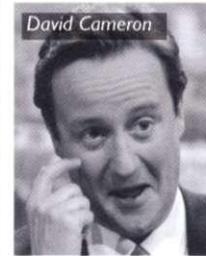
1996 Jean-Marie Dru of TBWA publishes *Disruption*, a whole-agency process to impact clients' business led by the agency's planners across the world.

2000 Naked Communications is launched by ex-BMPers Jon Wilkins and Will Collin, fusing media and creative planning into a new strategic approach to communications planning. Their innovative campaigns and international growth provide a 'new model planning' to clients.



2004 The AdLab blog launches and, by the end of the decade, claims 20,000 users. The new generation of planners become avid bloggers and tweeters.

2011 New Prime Minister David Cameron hires JWT's global planning head, Guy Murphy, to bring consumer understanding and strategic creativity into Number 10. Every government department is instructed to hire planners.



2013 Inspired by Paul Feldwick's biography of Stanley Pollitt, ad agency planners fight back, regain control of channel planning and market research, reintegrate the whole communications approach, from strategy to consumer brand experience, lead client engagement teams and thus fulfil John Treasure of JWT's 1960s prediction that the future of advertising lay with 'the highest level of intellect in the business'.

90s

00s

10s

1990 The US APG is founded, largely by UK ex-pats, and stimulates the burgeoning US planning scene. It launches popular conferences, which, by the end of the decade, attracted 1,000 attendees. By 1992, a third of US agencies claim to have planning.



1998 Ex-BMPer Jon Steel's influential book, *Truth, Lies & Advertising: the Art of Account Planning*, celebrates the growth of planning in the US through its success at Goodby (Berlin) where he is planning director.



2003 As planners grapple with the digital revolution, Russell Davies of Wieden & Kennedy/Honda fame publishes his first blog and the 'plannersphere' is born.

2012 Google launches gplan, its online ad-planning service, automating the process and generating an infinite number of original briefs for creatives to execute through behaviour-targeted online campaigns. It's cheap and instant. Agencies worldwide shed planners like autumn leaves.

2015 Ad agency planners regain control of media/channel planning and re-integrate the whole communications approach, from strategy to creative execution and consumer brand experience, leading client engagement teams and thus proving that they rock.

