

HOT POINTS for The Week of November 13, 2006

NOTE: ALL NAMES IN THIS STORY HAVE BEEN CHANGED TO PROTECT ME.

THE QUESTION YOU NEVER WANT TO HEAR

I recently had somebody send me a commercial and ask, "What do you think of this?"

Oh, boy.

You know what that means.

I clicked "play."

THE FIRST THING I HEAR IS SOME GUY WITH A LISP SAYING...

"Hi this is John Smith.

"Recently I met with Ari Canogi, the owner of Canogi Diamonds. Man, was I impressed with the store. The sales personnel take the time to educate their customers on buying diamonds, and the four Cs.

"I finally found a jeweler I can feel comfortable with and trust.

"I have to tell you about a score I found in Canogi Diamonds.

"Here's the good news.

"All loose diamonds are sold at or below New York wholesale prices or your money back guaranteed.

"Engagement proposal, anniversary, birthday, somethin' for yourself, or just because, Canogi Diamonds is a wise choice.

"Their newest Lambomanti designer wedding sets are available now. Over 250 styles exclusively designed for Canogi Diamonds. Here's Ari Canogi."

OK. As if that wasn't enough, here comes the owner.

HE SOUNDS LIKE BORIS BADENOV.

“You will save money when you shop Canogi Diamonds. That is my promise to you.”

Following this, some big, professional announcer with zero emotional investment in the sell comes to say something very important.

Ready?

“Canogi Diamonds. Quality. Value. Service.”

Then, Ari/Boris comes back in: “Come see us at 9372 Grandview Boulevard in Glenoaks.”

WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE?

This guy with the lisp? The owner who sounds like a cold war spy from central casting? The announcer who appears for no reason at all? What is going on here?

And how did the various people involved, from one of the biggest broadcasting companies in the nation, let this happen?

Well, that last question, we'll never know the answer to.

As for who these people are, get this.

JOHN SMITH IS A PROFESSIONAL ATHLETE.

I'm also guessing Ari Canogi is somebody who fell in love with the idea of a professional athlete pitching his store.

Folks. Celebrity endorsements? Forget 'em.

This is not the ubiquitous Lindsay Wagner being hired for her trustworthiness to shill for the Sleep Number Bed. (“It must be comfortable! The Bionic Woman sleeps on it! It's a Bionic Bed!”)

In this case, a high-profile millionaire athlete (if anybody even recognizes him) does not convince the non-millionaires in the audience that this is a store for them.

But if you MUST use the celebrity, at least explain who he is.

Though even that can have marginal benefit.

I once had a tax specialist insist on using a guy from a little-known 1970s Christian comedy troupe in his ads.

He couldn't be talked out of it until 6 weeks after the ad went on the air and his phone stopped ringing.

So, the celebrity endorsement is a broken crutch—but it's not the most unfortunate aspect of this ad.

THE MOST TRAGIC THING HERE IS THE WRITING.

Guaranteed, anybody who writes ad copy, even if only reluctantly in their capacity as a sales rep, knows how to be coherent.

This script is utterly incoherent.

It is writhing around on the floor of the jewelry store in the throes of no-focus narcosis.

Among other things, it has four first sentences...

“Recently I met...”

“I finally found...”

“I have to tell you...”

“Here's the good news...”

So, the ad starts four times. The rest of the runners are approaching the finish line, and this guy keeps going back to the blocks for another try.

And why is it “a wise choice?” I have no idea. There's never any illustration of that wisdom.

Then, there's the mention of the ever popular Four Cs. (“Hunh?”)

No explanation of what they are, just the mention. So if you've never heard of them, or have heard but don't know what they are, you're already baffled and intimidated. (Hint: nobody cares about The Four Cs. They care that her eyes are going to pop out of her head.)

There's the loose diamond prices. (What do I do with loose diamonds? Do I have to buy them by the handful?)

The unexplained Lambomanti designer wedding sets leave me with zero.

And, let's not forget, the ever popular street address. ("Where's 9372? Or was that 3927? Wait, 7329? Forget it. I'm going to the mall.")

One smart choice: they're trying to drive retail traffic, so there's no phone number in this ad. Good thing. Because if there was, I'd call them up and say, "What on earth were you thinking?"

LEARNING FROM OTHER PEOPLE'S (EXPENSIVE) MISTAKES

This is a sterling example of how not to create an ad for a jewelry store.

And ultimately, it is so sad.

Here's a jeweler who's probably a very nice guy, entrusting his advertising to somebody who's represented himself as a professional.

And the professional is unable to protect him from this glorious mess.

Once again, as we all know, radio works best on an emotional level.

Radio also works best when it focuses on one thing at a time.

To that end, focus on one piece of jewelry, and the emotional satisfaction resulting from it.

What did John Smith the athlete buy? Who was it for? How did that person feel about it?

I doubt the conversation went like this...

"Hey, baby. Here's a big fat engagement ring."

"Oh, excellent. Tell me about the cut, clarity, color and carats."

The last time I gave my wife a diamond ring, she was pure, rubber-limbed stupid for over an hour. And she still talks about it, 5 years later.

And never once has she asked about The Four Cs.

As Always,

Blaine Parker
Your Short, Fat Creative Director in
Los Angeles