

Ogilvy on Advertising

By David Ogilvy

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About the Author

David Ogilvy, born in 1911, was called by *Time* “the most sought after wizard in the business.” Ogilvy was one of the three key individuals in the Creative Revolution, along with Bill Bernbach and Leo Burnett. Before Ogilvy began advertising, he worked with research giant George Gallup for 3 years (David Ogilvy: History). Ogilvy came from the UK to start his agency Ogilvy & Mather. Starting with no clients in 1948, it has since grown into a worldwide enterprise (Ogilvy.com). As successful as Ogilvy was, he did it all with no college degree (Ogilvy 51). Some of Ogilvy’s most famous campaigns were the Hathaway shirts which ran for 25 years, Schweppes, and Rolls-Royce. Ogilvy wrote 3 books about advertising: Confessions of an Advertising Man (1963), Blood, Brains, and Beer: The Autobiography of David Ogilvy (1978) and Ogilvy on Advertising (1983). Ogilvy retired in 1971 and after his retirement, Ogilvy & Mather was purchased by mega agency WPP in 1989 for \$864 million (Ogilvy.com). Ogilvy died in 1999 but his legacy in the advertising world will always be remembered.

Abstract of Ogilvy on Advertising

In Ogilvy on Advertising, David Ogilvy writes about all aspects of advertising. He explains all the tips and rules he has learned about advertising through his own experience and through looking at data. He mainly writes about the aspects of advertising he knows from his own experience, particularly print advertising. In his book, he states that he does oversimplify some complicated subjects, making it easy for readers to understand. The book is broken down into 20 chapters, which all discuss different aspects related to advertising. The division of chapters makes the book easy to read. It does not read together like a whole book, but can be read just section by section depending on what you want to learn.

First, Ogilvy examines how to produce advertisements that sell, jobs in advertising, how to run an ad agency and how to get clients. Then he moves on to talk about print advertising, making television commercials that sell, advertising corporations, how to advertise foreign travel, business-to-business advertising, and direct mail. Finally, he addresses research, marketing, and influential advertising people.

Summary of Ogilvy on Advertising

In the beginning of his book, Ogilvy gives an overview of what he will be discussing in this book. He opens his book with this statement: “I do not regard advertising as entertainment or an art form, but as a medium of information. When I write an advertisement, I don’t want you to tell me that you find it ‘creative.’ I want you to find it so interesting that you buy the product” (Ogilvy 7). He states that the only real major change advertising has gone since he has been in the business is the television. Other changes have been exaggerated such as the concept of brand names, which he popularized in 1953. It was not really new though; Claude Hopkins had described in 20 years before.

Ogilvy first examines how to produce advertising that sells. He states that the wrong advertising can actually reduce the sales of a product. All advertising does not increase sales to some degree. He then gives the steps he has for producing successful advertising:

1. Do your homework. When he wrote the Rolls-Royce ad, the most famous of all automobile ads, he spent three weeks doing his homework.
2. Find out what kind of advertising the competitors have been doing for similar products, and with what success.
3. Research among consumers. Find out how they think about your kind of product and what promise would be most likely to make them buy your brand.
4. Decide how to position your product. He defines positioning as “what the product does, and who it is for.” (Ogilvy 12). He positioned Dove as a toilet bar for women with dry skin and still works 25 years later.

5. Decide the Brand Image. Image means personality- the name, packaging, price, style of its advertising, and most importantly, the nature of the product itself.

Every advertisement should be thought of as a contribution to the brand image.

The advertisements should project the same image, year after year which is difficult to achieve.

6. Invent big ideas. Big ideas come from the unconscious, which has to be well informed. Ways to help recognize a big idea is to ask yourself five questions: Did it make me gasp when I first saw it? Do I wish I had thought of it myself? Is it unique? Does it fit the strategy to perfection? Could it be used for 30 years?

Other tips that Ogilvy gives on producing successful advertising is to make the product the hero of your advertising. The writer needs to be personally interested in the product to write a good advertisement. When products seem no different from competitors, you have to explain the virtues of the product more persuasively than your competitors, and differentiate them by the style of advertising – this is added value. Another tip is that if you write a good advertisement, repeat it until it stops selling. Also, Ogilvy says to avoid committees, learn from what direct response advertisers do, and only use sex if there is a functional reason.

Next, Ogilvy focuses on jobs in advertising and how to get them. He only knows about jobs in agencies. At the start of your advertising career, Ogilvy says that what you learn is more important than what you earn. He then gives descriptions of jobs in an agency. Copywriters are the most important people in agencies. Art directors must have some training in film, layout, photography, and typography. Account executives are the ones who are in daily touch with clients, the most informed person in the agency on the

account given, must be able to make good presentations and write lucid memoranda. To get this job, Ogilvy recommends first spending a couple years in brand management and a year in a consumer research company. Another job is researchers, who probably need a degree in statistics or psychology, an analytical mind, and must be intellectually honest. Other jobs are in the media department, chief executive officer, and creative director (Ogilvy's job).

Ogilvy then moves on to tell how to run an advertising agency. First of all, you have to make it fun to work in your agency. All of the accounts you work on are from different industries so every time you see a client you have to be sufficiently beefed on their business to give good advice. There are two ways to get paid: the traditional commission system or the fee system, which Ogilvy pioneered.

Next, Ogilvy describes how to get clients. Ogilvy says that the easiest way to get clients is to do good advertising. When you meet with a prospective client, tell them what your weak points are before they notice them because it will make you seem more credible. Also, avoid clients whose ethos is different than your company. It is very hard for small agencies to get big accounts, but the bigger an agency grows, the more bureaucratic it becomes.

The next chapter tells Ogilvy's tips that he has learned on print advertising. Agency people find making television commercials far more exciting than making ads for magazines and newspaper. Unless the headline sells the product, you have wasted 90 per cent of your money. The headlines that work best are the ones that promise the reader a benefit, or contain news such as the announcement of a new product. If the advertisement is aimed at a small group of people, put something in the headline to signal

them, such as women over thirty-five. Ogilvy also gives many tips on how make your illustrations work, with some of the most helpful being:

- Have a good subject for your illustration.
- Use story appeal if you can and if not, use your package as the subject of the illustration.
- Use before and after photographs to show the end result of using the product.
- Keep the illustration simple and focus on one person.
- Use four color advertisements even though they cost more.

Ogilvy also gives advice on the body copy of the advertisement. Some of his tips are: write as if you are writing each reader a letter, write short sentences and avoid difficult words, write the copy in the form of a story, do not use brag and boast (my product the best), make the first paragraph grab the attention of the reader, and use testimonials which are more persuasive than puffery. When laying out an advertisement, Ogilvy describes it as KISS (keep it simple, stupid). A person reads an advertisement by first looking at the illustration, then the headline, and then the copy so put them in this order on an advertisement. If there is a functional reason to run a double spread, such as when a product has to be shown horizontally, then use a double spread; otherwise, do not. Without a double spread, twice as many advertisements can be run for the same amount of money, which doubles the reach of the ad.

Ogilvy then moves to making televisions commercials that sell. Ogilvy's experience in television is not near as much as print advertising, so he relies heavily on research for his information on television advertisements. Above average commercials have: humor, slice of life, testimonials with loyal users, demonstrations, problem

solution, talking heads, characters, reason why, news, and emotion. Some tips he gives about making successful television commercials are using brand identification, show the package, sing it if you have nothing to say, and show the product in use.

The next area Ogilvy focuses on is advertising corporations. By using corporate advertising, it can improve the morale of the employees and can make a good impression on the investment community. Lots of corporate campaigns fail because they are underfunded. Another reason they fail is because by confining the campaign to just magazines and newspapers. Ogilvy advises corporations to not change their name to initials because it will take many years and lots of money to teach the initials to the public.

Ogilvy then addresses how to advertise foreign travel. A classical campaign in travel advertising is Doyle Dane Bernbach's (DDB) Jamaica campaign. When Ogilvy started an ad campaign for Britain, it was the fifth most visited European country by the time he wrote this book it was first. His tips on foreign advertising are advertising for countries should be designed to plant a long term image in the reader's mind. Also, choose to illustrate things that are unique to the country concerned and not something people can do at home. The job of the advertising is to convert people's dreams about visiting foreign countries into action. Ogilvy says this is best done by combining "mouth-watering photographs with specific how-to-do-it information" (Ogilvy 133). Whenever the advertising is for a little known country, it is important to give the people a lot of information in the advertisement such as the weather, language, food, etc. Charm and differentiation work well in tourism advertising.

His next chapter focuses on business-to-business advertising. This type of advertising is for products that people buy for their companies, not for themselves.

Ogilvy says that the advertising techniques that work in business-to-business advertising are the same as the ones that work for consumer advertising, such as promising the reader a benefit, news, testimonials, and helpful information. When you promise something, make sure it is important to the customer and make the promise specific. Testimonials work well when they come from experts in reputable companies. News also works well because readers scan technical journals when looking for new products, so be sure to announce your news. Also, long copy actually attracts more readers than short copy. Business-to-business advertisers are turning increasingly to television because audiences of sports and news programs include a high percentage of business people.

The next medium of advertising Ogilvy talks about is direct mail, which he calls his secret weapon. He talks about how direct mail has exploded, which at the time this book was written is the early 1980s. Direct mail today is still the top medium of advertising. Ogilvy explains how the explosion was caused by computers which made it possible to get names from mailing lists. An advantage of using direct mail advertising is that the results of the mailings can be measured to the dollar. . With direct mail, every variable can be tested to determine exactly its effect on sales, but only test one variable at a time. Once a profitable mailing has been created, treat it as a control to find new variables to beat it. Direct response advertising can also be used in magazines and television by getting people to send their orders directly without going to a store. The right kind of television commercial- ones that set up a problem and demonstrate how the product can solve it, give a money back guarantee, or promise benefits- can persuade people to order their products by mail or telephone. Ogilvy reminds readers that there is no correlation between the size of the audience the number of orders received. Ogilvy

recommends reading other books about direct response because each chapter of his book is an over-simplification of a complicated subject.

The next chapter, titled “18 Miracles of research,” talks about the importance of research. Before Ogilvy became a copywriter, he was a researcher. Some helpful things research can do are:

- Measure the reputation of the company among consumers.
- Estimate the sales of new product and the advertising required to achieve maximum profits.
- Get consumer reactions to a new product
- Show how consumers rate the product compared with product they are now buying
- What color, flavor, etc will appeal to most consumers
- Tell which package design will sell the best.
- Help decide the optimum positioning for the product
- Define the target audience.
- Discover what factors are most important in the purchase decision.
- Warn when consumers show signs of finding an established product less desirable than it once was.
- Save time and money by reading the competitor’s test markets.
- Determine the most persuasive promise. Try to find a promise that is persuasive and unique.
- Tells whether the advertising communicates what you want it to communicate.

- Tell you which of several television commercials will sell the most. Ogilvy prefers testing methods which measure the commercial's ability to change brand preferences. It can also measure the 'wear-out' of the advertising.
- Finally, research can tell how many people read the advertisements and how many remember them.

Research can make your advertising produce more sales. One answer that research cannot answer is what price should be charged for the product. Split-run, not favored by researchers because it does not require their services, is a technique which Ogilvy prefers. This is when two advertisements are written with different promise in the each headline and see which one gets more response from a free sample offer. Few copywriters share Ogilvy's likely for research. Among those who did not was Bill Bernbach, who thought research inhibited creativity. Ogilvy explains that his experience has been the opposite; research often led Ogilvy to good ideas, such as the eye patch in the Hathaway shirt campaign.

Ogilvy next addresses marketing, which he claims to know little about. Ogilvy defines marketing as objectivity. With new products, Ogilvy says that one can judge the vitality of a company by the number of new products it brings to the market. Some products which sell well without being advertised might sell better, and make more profit, with advertising. An example Ogilvy uses of this is with Listerine because they sold modest amounts without advertising but when they started advertising, sales went through the roof. Advertising should be treated as a production cost, not a selling cost. When you are marketing products, focus on the heavy users. Also, consumers do not buy just one brand of soap, coffee, etc. They have a repertory of four of five brands, and

move from one to another. The goal of advertising is to get those who already use the product at least occasionally, to use it more frequently.

Ogilvy also spends time in his book to talk about six people who invented modern advertising. All of them were American, had other jobs before they went into advertising, were perfectionists, four made their reputations as copywriters, and only three had university degrees. These six people were:

1. Albert Lasker (Lord & Thomas, Ogilvy said that Lasker made more money than anyone in the history of the advertising business)
2. Stanley Resor (J. Walter Thompson, was the first agency chief to start a network of offices outside the United States)
3. Raymond Rubicam (founded Young & Rubicam)
4. Leo Burnett (leader of Chicago school of advertising, famous Marlboro campaign)
5. Claude Hopkins (advocate of 'hard sell,' and said importance of brand images)
6. Bill Bernbach (DDB)

To end his book, Ogilvy records 13 changes that he predicts. Most of these changes did not hold true, such as billboards will be abolished. Yet some changes did occur, such as the "quality of research will improve" (Ogilvy 217). Overall, Ogilvy's book is like an information book on all aspects of advertising that he has learned over the years.

Review of Ogilvy on Advertising

Although Ogilvy on Advertising was written in 1983, this book is a classic book about advertising. Most of the information in it is still useful for people today in advertising and are still applicable to the advertising world today. The principles and guidelines in his book still have not changed today, such as his methods for producing successful print advertising. The book is great at giving examples of everything Ogilvy talks about with all of the advertisement examples in the book. Whenever he talks about a certain point, such as Dove being designed to target women, he puts in an example of an advertisement used. The advertisements in the book also make it a lot more interesting to read.

Some areas of weakness with his book applying to today is that it does not address the new medium of advertising, the internet and the sophistication of technology today. Some of the advice Ogilvy gives on types of fonts to use in advertisements is outdated, because now everyone is familiar with all the fonts and can read them.

Although there are some weaknesses in this book, it is a great book for learning about advertising from a very successful man, especially on producing print advertising. I would recommend this book to advertising students to read because it is a “classic that should be dog eared and worn” (amazon.com).

One reviewer on Amazon.com who is an advertising professor described Ogilvy’s book as a must read advertising book, with his ideas being timeless and his writing captivating.

Teachout for the *National Review* wrote how Ogilvy’s other book Confessions of an Advertising Man was heavy on autobiography and stingy on illustrations but in Ogilvy

on Advertising, he readdresses this imbalance. It provides no fewer than 185 ads with explanations of why they did or did not work. He said that everyone should relax and enjoy this intelligently designed book. I must agree with the reviewers and recommend Ogilvy on Advertising to any thinking about going into the advertising business. It is an easy to read book with lots of useful information about advertising.

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