

## **MCSWEENEY & ANTMAN'S OCCASIONAL UPDATE VOLUME 4 NUMBER 2**

From the corporate branding and strategic marketing communications firm  
**McSweeney & Antman.**

Welcome to the latest edition of McSweeney & Antman's Occasional Update, our periodic compilation of useful information and interesting news. If you wish to unsubscribe, just reply to this e-mail with the word "unsubscribe" in the subject line.

As always, we welcome your thoughts and comments. Please send greetings, gripes and other correspondence to [michael@mcsweeneyantman.com](mailto:michael@mcsweeneyantman.com)

### **1. McSWEENEY & ANTMAN IN THE NEWS**

An article by McSweeney & Antman President Michael Antman, "Five Simple Techniques for Getting Better Results from Qualitative Research," is featured in a new book, *The Expert's Edge: Become the Go-to Authority People Turn to Every Time* by Management Consultant Ken Lizotte, Chief Imagination Officer of Emerson Consulting, to be published by McGraw Hill in January, 2008. The original article first appeared on the online publication MarketingProfs, and has subsequently appeared on many other websites worldwide. You can read the article in its original form here: <http://www.marketingprofs.com/6/antman2.asp>

### **2. RECENT McSWEENEY & ANTMAN PROJECTS**

Read a new article that McSweeney & Antman placed on behalf of client Loreto Services and Technologies at Loreto's website (designed by McSweeney & Antman): [http://www.loretotech.com/pdf/EBPR\\_0707\\_Loreto.pdf](http://www.loretotech.com/pdf/EBPR_0707_Loreto.pdf). And another website, this one designed by McSweeney & Antman for client eDairy, a provider of price-forecasting and price-risk consulting services to the worldwide dairy industry, recently went live, and can be viewed here: <http://www.dairy.nu>.

Other recent client projects include article copywriting; development of an e-mail, print ad and mail direct-response campaign; and ongoing media relations programs.

### **3. DON'T FAST-FORWARD THROUGH THIS**

Someone once said, "Half of all advertising is wasted. Problem is, I don't know which half."

Now, at last, we know – it's the half (more likely seven-eighths) that's spent on image advertising and other forms of advertising that aren't direct-response in nature. That, at least, is the conclusion reached by the digital video recorder company TiVo, which is able to measure directly which ads consumers in about 20,000 TiVo households don't fast-forward through and, therefore, presumably watch in their entirety. The most-watched? Unglamorous, hard-sell direct-response ads and other ads that are highly targeted to specific audiences.

These ads “aren't funny, they aren't touching, and they aren't clever. And they don't have big budgets,” as Burt Helm, media columnist for *Business Week*, puts it in the magazine's September 3 issue. “But all of these ads are well-tailored to their audiences,” Helm notes, adding, “(s)mart media planning, not creative ads, seems to be the key.

In actuality, the amount of wasted advertising dollars was probably never as high as 50 percent, and that number is probably declining all the time, as cable and the Internet allow more-precise targeting, and as the creative center of gravity in advertising agency switches from writers of lame jokes to those who develop fascinating new technologies to communicate with consumers, and those who develop precision-engineered plans for reaching them.

#### **4. “I’LL TRADE YOU A SKUM FOR ONE OF YOUR SMELLURS.”**

Most advertising, public relations, and marketing books specialize in stating the obvious, dully. Here's an interesting exception. *Shelf Life: A Celebration of the World's Quirkiest Brands*, is a photographic gallery of products that sound like they were named by randy 13-year-old boys, but are, in actuality, mainstream consumer goods in countries where the *entendres* are single, not double.

Examples: Aass, a Norwegian bock beer; Basterd brown sugar from the Netherlands; Skum candies from Sweden; Gross vinegar from South Africa; Mental mints from Italy; Colon laundry detergent from the Czech Republic; Rasch diswashing powder from Chile; Puke playing cards from Turkey; Smellur biscuits from Iceland; and Schmuck cake and cookie sprinkles from Germany. (The last name is less surprising if you know that “schmuck” is the German word for “decoration.”) There are other examples, like the mouth freshener from India with an interesting name that I can't include in this newsletter for fear it won't make it past your spam filters.

As the editors of the book note in their introduction, these products are “more characterful than any global mega-brand (and) don't kowtow to foreign marketing concerns...(w)hile most English-speaking manufacturers can't stand being misunderstood, the brands collected here maintain the courage of their convictions.”

And here's an interesting lesson in cultural relativism: Here in America (where most of the recipients of this newsletter reside) we probably don't give a second thought to the popular candy bar Mounds, but there it is, stretched out like a centerfold on a two-page spread in the middle of the book, where it undoubtedly is engendering much hilarity on the part of readers elsewhere in the world.

## 5. NEVER STRUM YOUR RACKET IN A RAINSTORM

And here's another interesting book, this one from the public relations end of the marketing communications spectrum. *It's Not News, It's Fark: How Mass Media Tries to Pass Off Crap as News*, written by Drew Curtis, founder of the popular website [www.fark.com](http://www.fark.com), is a sometimes funny, sometimes depressing compilation of the kind of news items that dominate the cable news station's 24-hour news cycles *and yet have absolutely no intrinsic importance whatsoever*.

One example of Fark is the medical or technological scare story that, upon closer examination, turns out to have no basis in reality. For example, Curtis cites an actual newspaper headline that reads: "Hang Up Your Cell Phone or Get Hit by Lightning." The "news" story that follows nowhere states that talking on a cell phone outdoors makes it statistically more likely that you will be hit by lightning. In fact, the medical journal article upon which the newspaper piece was based cites a grand total of *three people worldwide* who have been hit by lightning while talking on a cell phone. Considering how many billions of cell phones there are in the world, it would seem statistically more likely that you could be hit by lightning while strumming a tennis racket and pretending that you're Eric Clapton.

This, of course, is only a very small example of how the mass media, often aided and abetted by public relations practitioners trying to sell a product or service (or discourage people from said product or service), panic the public with utterly bogus scare stories. Other cell phone scares have held this technological marvel responsible for exploding gas tanks and, believe it or not, disappearing bees.

Curtis also covers a host of other types of Fark, such as pop singers making pronouncements on global warming, and self-serving "surveys," like the one that claimed, using dubious methodology, that vegetables are the most popular Super Bowl snack. The survey, which was carried by all of the major news wires, was sponsored by an organization called the NPD Group. One of its clients, according to Curtis, is the Produce Marketing Association.

And that's what he means by Fark.

Please note that McSweeney & Antman's telephone number has been changed to: 847-636-2715

Our mailing address remains:  
McSweeney & Antman  
424 Prairie Avenue  
Wilmette, Il. 60091

Our e-mail address remains [michael@mcsweeneyantman.com](mailto:michael@mcsweeneyantman.com).