

## **MCSWEENEY & ANTMAN'S OCCASIONAL UPDATE VOLUME 5 NUMBER 1**

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. NEW CLIENTS**

McSweeney & Antman welcomes its new client FCStone Group, Inc. (NASDAQ: FCSX). FCStone Group is an integrated commodity risk management company that provides risk management consulting and transaction execution services to commercial commodity intermediaries, end-users, and producers. Headquartered in Des Moines, Iowa, the company manages 13 offices in the U.S., plus five international locations.

Also, McSweeney & Antman has begun providing brand-management and business-development services to a Chicago-based advertising agency.

### **2. "A MONEY-BURNING BARBECUE": MARKETING IN A RECESSION**

The tricky topic of marketing during a recession (which the vast majority of economists would agree is what we're facing at the moment) is, not surprisingly, receiving renewed attention. The calculus of cutting costs when sales are declining – or when a company expects that, in the near future, they *will* be declining -- isn't an easy one, and a strictly arithmetical approach usually isn't effective. That's especially true when the budget being trimmed is earmarked for the very activities that bring in new business (advertising, trade shows, sales support materials, etc.)

Nonetheless, it's a fact of life that, at many companies, marketing and marketing communications activities are among the first items that a company cuts – even though these cuts are likely to hasten the downward sales spiral.

If a company *does* need to cut money from marketing and sales, it's usually better to cull some specific, individual marketing and sales-support programs that haven't been carrying their weight, while proceeding full-speed ahead with other programs, rather than to roll out half-hearted, poorly funded programs across the

board. A very brief advertising burst, for example, with no long-term follow-up, is probably no better than throwing money away.

Marketing consultant Lewis Green agrees. In a blog posting here, [http://lgbusinesssolutions.typepad.com/solutions\\_to\\_grow\\_your\\_bu/2008/02/it-looks-like-b.html](http://lgbusinesssolutions.typepad.com/solutions_to_grow_your_bu/2008/02/it-looks-like-b.html), he advises companies and their agencies to “ensure that marketing is a long-term effort. Starting and stopping, doing a little here and a little there, is a failed policy. You might as well host a company BBQ and burn money instead of charcoal.”

Here’s another article on the same topic from the invaluable website MarketingProfs, with five simple, practical tips for marketing during an economic downturn: <http://www.marketingprofs.com/8/five-tips-marketing-in-a-recession-gow.asp>.

A simple but critically important point from the article: “You have an opportunity in a downturn to win market share from your competitors.”

### **3. SHAVING BABIES, CARROT MEN AND WEREWOLVES**

One thing’s for certain: Whether in a recession or in economic boom times, odd and ill-conceived advertising that hurts your brand image is worse than a waste of money. Take a look at this fascinating collection of print advertising from the site Weirdomatic, here: <http://www.weirdomatic.com/creepy-ads.html>. After you look at these ads, featuring references to “senile agitation,” masochistic pigs, and “the summer season of extra smoking,” ask yourself this question: How many of these ads were creepy and ill-conceived from the first, and how many merely look that way today, from our contemporary perspective?

Answering that question isn’t easy, but certainly easier than evaluating which of *today’s* advertising campaigns will look ridiculous years from now, as opposed to the ones that will stand the test of time.

### **4. “A COOLER HEAD PREVAILS”**

Among the myriad concerns confronting American business, global warming is one of the highest on the corporate agenda. Yet the scope of climate change, the extent to which it can be ameliorated, and its likely effect on business are still very much open questions. Bjorn Lomborg is a highly controversial environmental writer who believes that while global warming is real, and caused primarily by human activity, it isn’t nearly as much of a threat to civilization and the health of the global environment as others have claimed. He also thinks that many of the proposed solutions to global warming are far too expensive and likely to be only marginally effective.

McSweeney & Antman president Michael Antman's new feature-length review of *Cool It*, from the cultural criticism website PopMatters, can be found here:  
<http://www.popmatters.com/pm/features/article/53272/a-cooler-head-prevails/>

## **5. SCARLETT JOHANSSON, SKUM, SOX, ARSENIC AND WOMBAT COATS**

We've expanded our newsletter mailing list. For those of you receiving this newsletter for the first time, there are some interesting, relevant (and, in some cases, utterly and, we hope, enjoyably *irrelevant*), articles to be found in past issues, including pieces on the topics in the headline above. They can be found at our newsletter archive, here:

<http://www.mcsweeneyantman.com/index.asp?page=9>

## **6. "DON'T LECTURE ME!"**

McSweeney & Antman president Michael Antman has recently been providing presentation training for clients. If you or one of your colleagues tend to suffer from a bad case of the heebie-jeebies before a major presentation, would like to be weaned from over-dependence on the insidious and ubiquitous PowerPoint program, or would like to learn why a presentation should resemble a conversation more than a speech or a lecture, I would be happy to provide a free initial consultation on your needs. Just contact me at [michael@mcsweeneyantman.com](mailto:michael@mcsweeneyantman.com) or 847-636-2715.

Please note that McSweeney & Antman's telephone number has been changed to:  
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