



January 23, 2006
Media Industry Newsletter
Vol. 59 No. 4
New York, N.Y.
www.minonline.com

Media Industry Newsletter®

SINCE 1947: THE AUTHORITATIVE MEDIA/MARKETING NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY BOXSCORES KEEP THE ADVERTISING FAITH.

Month was flat versus February 2005 (last year's differential was +2.86%), which is good as can be expected considering the vagaries of selling during the holiday season, when 2006 budgets had not been completely set. Amen to Guideposts, the nonsecularian faith-based monthly that did not accept advertising until 2001 (56 years after its launch), which nearly quadrupled its business from last year. **Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia** president/ceo (since November 2004) Susan Lyne, who spoke last week at a **Magazine Publishers of America** breakfast, had to enjoy the +59.51%/+84.80% February from, respectively, MSL and Everyday Food. February was also +50%-and-above for Firehouse (+66.24%), Wired (+59.52%), NG Kids (+55.08%), and Dwell (+52.63%).

- ◆ Eyepopping about Prevention's +5.99% is that the issue's 109.46 ad pages set a February record for the 56-year-old monthly. A catalyst, says promoted-last-October vp/publisher Bob Ziltz, is a custom-marketing section on women's heart disease with the nonprofit **WomenHeart** and ad partners **Uncle Ben's/Minute Maid/Promise Buttery Spread/Plavix**. (boxscores are on pages 8 and 9)

RESIGNED "OUTSIDE" EDITOR HAL ESPEN JOINS A FRATERNITY OF THREE.

His January 17 announcement--Espen's wanting to write full-time being the factor--means that owner/chairman Larry Burke will be searching for an editor for only the fourth time since he acquired the just-launched Outside from Jann Wenner in 1977. Espen, who will end a seven-year run when he leaves in February, followed John Rasmus (1979-1990), and Mark Bryant (1991-1998), with interim editors in-between. All three reigns produced **National Magazine Awards** for Outside, and National Geographic Adventure founding editor-in-chief (March 1998) Rasmus tells min: "Outside's high editorial quality reflected Larry's character. I had a great experience."

- ◆ Both Rasmus and Bryant subsequently went to Wenner's Men's Journal (Rasmus was MJ founding editor in 1992), where, as with all **Wenner Media** magazines, turnover was (continued on page 4)

Guest Commentary, by Jonathon Scott Feit:

THERE IS A MISGUIDED EMPATHY--WITH A GENERATION GAP--IN ADVERTISING.

When it comes to business development, there is a glaring difference between One-Size-Fits-All and Jack-Of-All-Trades. The former almost never works. (A singular exception: **Google**, of course.) The latter is the sign of our times.

- ◆ Michela O'Connor Abrams, president/publisher of the red-hot Dwell, has aptly described the marketing crux of the early 21st century as a need to be accessible (continued on page 5)

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- MORE CIRC/ADS FOR RACHAEL RAY; HALPERN'S PHILA. STORY. Pages 3 and 4
- CARBINE, WOLFE ARE BLACK'S AND BUCKLEY'S AWARD RIGHT STUFF... Page 4
- MAG. AD \$\$\$ (YEAR-END); MONTHLY BOXSCORES (FEB.).. Pages 7, 8, and 9
- BLACK ENTERPRISE "♀/POWER" COVER PICKS RENETTA OVER OPRAH...Page 10

GUEST COMMENTARY
JONATHON SCOTT FEIT



MISGUIDED EMPATHY IN ADVERTISING
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anytime, anywhere, and in any form." *Every single* publishing and advertising industry conference now has at least one--and often more--panel discussion about search technologies. *À la carte* is a motif that has underlain many a recent major business transaction.

Why, then, would The Wall Street Journal--that venerable holdout of editorial integrity during a shadowy era of newspaper-industry layoffs and scandals--devote its entire "Advertising" section of Wednesday, January 4, 2006, to a mistake?

The article, entitled **Chrysler's Made-Up Customers Get Real Living Space at Agency**, explains that car manufacturers--most extensively **DaimlerChrysler**--are so desperate to empathize with their customers' needs and wants that they have built mock domiciles in an effort to get inside potential buyers' heads. The agency helping the get-to-know-you effort is San Francisco-based **Organic**, which describes itself as a "digital marketing agency that designs and builds exceptional interactive experiences for leading companies to drive brand awareness and more profitable customer relationships."

Yet auto sales remain depressed, particularly among American and German makes, despite elaborate efforts to "get in touch" with the consumer. A companion piece in the January 4 WSJ (**VW's American Road Trip**) enumerates a possible trio of reasons for the sector's slump: "declining sales, unfavorable exchange rates, and quality problems." (The Japanese are flourishing, either of their own accord or because their rivals are off-target.)

To venture a fourth possibility: the hubris-filled notion of being able to "simulate" a human being--a tastemaker, no less!--is at best counterproductive, at worst downright wrong.

According to the WSJ article, in the room belonging to "Roberto, a 28-year-old who lives in Boston...an open **Lays** potato chip bag sits on a scratched end-table...posters from the movie *Fight Club* and the animated film *Akira* adorn his walls."

But Boston--where I not only completed school but also currently teach--has the highest concentration of young intellectuals in the United States, and I cannot think of any 28-year-old men living there who fit that stereotypical post-frat boy description.

Organic's "Jenny" campaign is likewise trite and flat. "Because of her busy life and hectic career, two important themes emerged: her need for sanctuary and her 'metrospirituality,'" the copy reads. Maybe some do conform to the agency's preconceived mold, but most of the young professional women I know thrive as "Type A."

The underlying problem is not one of simplification or even stereotyping, for complexity has always been the bane of the advertising industry. Advertisers depend on a common understanding of a single message, a simple slogan, or a catchy jingle.

The rub stems from underestimation: *How stupid do advertisers, agencies, and mainstream media think young people are?*

Fantasizing that consumers, especially young professionals, conform to Hollywood-driven notions of need and taste won't sell products that require any kind of consideration. It will do nothing but alienate the independent-minded.

And in today's on-demand world, the independent-minded are the majority, since we can all afford to go our own way.

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