

ADWEEK

Vol. XLII No. 4

EASTERN EDITION

January 22, 2001/\$3.95

art&commerce



Eric Yaverbaum
is president of
Jericho Communications
in New York.

The Right Touch

A primer on the fine art of building an agency brand

For those who were watching closely, the sale of Deutsch should be the final class in a course on branding an advertising agency—and what the rewards are for doing it well.

There are few agencies, big or small, that brand themselves—even though the ones that do, without exception, achieve more success.

The people at Deutsch will say they do advertising better than any one else. Perhaps their campaigns are better, but is that ever definitely proven right or wrong? No, it's right only because the brand says so.

What they obviously did better than most was build a clear and distinct brand personality.

Donny Deutsch evolved the brand at just the right times. When the shop was young, it lived on its creativity, which is the only brand weapon a small agency can use. As the shop grew into adolescence, the brand developed a strategic prowess. Later, the brand adopted the attributes needed for a large agency to succeed: capability, diversity and service.

All the while, Deutsch began extending the spotlight to other key people at his agency. This helped the brand attain the attributes of size and stature, while maintaining the Deutsch DNA of irreverence, innovation and creativity.

In my 15 years working for and with advertising agencies, I have discovered why ad shops don't brand themselves well.

First, it's amazing how often an agency will mistake its reputation for a brand. A reputation brings recognition, a brand brings business.

Second, agencies want to believe their creative will brand them. That, with few exceptions, does not happen.

For example: Chiat\Day received more press for the architecture of its offices than for the creative work itself. McCann-Erickson produced great commercials—yet the agency didn't have a brand that leveraged the work. It didn't reap the full benefits from that creative.

Creative is subjective—in other words, it's not an effective branding tool. Even when the work is univer-

sally praised, it won't help meet an agency's ultimate goals. A brand positions creative, but it cannot *be* creative.

Third, a brand must be constructed in quantitative terms. Ad people think qualitatively. Agencies send out press releases every day, touting their new campaigns as revolutionary. They get nowhere.

To properly build a brand, a shop must prospect personality and quantifiable differences. It must make a commitment—to creativity, innovation, service, diversity. Alone, the great ad, the newly hired executive creative director and the CEO's history don't build brands. There is just too much talent in this industry.

Most agencies refuse to look at themselves the way they look at their clients. They know Coke is not branded by its recipe, and Budweiser by the quality of its beer. Yet they travel those same roads themselves.

Historically, there has been criticism of the Deutsch approach. Start spreading the news, folks: The Deutsch approach worked. ■