

ADVERTISING STAR



Harvey Hoffenberg: Founder/President of Propulsion, LLC

[By Aundi Howerton]

Anyone who has spent even minimal time in front of the television during the 1980s or 1990s in the United States has likely had some portion of their imagination stamped by advertising maven, Harvey Hoffenberg. After graduating from the University of Florida in 1974, Hoffenberg's career began with a 15-year stint at Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborn (BBDO) where he became the agency's Senior Creative Director. In 1989, he joined Saatchi & Saatchi as Chief Creative Officer and ultimately Vice Chairman and CEO. Then Hoffenberg moved to Bozell Worldwide and another CCO position before founding his own company, Propulsion, a self-declared "new breed of branding and ideation firm."

Hoffenberg is responsible for some of the most well-known and creative advertising campaigns in history, including Pepsi's "Choice of a New Generation" campaign with Michael Jackson, Pepsi's "Archeology" (noted as one of the "50 Greatest Commercials of All Time" by *TV Guide*), the "Essence of Shaving" for Gillette, "You are Tomorrow, You are the Navy" for the U.S. Navy, "The One and Only Cheerios" for General Mills, and "Making it Great," for Pizza Hut, among others. His work for Pepsi in the '80s remains among Hoffenberg's most prized accomplishments, along with a Taco Bell project he completed while with Bozell, and most recently, a television spot for Stew Leonard's, a Connecticut dairy store. "It was done on a shoestring budget and has gotten some recognition," Hoffenberg said. The ad ran at the end of last year, and sales have jumped 28% since then.

Hoffenberg is prone to making such gains for his clients. His theory around the creation of ad holds the elegant code to his successes. On the Propulsion website, he writes, "I've been schooled in the art of understanding customers for over 25 years — what makes them tick and how to connect with them. I hope to keep learning and never graduate."

Hoffenberg focuses a great deal on the "power of sight and sound in any medium," or simply relating the body of the observer to the product. "Business has always been about connecting with customers," he said.

There are two sides to this: "What you say and where you say it," he said. "In the past, there was a lack of accountability." With the surging use and capabilities of the Internet, the advertising question, Hoffenberg said, is no longer just what's being said, it's about "connecting with them where they are, who they are, and when ... they're involved in media. Connecting with them [the customer]

is cornerstone. The Internet is a great venue to get accountability [in advertising]."



On current campaigns, Hoffenberg said out-of-the-box thinking is pushing the advertising market in exciting directions. "Packaging is hugely important now. People are looking at more of a 360-degree approach in connection with customers. No more flat advertising." For a field that was once the ugly stepchild of media, creativity is charging a new front and, he said, is taking "a lead role in being able to create the visibility and connectivity to customers."

And Hoffenberg has earned the license to comment. He has won almost every creative award granted to advertising geniuses, including several Clios, One Shows, and Cannes Lions awards. On his website, he notes his most cherished award as the Advertising Council's highest award for volunteerism, The Silver Bell, for his work on the Points of Light Foundation; and he's not slowing down.

His recent clients (along with Stew Leonard's) include the environmental engineering company Malcolm Pirnie and *Forbes* magazine. He also recently named,

Q. What do you do for fun?

A. Being outdoors, fishing, and an occasional round of golf. Fishing clears the space between your ears.

Q. What CD is in your CD player right now?

A. You mean my iPod? I have a very eclectic taste in music; everything from classical to country. Songs must be written well, lyrically.

Q. What is the last magazine you read?

A. *Advertising Age*, *Fortune*, and *Forbes*. *Fast Company* is a great magazine. I read so many.

Q. What is your favorite TV show?

A. *The Sopranos* and *24*.

Q. Who is your role model?

A. My kids are, in part. They don't have the inhibitions we learn to incorporate. You get the real deal from your kids. That's what you need in this business. You can't be afraid to try something different, can't be afraid to fail. Like acting, you must approach what you do without the fear of looking stupid. Do it differently.



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co-designed, and launched a campaign for an all-natural, preservative and hormone-free chicken product called Naked Chicken. Sales have jumped 300% from last year.

Hoffenberg is among the few successful advertisers who actually studied the craft and achieved a college degree in advertising and design. He began his hands-on experience humbly with an internship at a "one-man shop" in Florida where he said he got to experience everything, rather than being lost in a big agency. He said he was an average student as a junior but returned his senior year after the internship experience to complete his studies at the top of his class.

For those suited for the art of advertising, Hoffenberg offered much encouragement. Acknowledging that artistic types can often be queued to the parameter because of non-traditional ways of thinking, he said these are just the people that advertising needs: those who won't bore the customer. Original ideas are the future of advertising. As entertainment value within ads gains importance, the ability to create "a dialogue with customers...a story that involves a listener" is crucial.

He encouraged the development of networking and connecting for young ad professionals and reiterated the basics, like creative writing, technology, and art direction as absolutes in being able to "communicate

the strategy of the product." Hoffenberg asserted that technology can make nearly any artistic vision a reality, but not to let its current limits limit the creative mind. "Do something that's never been done before... but at the core of the product, the service must be there."

ON THE NET

Propulsion
www.propulsionllc.com

Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborn
www.bbdo.com

Pepsi
www.pepsi.com/home.php