



The Art of Presenting.
An Informative Series

NO **6**

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Bart Cleveland is Creative Director and a partner of McKee Wallwork Cleveland. Over the last two decades, his work has included branding campaigns for Coca-Cola, CNN, The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company and Dow in markets across the globe. Bart has previously worked at agencies such as Fahlgren and Saatchi & Saatchi, and in 1998 joined Sawyer Riley Compton as Sr. VP-Executive Creative Director. He is a frequent guest lecturer at many of the country's leading creative advertising schools. Bart's work has received hundreds of awards for creativity both nationally and internationally including The One Show, CA, D&AD and Clios. Be sure to check out his contributions to *Small Agency Diary*, a blog hosted by *Advertising Age*.

There are many stories about outrageous things ad people have resorted to, in order to sell an idea. George Lois threatening to jump out a skyscraper window if a bagel maker didn't buy his idea is probably the most famous one. This zealous commitment is an important element in successfully presenting concepts. It is more than skill that effectively sells, passion for the work also matters. Presenting is a performance. Remember, you're helping others see what the work will be. I don't suggest threatening to jump out of a window, but the more you believe in the work, the more likely you can sell it.

There are a few things one should remember to successfully sell an idea:

- 1. Prepare.** Think of your presentation as an ad. An ad has to be simple. It has to leave the viewer with one distinct message. Plan and hone your presentation message. Rehearse. It's much easier to be relaxed when you're not searching for words, so get in a room by yourself or with your partner and practice.
- 2. Clients worry.** They don't want to make a mistake by buying the wrong work. If you're nervous presenting they aren't going to think its stage fright but doubt in the ideas. They also can sense desperation. Name sound reasons the client should have for buying the work. Don't fight for it because of how great the idea is and

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never talk about it being an “award-winning” idea. Don’t be self-serving. Serve the client’s best interest by supporting rational support for the work.

3. *Clients don’t want to be sold, they want you to be sold.* You’re the expert. Present work you believe in. Give an opinion. Have a recommendation. Tell the client what they should do. That’s what they’re paying for.
4. *Clients can’t see what you can see.* They are buying a lot on faith, so they need to understand as much as possible what they’re buying. Bring the work to life. Tell a story. Paint a picture. Make it real. It will sell itself if you bring it to life.
5. *Don’t be condescending.* If a client feels you’re talking down to them the work can suffer the consequences. Clients are nervous and out of their element. No matter how ignorant or ridiculous a client’s comment may sound, help them understand with grace and tact.
6. *Great work has an edge.* It’s unexpected. Naturally there will be risks involved. Let the client articulate their concerns. If you’ve done your homework you’ve already thought of possible issues and have answers that address them.
7. *When you fail to sell your idea get back on the horse immediately.* It’s very easy to mourn great work that dies. It’s also easy to feel sorry for oneself and give up by doing mediocre work. View a no-go as an opportunity to beat that work. If you do, I guarantee you will beat it. 