Advertising Progress
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Clear-headed men no longer rush into print merely to satisfy a vanity for having their name and business autobiographies emblazoned on paper. . . . [T]he up-to-the-scratch business man now-a-days wants value received for every dollar spent in print publicity. He wants returns—sales—practical prestige that makes for better, bigger trade.

—The Hoeflich Printing House's Profitable Talks on Printing 3 (1915)

### Rising Expectations for Effectiveness

Advertisements became “modern” as specialists competed with each other to provide advertising services after 1890. As national, brand-name advertisers gradually gave up directing and writing their own messages after 1880, agents, printers, publishers, freelances, and advertisers’ employees vied for authority and patronage in the new niche for professional assistance. In the unsettled business environment that followed the Crash of 1893, progressive and up-to-date specialists urged that efficiency and effectiveness—the watchwords of the era—become the criteria for advertising prowess and progress. As difficult as they are to ascertain, then as now, efficiency and effectiveness argued against advertisers’ using costs as the sole criteria for advertising decisions, against manufacturers’ using product price as their primary promotional message, against messages that pleased advertisers instead of engaging consumers, and against nonspecialists’ creating messages, this last despite the great successes of owner-managers’ promotions throughout the century.

In order to improve their claims to the advertisers’ patronage, leading agen-
cies began to restructure their operations so that their highest profile became that of communication experts operating as intermediaries between advertisers and consumers, even though, to this day, media buying still occupies a major portion of agency personnel. In the course of this restructuring over three decades, specialists participated in the development of the consumer-oriented approaches that have come to characterize twentieth-century advertisements. Then, as now, it remains to be pointed out, advertising agencies prosper best by serving their clients, who are their first audiences. Therefore, consumer-oriented did not, and does not, refer to serving consumers and their interests. Consumer-oriented messages are designed to appeal to and influence consumers by calculating what visual and verbal stimuli can evoke the desired responses. Neither does use of the term consumer-orientation mean that advertising specialists quickly, if ever, got past their own intuitions and biases simply because they sought to override their clients' intuitions and biases.1

Promoting oatmeal as a breakfast cereal provides a case in point of the evolution of advertising creation. After leading producers merged, they battled over advertising styles, debating price and production emphases against a plethora of attempts to appeal to consumers' emotions. The rolled-oats industry began in the United States in 1854, pioneered by Ferdinand Schumacher. It epitomized the type of processing firm that required high turnover to profit from expensive technologies that could put products—many newly available or newly available in large quantities—into distribution channels to be pushed by sales forces or pulled by consumer demand. By the 1870s, Schumacher had successfully pioneered oatmeal with stark newspaper copy, first locally and then nationally. His accomplishments at convincing many consumers that oats were an economical food that was fit for them as well as for their horses encouraged competitors to enter the market, and by the mid-1880s prices began to fall rapidly. His competitors attempted pools, which Schumacher either ignored or sabotaged. Then in 1888 they merged into the American Cereal Company; Schumacher agreed to join them only after negotiating extremely favorable concessions.2

Schumacher never accepted the desirability of cooperation within the new corporate structure, however, and he continued to micromanage his activities within the firm, even refusing to employ a stenographer or typist. He also continued to see himself at odds with his former competitors; actually, he was at odds with them—because he and they approached business differently. In marketing strategies, Schumacher held onto the production ethos by which volume processing and price reduction were not only tools in competition but the industrialists' major contribution to progress. Like Carnegie and Rockefeller, Schumacher genuinely believed that lowering prices for processed goods
legitimated both business and personal fortune; Henry Ford never believed that any goal was more important than his lowering of automobile prices by high-volume production techniques. Schumacher's promotional strategies—namely, announcing price and nutritional benefit, distributing samples, and declaring his product's quality—had served well, and he saw no reason to change. In contrast to Schumacher's strategies (he had never made any effort to make his product more attractive to consumers except by price cutting) the corporation's directors sought to improve their product's superficial features, to experiment with packaging, and to advertise to develop brand loyalty so that they could maintain their price level. Schumacher staunchly resisted these elaborations, believing that consumers needed only to be convinced to buy oatmeal as a cheap, digestible, safely produced protein source. All else was a waste of resources and a distraction from the problem of generating primary demand for oatmeal. Despite Schumacher's objections, the American Cereal Company experimented broadly with style and content in advertising during the 1890s, relieved from price competition because of the mergers and because this cheap source of nutrition was relatively depression-proof. Henry Parsons Crowell, one of the corporation's prime movers, in contrast to Schumacher had had no experience with milling or any form of production when, around 1881 at the age of twenty-six, he purchased the mill that produced Quaker Oats. With K. B. Newell, a director who worked as its advertising manager, Crowell applied many of the tactics long used to sell patent medicines, including alleged scientific endorsements, customer testimonials, premiums, and the printing of sales arguments and recipes on the packaging. Crowell also supported story-line advertisements (narratives with plots) and puffing—that is, paid insertions that appeared in publications as stories or reports without declaring themselves as advertisements. In all of these stories, consumers of Quaker Oats dramatically achieved their fondest desires because of the cereal. The firm conducted these practices—which must have seemed erratic, even dissembling, to Schumacher—on a massive scale, with extensive national placements through magazines and newspapers.

The continued antagonism between Schumacher and his former competitors gave American Cereal Company's experimentation with advertising strategies special significance. Because Schumacher opposed applying brand-enhancing promotions or nonbusinesslike messages, the corporation's directors negotiated a two-brand program. While Crowell and Newell marketed Quaker Oats, Schumacher insisted that his name be continued on a separate "brand" of the same product, F. S., with an identical advertising budget. The advertisements for F. S. followed the owner-manager tradition that featured the producer's identity and prestige, and they all read alike: "The trademark F. S.
stands for Ferdinand Schumacher, who is probably better known than any other man in the country as a manufacturer of Pure Food Products. The brand F. S. on a package of flour or cereal is a guarantee to the purchaser that the quality is the best that can be had in the market.” In what amounted to a market test, F. S. sales declined while Quaker Oats sold well. Schumacher continued to deny that any advantage accrued to advertisements that addressed consumers’ lives and emotional interests instead of stating basic product merits and his own accomplishments. Moreover, he demanded that his brand be allowed to undersell Quaker Oats by rebates and discounts. Even with this, the F. S. brand suffered declining sales, meanwhile costing the company substantial profits; in the end, a proxy fight ensued, and by 1899 Schumacher had retired. Unlike C. W. Post and W. K. Kellogg, who lived on through their cereals’ brand names, Schumacher’s reputation died before he did.5

The American Cereal Company spoke to the public through the abstract figure of a jovial Quaker gentleman. In 1877, this symbol began its work for one of the original oatmeal firms as a small, serious man in dark clothing, but it evolved to a rotund, smiling, brightly drawn figure. The image appeared on packages to remind consumers of the countless times it appeared in advertisements, at fairs and expositions, or on special cross-country trains, always advising them on how to improve or preserve their health, or even their careers and romances. The cereal’s advertising claims ranged from the sublime, “Children fed on Quaker Oats will develop strong, white teeth,” to the ridiculous, “On four successive occasions [a woman filed for divorce because she] has asked her husband to bring home a package of Quaker Rolled Oats, and each time he has failed to do so.” What the new messages held in common made them stepping stones to modern advertising: no officer of the trust represented the firm to the public, none signed the labels, and they included no mentions or images pertaining to production, other than references to what directly affected consumers, such as cleanliness. The Quaker figure, whether drawn or walking around in costume, did not own or operate the firm; it did not exist other than as a conduit for promotional messages intended to attract and resonate with popular humor and consumers’ interests. It had no purpose other than selling oatmeal on behalf of a corporation that belonged to and represented no single person. In 1901, the Quaker Oats Company formed, identifying the corporation with its symbol, but not with its owners, or even their country.6

Besides the much publicized successes of Quaker Oats and others such as Columbia Bicycles and Duke's cigarettes, business owners and managers alike received many signals that strongly urged updating advertising methods. Electoral politics of the 1890s, culminating in the 1896 presidential election, of-
fered businesspeople a convincing lesson in the power of advertising, supple­mented generously and expensively by other forms of structured publicity. Most trade journals featured articles and editorials on the subject, and adver­tisements by agents and printers and publishers did what they could to add to the sense of urgency. An *Iron Age* editorial explained in 1896 that “the bicy­cle has been more extensively, expensively and ingeniously advertised than any other article ever placed on the market. . . . This is the result of the sharp and incessant competition. Makers do not do this because they like to keep their earnings in circulation—it is an essential part of the business and con­stitutes a large item in the cost.” *American Brewers’ Review* editors quoted *Printers’ Ink* in one of their continuing criticisms of brewers’ advertisements: “Yet, despite the millions poured out by brewers in this country every year for advertising, beer still remains one of the products about which the public knows least. Who will tell the story of beer properly?” With such admonitions everywhere, including the specter of ruin represented by competitors’ adver­tisements, the businessperson concerned with promoting a firm’s wares could hardly avoid worry lest “his competitor, beating him in what might be called the aggregate of selling methods, will beat him in the selling.” New business conditions required giving “continual study” to advertising, according to the first issue of the National Association of Manufacturers’ journal *American Indus­tries* in 1902, and the advertiser “who has not been so progressive as his competitor, nor so apt in adapting his own general proposition to the condi­tions which surround him” was fated to “exclusion” from the market.

How was a manufacturer to pursue a “progressive” advertising course? Ac­cording to all advice, the first step entailed recognizing that effectiveness rather than low media costs had to be the advertiser’s top priority. This com­prised both effective media planning and advertisement content. As *American Industries* put it, “if periodicals ‘pay,’ it is clear that the right periodicals will pay better than the wrong ones, and that the right kind of ‘copy’ will pay bet­ter than the wrong kind.” Although frequency and reach, or exposure per dollar, were easily understood measures of bargaining skills and business acu­men, buying space by seeking the lowest price for the maximum exposure could be a false economy. Not all circulations were equally valuable. A 1904 advertisement for N. W. Ayer & Son explained that in distributing an adver­tisers’ expenditures, “the cost per line per paper is of infinitely less conse­quence to the advertiser than that the right thing shall be said in the right way, in the right paper, at the right time, and in the right place, and this com­bination of right things does not come by accident or without experience.”

Earnest Elmo Calkins wrote in 1915 about the transformation in advertis­ers’ expectations for effectiveness that he had helped foster. “The manufac-

*Taking Advertisements toward Modernity*
turer who uses this great force to sell his goods has begun to submit it to the same tests to which he submitted his shop costs, sales or shipping methods. Long ago he admitted that advertising is a necessity. Now he asks can it be made more exact... The manufacturer who bought advertising as a commodity began to scrutinize more sharply what he was buying. Now if he is wise he is buying it as a service, or rather as a commodity made more valuable by a service. That service was best obtained from advertising agents, according to the bulk of the literature aimed at manufacturers in their own presses and elsewhere after 1895. One writer predicted in 1898 that advertisers would come to turn to specialists even if agencies' costs were not wholly met by publishers' commissions. The advertising business "exists because men want help in their advertising," less for the "clerical service" of buying space and more for the "vital thing" of copy. The second step to progressive advertising, accordingly, was to seek the services of a progressive advertising specialist.

During the 1880s, Harry Nelson McKinney had developed a strategy for soliciting accounts at N. W. Ayer & Son that was widely acknowledged as the most successful in the business. He investigated a prospective firm's products and markets, calculating how best to improve on its current marketing by more efficiently placing periodical advertisements. In the 1890s, McKinney began to seek out new, larger accounts, including financial institutions such as the major insurance companies and, especially, the foremost manufacturers of staple commodities. By 1891, the agency was prepared to assist with copy on a regular basis, and McKinney set an industry standard by acquiring the National Biscuit Company account in 1898 and helping to launch its Uneeda Cracker campaign. By 1905, at the same agency meeting in which McKinney pointed to the manufacturers' dissatisfaction with their inability to control jobbers, he called on his colleagues to seize upon that dissatisfaction as an opportunity for "business-getting" by making the advertisers' messages pay. They had to think "down below the surface" to come up with effective copy. By the turn of the century, an agency slogan, "make advertising pay the advertiser," applied to preparing advertisements as well as to placing them, and all leading advertising agencies had similarly begun to form new types of relationships with their advertising clients.

Intermediaries Between Advertisers and Consumers

As advertising specialists gradually took on planning and creating their clients' messages, they became, in effect, a new sort of intermediary. Unlike jobbers, wholesalers, and retailers, who had often operated at odds with man-
ufacturers, agencies explicitly, if not selflessly or without conflict, worked for, and at the behest of, the advertisers. In 1910, a Harper's Weekly article stated that even with small accounts the "advertiser becomes [the agents'] client. He [the ad agent] either writes his advertisements or supervises the writing of them. He organizes selling campaigns, takes a personal interest in the advertiser's business and becomes a sort of aide-de-camp or business counsellor to him."16

In addition to mediating between advertisers and publishers, specialists began to mediate, as they saw it, between advertisers and their markets. To compete with each other by promoting the levels of consumption that manufacturers sought, advertising specialists had to learn to persuade audiences on behalf of their clients. They eventually added new directions to commercial communications by learning to research markets and to seek out consumer reactions to products as well as to specific advertisements and overall campaigns. By doing so, they aimed at developing an awareness of the marketplace that advertisers, particularly the industrialists, had formerly neglected, but increasingly appreciated and rewarded when it sold goods. As a result, crude market analyses gradually began to replace advertisers' judgments about who the audiences were and what they wanted. Even so, it was specialists' intuitions and biases that began to replace advertisers' intuitions and biases. They succeeded if they could convince advertisers that those intuitions and biases sold.

For firms to accept the displacement of nonspecialist insiders by professional outsiders for producing their public messages, even when the latter were management-level employees instead of top management or owners, required the backdrop of deep changes in organizational structures and functions then restructuring high-profile American businesses. Although much of U.S. business still occurs in smaller firms, the national brand-name advertising that dominates the consumer marketplace largely comes out of managerially operated corporations. The growing distance of ownership from managerial controls resulting from mergers and generational changes meant that stockholders sought profits rather than their sense of worth or identity in the operations and reputations of the companies they owned. Middle managers more and more controlled businesses' daily activities. Even if founders of, or heirs to, firms that had merged wanted to maintain a hand in the new corporations' activities, they generally had to do so as upper-level, or even middle-level, managers. Consequently, no one person's identity was integrally connected with such firms in the way the founding owner-managers' had been. In some cases, the merger process pushed even the most prominent figures from firms' corporate identities, as when Edison's company became part of General Electric and Carnegie's became part of U.S. Steel.

The bureaucratization of the corporate structure accelerated the accept-
ance of the professional outsiders' roles. In contrast to the entrepreneurs' circumstances, the corporate environment rewarded receptiveness to other people's ideas and interpretations, fostering the "other-directedness" that David Riesman has posited. While Riesman dated the transition to a culture characterized by an "exceptional sensitivity to the actions and wishes of others" at mid-twentieth century, Louis Galambos has argued that "the other-directed man was already working for Standard Oil in the 1890s. By the early 1900s, his values were displacing individualistic concepts, at least in the middle class."17 This transition in the context for corporate decision making manifested itself in both an increasing appreciation of the value of investigating and responding to audiences in order to persuade them and a willingness to pass the responsibility for this task to specialists.

Even in this new corporate environment, advertising specialists did not come by the authority to direct advertising campaigns automatically. To the persuasive impact of publicized marketing successes they added their frequent arguments for why and how this transition to outsiders could benefit advertisers. As one analyst wrote in the general press in 1903, "even when a man doing a large business is thoroughly competent to advertise it himself, as many of them are, he does not have the time to give to this one of the many departments into which modern business divides itself." He also contended that "the view now generally taken in the business world" altogether dismissed nonspecialists' capacity to do their own advertising. When such a business owner or manager protested, "I think I ought to know how to advertise my own business," the proper response was, "Yes, you ought to, but you are one man in a hundred if you do." Assessments of the new marketing conditions echoed endlessly in the trade press to tell decision makers that they needed to change their practices.

The old methods were sufficient for their day, when there was little competition and the men who dared advertise largely made fortunes with small intellectual effort; but now advertising is a profession in itself, and men of enterprise are fain to employ skilled writers and equally skilled artists to tell the public about their business. . . . The business men are finding that it is one thing to know what you wish to say and quite another thing to know HOW to say it, and that, while they may know the former, it is usually better to hire special talent to do the latter.18

So, even if the officers of a firm had the time or the ability to communicate well to their consumers, they could certainly not have the perspective on their business to know what should be conveyed to a distant audience in order to maximize selling effectiveness.
The outside "experienced specialists" argued that they offered manufacturers the best sources of perspective feedback so that they might "Repeat the successes—not the failures," according to H. B. Humphrey, a Boston advertising agent, in 1901. Later Humphrey used the forum of NAM's American Industries to explain the importance of the "experienced advertising man [who] seeks out the vital points—he looks at the advertiser's business from the buyer's viewpoint—he is an outsider, and sees the features which interest him as a layman, and with his ability for handling words, can present these features to his readers in a way that is convincing, as though he was one of them and talking with them and not at them."  

Herbert N. Casson, who wrote on advertising as a time-and-motion expert, addressed the necessity for increasing the distance between specialists and advertisers with the concept of the admen as "professional outsiders." He concluded that "business men live too close to their work. They never see how it looks from the outside." Casson reviewed a long series of innovations in science, technology, and business by newcomers to those fields. Advertising, along with other aspects of managing in modern business, should be left to the professional outsider who can "put corporations in touch with the public" and "create new standards of efficiency." In the business culture of the times, appeals to specialization, efficiency, and effectiveness were hard to deny.

In making their claims to create more effective advertisements than advertisers could, specialists pointed in a specific direction of change, toward consumer-oriented, not advertiser-oriented content. To some, this conversion came as a personal revelation. William J. Raddatz became one of Cleveland's leading advertising professionals after leaving his position at the Morgan Lithography Company, a major printer of advertising show cards and other noncommissionable media. As a salesman for Morgan, he had prospered according to his ability to please the advertisers who were the job printer's customers. In 1911, he broadcast his new ambition as if it were a redemption: "I will today drop my identity as a seller of posters and burn incense at the altar of the buyer rather than that of the seller." In doing so, Raddatz rejected "the antiquated theory of poster advertising," which was "simply a process of crying one's name to the four corners of the earth with the wild hope of bringing your goods to the attention of someone without any regard for the impression you would create after you had this much coveted attention." By joining the ranks of those who managed the "impression" they made once they had their audiences' attention, Raddatz recognized that he had to lessen his concern for selling advertisements to the advertisers. Competing for and serving clients now entailed providing them with successful advertising campaigns that gave priority to appealing to the consumer. Conversely, agents had to be less con-
cerned with satisfying the advertisers' short-term, intuitive predilections. This dual realization became a rallying cry for advertising professionals, giving them direction for their professionalization.

Rather than perceiving any ambiguity or irony in their new ambition, or in the compromising position of the intermediary, the new profession of specialists adopted a self-righteous tone. They often spoke of themselves as the doctors or attorneys of business, and the new consumer-interest advertising became a medicine of sorts that advertisers should swallow for their own long-term interests. The most bitter pill of all those they offered was the prohibition against advertisers' boosting themselves through their advertisements. As a freelance copywriter and adviser through the trade press, Nathaniel Fowler Jr. depended entirely on the patronage of advertisers, yet he frequently asserted that "it doesn't make a particle of difference whether the advertiser is pleased or not, so long as the advertisement does its business." Nor, he said, did it matter whether the advertisement pleased the advertiser's "wife and his doctor and his lawyer and his artistic friend." Fowler went so far as to suggest that advertisers "paste these lines on your desk: 'The advertisement is for the buyer's eye, not for the seller's.'" Advertising professionals often expressed this principle to advertisers in colorful ways, such as admonishing them that, "it is not by his own taste, but by the taste of the fish, that the angler determines his choice of bait." Writing in *Language for Men of Affairs*, a series of business texts, James Melvin Lee explained the importance of researching audiences in sections entitled "Investigating the Basis of Appeal" and "Studying the Consumer's Taste." Lee emphasized his point with a parable about a wise manufacturer who had advertisements on his wall that had never gone to press. This possibly apocryphal businessman explained that "they are advertisements which I greatly admire personally, but which I know would never sell my products. By framing them and hanging them on my office walls, I can still enjoy them." According to Lee, even insisting upon approving the advertisements created by advertising professionals was not wise for the manufacturer.

This lesson was easier for some advertisers than others. In some cases the transfer of creative initiative and authority was smooth, as when Arthur Warren became the in-house advertising specialist for a major manufacturing firm. He claimed that the officers of the corporation were sufficiently pleased with the effectiveness of his advertising that they never countered his plans or expenses. In some cases, owners still managed their firms but felt burdened by advertising, doing it only to meet the competition, and they willingly passed the task on. The *Inland Printer* described this type of individual as having "spent a whole hour (!) in preparing 'copy'" and then sent it to all newspapers
alike for years at a time, "relieved when the copy was mailed and the space filled."  

In other cases, however, advertisers resented and opposed the suggestions of the specialists they had hired or commissioned to prepare their advertisements. For instance, Stanley Resor at J. Walter Thompson Company recalled recommending that Gerhard Mennen change his logo and the design of the tin container for his major product, baby talcum powder. Mennen's trademark featured his own portrait, and the tin container was, as Resor described it, "decorated with the picture of a baby with the muscle of a John L. Sullivan and glowering with [a] Mussolini glare." Mennen had intended to show the happy effects of his talcum on a baby, and since he did not want to cast aside decades of product-association with that image, he adopted more "modern" symbols only "when the business had begun to suffer."  

N. W. Ayer & Son personnel frequently responded to a client's comments about not liking copy with the "equally unanswerable argument that the copy is not intended to please him but rather to sell goods to a different class of people." At other times, a client's opposition resulted from "his instinctive distrust of unfamiliar ideas and methods." The outcomes of the ensuing clashes of wills varied, but the agency's records indicated, according to Ralph Hower, that "where the client has complied with [a] request for non-interference, both the advertising results and the relations between N. W. Ayer & Son and client have shown a noticeable improvement." Clients could be lost, however, over such disagreements, and some clients were rejected who refused to follow the agents' creative lead, such as when Ayer refused to handle Sears & Roebuck advertising because of Richard W. Sears's inflexibility. Livermore & Knight reported that, before 1900, "some trade was lost by their refusal to prepare advertising solely according to the taste of customers." And in yet other cases, trade journals and other advisers warned advertisers against agents who offered their services to flatter "their unconscious egotism. Most business men are so completely possessed with the thought of their own goods that they are unable to put themselves in the position of the public who know nothing of them and care less." In some cases, advertisers simply resented "a foolish outgo" of their "hard-earned money" on something that did not immediately produce results, as Claude Hopkins experienced with meat processors Swift & Company.  

The irony that advertisers were served best by advertisements that pleased them less than they appeared to please consumers resulted in a growing distance between advertisers, their agents, and their advertisements. However, it also testified to the apparent effectiveness of the advertising campaigns that professionals created during this transition period. For instance, when the Welch grape-juice business was twenty years old, William Armistead of N. W.
Ayer & Son discussed their advertisements with Dr. Welch and Edgar Welch, president and vice president of the firm. When Armistead and his colleagues suggested changes in their advertising, the Welches were “indignant.” After much discussion, however, they agreed to a trial, and their business increased 40 percent during the first year of the new campaign.31 Had the new styles of advertisements not appeared to market more effectively than those produced by the advertisers themselves, the arguments for specialized planning and copywriting could not have upset traditional practices so quickly. Such product successes could have been due to other factors, such as demographic changes, new communication technologies, competitors’ failures, or fads. What matters here is that advertisers and their advisers attributed the successes to what they controlled, namely, the marketing.

Rejecting the Past’s Copy and Design

The changes in advertising styles and content after the early 1890s did not occur because of any inevitable modernization. Nor did advertisements change simply because the professionalizing field of advertising specialists “took over” creating advertisements and exercised their budding expertise. Instead, advertisers, printers, publishers, and advertising specialists changed their output as they engaged in highly competitive and sometimes acrimonious interactions, all within a context of new printing technologies and new trends in American culture that both affected and reacted to the changes in advertising. The printing developments made it possible to increase vastly the volume and quality of pictures available to the public everywhere, but especially in periodicals. Gradually, the old-style one- or two-inch “cards” were pushed to the backs of publications or onto designated “classified” advertising pages and by 1900 larger ads—quarter-page, half-page, and full-page—increasingly became frequent, if not standard, especially for major advertisers in magazines. Photolithography, photoengraving, and screened halftones, all means of mechanically preparing images for printing, replaced chromolithography, engravings, and woodcuts as the technologies of choice for nonperiodical advertising in the 1880s and 1890s, with offset printing after 1900. The ensuing decline of trade cards and other ephemera was only one of many blows to formerly dominant advertising media, although manufacturers and wholesalers did increase their use of illustrated catalogs and circulars in lieu of distributing samples; calendars and other ephemera—such as fast-food giveaways—have remained widespread in retail promotions and in nonconsumer advertising. Once advertising agents could distribute illustrated advertisements through periodi-
cals, this strengthened their case for newspapers and magazines as advertising media. Photomechanical printing processes also reduced designers' dependence on printers and engravers for generating images, as anyone's illustrations (drawn or photographed) could be reproduced directly, without the intermediary of a printer's hand to redraw them. Photography's "constant feast for the eyes" itself gave advertising designers much greater freedom from both artists and printers.

The cultural context for these transitions in advertising included the period's many reactions against nineteenth-century culture, including design and prose styles. The extravagances of decoration that had characterized Victorian design became fashion's new target. Fashion's arbiters no longer felt the preceding century's strong needs for a reaction against mechanization and urbanization, a means of legitimating industrial products, or a celebration of industrialization's abundance. So powerfully had these three older impulses reinforced each other that the penchant to elaborate had rarely been restrained; decades of lighting devices, furniture, clothing, and even industrial equipment bore its influence. In this spirit, nineteenth-century advertisers and their printers and publishers had relished applying the new abundance of typefaces, borders, and dingbats. Flourishing these devices showcased printers' expansive styles, technical prowess, and ownership of the required technologies, all the while proclaiming advertisers' power to command such resources. Letterpress posters and handbills, as well as newspaper advertisements, often featured as many, or more, different typefaces as they had lines of type. Even an old letterpress printer had to admit, though, that lithographers had "led the typographic printer in the pursuit of the beautiful and truly artistic in printing." Lithographers had gloried in their abilities to design a new typeface with which to brandish each advertiser's name, and with no need to follow a straight line at all. The taste for printed extravagance began to fade only after decades of enthusiasm had sated the leaders among printers and publishers. By the mid-1880s, the trade press had already begun to caution its readers—advertisers and printers alike—"against crowding every ornamented font in the office into one job." Advisers began to warn that using "gingerbread, filigree work turned out under the guise of artistic printing, while valuable as showing what patience and effort can accomplish, is practically worthless...[in part] because it is frequently out of character to the nature of the work for which it is used." Admonitions to avoid the seductions of ornamentation continued for decades, such as the Printing Art's 1907 recommendation of "plain type": despite contentions that "this is an age of novelty," a "touch is usually all that is necessary, and the same is true of ornaments."

Printing was not the only field to move away from its nineteenth-century...
fashions. By the end of the century many Americans, and particularly leaders of the mainstream culture, had begun to react against the complexity of Victorian visual styles as manifested in all forms, from architecture to home decoration to advertisements. Designs, visually isolated figures, and abstractions increasingly replaced pictures and detailed scenes. Writing styles experienced an analogous shift away from elaborate, "literary," or "flowery" constructions. Major magazine editors, for instance, began to demand a simple, speechlike style from authors that persuaded rather than expressed—a "forceful," commonsense prose that communicated straightforward ideas and sold the reader on editorial policy.\textsuperscript{36} As the modernist impulse filtered into popular culture, advisers in both commercial art and copy picked up on its "progressive" movement away from tradition and guided advertisers accordingly. Just as modernist intellectuals defined their cause, in part, as a reaction against traditions, progressive advertising advisers defined their work as up-to-date according to how it moved away from traditional techniques and messages. They also used the modernist languages of expertise, efficiency, and Scientific Management, invented for industry, and applied them to convince industrialists to leave their public messages to the experts on writing with emotional appeal. These commercial rebels acted selectively, however, in rejecting the past. For instance, they eagerly sought to distill and preserve the essence of success from entertainers' and patent-medicine vendors' carnivalesque excesses and apply it to their own messages.

The practitioners' movements away from traditional advertisements in the name of effectiveness led them increasingly away from an emphasis on price advertising. They could hardly claim an important place for ad-writing skills if advertisements only publicized prices. Of course, competition based on characteristics other than price was not new; it was as old as consumer preferences themselves. The amenities retailers offer, for instance, can influence people's decisions on where to conduct their trade. Likewise, producers of similar goods can advertise incidental advantages in quality, service, or changes in style; both price and nonprice competition exist in different balances in all markets.\textsuperscript{37} Patent-medicine purveyors and entertainers since ancient times had adopted lively narratives and other appeals in their advertisements; some manufacturers and merchants did likewise.

Then under the pressure of the 1890s' marketing conditions, all forms of competition intensified. Initially, price competition did characterize many firms' marketing strategies as they competed for shrinking markets, both industrial and consumer. However, those purveyors and manufacturers of consumer goods whose market positions allowed them to avoid desperate price cutting, such as Quaker Oats, increasingly developed consumer-oriented pro-
motional strategies after 1893. For a while, manufacturers turned to the kinds of images printers had been selling for decades as stock images—pretty, humorous, or evocative pictures altogether irrelevant to the products being advertised. In periodicals and on trolley cars, doggerel and other light copy abounded, sometimes providing more fun for readers than it was persuasive, as, for instance, Artemas Ward’s later stories of Sapolio’s Spotless Town. A surge of such messages in both published and ephemeral media testified to the growing sense that it mattered less what an advertiser said or portrayed than that it be pleasing to consumers.

All early selling arguments had followed from advertisers’ idiosyncratic and intuitive notions of what they wanted to communicate to consumers, or from what they thought consumers’ interests ought to be, with varying degrees of appropriateness and accuracy. This nonprice competition did not yet qualify as consumer-oriented, particularly when the messages satisfied first advertisers’ interests other than selling, such as social aggrandizement or claims about the advertisers’ contributions to progress. Whether or not such messages appealed to consumers and sold products, consumers’ interests did not inform them. As corporate directors and their advertising agents and internal specialists started to react against those traditional orientations in marketing, they instead put together deliberate programs to develop messages intended to play to consumer interests. Of course, what they actually played to were their own senses of consumer interests, since that was all they knew; but they did know to aim for personal, familial, social emotions. The experiment in internal competition between Quaker Oats and the F. S. brand vindicated this strategy by increasing both primary demand for oatmeal and secondary demand for Quaker Oats. Although consumers did not see completely new types of advertisements right away, neither did they see Quaker Oats advertised by factory scenes or statements or images that hinted at the founders’ or owners’ wealth and successes. What this pre–World War I transition to modern advertising entailed, therefore, more clearly than a general or immediate adoption of new techniques, was the elimination of advertisements that were not consumer oriented.

Experiments in Modernizing Advertising Images

Printers and publishers continued to influence advertising styles as the only source for the production of images in mass quantities, regardless of who originated the designs. For instance, the first U.S. example of the art poster, the favorite medium of art nouveau and already the fashion in Europe, appeared when Harper and Brothers’ editors asked Edward Penfield, head of their
art department, to design a unique poster for the April 1893 issue of Harper's. They wanted something quite different from typical magazine posters, with their rows of type listing upcoming contents. Penfield produced a design, rather than a detailed picture, that he later credited for setting the pace for "simplicity and good composition" in American commercial design. This poster showed a man intently reading a magazine, oblivious to the rain falling about him; it showed no other detail, and the only copy read, "HARPER'S FOR APRIL." Penfield claimed that he had not yet seen contemporary French posters and that this was "only an experiment." This experimental style became the rage for publishers' advertisements and covers, as well as illustrations.

Another contemporary commercial artist who helped set the design pace in the United States with his work, Will H. Bradley, was a printer as well as artist, controlling both design and production from his advertising agency and press. With models such as these in publishing and printing, art nouveau fashions spread into advertising styles, particularly for those consumer industries, such as bicycles and cameras, that deliberately projected innovative profiles. For instance, the winner of Columbia Bicycles Company's second poster-design contest in 1896 was none other than the young Maxfield Parrish, who left his mark on decades of advertising and illustrating. Although pure forms of this "art poster" style with its minimal copy and often unnatural shapes and color schemes never dominated American product advertising, the popularity of the style among publishers, printers, and artists exerted a powerful pull toward simple, high-impact messages as the new standard for commercial design, with or without direct relevance to the advertised goods. Art Deco and streamlining, representing speed and efficiency, carried this trend into later decades.

These and other new design trends for attractive but usually irrelevant images surfaced between the realization that advertisements had to appeal to their audiences and the establishment of advertising specialists' authority in determining how. Everyone knew (as they still do) that the first object of an advertisement was to get its audience's attention, and that its second object was to interest its audience somehow. A message cannot sell before it has accomplished these two goals. Many advertisers, such as Thomas Barratt, had mastered these arts and continued to do so with questions ("Have you used Pears' Soap?")`, testimonials (Lillie Langtry for Coca-Cola as well as for Pears' Soap), and other imaginative fare. Joel Benton, a frequent writer in the advertising trade press, commented in 1893 that because of the growing competition for audiences, "the advertiser, above all others, needs to 'invoke attention and fasten remembrance.'" As a result of this need, "a change has been rapidly coming, within a very few years, calculated to make the style almost..."
more important than the thing said. This may reverse, possibly, the order of nature, but it does not allow any more than the proper stress upon the prime value of making an impression.\textsuperscript{42}

In 1896, when Charles Austin Bates categorized the three ways of using pictures in advertisements—representing an article, illustrating the selling argument, and “merely because it is pretty and will attract a passing glance”—he did not strongly recommend one over the others, insisting mostly on artistic and typographic skill.\textsuperscript{43} The printers’ art and artists had the most credibility to date in achieving the “appearance” advertisers and their specialists sought. For good reasons, job printers—more so than periodical printers with their technological limitations—had already presaged many of the fashions that developed in advertising styles after 1890, when appealing to consumers became a deliberate advertising goal. They had long since collected feedback on consumer preferences from the sales of their noncommissioned or speculative prints.\textsuperscript{44} The resulting sensitivity to their markets’ tastes and interests made their consumer-directed images dramatically different from those producer-oriented images they printed at the behest of manufacturers. Derived instead, for the most part, from what advertising analysts came to call human-interest subjects (see chapter 3), these generic images were first created expressly by the job printers to sell according to popular tastes.

Because of printers’ own marketing activities, consumer-oriented images existed in their stock prints long before questions about appealing to consumers arose in the advertising field more generally. As a result, advertisers and their advisers turned often to the printers’ generic images for their initial forays into consumer-oriented images, and a new fashion came into vogue. After 1895, countless advertisements appeared in both periodicals and ephemeral media sporting images with only minimal references to the advertisers and their products. These pictures, often without a detailed background or with a studio background, featured only the advertisers’ names or trademarks for identification, unless a model or drawn figure held or looked at the product. Often the only means of distinguishing such advertisements from stock advertisements was how the advertisers’ names were printed; a letterpress overprint rather than having the name incorporated into the design indicated a stock ad that could very well appear for another advertiser, too. To avoid this, large advertisers frequently purchased “exclusives” from printers or electrotype makers, buying exclusive rights to use one or a set of images originally generated on speculation and sold through a printer’s catalog or samples. For instance, W. Duke, Sons & Company, New York, purchased a series of trade cards with cowboy scenes as an exclusive from Koerner & Hayes, Buffalo, beginning in 1888. J. & P. Coats Thread Company purchased a series of trade cards entitled

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"Grotesque Mice" in the 1899 catalog of Butler & Kelley, New York City. These images borrowed from the same conceptual categories as the stock images produced by printers for decades. Instead of appearing only in ephemeral media, they now flowed into periodical media as technological improvements permitted, mediated by advertising practitioners.

Advertisers and their advisers very often explained this fashion in terms of progress in "good taste." It became a constant concern and resulted in an intermediate stage, preliminary to the fully-modern advertisements that emerged by World War I. In part this minimalist approach to layout manifested a reaction against the flash and hard sells of the patent-medicine and entertainment advertisements, then bringing disfavor upon the whole field. Yet notions of advertising as simply "putting one's name before the public" were not new and had resulted in vast quantities of advertisements in all media through the nineteenth century, when "experts" had critiqued them as simplistic. By the middle 1910s, when "good taste" glowed like a beacon to advertising practitioners trying to improve their field's professionalism and public esteem, the fashion for such advertisements presented them as elegant, not mindless. The trade press often encouraged printers to attend schools of decorative art in night school or similar educational venues as an important source of guidance not best learned in the shop. The practice of purchasing fine art unrelated to the business or product being promoted had actually begun at least as early as 1886, with Thomas A. Barratt's purchase of a painting by Sir John Millais to use in advertising Pears' Soap. This success led to other, less notable, attempts at applying fine art, such as the Robert Portner Brewing Company's reproduction, just after 1900, of a woman's portrait from an "original by Asti, valued at $2,000, and pronounced by connoisseurs his masterpiece." This statement on the back of the poster also announced that the "picture will make a handsome ornament to your home and can be secured without any printing." The "fine art" strategy peaked around the turn of the century, flourishing from the mid-1890s to near 1910.

In the search for an iconography that would succeed in appealing to the "better" sorts of audiences of both genders, both printers' and advertising specialists' journals encouraged the use of women's pictures as a "surer attraction" than all else, particularly "a woman's winsome face" or the "human form divine—mostly female," and often only slightly covered, depending on the product and the audience. Printers' Ink explained in 1895 that the apparent irrelevance of women's faces and figures to tobacco hardly disqualified them from advertisements: they attracted men's attention. Yet women's images were not confined to appeals to men during this period, or since, for that matter. A 1902 article on "Beauty in Advertising Illustration" in Cosmopolitan ex-
plained that advertisers had discovered that “a first-class magazine was valuable because it was the companion of the hour of rest.” To reach such a fine readership in the heart of their homes, “every cranny and nook of art is being ransacked” to make the advertisements attractive. While some inventive artists succeeded in creating truly unique and memorable images, “the search for novelty . . . seems now to be focusing itself most often in the direction of beautiful faces. Such are eternally new and always to man or woman delightfully interesting.” The era of “indelicate drappings” had passed because “good taste required that everything offensive should be eliminated, and that that advertisement was most effective which attracted all and offended none.”

As Robert C. Ogden, manager of Wanamaker’s in New York City, explained to the Sphinx Club in 1898, the “advertiser has a mission in uniting in some degree the fine and useful arts.” He advised advertising professionals to “[w]age warfare against the spirit that sneers at art applied to advertising as a degradation.” Key to accomplishing this progress was to use “no illustration that is not artistic,” because the costs of reproducing and distributing advertisements so greatly outweighed the costs of “original designs” to make slighting the latter a false economy. In a more positive mode, the Inland Printer asserted that because commercial art had been able to “keep pace with modern progress,” art had drawn “business up to a more elevated plane,” to the benefit of both business and art. The prestige that might come to advertisers as patrons of art motivated William Haskell Simpson of the Santa Fe Railway to take credit for having directed his firm to become “the first road in the land to take art seriously, as a valuable advertising adjunct. We have never skimped. We use the very best art that can be bought.” (Simpson commissioned art of the Southwest, especially of, not usually by, Native Americans, to encourage tourism.) As part of the movement to fine art, or at least fine commercial art, many artists followed the practice of signing their works, as initiated in the United States by Penfield with his Harper’s posters, leaving traditional anonymity behind. Palmer Cox became famous for his elfin Brownies as they frolicked through countless advertisements; and Maude Humphrey (mother of Humphrey Bogart) painted innumerable charming scenes of children, winning fame in association with Ivory Soap as well as for her children’s books. By the end of the first decade of the new century, Howard Chandler Christy, Will H. Bradley, J. C. Leyendecker, Maxfield Parrish, Harrison Fisher, and others had all begun to reap the rewards of celebrity. (Rarely did copywriters sign their work; Elbert Hubbard was an exception.) In these and other ways, the increasing importance of the advertisements’ appeals paralleled the diminishing prominence of the advertisers, as heroic figures, in the messages. For the duration of this pursuit of art, advertisers who could not or chose not to commis-
sion a commercial artist for a custom rendition might sacrifice all relevance to their products on the altar of good taste, sending their names into the public market with an irrelevant but “artistic” stock image.

The *Inland Printer* led advertising art and fashions by example and advice. In the middle 1890s, its editors and contributors increasingly offered advice about advertising images in its own pages. In April 1894, for instance, the masthead took on an art nouveau look, and the lead article discussed Aubrey Beardsley’s work; in that one issue, twelve articles and three editorials, plus one letter, two poems, and miscellaneous smaller items, all addressed advertising matters. The journal asked Will H. Bradley to design a new cover about the same time. He convinced editors instead to change covers regularly, rather than staying with one for years, and his and others’ contributions showed the impact of cosmopolitan styles. In December 1899, for the last issue of the century, the journal reproduced seventy-two of its covers, explaining what technologies had made them possible. The first cover in the series, “one of the early covers” (1887), presents a striking contrast to all of the others, showing a dense glorification of industrial imagery and technological progress related to printing: three vignettes portray printers at work in idealized settings; telephone and telegraph lines flow through the title; a goddess figure composes type along one side of the cover, and a crowned male presides over the whole. The cover that appeared from July 1891 through September 1893 referred to printing as “The Art Preservative of Arts,” but showed no press. Covers changed monthly after March 1894 until at least 1900, but only twice did presses appear: once as a heroic printer struggled to turn down the screw of an ancient press, and again, on the last cover of the series, as an abstracted antique and oversized press frames a dandy clearly not dressed for work. The intervening designs featured highly stylized schemes that included nature scenes and, most commonly, images of women by influential commercial artists such as Will H. Bradley and J. C. Leyendecker.

The practice of using fashionable but largely irrelevant images for attracting audiences, evoking pleasant emotions and good taste, never went unchallenged, even in its heyday. Criticisms of irrelevance that had begun in the 1890s mounted in the new century as analysts and advisers increasingly emphasized that selling was the ultimate, if not the first, function of advertisements. Advisers on design increasingly stressed that while “the better the art the better the ad,” the “power and value of art, as applied in business” depended on bridging “the gap between art for its own sake . . . and art for the sake of publicity.” As George Frederick explained, “art is a commodity,” and its value to advertisers depended on its capacity to evoke emotional responses that promoted selling. In 1906, *Ad Sense* insisted that illustrations “should
The Decline of the Industrialists' Imagery

During the heyday of the irrelevant, pretty image, the motifs that nineteenth-century industrialists had favored declined in frequency. In part this followed from the same growing appreciation that had brought generic images to the fore; namely, that messages must first of all appeal to their audiences. The decline of industrialists' images also followed from the increasingly frequent and pointed arguments on behalf of messages that were "nearest to the mind of the reader" in order that they might "have some 'pull,' some influence to action." As the American Druggist advised those advertisers who were still preparing their own messages in 1906, "the Pointless Cut should be the bete noir of every advertiser." Inappropriate, irrelevant illustrations could "ruin the effect" of advertisements, either by "having nothing whatever to do with the text" or because they induce the advertiser to write messages "to match the poor cuts." By this time, standards for advertising images had come to consider their usefulness in selling as well as getting attention and pleasing audiences.

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N. W. Ayer & Son had in dealing with clients’ lack of cooperation over these matters before World War I. Many of the greatest difficulties occurred when Ayer’s clients insisted on having their names and pictures placed prominently in their advertisements. The agency’s personnel then had to persuade the advertisers “tactfully” that “such sops to vanity hindered the work of advertising.”65 The Inland Printer also rued the advertisers’ too frequent request to have their own portraits “crowded in.” Another analyst expressed his relief in 1903 that “there is an abatement of the man with the bald head and chin whiskers or close-cropped pompadour, whose ‘face is on every package.’” He was very glad that the time had passed when “we were bored to death by the advertiser who insisted that we admire the profile, three-quarters, and front view of his manly and heroic head. It was like looking through a rogue’s gallery to glance over the advertising pages of a popular monthly.”66

In 1900, Nathaniel C. Fowler Jr. published one of his several volumes that, among other things, coached advertisers and their advisers to direct their copy to consumers in appropriate, meaningful language and to attend to their audiences’ interests. In the chapter entitled “Personal Publicity,” Fowler argued against the traditional motifs of self-aggrandizement: “Advertise the goods for sale and not the folks who sell them.” It was “vanity and conceit” to promote one’s self by name or portrait, because “no man is as great as the business he has made.” In step with the advertising literature of the day, Fowler’s advice was starkly anathema to the traditionally intimate linkage between a business and its owner-manager. The fervor of his arguments in this matter indicated Fowler’s sense of crusading for a still-unpopular cause among manufacturers.67 He did not, in fact, think much of producers or production, relative to the importance of goodwill—a firm’s positive public image—in building business success. After all, the “factory may burn to ashes . . . . The members of the firm may die. . . . But the good of advertising never changes.” He continued the attack on the producers’ values by declaring, “The buyer of a thing is not the maker of it; he is interested in the result, not in the steps to the result. He does not care how a thing was made. . . . The picture that appeals to him is the one that shows what he wants, doing what he wants it to do.”68 So not only must the advertiser keep himself out of his advertisements, but he must keep his production facilities out, too. To demonstrate his advice, Fowler collected more than one hundred of the “best advertisements” in a separate section. Not surprisingly, none of these “specimens of success, [included] for the reader’s benefit,” show factories or advertisers’ portraits.69 After 1890, other advertising professionals who publicized samples of what they considered good advertising, as did J. Walter Thompson from at least 1895 through the 1910s, never included advertisements that showed factories, and only rarely owners’ portraits.
Trademarks made an analogous and significant shift toward greater human interest and away from founders' or owners' surnames and portraits during these same years. Advising manufacturers to think carefully about their trademarks in 1893, *Iron Age* declared that there is "vastly more in a trade-mark than merely business egoism." Through advertising and packaging, the producer should "keep the name before the trade until it became better known than his own. . . . A short name takes the fancy." Firms' and founders' names were "too long for mankind generally to bother with." Frank Presbrey included a chapter entitled "Enter the Human-Interest Trade-Mark" in his 1929 history of advertising. This movement in the 1890s he credited to those improvements in printing technology that had made "the half-tone reproduction of humans in action" possible; his theory, however, does not explain why advertisers did not simply employ better reproductions of the same old trademarks and other symbols, such as their places of business. Two letters from the Anderson Preserving Company, sent out in 1898 and 1899, demonstrate how the factory could be replaced by symbols with more human interest without a change in the printing technology employed. The reverse sides of both pieces of stationery, both printed by the same technology, were covered with various company trademarks and images of packages, a choice that shows the importance this firm accorded to trademarks. Sent out during the firm's transition into modern promotional styles, the letter written in 1898 displayed a traditional factory scene at its top; the letter sent the following May highlighted instead the figure of a jolly monk, one of the firm's new trademarks. The change was conceptual, not technological.

Printers and those who advertised to them in the *Inland Printer*, such as manufacturers of printers' machinery and supplies, paralleled the trends in consumer advertising, even though, generally speaking, other manufacturers of industrial machinery continued to employ industrial images in their trade-journal advertisements through the twentieth century. The printing trade used industrial images in relatively equal numbers with nonindustrial images into the mid-1890s; then the latter increased in frequency. Printers and their suppliers reduced their uses of industrial imagery earlier than most other industrialists for many reasons. Because they produced images, their credibility as advisers and suppliers depended on their responsiveness to feedback from their customers—and their customers' feedback from their own audiences. Since this feedback indicated the popularity of nonindustrial images with consumers, such images were not as irrelevant to these producers as they were to other manufacturers and merchants who bought stock images for their advertisements. They represented, after all, evidence of the printers' products. In 1894, as the *Inland Printer* began to champion advertisements with "pull," printers'
own advertisements with factories or machines declined. Instead of what Fowler called “still life engines” standing alone, these advertisers began the practice, only recently questioned, of picturing irrelevant figures alongside their machines. Most often they depicted women in various drapes, but also cupids, flowers, and other popular motifs.73

By 1910, factories, engines, and other industrial scenes were gone, as were most founders’ portraits from all but a few consumer advertisements. The most notable exceptions included owner-managers like Henry Ford, and others, such as electricity power companies, who continued to promote their sense of the value of production to progress. C. W. Post, for instance, kept factories on his letterhead and in his food-product advertisements at least into the 1910s. The copy he wrote described his overcoming obstacles in his own life and pursuing a “long and exhaustive study of food and beverage.” His accomplishments had improved the “healthful welfare of millions” and “repaid him a hundredfold.” He personally wrote loving descriptions of his buildings and factories for publicity.74 Trade journals have generally continued undeterred in industrial imagery. The technological sublime can be found in advertising, art, and industrial design through World War II, although the streamlined imagery resembled only slightly the actual, dirty, noisy, and complex means of production. On the rare occasion when factory images were advocated in the advertising trade press for consumer ads after 1900, it was clear that they were no longer “natural”; that is, their purposes needed to be explained and justified.75

In addition to the advertising professionals’ rejection of these motifs in favor of imagery that was more consumer oriented, other factors contributed to the decline of industrial imagery, including the increasing popular association of factories with blight and hardships, rather than heroic innovation. The Progressive Era’s frequent associations of factories with child labor, with other abuses of labor and ensuing unrest, and with increasing concerns about the impacts of pollution and lack of industrial hygiene on the general public contributed to the changing perceptions of industrialization.76 General reactions against the complexity of Victorian visual styles also played a part in this shift. They combined with the twentieth century’s intensifying saturation of stimulus to make it difficult to attract and hold audiences’ attention long enough to view the traditional, complicated advertisements that showed factories and multiple vignettes; ad writers believed that a story could hold attention, but not an unnarrated picture. At the same time, factory architecture also became simpler, safer, and more efficient, eliminating much of the architectural detail that had made the early buildings visually interesting.77 In addition, the evolution of corporate capitalism ensured the ultimate demise of producers’ portraits and surnames from advertisements for lack of motivation on the part of
the advertisers themselves. Yet these last two developments explain only why advertisers would allow the older motifs to fall into disuse, not why admen labored so diligently to expedite the transition. This shift was central to their growing sense of professional justification, as the next chapter will demonstrate.

Modernizing Copy

Even while copywriting was the advertisers' domain, advertising practitioners began to offer their advice, increasing the volume and intensity of that literature during the decades after midcentury. Since they could only justify, and continue, their livelihoods if advertisers appeared to profit from sales attributable to advertising, they sought to "make advertising pay the advertiser," in Frances Wayland Ayer's phrase, by helping to sell the advertised article. Still, as long as practitioners defined their occupation in terms of the buying and selling of publication space, most of their help drew on that experience. So George Rowell offered precious little advice on copy in his early career, merely cautioning advertisers that, to find their fortunes, they should pay "attention to their manuscript compilations." In his 1870 book on advertising practice, advice on writing took up only 3 of 207 pages, vaguely recommending that a "notice of any kind, to be read, must be readable" and that "novelty attracts attention." He concluded that shrewdness was a major asset in coming up with effective copy, but he offered no recipe for it, only describing the praiseworthy inventiveness of successful advertisers. Years later, in the first volume of Printers' Ink, Rowell's advice continued to emphasize advertising volume and placement, but he did feature an article in the first year asking advertisers if their messages were "properly worded and displayed." With increasing frequency as the years progressed, his journal warned advertisers to avoid "exaggerations and misrepresentations," to write "plainly, lucidly, simply," as they did when they talked to customers, and reminding them that they were "talking still through printers' ink." By 1891, the year Rowell hired a full-time copywriter for his own agency, Printers' Ink included a regular column by Artemas Ward, a high-profile copywriter.

During the 1890s, freelance writers and other specialists began to advise advertisers on copy. Fowler began the chapter on writing advertisements in his 1893 tome on Building Business with the epigram, "'Tis not so much how much is said—'tis how it's said." His most frequent advice, however, reflected the changes since Rowell first wrote, recommending that advertisers turn to professional ad writers "to more often succeed than to fail." For those many ad-
vertisers writing their own messages, he recommended a variety of strategies, including regular revisions, not "radical changes," of style, and always they should remember to "advertise the goods for sale, not the men who sell them." Fowler insisted that advertisers not feature their name prominently. In any case, if "the advertisement has anything in it worth reading it will be read, and the advertiser's name discovered," however small its size. Importantly, because an "advertisement is a silent drummer" and people generally resist drumming, "it is absolutely necessary that the advertisement should be so written that the reader will absorb it before he has time to remember the conventional apathy he may suppose he possesses." So Fowler recommended large, uncrowded spaces with strongly stated headlines and a few, well-written words that emphasized a single point—for "a statement cannot be too broad and strong, if it be true." Above all, he said, "the advertisement should be written for the eye of the reader, not as a means of personal gratification to the advertiser." A few years later, Fowler reminded advertisers that the "good of advertising is in the good it does. If the advertisement brings results it must be a good advertisement. Not what we think is good, but what does good, is good, in advertising and in everything else." 80

Since advertisers wanted copywriting that sold, the practices of face-to-face salesmanship provided the foundation for many of the ideas about improving advertising strategies. According to an oft-repeated story, John E. Kennedy gave Albert D. Lasker the key to understanding advertising in three words—and twenty years later, Lasker still credited Kennedy with the revelation that advertising was "salesmanship in print." In 1905, Kennedy was a copywriter of considerable repute, making the fabulous annual income of $28,000, writing for a patent-medicine company; Lasker was just beginning what would be a long, prominent career at Lord & Thomas in Chicago. Kennedy's insight reinforced John E. Powers's earlier lessons for the field and fostered the institutionalization of forthright and "reason why" advertising strategies; that is, honestly explaining benefits from audiences' perspectives, rather than piling on the conventional superlatives. Both of these principles functioned as slogans to the new field, serving to encode and communicate standards and goals, building new conventions. Kennedy's observation made especial sense to his contemporaries in light of the large role that the sales force played in business at all levels then. 81 It must be said, however—Kennedy's celebrity, notwithstanding—long before his widely publicized disclosure, other advisers had told advertisers to write copy as printed salesmanship. For instance, in 1891 Printers' Ink admonished advertisers who tried to use "graceful and dignified diction" at the expense of "plain and blunt" and "commonplace" language. "Write precisely as you would talk to a customer." Above all, "recollect that
what you are doing is done to please the public—not yourself or your highly educated friends."82 Charles Austin Bates likewise reminded his readers in 1899 that if they "deserve patronage there are reasons for it. Your ad should tell the reasons rather than the mere fact that you are deserving." Moreover, advertisers "should never say anything in an ad that [they] would not say personally to a customer." In other words, Bates recommended, "just recall what you said to the last half dozen customers you waited upon, and you will almost invariably recall good material for an ad."83 Through the 1890s, Printers' Ink repeated this message again and again. That Kennedy learned something of this approach from Bates's early criticism of his work indicates the extent to which it had been in the air for a decade.84

**Intuition versus Science**

In theory, good copy has always been defined as copy that sold the advertised product or service. Yet measuring selling efficacy has never been as easy as comparing copy with conventions and other fabricated criteria. And determining whether a product or service sold or not because of its advertisements has never been as easy as correlating promotional practices with sales figures and assuming causal links. Many promoters, from entertainers like P. T. Barnum, to patent-medicine vendors like Lydia Pinkham, industrialists like Cyrus McCormick, publishers like Cyrus Curtis, and advertising specialists like Nathaniel Fowler, certainly possessed an intuitive sense of how to market successfully, and they sold their wares. They often defied "common sense" or established procedures in some way because, in Lasker's words, "they inherently felt it within themselves." Yet many others' intuitions had failed them, and, moreover, intuition formed a poor foundation for a nascent profession in the new, increasingly corporate and bureaucratic business environment. Lasker and others recognized that the field needed to move beyond intuition to study content and strategies that could be communicated, systematized, and taught,85 and by the end of the century, the move away from intuition, or at least its appearance, was already well under way.

Practitioners sought a veneer of system and objectivity for advertising activities, borrowing at first from the established profession of selling—though face-to-face selling certainly requires intuition, as do psychology and Scientific Management, to which they turned next. Advertising specialists still vary in their willingness to admit that creating advertisements remains, in the end, a matter of intuition aided by research and technique. If nothing else, qualification as experts in this transitional period required rejecting their most flam-
boyant predecessors' stained reputations and instead seeking ways to create and judge advertising messages for which they could claim objective, even scientific, standards. In 1894, Profitable Advertising warned, "Experimental advertising is dangerous." Only "men of genius," such as those noted for having generated large fortunes by their advertising skills, should attempt advertising for themselves. Everyone else should either consider not advertising at all or call upon "an expert." Advertising had become a science, and it required a knowledgeable practitioner "to make it a success," both in terms of buying space and "imparting a 'pulling' quality to the advertisements themselves."86 Although science in the strict sense relies on experimentation, individual advertisers were advised not to contribute their own expenditures to the cause, instead to rely on the experience gained on others' accounts. Hence, John Lee Mahin's 1900 headline reassuringly, if misleadingly, declared that "Advertising is no longer an experiment."87

Advertising professionals' claims that they could accurately predict consumer responses belied Claude Hopkins's emphasis on the lessons from feedback that compared successes and failures. Earlier than most, Hopkins made "an everlasting argument ... against dealing with people in the mass." He developed an approach to advertising in the 1890s that based appeals on what he believed was important to consumers and wrote to them as if he were writing to them individually, even when he told them to follow the crowd. For instance, Hopkins researched and explained product features that might well not have been unique but that had not been previously publicized. Even if a feature "embodies no great advantages" but might appeal to consumers, such as steam-cleaning beer bottles, he believed that whatever "pains" a firm took to excel should be told. As long as no competitor had done so first, Hopkins claimed that the "product will come to typify those excellences." His autobiography relates scores of experiences, personal as well as professional, from which he calculated lessons in advertising through feedback. He tried to assess audiences' interests with personal conversations. He claimed to stay close to "simple people" to keep his perspective fresh. "I learn what they buy and their reasons for buying. Those reasons would surprise many who gain their impressions from golf-club associates." Despite his often homespun storytelling, Hopkins also developed some of the earliest objective feedback mechanisms, doing so first by following his intuition rather than self-consciously attempting to mimic scientific methods. Early on, he attended to sales figures and other consumer responses to products and advertisements, systematically collecting information to test and compare the worth of his copy. Extending Kennedy's notion of advertising as salesmanship, he compared advertising messages, "one by one, on a salesman's basis, and [held] them responsible for cost and result."88
Together, the results of his intuitive experimentations formed a “system” to which he and others could attach the label of “scientific advertising,” the title of a book he published in 1923. Freely admitting his frequent mistakes in the course of learning each lesson, Hopkins presented these techniques to the field as the means of avoiding intuition’s weaknesses by accruing expertise.

Not all advocates of progressive advertising argued for its place as a science. Many emphasized instead the art of preparing an effective message. Earnest Elmo Calkins, looking back on early debates from 1915, advocated a balance of the “statistical, bookkeeping, exact mind” with creativity, which “presupposes, in addition to experience, a certain touch of temperamental adaptability.” Such creativity requires “common sense, shrewdness and imagination” to plan and prepare advertisements. Psychological studies could inform and assist the creative processes, and explain after the fact what sold and what did not, but, Calkins declared, studying psychology cannot “make a good advertising man out of one who has not a certain feeling for the work, any more than a study of prosody and versification will make a poet.” Therefore, no “working formula or set of rules” could replace intuition in reckoning with “the human element.” Calkins saw in these searches for system “the same progress as shown by the older professions,” going “through many throes and many theories in its attempt to find itself” as specialists’ ambitions responded to manufacturers’ demands with research and art.

Another debate over the nature of advertising during these transitional years—whether or not advertising created desires—had major implications for the development of creative techniques. If, on the one hand, advertising “at its best is news,” as early analysts, even Bates as late as 1896, had generally concluded, “it merely caters to an existing demand” that might “lie dormant.” If, on the other hand, advertising “creates trade,” as Fowler claimed as early as 1893, this laid a heavier burden of expectations on the field. The marketing crisis that followed the Crash of 1893 fueled the stronger claim, and by the turn of the century, analysts assumed that successful advertisements attracted attention, tempted a reading, interested the reader, created desires, and turned desires “into resolves to have or see” the advertised goods. The outcome of this debate—namely, that advertisements were to generate demand through their salesmanship—meshed with the larger picture of advertising’s expanding roles in the marketing mix. In order to accomplish this expanded list of expectations for their services, practitioners increasingly felt the need to develop their techniques.

During this transitional period, then, advertising practitioners found themselves looking both backwards and forwards for guidance. Many sought direction from the newspaper training that had prepared them to write for public
consumption. For instance, John Wanamaker hired Joseph Appel from his newspaper job in 1899 when Appel wrote to tell him that advertising should "be made news." Another news reporter, Lasker, instead looked back paradoxically both to Powers's honesty and "reason why" techniques and to patent medicine, declaring repeatedly that it was from the latter that "we learned this art, and well we might, because there was no limitation on them as to what they could do." The entrepreneurs operating in that arena had virtually no restrictions imposed on their imaginations by either product or convention, and so, collectively, they tried everything. Both their competitors, other advertisers, and advertising practitioners took notice and learned. An article in the general press in 1903 corroborated that "the patent-medicine men were pioneers in the advertising business. If they did not originate the display advertisement, they were among the first to use it on a large scale, and it was their success that taught other business men how to increase their trade." Even in the midst of the public debates that led up to the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906, the latter author could proclaim that the "world at large may not owe very much to the old patent-medicine advertisers, since it canceled the debt long ago by giving them comfortable fortunes; but modern advertising must acknowledge their tuition." Successful advertising, it appeared, required avoiding the offenses perpetrated by the nostrum masters while learning from their techniques to open consumers' purses.

Having taken on the task of "creating trade," advertising practitioners began to explore how they might accomplish it. Looking at the lessons of the past, with an eye to their future, they experimented. According to Calkins, the "so-called advertising expert then is the man who studies the causes of great successes with the idea of applying them to other articles and other markets. It is for him to eliminate as far as possible the uncertainty, the waste, the non-essentials; to change advertising from an art to a science—or, at least, to a profession worthy of the ambition and energy of trained minds." Fowler advised in 1893 that advertisers make their messages "lively" by mixing them "with Brains," particularly, "the choicest cells of genuine cranial gray matter." The mix of brains, enthusiasm, and ambition led to a lively state of experimentation and growth. While it is certainly not the case, as Lasker claimed in 1925, that by 1915 all the "fundamental principles of advertising" had been discovered and disseminated, the velocity and volume of experimentation in the years after 1900 exploded, yielding many of the "principles" as well as the arts still in use today. Firms' willingness to spend unprecedented sums and agencies' eagerness to distribute those sums lured growing numbers of ambitious individuals with business, journalism, and university backgrounds, sharing a range of motives from financial to the lure of excitement. They gave free rein
to their imaginations; some of their offerings appeared to improve sales, and those in turn fanned the flames. The causes and dynamics of this experimentation and the activities, ideas, and advertisements resulting from these explorations into technique and strategy call for a full study to do them justice. The new approaches took advertising strategies and contents ever farther away from their roots.

Seeking to Persuade

Charles Austin Bates summarized the problem of persuasion in 1903 when he declared that “the whole purpose of a printed advertisement is to carry a definite and convincing impression to the mind of the reader.” By that time, the options for achieving that “definite and convincing impression” included attempting various systems. Bates’s older notion, a view also held by others, that advertisements simply communicated news to awaken existing wants no longer sufficed. George French, who wrote frequently on advertising’s functions in the new century, in 1915 declared, “It is now one of the minor functions of advertising to announce or give notice. Its major function is to persuade.” Moreover, advertising’s “office now is to develop the need or the desire. It ignores the necessity, for the most part. At the best, the necessities of the people form but one of the less considered elements of advertising, as it is now understood and practiced.” In other words, French explained, the advertiser tries “to create . . . a necessity in the lives of the people that has no economic or moral basis in fact. Whether the motive is to seek out real needs or to create fictitious needs, the motive for modern advertising runs along the attempt to persuade people.”

Herbert Casson advocated Scientific Management as a means of achieving persuasion, applying Frederick W. Taylor’s notions of creating “a new habit of thought” in order “to make UNCONCERNED people take notice” and then “to persuade UNCONCERNED people to purchase.” Success entailed increasing the probabilities of appealing to consumers by increasing sensitivity to their interests and needs in ways quite alien to traditional advertisers, who operated on their intuitive senses of what messages to disseminate and who had succeeded whenever their intuitions by chance struck a chord.

The trade literature offered advertisers and specialists alike endless instructions for striking the chords of consumers' purchasing responses. At one end of the range of options fell relatively simple insights on improving advertising’s access to people at their most vulnerable moments, such as observations that magazines’ excellence as advertising media resulted because they are “pecu-
liarly the companion of leisure hours, when the mind is free to accept new im­pressions." Other oft-repeated basic suggestions warned not to offend read­ers, either with extravagant claims following the old patent-medicine and cir­cus patterns, or with crude humor. The central theme of all this advice, via countless articles and books, called for consumer-interest messages, despite lin­gering resistance from some advertisers. Ubiquitous calls for uncluttered lay­outs linked them with positive human reactions, as in the claim that "ventila­tion in an advertisement suggests healthfulness and prosperity," as opposed to display that "looks as though its owner was afraid some little quarter of an inch of space would be paid for without being utilized, [which] puts the prospective customer in an unconscious attitude of dealing with a close-fisted mer­chant." Writers should avoid jargon and stilted language, and instead use human interest and humanity. "Sympathetic copy" included "not so much ... of the merits of the article as of what the company could do for the reader, if he would let them." Advertisements constructed by following this advice pos­sessed "that human sympathy which the good salesman puts into his selling ef­forts." By the turn of the century, the desirability of "humanity" became less an issue than how to apply it to "cold type." 

**Simplicity**

The earliest criticisms of advertisements' contents discouraged the usual practice of simply placing a small "card" that merely identified a firm or prod­uct and tacked on a superlative or two. Once most advertisers had learned that lesson, critics addressed the ensuing enthusiasm with which advertisers filled their advertisements. More often than not, critics focused on advertisers' over­filling their spaces, trying to pack content into a given space; the common ten­dency, encouraged in *Iron Age* as late as 1896, entailed claiming "nothing which is not strictly true, but never fail[ing] to claim all the truth." In con­trast, most advisers by then argued against compound messages, whether in lists of claims or clusters of images, by pointing to the vanguard of layouts and copy that were successful in either notoriety or sales, and also appealing to new standards of "good taste." Early in the 1890s, the *Inland Printer* 's editors complained that advertisers' habits could be "hackneyed and obsolete" in this respect. In 1900, the same journal excused a printer's own advertisement as "too florid in style for those having a critical taste in printing" with the guess that "the printer is looking to please the ideas of his trade and not his own." As J. Walter Thompson emphasized in 1895, "Always keep in each and every Ad., no matter what the size may be, one leading Idea, Trademark or Design. There is nothing else so forcible and lasting as this. Tell your story over and
over, with all its variations, in a series of ads., but always stick to the Idea and to the Point." The advertising mainstream followed this advice for both copy and art.

Urging advertisers to favor simple and direct messages followed an easy logic, given the period's intensifying level of stimulus saturation, in rural areas as well as in cities and towns. If ever it had been possible to attract and hold audiences' attention long enough to view the traditional, complicated advertisements with factories and multiple vignettes, or to read long lists of goods or lists of superlatives describing offerings, it was so no longer. Decades of competition had generated voluminous printed media, both ephemeral and periodical, and, according to Metropolitan Magazine, this had made the "busy American loath to read. His eyes must be attracted, coaxed, cajoled." As a result, "to-day the advertising columns of high-class mediums are nearly as attractive from a literary and artistic point of view as the regular text and illustrations." Ad specialists, as a rule, came to want simpler styles that did not interfere with their messages. This said, how could ads win their audiences' attention and interest?

**Planning**

With advertisers' growing demands for effectiveness and efficiency in both creating and placing advertisements, advertising professionals competed by developing services that featured basic planning and other previously neglected activities. As an expert on "scientific advertising" explained in 1911, "No great achievement, and certainly not the winning of an indifferent public, can be done without a Plan." Although "four-fifths of our selling is still of the slam-bang, hit-or-miss species," there were enough successfully planned advertising campaigns to inspire others. The most obvious components of an advertising plan are decisions about the advertising message and placing that message. These are, however, the end products of decision making, with or without a deliberate plan. By the 1890s, advertising professionals were already aware of some considerations that contradicted intuitive notions of how they should plan and evaluate their advertising, such as that immediate sales might not be the best indicators of a campaign's worth. For instance, in 1892, William Maher evaluated the "staying power of an advertisement" and advised advertisers to consider the long-term impact of their messages as investments in goodwill. Likewise, improving public attitudes toward companies could be an intermediate step to long-term sales.

As part of their intense competition for accounts and their clients' competition for markets, specialists experimented in techniques for market analysis,
planning, and creation during the transition period after the mid-1890s, resulting in campaigns such as Procter & Gamble's outstandingly successful marketing of Crisco shortening, starting in 1911.111 American Industries noted the rapid pace of change in 1904, praising advertisements that contained "appeals to the general public that would have seemed heretical a year or two ago."112 Of the countless examples of marketing innovations under the new regime, a single case can illustrate the nature of the advertising professionals' new roles and exemplify the impact that an advertising innovator could have in service of a powerful corporate advertiser.

The National Biscuit Company campaign for Uneeda Biscuit was considered extraordinary when initiated, but its remarkable success made it a model for a level of market analysis and planning that, within two decades, became the norm for major national accounts. Three years after the National Biscuit Company (NBC), later Nabisco, took shape from mergers in 1898, the corporation established a policy that it would no longer compete by price. Instead it would compete by "constantly increasing capitalization" to maximize efficient buying, production, and distribution, and "above all things and before all things, to improving the quality of our goods and the condition in which they should reach the consumer." In order to achieve this, NBC's chairman of the board, Adolphus Green, organized the production of a standardized, high-quality, and packaged biscuit—the traditionally popular soda cracker. Green sought assistance with the advertising and marketing problems involved and soon awarded the account to N. W. Ayer & Son, represented by Henry McKinney. Thereafter, the two men worked closely together to develop a long-range plan to market this yet-unnamed product.113 McKinney and Green cooperated on planning and executing all of the activities for what would become the largest national advertising campaign for a single product to date. They began by devising a name, both making suggestions, and finally agreeing on McKinney's idea, Uneeda Biscuit. Placing the agency's full capabilities at Green's disposal set a precedent for the extent of a major agency's assistance to a client. Most importantly, both Green and McKinney agreed on the importance of setting the highest priority on planning. Copy, artwork, packaging, and advertising placement were generated and coordinated within both the agency and the corporation to meet the overall strategies. This unique planning produced a nationally distributed series of teaser advertisements, placed in newspapers and store displays and on billboards and streetcars. The first of these messages simply stated "Uneeda Biscuit," without explanation. Every few days, a new message, such as "Do You KNOW Uneeda Biscuit?" added to the mystery. (Questions were not new to copywriting at this time, as evinced by examples cited earlier, such as Genin's
and Macy's discussed in chapter 1, and Barratt's for Pears' Soap in chapter 2. Nonetheless, the use of questions rose in frequency as consumer-oriented advertising grew.) Demand for the new product was almost immediate, once its introduction solved the mystery. Sales for this biscuit, with its guarantee of quality based on an elaborately designed, consumer-sized package, soon challenged the tradition of purchasing crackers out of barrels. Consumers, particularly urban consumers, readily bought these goods, innovatively packaged and sealed from moisture and vermin, even at roughly twice the cost per pound of those sold out of barrels. The Uneeda Biscuit marketing campaign worked so well that soon production fell behind demand. NBC then built new plants.¹¹⁴

To Adolphus Green, the Uneeda Biscuit campaign had much the character of a crusade; to N. W. Ayer & Son, it was less a crusade than a challenge. McKinney and Ayer understood the benefits of serving well the manufacturers of large volumes of branded, standardized, consumer goods. The tie between the two firms lasted until 1935, fulfilling another of Ayer and McKinney's post-1890 ambitions: they wanted long-term relationships with active and high-volume clients. The lessons of the Uneeda Biscuit campaign impressed many advertising professionals seeking direction. Planning for entire marketing campaigns rather than individual advertisements had begun to attract attention already, but this success quickly moved it into prominence. Although Ayer and McKinney had experimented with rudimentary market research for an occasional client as far back as 1880, they had never yet applied it at such depth. Even after this lesson, they still did not establish a separate planning department until ten years later, dispersing the planning function throughout the agency in the meantime.¹¹⁵

In the new century, the importance of planning and research reached general acceptance. The Inland Printer had already warned its readers in 1895 that although “everyone who has anything to do with it [advertising] feels assured he can excel,” it was “wise to seek the advice of students of the science” in view of the varieties of research on markets that major publishers conducted on behalf of advertisers to eliminate guesswork in placing ads.¹¹⁶ Daniel Starch, originator of a still-active readership feedback service, wrote in 1914 that “success and failure are not matters of good or bad luck. Complete analysis of a proposition and careful execution of the plans bring results with as reasonable certainty in an advertisement as cause and effect follow each other in any other controllable human affairs.”¹¹⁷ In 1915, Calkins addressed the importance of planning to effective advertising campaigns; he observed that “shrewd manufacturers keep advertising men at work two years before a single line of publicity is sent out” on a new product line. “Some time ago the advertising man extended his work from advertising pure and simple to a study of
sales problems.” This included spotting a “weak point in the manufacturing policy” by studying products, trademarks, distribution channels, and competitors. Because “the manufacturer has demanded better ground for his advertising plan,” and because “the advertising man, ambitious to develop a surer method, has neglected no field of research . . . this present, more scientific method of basing advertising upon the real facts, whatever they are, wherever they may be found, has come into its own.” These areas of study included “the laws of the human mind, the laws of supply and demand, the natural channels of trade, [and] the shopping habits of women.”

**Targeting Markets**

An important aspect of sensitivity to markets is knowing who populates the markets for different products; therefore, market segmentation—that is, dividing the general population into advertising targets according to their interests and demographics—has become an essential tool for planning campaigns and preparing tailored messages. In principle, it could work more reliably than impulse, intuition, or the preparers’ own tastes. This tool for enhancing effectiveness and efficiency infiltrated advertising practices only haltingly after J. Walter Thompson raised its profile in order to convince advertisers to buy space in the magazines he represented. As early as 1887, Thompson argued that a medium’s “character” was more important to advertisers than the wider circulation they could get more cheaply from newspapers. Advertisers should, therefore, favor publications that have “entrance to the better class of homes, where the other is never admitted.” Thompson continued: “The great bulk of business, aside from the necessaries of life, comes from the people of moderate or independent means associated with at least fair refinement and culture. The ignorant classes have no inclination to spend money for other than the necessaries of life; the poor have none to spend. Hence, judicious advertisers seek to reach people having both TASTE for their goods and the MEANS to gratify it.” Even so, as long as advertisers continued to care more for getting optimal circulation than for creating audience-sensitive messages, targeting remained a tool at most for placing advertisements strategically, rather than creating them with audiences in mind. Even after the mid-1890s, when copywriters slowly began to think about addressing specific classes or genders, they never used the term with its implied focus and precision.

Although most advertising agents brokered their space by contending that their offerings were superior to their competitors, few besides Thompson argued their cases with much more than the same types of superlatives other advertisers used in their copy before 1890. Most agents remained primarily con-
cerned with selling large volumes of space and with competing through price per unit of circulation, rather than audience appropriateness. Just as most advertisers sought broad audiences rather than finely targeted ones, some delineations were so crude that they assumed there was only one class of people whom all advertisers cared to reach. Thus a soap manufacturer declared that he had confined his advertising “entirely to newspapers. The man who does not read a newspaper does not use soap!” Although the general level of discourse on market refinements began to rise in the 1890s, for years the arguments merely claimed that particular publications or agents' lists of publications reached the “better classes.” An 1895 advertisement in Printers' Ink read simply that the “class of people you desire to reach are those to be found through advertising in The Sun, New York.” Country papers and their brokers or syndicates plied potential advertisers with a broad type of segmentation by which they might reach a desirable audience. They told mail-order advertisers, for instance, that country storekeepers could not keep large enough inventories to satisfy “people in country towns.” Occasionally using the drawing card of fond memories, they encouraged advertisers also to aim for another market: the city gentleman who read his hometown paper from cover to cover “with boyish eagerness.” Aiming for both sides of the rural/urban coin may have stretched the reliability of such targeting, but it told advertisers that they ought to be thinking about it.

Keying advertisements offered a systematic and relatively inexpensive means of targeting, and trade publications of all sorts encouraged its use, beginning about 1900. Well before that, some advertisers, such as Colonel Pope of Columbia Bicycles, had come to the method on their own. Advertisers could evaluate the effects of varied content or varied publications by placing different advertisements containing different, keyed, contact information and usually slightly different addresses, and then tracking responses to the keyed addresses. Gradually, targeting did become more refined for both placement and copywriting purposes, taking into account data from population surveys, primitive market surveys, and the accumulated experience of advertising professionals. The targeting of audiences had yet to yield the techniques of surveying and interviewing, much less setting up focus groups to explore people's thoughts or including representatives to help create messages. In 1911, Casson still criticized the field because “perhaps the most frequent cause of failure in selling is the vague this-is-for-nobody-in-particular aspect of the advertisement. There is no aim—no direct appeal.” Casson believed that advertisers too rarely appealed directly to the two most obvious targets, women and farmers.

By the early 1890s, however, the trade literature had begun to discuss...
women as a market, and therefore as an audience, oftentimes as an undifferen-
tiated audience. In 1894, the *Inland Printer* featured an analysis of ten ad-
vertisements by "feminine eyes." In an unusually lengthy article that coincided
with the journal's new "artistic" masthead, M. Georgia Ormond advised ad-
vertisers to appeal to women's "delicate sensibilities" with beauty, occasional
inoffensive humor, and constant bargains. Targeting the prosperous classes
of women was an early and frequent refinement. An advertisement for the
*Ladies' World* in 1894 offered to reach women because they "Can't vote, Can't
sit on juries, Can't put down riots;—BUT—They can and do purchase over
eight-tenths of all articles purchased for the household and used by the fam-
ily." The illustration's elegantly dressed woman combined class discrimination
with gender. The journal argued its case later for women as more lucrative tar-
gets than millionaires; they were "the best buyers—women of the well-to-do
class who can and do buy your goods." For decades after recognizing women's purchasing power in the 1890s, most
advertisers and their advisers labored mightily to figure how best to reach them
without ever taking on women as copywriters. Despite having Kate E. Gris-
wold as publisher and editor, *Profitable Advertising* rarely mentioned women in
any role other than targeted consumers. An exception, written by "Miss Prog-
ress" in 1893, pointed to the logical advantages of women writing to
women. The men in most agencies continued to struggle to prepare mes-
sages appealing to women through the 1920s, although some women were
hired, usually at relatively low salaries, to provide the "woman's viewpoint,"
usually in retail advertising. On rare occasions, an article in the general
press announced that "advertising needs women" to write, illustrate, and crit-
tique. Women could help advertisers avoid endless "blunders," and they could
do this, readers were assured, "without altering or searing their best natures."
With no sense of the procedure's inadequacies, Calkins told of an agency's cal-
culating how best to impress upon women the social errors inevitable from an
improper choice of writing paper. "The answer comes from various sources:
from the inner consciousness of the advertisement writer, from his friends,
from the manufacturer of the paper, from his salesmen, from the dealers. The
opinions of all these are considered."
But not, apparently, the opinions of
women. Appel likewise prided himself on having learned at Wanamaker "to
assume the attitude of the customer and give such information as the customer
would ask for were she talking to the salesman over the counter." Awareness
of a market segment clearly did not necessarily entail seeking its input for well-
tuned copywriting.

Helen Lansdowne was the great early exception. In 1908, when she joined
a major agency handling nationally advertised branded products, she began to
provide a genuine "women's view." Stanley Resor recruited her to help the J. Walter Thompson agency at the branch he had opened in Cincinnati; the agency still specialized in magazines for the home, and most of its large accounts wished to sell products to women. Lansdowne had written advertisements for several firms already: Procter and Collier (Procter & Gamble's agency), a nationally prominent streetcar advertising organization, and for retailers advertising in a Cincinnati newspaper. She had just received an offer of a position in the streetcar advertising firm's New York office when Resor made his offer. She accepted it and came to national acclaim immediately as the creative force to whom Procter & Gamble—in a rare excursion outside of Procter and Collier—turned for its Crisco campaign. She continued as one of the top figures in U.S. advertising for the next five decades, mostly selling women's products—even promoting government policy for women's war efforts in both world wars—and vigorously mentoring other women as she went. Lansdowne married Resor in 1917, and together they rebuilt the J. Walter Thompson agency into one of the world's largest.

Just as some advisers increasingly advocated reaching for the "women's view" through selective publications, they also cautioned advertisers and their agents against using the same space-buying policies for the "classes" as for the "masses." In 1918, the *Delineator* produced a report that combined gender awareness, economics, demographics, and class chauvinism that won favorable notice from advertising professionals. By assessing how much women, as compared with men, spent on household goods, and how much different classes of women spent relative to each other, the *Delineator* analysts concluded that the optimal targets of advertisements for household goods were families of "comfortable income," rather than either the small numbers of wealthy women or the many poor women. There were, after all, seven million "worth-while families" who "constitute the good wholesome fiber of our race," and who can manage to have whatever they truly want. Of these families, the women were the true targets because "to get her results the woman has to spend"; therefore, copywriters should "attend to the workings of the home" and thereby overcome men's notions that "your meals leap to the table of their own accord . . . and that the children's clothes grow on them in the night." By this time, leading advertising specialists knew they ought to reach people according to their demographics and interests, and that they should shape their appeals accordingly. Although it took decades for practitioners to move out into the worlds of their audiences on a regular basis, they wrestled with ways to communicate with them and to move them, sometimes turning for help to various systems, theories, and even to academic experts in psychology. Although practitioners projected their own expectations onto their audiences, in one way or
another enough of them struck enough chords that their impacts, as recorded in sales and notoriety, were enormous.

**Exploring Human Psychology**

Manufacturers' discomfiture in addressing the "pertinently and impertinently personal" had often precluded attempts at manipulating human interest. Not yet pragmatically or professionally distanced from the potential for embarrassment, an author in *Printers' Ink* warned advertisers that not all attempts to "address each reader individually, appealing to some want or supposed want, or asking a direct personal question" were fit carriers of commercial messages. Writing in 1894, William Kohn was likely reacting to the popularity of the Pears' Soap campaign that encouraged everyone to ask of everyone else, "Good morning! Have you used Pears' Soap?" Nonetheless, the great success of this and other provocative campaigns encouraged others to attempt to elicit personal emotions (for example, anxiety or guilt) and to indulge in ever more personal, human-interest strategies with the help of specialists. In 1903, George Frederick asserted that the advertising specialists' duty required him to exploit the personal in a matter-of-fact way. "In the great swirling world of buying and selling and boosting, it is the office of the ad man to turn the tide of human caprice and money toward his employer's coffers. . . . In study he must run the whole gamut of human nature's emotions, and if he doesn't like his task of taking humanity at a disadvantage and using his knowledge of its weaknesses as a level to pry gold from its arms, he has but to resign. A man may be greater than his tools, but he cannot change the tools or their use." After all, a man "may sacrifice half his business to sentiment, but he does not hire an ad man to sacrifice it for him. He hires him that he may have the more wherewith to sacrifice." So the advice that had originally come to advertisers as suggestions to assist them in preparing their own materials, increasingly by the turn of the century came as urgings that advertisers allow the experts a free rein in evoking consumer responses.

The effectiveness of designs, copy, and targeting can only be measured by feedback; that is, how well did any specific message draw out the desired response, whether making sales or getting votes? To obtain feedback, in the late 1890s inchoate market analyses began to replace intuitive judgments about who the audiences were and what interested them. Most of that research prior to the middle 1910s entailed setting up feedback loops, such as the tracking systems mentioned above. Some research, however, occurred in artificial settings, such as university and business-school classrooms and the new field of psychology, as a small but growing number of academicians joined advertising.
practitioners in studying advertising. Applying experimental psychology's techniques provided sources of feedback from artificial settings without the costs of time, media, and risking product reputation. In addition to the artificial settings, "psychological" testing differed from other sorts of experimentation by its stringent attempts to isolate variables of such phenomena as attention, learning, and motivation, and by obtaining feedback on them while attempting to hold other variables constant. Some techniques tried surveys and other means of questioning subjects. Sometimes more laboratory-like techniques presented subjects with stimuli, ranging from simple pictures and single words to colors, and measured some aspect of response. As Calkins defined it, psychologists study "the processes of the normal human mind," and from those understandings they deduce "the kind and character of advertising which will appeal, influence and create action."  

Printers' Ink appears to have initiated the advertising trade's discussion on psychology in advertising in 1895. That year, in "Human Nature as a Factor in Advertising," Oscar Herzberg concluded that "the advertiser who studies 'the noblest study of mankind' is apt to get the best results. Probably when we are a little more enlightened, the ad writer, like the teacher, will study psychology," because both must "influence the human mind." The next year an article on psychology ended with the statement that, if a man intended to become "a good advertiser, he must become perforce no mean psychologist." And another year later, the "Hidden Forces in Advertising" asserted that it "seems almost ridiculous to insist at this late day that advertising is founded on human nature; yet the fact is often forgotten." Still, the same piece also argued that advertisers of true genius "are born, not made," even though, all abilities require "cultivation and direction" through study. In addition to numerous articles in Printers' Ink and other publications that advocated the study of human nature in general, several specifically mentioned the academic study of psychology. For instance, in 1908, Profitable Advertising recommended that, to ensure its effectiveness, practitioners study psychology formally, rather than by "common-sense". Claude C. Hopkins and many others around the turn of the century began to write of using psychology as the scientific tool that could help in knowing "how to appeal to... desires." In the competitive commercial world, whoever "wins out and survives does so only because of superior science and strategy." Hopkins did much better than survive; he, like others who had survived less well, believed that they had "discovered some enduring principles." Advertising advisers began to offer their particular lessons about human nature and their notions of how those lessons related to promotional successes or failure, to which some added lessons from academic studies. Scholars of various per-
suasions, including faculty in the burgeoning business schools, began to offer their work and insights to practitioners, attesting to the growing interest in and respectability of advertising. As a result, the available instructions about understanding consumers and their interests included increasingly sophisticated insights from analysts’ newly developed survey techniques and psychological investigations. Psychological experimenters also began to explore systematically just how and why people respond to stimuli, and specifically, how and why advertising layouts and verbal appeals vary in their effectiveness.142

By far the most deliberate and extensive campaign on the benefits of applying psychologists’ principles to advertising began when Mahin’s Magazine took the issue up as a crusade of sorts. John Lee Mahin had earlier published System, in which he advocated feedback systems for every type of business. In 1902, he invited Walter Dill Scott, professor of psychology at Northwestern University, to write what became a year-long series of articles based on work Scott had begun for a presentation to the Agate Club, Chicago’s primary advertising organization. Scott also later wrote for the general press, most importantly in the Atlantic Monthly in 1904, and in several books. By the time of his second book, 1908, Scott had achieved considerable renown for his work. He returned the favor in part by dedicating The Psychology of Advertising to “that increasing number of American business men who successfully apply Science where their predecessors were confined to Custom.” Scott’s advice included suggestions that ads “awaken in the reader as many different kinds of images as the object itself can excite.” In other words, piano makers should try to evoke memories of music and tone; food sellers should add taste to their product descriptions.143

By the 1910s, any number of “theories” about how best to do advertising circulated. Most of them laid some claim to psychological insights—that “ponderous word,” according to one analyst in 1909, that “opens wide the door of opportunity to the advertiser”—that “relates to the study of the mind of man, the instrument we must play upon when we advertise.”144 As in many other fields struggling toward standardization, each advocate of a theory labeled his as “scientific” or “realistic” and the others as “mere theories.” Hopkins, for instance, had “little respect for most theories of advertising, because they have not been proved”; his own principles, however, he considered well proven and therefore scientific.145 In raising the field’s claims on effectiveness, the psychological and other research methods contributed to the sense that Hugo Munsterberg, a Harvard psychologist, termed in 1909 “a certain contact between empirical psychology and business.” As he warned, and others recognized, “many hundreds of millions are probably wasted every year on advertisements that are unsuccessful because they do not appeal to the mind of the

Consumption as Progress
Yet so often those insights deemed psychological were simply logical, such as Appel's epiphany, framed in John E. Powers's words, that advertising's goals were to "get seen," "get read," and "get sales." This "psychology of advertising in a nutshell" "hitched" together his college psychology studies and his practice of journalism to good purpose.147

By the mid-1910s, study and thinking about the psychology of advertising had advanced sufficiently to make synoptic texts useful, such as the 333-page *Advertising and Its Mental Laws* by Henry Foster Adams, a professor of psychology at the University of Michigan. Adams placed psychology on a par with economics as a science necessary to understand and succeed in advertising because it explored the "facts of the mental life—attention, sensation, perception, memory, reasoning, feelings, emotions—and also . . . the facts of the behavior of the individual." Adams encouraged advertising professionals to apply psychology's understandings of these mental processes to induce "a certain definite kind of action on the part of the reader." For instance, since stimuli elicit both emotion and action, carefully determining the types of stimuli to employ could serve advertisers well. As a case in point, Adams reproduced a Woodbury Facial Soap advertisement showing a young couple caressing romantically. He explained the sensual, sexual impact of this picture, which evoked "a contact or an internal sense" to enhance a message that could only come to the audience through sight, one of the less-potent "distance senses."148

Adams's example came from Helen Lansdowne's still-famous campaign, begun in 1910, that had launched Woodbury's sensual slogan "A skin you love to touch" (plate 8). (Years later, the slogan transformed into "The skin you love to touch.") In using this example, Adams corroborated Calkins's argument that science could only explain after the fact what intuition had created because Lansdowne said that she always relied on her intuition and her woman's perspective, not "science." Nonetheless, she, like Calkins and most modern copywriters, highly valued information and research on markets and products, and her intuition came into operation after having analyzed the available information.149

**Balancing Art and Copy**

Notions of the proper balance of artwork and copy have never held constant but have changed according to fashion, prevailing technologies, and priorities. In the lithographed media of the nineteenth century, pictures dominated, the better to make use of the strongest communication technologies available. Commercial artists flourished in all printed media as technologies developed, reaching their greatest successes in publications after 1890. Into
the 1920s and later, a few, such as Maxfield Parrish, J. C. Leyendecker, Harrison Fisher, Howard Chandler Christy, and Norman Rockwell, carried their signature styles to both magazine covers and the advertisements inside with large displays and often minimal copy. As publications became the preferred media for reaching consumers, however, copywriting moved into its ascendancy. This, after all, had been the first creative option in formats that for decades had had few pictorial opportunities. When those opportunities expanded in the 1890s, copywriters already had priority over artists within agencies and advertising departments for setting messages' themes and points. As advertising specialists gained a measure of confidence in using the growing number of pictorial options in publications to support their new responsibilities for writing copy, they experimented with coordinating the two means of appeal. Still, most leading advertising analysts through the 1950s believed that effective copy paved the high road to success, valuing pictures only as signs to attract audiences onto the road. By the 1910s, the creative advisers most in direct contact with advertisers' decision makers were “literary men” of the type their predecessors had regarded with disdain. (Cyrus K. Curtis and F. W. Ayer had considered themselves businessmen, not “literary men.”) The new agents held college degrees and incorporated references to literature that reflected their educations and class. 150

Printers came to terms with their declining influence with advertisers as copywriters ascended. The Inland Printer increasingly acknowledged the primacy of copy, although reluctantly at first, as in 1893 when commenting on the “purer, stronger diction” coming into use: “A line can be catchy quite as much in its essence as in its outer form—in what it says, as in the loudness with which it says it.”151 By 1910, the Inland Printer demonstrated the new terms on which printing and copywriting professionals cooperated with a series of suggestions on layout followed by this advice:

Take this hint! The ad. man wants simplicity. Rarely will he pass a florid effort. He especially dislikes fancy borders. They interfere with his direct-talk effort, for he depends much more on his words to induce sales than on the art preservative. This may seem a stunning blow to the pride of the “artist” at the case, but it is a lesson he will have to learn, if he comes into intimate contact with agency work. And I heartily endorse this preference. It is not within his province to present the beauties of typography—rather the message he has to convey.152

The verbal message—the “direct-talk effort”—was the copywriters’ domain, and those who dominated the field of newspaper and magazine advertising between 1890 and the mid-1920s insisted on the primacy of their con-
tributions. Visuals were just illustrations to most of them, despite the acclaim many commercial artists received and Lansdowne's successes at balancing copy and visuals. Their copy often filled advertisements with lengthy argument and product details that contradicted copywriters' admonitions about clutter. But text was not clutter to these specialists—it was "clean," no matter how long, if it consisted of short, direct sentences. These "literary men," and occasionally women, wrote for their literate peers, so much so that Profitable Advertising and other advisers warned copywriters against writing for their peers rather than for "the men and women who are expected to read them." Nobody knew yet how much time people spent reading advertisements, but the writers knew what they felt comfortable doing and what they believed pulled. Their successes at this stage of the art reinforced their beliefs and their authority, whether or not theirs were the most effective possible in this new milieu.

Copywriters provided much of the literature about their profession, in both popular publications and in the trade journals, enhancing the impact of their convictions. The writers prominent in the 1910s generally saw little merit in accompanying their messages with anything but the most minimal amount of illustration. They had come to maturity before printing technologies permitted cheap and easy pictures in periodicals. They also shared an interest in moving their profession's reputation away from its colorful lithographic heritage, disproportionately associated after 1900 with the notorieties of patent-medicine and circus advertising, rather than with the many manufacturers and publishers who had earlier used lithographed images extensively. Reasoned argumentation and information served their multiple concerns, employed their talents, and, they believed, sold products best. As Lasker put it, "it was copy—copy alone—that makes advertising pay."

**Persuading in Peace and War**

Among the strongest advocates of copy between 1890 and 1920 were Charles A. Bates, John E. Powers, John E. Kennedy, Albert Lasker, and Claude C. Hopkins. Of these, Hopkins most successfully systematized the pursuit of effectiveness and scientific advertising, throughout this period and into the 1920s. His famously successful campaigns (some of which took place when he worked for Lasker at Lord & Thomas) took obscure products to national leadership, among them Bissell carpet cleaners, Pepsodent toothpaste, and Palmolive soap and shaving cream. As a case in point, Henry Crowell invited Hopkins to launch a campaign for Quaker Oats' puffed cereals in 1908. Hopkins followed his customary practice of studying product processing and character-
The Good Things Some Folks Have

At breakfast today, perhaps a million children found Puffed Grains on the table.

Crisp, toasted grains, puffed to eight times normal size. Grains that taste like toasted nuts.

At dinner today, on many a table these grains were served in soup. And many another housewife used them as a nut-like garnish for ice cream.

At supper tonight, countless bowls of milk were served with these Puffed Grains in them.

Thin, airy wafers—bubble-like and brown—grains four times as porous as bread.

This afternoon, legions of girls used these grains in home candy making. Used them in place of nuts. Armies of boys enjoyed the grains dry, like peanuts, when at play.

Forty million dishes per month are now served in all these delightful ways.

Puffed Wheat, 10c
Puffed Rice, 15c

Your boys and girls would enjoy these grains better than any other cereal food.

They are thin and fragile—steam-exploded—filled with a myriad cells. And terrific heat has given them a delightful almond flavor.

Every food granule has been blasted to pieces by Prof. Anderson's process. Inside of each grain there have occurred at least a hundred million explosions.

So these are whole grains made wholly digestible, as no other process can make them.

They are ideal foods—scientific foods—the best-cooked cereal foods ever created.

It's a pity to go without them.

The Quaker Oats Company

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Fig. 8.1. Leading copywriters trying to set new, up-to-date standards for advertising content after the mid-1890s self-consciously wrote "reason why" messages. In this advertisement for the Quaker Oats Company, Claude Hopkins explained why mothers and children would fare better with puffed cereals. By guiding consumers to wise purchasing decisions, advertising professionals claimed to contribute to progress, while reducing production to a matter of metaphors. *Ladies' World* 34, no. 9 (1913): 21.
istics to find features attractive to appropriate markets. He visited plants with Alexander P. Anderson, developer of the technologies for puffed grains. He learned how the grains exploded in massive, gun-like devices and coined the slogan “shot from guns.” An example of Hopkins’s puffed-cereals advertising filled half of a large (16” x 11”) page of the *Ladies’ World* for September 1913 (fig. 8.1). Two stylized children look down into a massive bowl of cereal and milk that floats above “The Good Things Some Folks Have.” The copy explained the different ways that “perhaps a million,” “legions,” and “armies” of people enjoy “countless” meals and snacks in the course of a day, adding up to “forty million dishes per month [which] are now served in all these delightful ways.” The cereals were digestibly “thin and fragile” because “every food gran­ule has been blasted to pieces by Prof. Anderson’s process. Inside of each grain there have occurred at least a hundred million explosions.” Because these were “ideal foods—scientific foods,” it was “a pity to go without them.” While the children’s picture draws the gaze into the bowl and the headline, it comprises a small portion of the overall display. Without question, people responded to Hopkins’s reason-why campaign, because it moved the once-failing product from obscurity to Quaker Oats’ most popular ready-to-eat cereal.155

Copywriters labeled as “reason-why” techniques their attempts to project an apparently logical argument. Such messages might include, in an effort to engage the audience, features of the product and their benefits to the consumer. Whether such arguments actually appeal to reason, motivate buying, or instead justify purchases made for other reasons are still topics of debate within the trade. Reason-why techniques never dominated the ads in print, but their advocates’ arguments dominated the literature in the first quarter of the century. Reason-why methods served both advertisers and ad writers by encouraging consumers to trust new products in a nearly unregulated marketplace. Rather than offer only tired superlatives or founders’ portraits, the lengthy copy ostensibly assured consumers about products’ reliability and safety. Detailed copy also gave consumers a language and framework within which to think and talk about the products. Beyond selling products, this approach also allowed advertising specialists to define and assert their professionalism as measured by their distance from past practices. In this capacity, reason-why played an important transitional role as advertising practices moved from the producers’ messages to consumer-oriented messages mediated by the new advertising communication specialists.

Reason-why’s transitional role—assuring consumers and addressing their interests and at the same time satisfying advertisers by focusing on their products—made it attractive to its users in automobile advertising. It dominated that arena well into the 1920s, even though more evocative marketing tech-
niques were already in use in promoting other nationally advertised products. Auto advertisers were still largely owner-managers, and they generally ignored or rejected the notion that the reasons why people might want to purchase an item were not necessarily its objective and practical features and benefits. Advice to do differently existed as early as 1903, when a *Judicious Advertising* editorial quoted publisher Frank Munsey as having exclaimed that automobiling “will renew the life and youth of the overworked man or woman.” The editorial confirmed, “This is good sound talk—truthful talk—and it offers a suggestion for strong convincing advertising argument for automobiling and for any automobile that goes.” In contrast to this “sound talk” about benefits, most automobile advertisements had “a certain sameness” that belied the promotional potential so often expressed by enthusiasts such as Munsey. Automobile manufacturers had failed to keep up with the progress in advertising and were still clinging “to the old-time idea that the proper sort of an ad shows a cut of the machine, with a few stock phrases” about features, and a list of agents. “Let the makers catch up the spirit of enthusiasm—and stand out for work of the highest quality from those who prepare their announcements. The results will well repay the pains.”

Such “arguments” as this—emotional reasons why—were seldom used in automobile promotions for another twenty years. Instead, the ads emphasized the reliability of the production firms or the mechanical features of the products themselves, and always the costs. Just as Claude Hopkins devised copy about cereals shot from guns and steam-cleaned beer bottles by abstracting facets of production, he advised strategies specifically to reassure buyers and to build confidence, such as writing profiles about head engineers and glossing facts, such as “actual figures how quantity production reduced costs,” especially for middle-class cars like the Hudson and the Studebaker. So while he did not advocate portraying a factory as a matter of the producers’ pride in industrial progress, he did feature aspects of production that he thought would attract consumers because of their presumed effects on the products. At a time when the absence of regulations combined with the novelty of many products to induce some uncertainty in consumers, this attention to production and product was truly consumer-oriented, even if copywriters still assumed that they somehow knew what consumers wanted to learn. In the case of automobile advertising, it was not that Hopkins did not share Munsey’s personal enthusiasm for automobiling; he was an avid buff himself. He simply did not think of promoting automobiles in that fashion. The reason-why approach, which focused on mechanical features and reliability and economic efficiency, was intended to encourage and reassure buyers while giving them a manage-
able lexicon with which to feel expert and conversant about the new intimi-
dating technology. Copywriters thereby gave emotional needs a veneer of ra-
tionality that was important for selling a new, expensive, complex technology.

The one type of emotional appeal in the selling of automobiles recognized
as a tactical exception to this rule, even before the mid-1920s, appealed to elitism—that of both the producers and the consumers of the most expensive makes. As another leading copywriter, Earnest Elmo Calkins, observed, “me-
chanical excellence would be approached ultimately by all cars,” so the finest
cars should be distinguished instead by their “finish, beauty and luxury.”

This practice fit a “gentleman’s car, built by gentlemen” who were more con-
cerned with their reputations than their fortunes. Even these messages, with
their elegant but static images, expressed the prestige attending ownership, but
not the excitement. Only after the country had assimilated automobility (and
when most leading major automobile makers had incorporated) did auto ads
begin to apply the marketing techniques explored earlier by advertisers in
other markets.

At the same time as reason-why copy reassured and informed consumers—and sometimes misled them, according to critics—some innovators moved to-
ward more evocative strategies. Copywriters Lansdowne and Calkins and psy-
chologists Scott and Adams, for instance, believed that an effective “fusion of
sensations,” as Adams termed it, combined copy and picture to form the most
effective advertising messages. Adams cited a study indicating that although
some people disliked ads with all copy and others disliked the opposite, both
groups reacted positively to ads split evenly between illustration and text. In
addressing what sorts of images worked best, Adams declared that advertising
“is very largely a visual affair” that is best done by using the “distance sense” of
sight to evoke “organic and contact sensations.” Lansdowne achieved this
impact with her Woodbury soap advertisements, Adams believed, and cer-
tainly her campaign sold soap: sales multiplied ten times in eight years. Suc-
cessfully creating demand by evoking emotional responses through picture and
copy, Lansdowne’s messages continued for decades and pointed the way to
powerful and controversial practices that appeared ever more frequently after
World War I. The campaign for “A skin you love to touch” offered, both ver-
bally and visually, sensual messages that were novel in marketing to proper
women, although not entirely novel to their reading material. These messages
implied that these most proper of women should seek such experiences and
that the right soap could transform them—first their complexions, then their
lives. As daring as they were, Lansdowne’s Woodbury advertisements also
pointed to the past: they offered copies of their illustrations as premiums. More

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tellingly, the soap packages pictured in the displays still bore John H. Woodbury's full name and head-only portrait. Such remnants of the traditional practices that featured the advertiser and what the advertiser held dear lingered on during the transition to full specialist control. Kellogg's cornflake advertisements in the 1910s, for instance, embedded a traditional Victorian box in stark, modernist, sometimes evocative designs.

The advertising field's experiences with World War I, including the work of the propaganda organ, the Committee on Public Information (CPI), taught its practitioners much about the potential for persuading audiences. The war's opportunities for experiments in the name of patriotism came when the field and strategists were already on a fast track. Taking advantage of these opportunities, in the name of patriotism, led to narrative styles that did more than offer consumers benefits, such as lovely complexions and romantic liaisons, and more than reasons-why for preferring one product over another. Copywriters moved to narratives that used illustrations to dramatize in no uncertain terms why citizens/consumers should or should not act in some way. Wartime exigencies warranted such strong admonitions as "Nail Lies Like These! . . . Get the Facts from Washington!" and "That Liberty Shall Not Perish from the Earth Buy Liberty Bonds." Ominous and dark illustrations often accompanied this copy, threatening a bitter world if citizens did not pitch in. Some instructions told readers to "Write Him Cheerful Letters," as drawings or photographs compared the effects of hopeful and sad letters on soldiers and hence on the war effort. Countless solicitations on behalf of the Red Cross asked for money and volunteers from "those who love America, believe in humanity, and have faith in God." As commercial artist Charles Dana Gibson explained, "One cannot create enthusiasm for war on the basis of practical appeal." The public must be aroused by the horrors of war.162

Copywriters and commercial artists let their imaginations range freely to discover threats to soldiers and the war effort posed by individual citizens' carelessness or lack of diligence. They sold the war through posters, magazines and newspapers, and the Four-Minute Men's speeches; it was a time when there was nothing to offer but everything to fear. In doing so, they learned what propagandists and proselytizers have long known; namely, the power of the narrative to define virtue and evil, to plant fear and doubt, and to promise only the surcease of anxiety as a reward for obedience. Most of all, they wrote to ensure that citizens examined their actions and those of the people around them for true patriotism. It was not enough to believe in one's own patriotism; there were certain requisite behaviors, and only those could satisfy this eternal judging. A CPI ad made this explicit, picturing a fierce-looking Columbia who declared,
I Am Public Opinion. All men fear me! [Public opinion] will judge you not by an allegiance expressed in mere words . . . not by your mad cheers . . .

But, as wise as I am just, I will judge you by the material aid you give to the fighting men who are facing death that you may live and move and have your being in a world made safe. I warn you—don't talk patriotism over here unless your money is talking victory Over There. I am Public Opinion! As I judge, all men stand or fall!163

So, in case patriotism might not be enough to ensure action, copywriters called on citizens’ fear for their reputations and self-esteem.

Wartime copywriters developed new narrative powers to define values, to warn of the consequences of specific actions or inaction, and to label heroes or villains. To accomplish their political purposes, the propagandists wrote to and about citizens and soldiers—“you loving wives and sweethearts” and “our boys”—and not about objects. Reason-why became reason-why-or-else! Writers did not recommend or suggest or compare or describe or make claims about the worthiness of actions; instead they insisted that citizens’ worthiness could be measured by how loyally they joined the cause and followed its instructions. This directness, of course, fit the official definition of the crisis and its urgent purposes.

When translated into product advertising targeted at consumers after the war, such boldness presented readers with instructions in several forms. Some copywriters, such as William H. Rankin and William C. D’Arcy, recognized and expounded on the usefulness of wartime activities for postwar commercial advertising.164 Warnings and offerings gained force from narratives of personal failures and successes that, as during the war, hinged not on the consumers’ own judgment but on whether or not they satisfied specific standards. Now the standards became whether or not readers purchased and used specific products, be they personal or house-care products or etiquette books. The rapidly developing narrative techniques resulted in long texts written and illustrated to install fears of betrayal in business, fears of social disgrace, fears of grooming inadequacy, fears of harming one’s children, and so on. Once developed, in the 1920s, parables, social tableaux, and visual clichés, as historian Roland Marchand terms them, taught the merits of products indirectly, less by description of features than by enacting the consequences of neglect or benefits of use.165

In the meantime, exhortations, admonitions, and, increasingly, melodramas evolved, reducing the announcement styles of advertisements, with their declarations and superlatives, to a minor role. Extensive copy continued well into radio days, diminishing only with the advent of television when the level of popular culture made too many demands on audiences to favor lengthy copy.

Of course, stories about product benefits were not new to advertising, but
Fig. 8.2. Nineteenth-century advertisers made large claims for their products, but rarely, except for patent-medicine and cosmetic firms, did they promise personal transformations. Instead, they showed that people who were already competent, attractive, and progressive had the good sense to purchase and use their products. Therefore, Mrs. Enterprise most certainly used Dobbins' Electric Soap, leaving her time to attend to her child, whereas Mrs. Fogy struggled with ordinary soap as her neglected child cried. Two-part chromolithographed trade card, circa 1880.

their appearances as picture stories through the lithographic media, particularly trade cards, had long since become passé. In any case, those older picture stories did not offer miracles of consumption because the people portrayed in them did not experience transformations. Instead, two sets of people demonstrated what products could do for consumers: one set appeared incompetent and unattractive; the other set was competent enough to select the better product and therefore prosper. Double trade cards for Dobbins' Electric Soap and Rising Sun Stove Polish demonstrate both character and ethnic differences between “wise” and enterprising people, on the one hand, and “foolish” fogies on the other (figs. 8.2 and 8.3). Using the right product could not transform one into the other, but it could offer comforting evidence of one's belonging to the right sort of people in the first place—not unlike sacramental evidence of one's belonging to those graced by predestination for spiritual salvation. In contrast, patent-medicine purveyors did use before-and-after formats throughout the nineteenth century; but even they offered only cures, not personality or lifestyle transformations. Still, by promoting what products
Fig. 8.3. Elijah Morse, founder and manager of the Rising Sun Stove Polish Company, served his hometown of Canton, Massachusetts, as its congressman. His chromolithographed, double trade card, circa 1885, defined that achievement as the height of success, made possible when a wise man brought to his wife the best stove polish—an important asset to the well-run kitchen in the days of the cast-iron stove. The ads did not, of course, point out that manufacturing the product surely helped a man's career more than purchasing it. Morse's other advertisements often portrayed his factory and homes as evidence of his success.

could do for the consumer—and what failure to use them implied about one's character—these early advertisements presaged the narratives of the 1920s.

James Webb Young prepared the first of the notorious postwar appeals to social fears in 1919 as a full-page advertisement for Odorono, a woman's deodorant (fig. 8.4). This pace-setting advertisement appeared in a typical format for the decade: small illustration, prominent headline, and more than one-half page of tight copy. Its copy had the form of reason-why, but it ap-
A woman's arm! Poets have sung of its grace; artists have painted its beauty. It should be the daintiest, most delicate thing in the world. And yet, unfortunately, it isn't always.

There's an old offender in this quest for perfect daintiness—an offender of which we ourselves may be as ignorant as we are beautiful; a thing which must be there whether we want it or not; a thing which most of us have been taught to dread and avoid.

**Within the Curve of a Woman's Arm**

A frank discussion of a subject too often avoided

A woman's arm! Poets have sung of its grace; artists have painted its beauty. It should be the daintiest, most delicate thing in the world. And yet, unfortunately, it isn't always.

There's an old offender in this quest for perfect daintiness—an offender of which we ourselves may be as ignorant as we are beautiful; a thing which must be there whether we want it or not; a thing which most of us have been taught to dread and avoid.

**Shall we discuss it frankly?**

Many a woman who says, "No, I am never annoyed by perspiration," does not know the facts—does not realize how much sweet and daintier she would be if the odor were entirely free from it.

For there are worse offenders because they have no more than anywhere else. We are not smitten because the perspiration itself, occurring under the arm, does not evaporate as quickly as from other parts of the body.

Thus we are not blazoned because there is a conscious odor; we are not blazoned because the perspiration itself, occurring under the arm, does not evaporate as quickly as from other parts of the body. The curve of the arm and the constant wearing of clothing has made normal evaporation there impossible.

**Would you be absolutely sure of your daintiness?**

It is the chemicals of the body, not the skin glands, that cause odor. And even though there is no active perspiration—that apparent source—there may be the odor that one can't feel under the arm or under the axilla.

To meet this need, a physician from abroad—Ohioano—has taught us how to avoid this. With particular women Ohioano has become a secret weapon, which they use regularly two or three times a week.

**So simple, so easy, so sure.**

No matter how much the perspiration glands may be excited by exertion, emotion, or heat, Ohioano will keep your underarms always sweet and naturally dry. You can throw all anxiety as to your Reehness, your perfect daintiness.

The right time to use Ohioano is at night before retiring. Pat it on the underarms with a bit of abundant salve, only two or three times a week.

Then a little talcum dusted on and you can forget all about that worst of all embarrassments—perspiration odor or moisture. Daily baths do not lessen the effect of Ohioano at all.

**Does excessive perspiration ruin your prettiest dresses?**

Are you one of the many women who are troubled with excessive perspiration, which ruins all your prettiest blouses and dresses? To endure this condition is so unnecessary! Why, you never need feel a dress with perspiration! For this bower-tumble Ohioano is just as effective as it is for the more subtle form of perspiration annoyance. Try it tonight and notice how insignificantly fresh and sweet you will feel.

If you are troubled in any unusual way or have had any difficulty in finding relief, let us help you solve your problem. We shall be so glad to do so. Address Ruth Miller, The Ohioano Co., 715 South Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio.

At all toilet counters in the United States and Canada, 60c and $1.00. Trial size, 10c, postpaid if you order from your dealer has it.

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Fig. 8.4. James Webb Young's innovatively intimate advertisement for the Ohioano Company attracted wide attention. It offended many readers of the *Ladies' Home Journal* enough for them to cancel their subscriptions, but it also sold a lot of deodorant. The intention of most copywriters of this era was to use illustrations in magazine and newspaper advertisements only to draw readers to the ads' lengthy texts, which were filled with stories and warnings. Such formats contrasted profoundly with the earlier, freestanding advertisements that narrated by means of pictures, using minimal text and rarely offering personal transformations. *Ladies' Home Journal* 36, no. 5 (1919): 168.
pealed to powerful or-else emotions. As a young couple danced in a romantic setting, the caption under them read, “There isn’t a girl who can’t have the irresistible, appealing loveliness of perfect daintiness.” Young, a protégé of Helen Lansdowne Resor’s, had self-consciously tried to balance propriety and his task of eliciting interest in the product’s benefits; therefore, the headline only hinted at the subject of the message: “Within the Curve of a Woman’s Arm.” Yet he did inject into the copy candor about body processes unheard of in the Ladies’ Home Journal since patent medicines had been expelled. Young did not threaten consumers with ill health, as had the nostrum sellers, but there were potent goads to anxiety just the same. Just as the CPI had denied wartime citizens the option of judging their own patriotism, Young’s lengthy text informed readers in different ways that they could not “be absolutely sure of [their] daintiness” without this product. “It is a physiological fact that persons troubled with perspiration odor seldom can detect it themselves.” In August, another Odorono advertisement appeared to use the voice of “a well-known business man” in a “courageous article” to tell women that their chances for success in business as well as social spheres could be spoiled by a “real menace” to which they were probably “utterly unconscious.” Only proper applications of Odorono could end their offensiveness and salvage their romantic and business lives. In dismay over these breaches of decorum in the Ladies’ Home Journal, more than two hundred people canceled their subscriptions. Sales of Odorono, however, increased 112 percent in the next year, and Young learned the merits of (to quote his “Curve of a Woman’s Arm” ad) “a frank discussion of a subject too often avoided.”

As advertising practitioners and their advocates observed the internal progress of their field after 1890, they interpreted and touted their marketing successes as evidence of their own progress. By the turn of the century, they began to claim that their progress deserved credit for the progress of society as a whole. By 1920 they were sure of it.