

A STUPID ARTICLE

by Randy Jones

"Stupid" photos courtesy of Peter Berec

Okay, I admit it. I'm stupid—but I'm certainly not alone.

The public—you, me and everyone we know—are becoming "stupid" because we are running out of time and convenience rules the world.

Scurrying around in our own little ecospheres, we end up acting "stupid" because we no longer take the time to be smart. Between jobs, kids, and way too many online and offline media options, we're too busy and too overwhelmed to pay attention any more.

Furthermore, we're simply drowning in media alternatives.

And just look at how media folks suffer when trying to reach "Stupid":

TiVO makes it easy to skip commercials; deleting "junk email" is a breeze; and commercial-free radio is taking over.

I'm totally Sirius.

To make matters worse, Amazon and others are trying to wrestle my beloved hard copy books and newspapers from my hands and replace them with a gizmo they claim can house all my media.

Curse you, Kindle.

Through their ongoing rate hikes, the United States Postal Service is actually

losing money as more and more direct mail marketers abandon ship based on the perception of "greener grass" in the online world.

And say what you want about the social media frenzy but I'm certainly not able to follow the comings and goings and 653 Facebook "friends" and all their favorite links, preferred YouTube videos, Farmville antics, travel destinations and unsolicited political rhetoric. Facebook and Twitter are perhaps the most clogged media outlets of all these days.

For an increasing number of us, it's sometimes just easier to be stupid and



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shut down rather than try to keep up.

From a marketing communications standpoint, to reach “Stupid,” we have to get *creative*. And by “we,” I mean each and every one of us tasked with crafting a verbal or written communications message to the consumer.

To make matters even worse, as a consumer group, “Stupid” has developed an outrageously short attention span.

To better understand my perspective, my primary marketing expertise is targeted promotions with a focus on life-event audiences, lifestyles, special events and cow tipping.

Just checking to see if you're still paying attention. Moo.

Almost every marketing program ever produced by my agency contains a significant amount of emotional content camouflaged as sales copy.

Thankfully for us, “Stupid” has triggers that elicit emotional responses.

Finally, I must also confess that, with my 2009 relocation to Collier County, I'm somewhat more stupid *now* than before.

There's something about the ongoing sun exposure that bakes some of the smart right out of you.

All that being said, you may be puzzled by my assessment of this dim situation: we can all profit from being a little bit stupid and a whole lotta smart at the same time.

Being stupid is GOOD.

In a variety of situations, *dumb* is bad and costly but intentionally being stupid *can be* exciting and liberating.

For example, I am keenly aware that when MindZoo hires new employees, I can only take advantage of their brilliant ignorance for a very short time.

Take my recent Florida Gulf Coast University Intern, Lauren McAuley, who brilliantly surmised, “It seems to me that moving the extra copy paper *over by the copier* would be a good idea.”

You think?

In a few months, darn it, my new charges are going to be *trained in our way of thinking* and their fresh perspective will diminish. Before long I will gasp in horror when I hear those lamentable words

coming from a relative new hire, “But Randy, don't we always do it this way?”

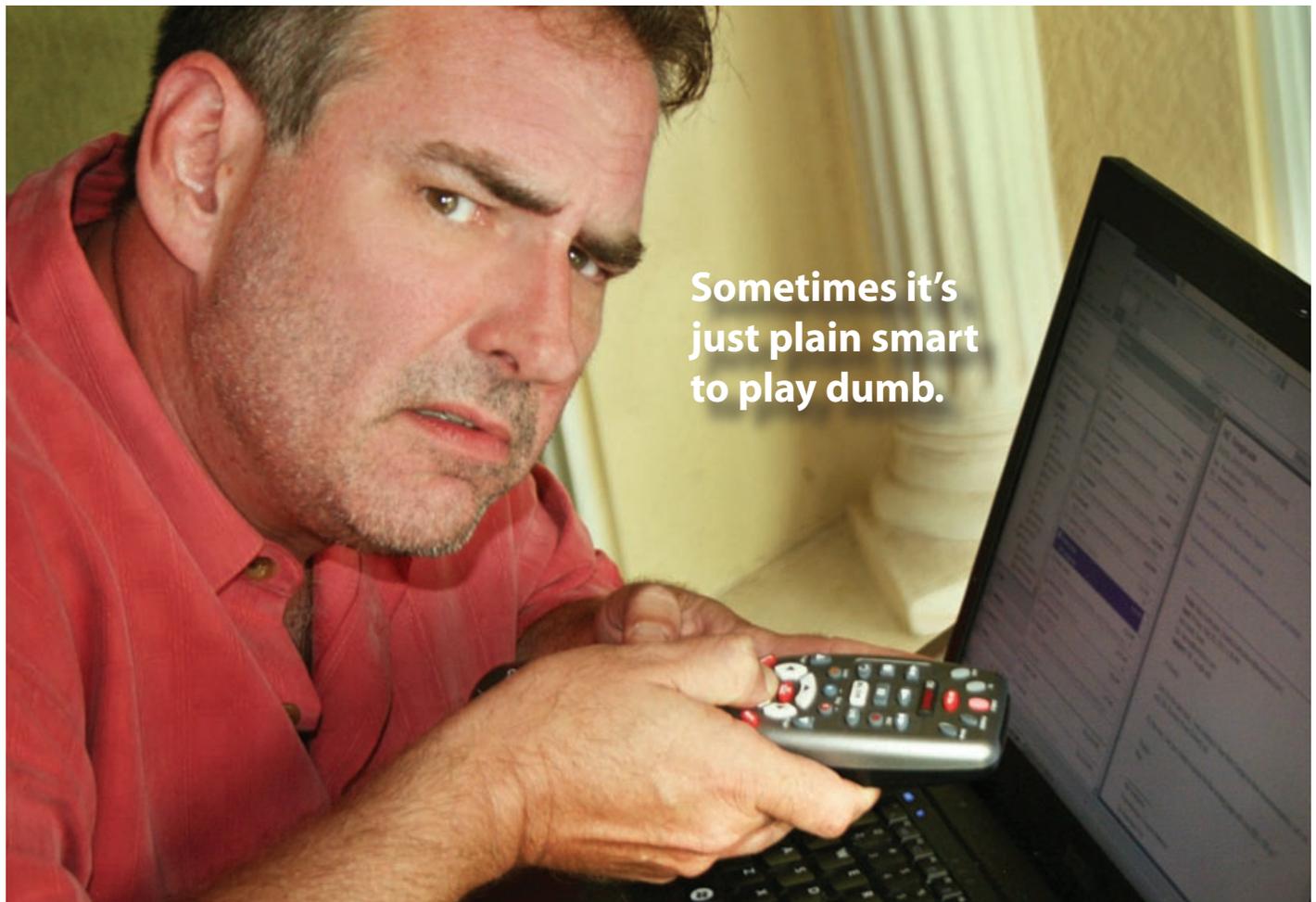
Aarrgh!

“True. But if you didn't know what we *always* do, you might engineer something new and different because you wouldn't be inhibited by assumptions or unnecessary expectations.”

In a best-case scenario, I can cleverly guide my newbies back to a somewhat more enlightened version of “stupid” where, with brain cells metaphorically stripped away once again, fresh perspective and robust creativity can be reunited.

As someone who openly confesses to being “Type-A impaired,” I also approach each marketing project thinking *stupid*. After all, what happens when we *assume*? (As this is being published in conservative *Business Currents*, I am not allowed to *spell that out* for you.) (Editor Marci's note: No, he's not ;))

I continually force myself to view all of our creative projects, every word and every image, as if I knew absolutely *nothing* about our client's product or service and



moreover, as if I was *completely oblivious* as to how to purchase it.

I have also been known to set up a homemade focus group of “clueless” friends and family to see how they respond to our work. For me, nothing is more eye opening than observing one of my college-aged children struggle to interpret a sales message I have prepared for a client. Besides, my kids are *ruthless* and never hold back when sharing candid opinions and recommendations.

And they have plenty of experience spending money too—mine.

In short, sometimes it’s just plain smart to play dumb.

KISS Me

Ultimately, all our collective marketing communications and media promotions will be judged by a group of consumers who know infinitely less about our product than we want to believe.

Once again, don’t *assume*.

That being said, I project that 80% of my clients come to me with the desire to include 80% *more* sales copy as part of

their media message than is realistic or necessary.

Consumers are very smart about one thing—they know when they are being duped with an inferior offer and extraneous fluff. With their stupid hats perched firmly upon their heads, they expect you to make it easy for them, provide them offers that have real value, and not waste their time.

More and more, consumers are also demonstrating an unwavering stance quite familiar to both me and the citizens of my home state of Missouri: SHOW ME.

If you have not heard of the KISS Principle then you may well be living under a rock...or perhaps Cape Coral. Regardless, it’s a statement so famous, almost to the point of *infamous*, that it’s always shocking to me how frequently its rather straightforward meaning is ignored.

“Keep it Simple, Stupid”

As you can see, it’s not a terribly complicated idea and justly serves as an excellent yardstick for *avoiding* complicated messages. Let’s review it again.

“Keep it Simple, Stupid”

Now, please allow me to remind you, as stated previously, “Stupid” has an outrageously short attention span so...

“Keep it Simple, Stupid”

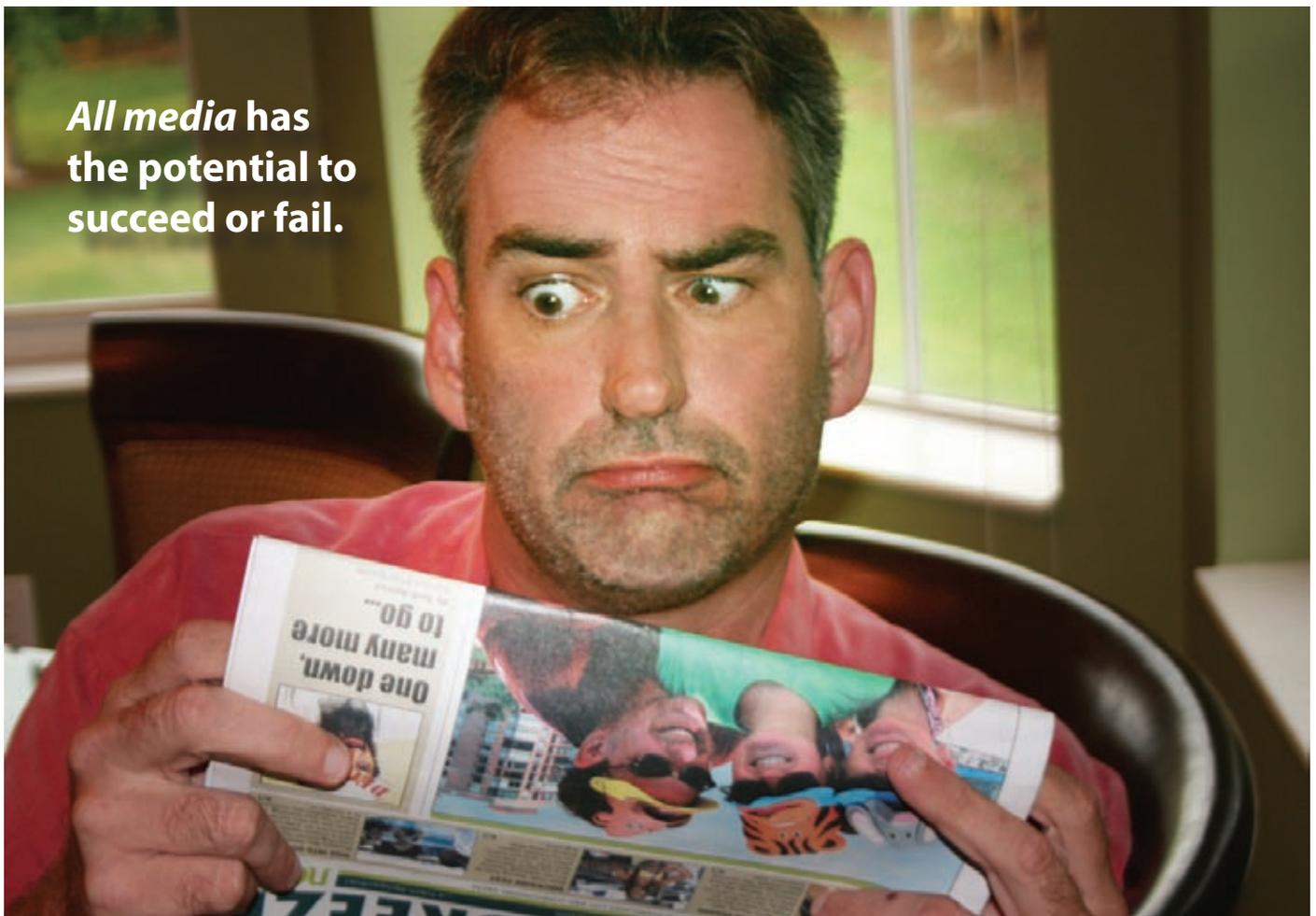
What’s more, thanks to this wonderful late 20th Century invention, the World Wide Web, those bibliophiles who ache to read everything there is to know about you can find that information on a little box in their home. For the rest of us, give us a KISS and get to the point.

Being stupid is BAD.

There’s a reason the adjective “frenzy” often accompanies the buzz surrounding social media. Personally I have seen far too much emphasis placed on the “value” of social networking and mobile marketing. What’s dense is assigning too many of your marketing dollars to these media channels before you *prove* their value to *your* organization.

You may as well be in Vegas gambling away your marketing budget.

In actuality, the same could be said about over budgeting for any untested



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channel, either offline or online.

Though the media landscape is rapidly changing, the only way to effectively develop a successful media plan is to understand that *all media* has the potential to succeed or fail.

Only through careful consideration, testing, analysis and evaluation can an individual business determine the correct mix across *all available media channels* to suit their particular needs.

There are also times the *media* doesn't directly fail us but we tragically fail ourselves.

I have witnessed too many unnecessary disappointments due to key marketing programs being managed by inexpert staff on the client side *and/or* on the vendor side.

Handing over program responsibility to *anyone* lacking the experience to apply skillful judgment increases the likelihood of less-than-favorable results—even on programs that could have been successful given proper leadership.

Plus, choosing a “one-size-fits-all” vendor who is not experienced selling your product *and/or* working in your

desired media is also predictive of modest results.

Though we all have missteps on the road to success, failing to recognize and learn from these blunders is infinitely more damaging than the initial mistakes themselves.

Yep, that'd be stupid.

Get Smart

Though I have discussed the pros and the cons of being stupid, when it comes to communicating the value of your product through the media, *smart and educated* beats *stupid and ignorant* every time.

Please consider a few basics:

- ✓ Determine Return-on-Investment (ROI) scenarios, in advance, for both break-even and program profitability;
- ✓ Ask for case studies specific to how your product category has been promoted through various media channels;
- ✓ Request detailed demographic information on their reader, listener, viewer or clicker;
- ✓ Emphasize media buys that enable

you to efficiently track responses back to specific media channels;

- ✓ Identify non-competitive partners who wish to reach a similar prospect audience and establish a mutually beneficial affiliate marketing relationship.

My Stupid Blog

Some would say it would be extremely stupid of me to not take advantage of any media outlet available to push my blog, **ATTACK BUNNES, INDECENT EXPOSURE, ELIZABETH VARGAS AND OTHER BUMPS IN THE ROAD** at attackbunnies.com.

I tend to agree—especially considering the majority of my blog content is about *me being stupid*.

- ✓ In 1969, I innocently allowed a barnyard animal to become a beloved pet and subsequent unexpected dinner entrée;
- ✓ I maintain the Easter Bunny stalked me as a child in Missouri;
- ✓ I almost single-handedly ruined *Tom Sawyer*, the 1973 movie musical;
- ✓ Lastly, I have convinced myself that ABC News's Elizabeth Vargas is out to get me.

My point: chances are any *stupid* move I have ever made, professionally *and/or* personally, will be dissected, chronicled and ridiculed on AttackBunnies.com.

So I assure you, the reader, from the standpoint of *understanding and celebrating stupidity*, I talk the talk and I most certainly walk the walk.



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