The Idea Writers: Copywriting in a New Media and Marketing Era

By: Teressa Iezzi
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Reviewed by Andrew Clark
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The 21st century has brought a wave of technological advancement, often leaving newly developed technology obsolete within a few years of its release. The quick turnover of technology often leaves users in the dust, especially professional users stuck in a work environment that is not quick to take advantage of these new advancements.

One profession that had to adapt as quickly as the change in technology occurs, is the copywriter. In The Idea Writers: Copywriting in a New Media and Marketing Era, Teressa Iezzi examines the change in media that ultimately resulted in a change of the whole copywriting and ad industry.¹

Author Teressa Iezzi is a New York based editor at Fast Company. She covers creative topics in the following fields: advertising, marketing, technology, and culture for Fast Company’s channel, Co.Create. Ms. Iezzi frequently speaks at industry events and in the media, discussing creativity and popular culture. This is her first foray into writing a book.

The book begins with creation of the advertising industry then transitions into the subsequent changes to the industry to coincide with the advancements in technology. Ultimately the book concludes by assessing where the industry is now, and how and why

ad agencies operate as they do today. Throughout the book, the author includes numerous “Copywriter’s Tips,” which are great practical tips for copywriters to use. The first chapters set the scene for the advertising industry beginning by discussing a wildly successful ad campaign that ran in 2008. Furthermore, the beginning chapters foreshadow the overall premise of the book, which is a metamorphosis of the copy write industry. The change is described as “fundamental, irrevocable and to many players in the media and marketing scene catastrophic.”

The early ad industry described in the book is much like the depictions of the industry on the AMC show *Mad Men*. It began with ads and ad campaigns designed specifically to sell or pitch a product to the public. These ads were often used to create the desire to purchase the product through a showing of necessity, described in the book as “buy this product, receive this benefit.” In the days before the Internet, the public often gained information and sought entertainment through print, radio and television. In that time, a copywriter had a more isolated audience, one that was forced to endure their advertisements in order to receive the entertainment. A person reading a story in a magazine could only read that story in print. This assured print advertisers that at minimum a reader would flip through the pages breezing past their ad. It was the print advertisers goal to put something catchy enough to grab the reader’s attention and draw them in for the subsequent pitch of the product.

The book then describes the catalyst for the change in the way ad campaigns are done, the Internet. The book discusses the ways the Internet has effected the advertising industry stating “[it] completely and irreversibly transformed the media landscape and the

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2 See Iezzi, supra note 1 at 4.
3 See Iezzi, supra note 1 at 20.
way people experienced and interacted with brands and brand communication.” This change in media landscape has transitioned the control of ad content and brand exposure from the hands of the copywriter to the hands of the consumer. The Internet created many outlets to obtain information and entertainment by the public. This access allowed the public to selectively tailor what advertisements and campaigns they were exposed to, making it markedly harder for the copywriter to grab and maintain the consumer’s attention. The book attributes the effect on the public caused by the Internet, as the reason for the change in the way advertisements were created.

The author declares that the change caused by the Internet should be categorized as a transition to consumer controlled or consumer generated content. Companies that utilize consumer generated content allow customers to do a majority of their advertising by sharing information about the product with friends, family through social media and word of mouth. The Internet provides the perfect media for the consumers to share advertisements and opinions on products with the whole world, or anyone willing to read what they have written. This has been a huge change for companies; now they not only compete with other participants producing the same products and offering the same services, but they now have to compete with consumer feedback and reviews that were not readily available before the Internet. With the advent of consumer feedback and interaction, advertisements have now become a two-way conversations rather than one-way sales pitches. One of the broad conclusions this book has made is that copywriters are no longer charged with creating an advertisement but rather “to create something

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4 See Iezzi, supra note 1 at 8.
useful, entertaining or beautiful (or all of the above) on behalf of the brand.”5 This new creative responsibility placed upon the copywriter is forcing them to create a brand experience. A brand experience will compel the consumer to immerse themselves in the advertisements of the product. The author states quoting Ty Montague, “I think, in general, people don’t buy products, they buy stories.”6 The ultimate message the author conveys is that to be a successful copywriter in this high technology era, you need to tell a story, and create a compelling brand experience to engage the consumer and encourage them to buy their products.

The Idea Writers: Copywriting in a New Media and Marketing Era is a well written and organized book. The points the author makes regarding the ways in which consumers view advertisements and new media are well founded and supported. The author guides the reader through the development of Internet advertising and brand experiences through storytelling, and by highlighting her theories with numerous real world ad campaign examples. The examples were extremely helpful, especially to illustrate some of the abstract advertising examples. Overall, I would recommend this book because it was an easy read, and would be particularly beneficial to copywriters looking to learn about new media advertising or those looking to begin a career in the copywriting industry.

5 See Iezzi, supra note 1 at 80.
6 See Iezzi, supra note 1 at 56.