Continuity

It is common knowledge in advertising that consumers seldom respond to a single viewing of an ad. But, there is also a point where they get bored and begin to tune the ad out. To combat this problem, agencies create campaigns--sets of ads with a single strategic message.

The first principle for arranging elements is that a campaign must have continuity. This means that all the ads in the campaign must have a set of visual themes that identify each ad as part of a continuing whole--a member of the set. These themes must appear in ALL ads in ALL media. You can't identify the themes from a single ad. You must see several in order to understand what's going on.

The ads on this page show some fairly simple on-going continuity themes. It's not enough to have just one or two continuing themes. There must be a sufficient number to identify all ads as a set immediately. Notice all the ways in which the each ad is similar to the others:

-- In each photo, there are unusual-looking sheep.
-- The photos all are about the same size.
-- The photos are placed in the same position on the page.
-- There are color blocks above and below the pictures.
-- The typeface stays the same.
-- The headline type is about the same size.
-- The body text is set in two columns.
-- The logo is placed in the same position.

Did you identify all eight themes?

Now, consider the ways in which they differ--The headlines, photos, body copy and color schemes. Remember, the viewer must immediately notice that she is looking at a different ad, but still identify it as part of the set.

On the next page is an example of a cross-media campaign. You may remember seeing television ads from this DeBeers campaign. When they first appeared, the shadow silhouettes presented a striking contrast to the usual guy-gives-girl-jewelry ad scenario. While each ad portrayed a different occasion on which the woman...
deserved a diamond, the basic format of all commercials was the same. You saw the shadows overlayed on black and white backgrounds with the jewelry as the only colored object in the commercial. The dramatic musical background, Vivaldi’s Four Seasons, provided an additional continuity theme for television.

As you can see above, each print ad is different, but the themes continue. All are quarter-page squares with white type in the same italic font, the shadows and the jewelry in color. Would these themes continue on posters, point of purchase displays, trade ads, and billboards? YES, YES, YES and YES.

Once you see several ads in the campaign, the target audience and strategic message become obvious. (Knowing the media in which they appeared, Time and Newsweek magazines, is another clue.) These ads are aimed at married men age 35+. The goal is to get them to buy a second or third diamond for their wife. The promise is: If you buy your wife diamond's for special occasions, you'll keep the romance in your relationship (and maybe get sex). What tells you this? The copy...tenth anniversary ...Mothers day. And the positions of the shadows. Check out the background in the middle ad and the female figure in the bottom ad. Is this the hair style and attire of the average woman in her 20s?

There are examples of campaign continuity through these on-line lectures. For instance, you saw several ads from the Gallo Campaign in the Size Section of the Ingredients chapter. One of the best ways to assure that there will be continuity among all the ads in the series is to use the same visual format (more about that in the Print Formats Section). Even so, there's lots of room for variation and creativity.