

# Brown & Martin's

## newsletter

### Chip Martin Says... Stop Boring Your Prospects...and Me



Chip Martin

Most business-to-business advertising is so dull that it's not too much of a stretch to imagine that "b-to-b" actually stands for "boring-to-boring."

Why is this? Why are b-to-b marketers ignoring the fact that wit and emotionally engaging messages move business buyers just as effectively as they move consumers? Do they assume that business people don't like to smile or that they're boring?

Some companies get it. UPS commercials that are tied to NASCAR have long been entertaining as well as informative. The same can be said for some of Staples business-to-business marketing. In fact, these marketing efforts are so successful that people actually look forward to seeing future installments.

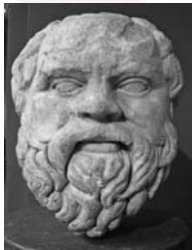
You could even use the newsletter you're reading right now as a solid example of successfully using humor in b-to-b marketing. To date, decision-makers from 11 companies appreciated the format of this newsletter so much that they retain B&M to create similar publications for their businesses. (I gotta ask for a raise ...)

Yet the majority of b-to-b players remain afraid of distinctive advertising that will get attention and help them to stand out from competitors. I don't get it.

Socrates slapped his students when he was about to say something important. That got their atten-

tion. Likewise, humor ... or at the very least, a little entertainment, can provide the necessary "slap" to gain your prospects' interest.

I know that business people appreciate a little laughter. You should have seen how much they enjoyed reading my resume. Some shared their enjoyment by forwarding copies to colleagues and friends. I think that substantiates my hypothesis almost as much as a scientific study.



If you don't think business people are aware of how popular humor is, how do you explain the big money they spend on internet software that filters out fun stuff? Wait ... that's a bad example.

Many companies have great products, great people, great service and great stories to tell. But to prospects, these companies look just like their competitors ... because all of their marketing looks just like their competitors.

You want to stand out? You want to make a memorable impression? You want to increase sales? Then dare to increase the amusement factor of your marketing materials. Hey, I've got an idea. Have a fictitious character write your newsletter! - Strike that. It'll never work. How about creating a "fun," attention-getting direct mail campaign? Or, develop signature ads that use humorous photos ... or a clever tagline that always makes prospects smile.

Come on ... stop being so boring and start being more effective. Dare to be what I am...entertaining.

### How Our Clients Celebrated "Boss's Day"

October 16th was National Boss's Day. To mark the event I sent out emails to a number of company owners and executives who are on our newsletter mailing list. Here are some of the replies. (Names have been withheld to protect their pride.)

#### Two Owner/Presidents and One President

"Nothing!"

#### Publisher

"I didn't receive a thing. Oh no, wait. One person did sneer at me. Put me down for one sneer."

#### Attorney

"I received movie passes, dinner certificates, and donuts from my staff. I received (\_\_\_\_) from the office administrator ... who also happens to be my wife. The (\_\_\_\_) stands for 'nothing.'"

#### President

"Cards....a leatherman tool....and a duck hunt in North Dakota"  
*Editor Note: I assume the "duck hunt" was a gift to himself. Or maybe they just want to get rid of him?*

#### VP Sales/Marketing

"One card, not even any emails. (I mentioned the lack of recognition in today's sales meeting and expect some suck-ups to send something belatedly.)"

#### Vice President

"I had a bang-up Boss's Day. Let me recount. Got to the office early in support of my employees. Sublimated my anticipation of my staff's plans for Boss's Day. Late in the morning announced I was leaving for a meeting. (Surmised they had waited to surprise me). Hearing no objections - I left. This would not have been so emotionally unsettling had not Boss's Day been brought to my attention earlier in the day by a 'D. Brown'. Sigh...I almost feel sorry for me."

#### Executive

"The only thing I received from anyone I supervise was from my dog. He threw up on my shoe."

#### President/Owner

"Just a nice email."

#### Director

"Hi Chip, you cocky little B\*st\*rd. My staff got me a card and community munchies - coffee cake, cookies."

### Chip Shot

People seldom live up to their baby pictures.

*Continued on back...*

# Brown & Martin

r e t t e l s w e n

## "Boss's Day" ... Continued from front

*Editors Note: So basically his staff bought themselves food and cloaked that fact with a card.*

### President

"Nothing – NADA – Zip – Zero – Nought – oh wait, I did get some ugly looks."

### Financial Planner

"I got an up market, which was much appreciated!!"

### Executive

"Nothing. Which was, conveniently, what my boss received from me."

### President

"I received a salted nut roll with a handwritten note stating – 'Happy Bosses Day, to the Finest,' from one of my managers!"

### Vice President

"Nothing! Absolutely nothing! I guess it's true. No one thinks I'm a boss."

### President

"A B&M invoice."

### General Manager

"Case of Miller Lite and some Ghiradelli chocolates."

Many respondents inquired about what the president of our company received. Well, we held a surprise party for him in our conference room. We served food and Mimosa's. (Yes, we drink here. If you worked here, you'd be drinking in the morning too.) We also gave him a lovely "Corvette fob" for his key chain. We wanted to give him an actual Corvette, but the stock market crash forced us to change our plans. But the Mimosa's put him to sleep, which was our plan, and he stayed out of our hair for the entire day.

## Free Offers

As we do every year, B&M is offering to critique your company's employee, distributor and customer newsletters. The service is offered free to any company on our mailing list. Requests must be received by December 15th.

Also free to those on our mailing list, B&M will critique your Web landing page(s) used for ads, direct mail campaigns or other type of marketing programs. If you don't use "landing pages" as extensions of your marketing programs, call us. We can help you to significantly improve the effectiveness/measurability of your marketing vehicles for very little cost.

## Email Goggles

It's Friday night, and what began as an innocent happy-hour margarita morphed into a few pitchers. After all, those tacos were salty. Bidding friends adieu, you jump in a cab, head home and decide a quick e-mail check is in order. And there it is: a message from your ex. Or your boss. Or that friend you're secretly mad at.

If you're the kind of person who types tipsy and regrets it in the morning, Google's "Mail Goggles," a new test-phase feature in the free Gmail service, might save you some angst.

The Goggles can kick in late at night and on weekends. The feature requires you to solve a few easy math problems in short order before hitting "send." If your logical thinking skills are intact,

Google is betting you're sober enough to work out the repercussions of sending that tirade you just drafted.

And if you can't multiply two times five, you'll probably thank Google in the morning.

To activate Goggles, Gmail users should click the "Settings" link at the top of a Gmail page, then go to the "Labs" section.



## Brown & Martin's Newsletter

*Issue: Boring-to-Boring*

*Normal is a cycle on a washing machine.*

**Editor: Chip Martin**

**This newsletter is produced for clients of Brown & Martin, Inc., a marketing and public relations firm serving companies across the country. If you're not a client, quit reading! Or, call us and become one.**

## I'm Doing My Share...Are You?

While many in the b-to-b arena sit on the sidelines crying about slow sales, I'm doing something about it. I'm buying. First, I'm buying stocks. Then I'm walking into stores and swiping my credit card. This is the time to peruse showrooms and purchase a car. This is the time to procure your dream home at a price you may never see again. This is the time to buy whatever purchase you've been putting off. But you'll have to stand behind me, because I'm already in line. I'm being a good Mannequin American by pumping cash into the economy.

And B&M is helping to jump-start the economy by working hard to find innovative, cost-effective, high-impact and measurable ways to make our clients' dollars pay off. We're helping clients to out-think rather than out-spend their competitors.

And we're helping clients steal market share from competitors who have flattened their marketing budgets. Study after study has shown that manufacturers and distributors can increase market share dramatically in a recession by out-hustling weaker competitors.

So I'm doing my share and B&M is doing its share. What are you doing?