

Evidence-based Risk Management for Advertisers

An opinion about online and offline promotion

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Grant Lee of AGL Marketing Limited is a long-time Associate Member of the AOLS. He began his career as a survey technician in the early 70s, spending years on the boards drafting plans on linen and Mylar. His interests led to a career as a Registered Professional Planner and now a Chartered Professional Marketer. AOLS has been a client of AGL Marketing Limited since 1999. Throughout that period, Grant has contributed to strengthening the Association's marketing and public awareness activities and contributed to the growth in membership. Advertising is one of many elements of marketing that falls under 'promotion' in the marketing mix. Awareness of evidence-based risk management for advertising will help AOLS members be more effective in online and offline advertising.

Ontario Land Surveyors can promote their services and products and remain in compliance with the Surveyors Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. S.29.¹ The Canadian Code of Advertising Standards, overseen by Ad Standards^{TM2} sets the criteria for acceptable advertising in Canada. It contains 14 provisions so that advertising is truthful, fair, and accurate. Canada's anti-spam legislation (CASL)³ may affect the use of electronic channels to promote a business or non-profit-organization. There is another element of advertising, however, that is seldom considered beyond regulations and codes. That consideration is the level of risk that a company or individual is willing to place in an online or offline advertisement.

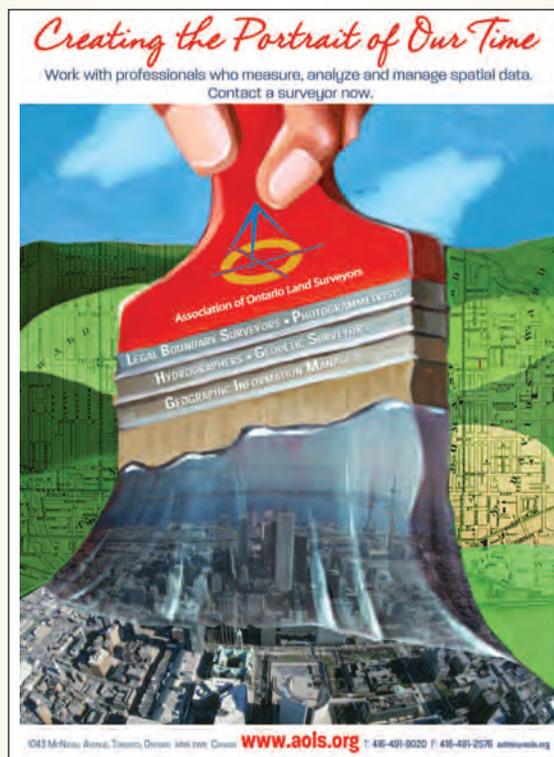
Shopify publishes a contemporary definition of advertising: 'A marketing tactic involving paying for space to promote a product, service, or cause. The actual promotional messages are called advertisements, or ads for short. The goal of advertising is to reach people most likely to be willing to pay for a company's products or services and entice them to buy.'⁴ An ad can be used to change a perception or action of a targeted audience while having nothing to do with an exchange of currency. In this case, think of advertising in election campaigns.

Where promotion becomes interesting is at the creative stage. This is where the level of risk in a display advertisement or video begins. There is a very good research paper by Dr. Jaafar El-Murad and Professor Douglas C. West, Westminster Business School, University of Westminster,

London⁵ that investigates risk and creative advertising. It was the first empirical study of the relationship between risk and creativity in advertising. The study finds that when firms perceive that they are performing well, they are risk averse. When they perceive that they are performing poorly, they are more willing to take risks.

Because many small to medium-sized professional firms equate advertising with marketing, it is no wonder that in times of recession or a sluggish local economy, there is a scramble to "do marketing and get out there" to find more work. Ad campaigns of the desperate may in fact appear edgy and aggressive. When times are good, there is minimal effort placed in marketing, clients are easier to attract, there is a demand for products and services, and promotion through advertising tends to take a back seat to engagements with prospects and clients through networking activities. Any display ads published online or off are likely to be product or service-related with less messaging about issues and more about why a product or service should be favoured from an enterprise with a friendly face. Think of "Fun Friday" and "Throwback Thursday" in online social media promotions by the private sector and their associations. Desperate tones in messaging appear to be all but absent when times are good.

It is during challenging times that a company may have a greater awareness of risk and the benefits of taking on more risk in a marketing strategy. Greater risk, however, must be



AOLS display ad placed in print publications

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carefully considered and measured. There must be some level of empirical evidence or credible anecdotal information to underlie support for unusual creative work. As references in the El-Murad-West paper point out, an incorrect strategy can result in serious “collateral damage.”

Advertising campaigns can be undertaken over online delivery systems such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, and email marketing services like Constant Contact and Mailchimp. The metrics provided by online campaigns are almost instantaneously giving an advertiser evidence-based feedback that can be used to alter campaigns quickly, strengthen the messaging in words and graphics, or change course to conserve resources and mitigate pushback to the messaging before control is lost.

Display advertising in print media is time critical and time dependent. Ads must be placed with messaging that will be relevant by the time of publication which may be weeks or months ahead. Industry issues must remain constant, as well as the market environment. Perhaps the reason for conservative advertising in professional journals and industry publications is a deliberate lower level of

risk-taking. Once an ineffective or damaging ad is published, the messaging cannot be taken back. It is there to see in print for a long time. On the other hand, an effective creative will shower welcome attention to the advertiser and may help drive sales or change a perception. In either case, metrics are much slower than online to collect, analyze and form opinions for decision making.

Risk management in advertising creative is not new. Canadian legislation and professional regulation of business behaviour is well known, and cases of abuse have been documented. What is new over the past few years is the added element of almost immediate evidence to help advertisers develop strategy and identify implementation tactics. Through social media pages and sites, websites, and email marketing campaigns, we can assemble data in advance of major advertising campaigns to assist in the creative process and provide supporting copy. Such data and information can be extended to offline campaigns to present audiences with exciting graphics and copy that people will embrace. The era of evidence-based risk management for advertising creative is upon us.



Opening creative for promotional video on AOLS social media



¹ R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 1026: GENERAL, under Surveyors Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. S.29, <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/901026>

² Ad Standards, <https://adstandards.ca/>

³ Canada’s Anti-Spam Legislation, Government of Canada, <https://www.fightspam.gc.ca/eic/site/030.nsf/eng/home>

⁴ Shopify, <https://www.shopify.ca/encyclopedia/advertising>

⁵ El-Murad and West, Risk and Creative Advertising, Westminster Business School, University of Westminster, London, 2003; https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233495959_Risk_and_Creativity_in_Advertising

Calendar of Events

February 11 to 13, 2020

ORCGA Damage Prevention Symposium
Ottawa, Ontario
<https://orcga.com>

February 24 to 27, 2020

Canadian Hydrographic Conference
Quebec City, Quebec
<http://www.chc2020.org>

February 26 to 28, 2020

128th AOLS Annual General Meeting
Huntsville, Ontario
www.aols.org

March 23 to 25, 2020

International LiDAR Mapping Forum
Washington, D.C.
<https://www.lidarmap.org>

May 7 to 9, 2020

GISTAM 2020
Prague, Czech Republic
<http://www.gistam.org/Home.aspx>

May 10 to 14, 2020

FIG Working Week 2020
Smart Surveyors for Land and Water Management
Amsterdam, the Netherlands
<http://www.fig.net/fig2020>