

# VIEW FROM THE CHEAP SEATS

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## **This Agency's For You**

*The industry's sucking wind--maybe advertising agencies should try advertising*

Agencies are cutting costs. Cutting people. Freezing salaries. Hocking the foosball tables. Getting rid of the free bagels. All of which are symptoms of a bigger problem.

Every week, a new article appears about how advertising is dying or becoming irrelevant. In general, the industry can't seem to stop the slide. Most agencies do good work for clients, but that message isn't getting out.

So why aren't ad agencies promoting themselves by advertising?

Besides the cutesy masturbatory ads you see in Creativity magazine or a local awards show annual, you never really see ads for ad agencies, do you?

I actually saw an agency in Texas advertise itself. The shop took out full-page ads in a slick regional magazine. One had a photo of a bull in it with the line "Great ads without the bull." I think another one had a donkey with the line "kick ass advertising." I know, I know, but they get an A for effort in my book. At least someone's out there doin' it. This agency kept up the self-promotion for a long time, too—every month was a new ad. Then I read recently that they had to lay a few people off.

You'll never see advertising agencies advertise themselves often. Is there a secret fear that advertising doesn't work, so agencies don't ingest their own medicine? Can agencies simply not afford the media? I would say "no" to both those questions.

Here's the real reason why you won't see ads for agencies: creating those ads would be the most politically charged, fucked-up assignment anyone ever worked on. Donating a kidney would be a more pleasurable experience.

Most agencies sound alike in their self-promotion materials. Want proof? Look at the mission statements you see on agency web sites: "We're passionate about the power of creative ideas to get business-building results for our marketing partners." Or some shit like that.

I've found that most people in agency management don't have a vision for their business. (And no, making a shitload of money and screwing employees in the process doesn't count as a "vision.") And the fish rots from the head down.

Without a point of differentiation, agency self-promotion efforts devolve into the very kind of advertising we loathe-- full of non-offensive double-talk and empty platitudes.

If you filled out a creative brief to sell your agency as a brand, what would it say? And what kind of creative work would result?

Until ad agencies get better at building their own brands--promoting their own services, defining what they stand for, and defending their point-of-view and their work, clients will find other ways to spend their marketing dollars.

After all, brands either live up to their promises, or they die. Right?