

# Zen & The Art of Legal Networking

INSIGHTS & COMMENTARY ON RELATIONSHIP BUILDING WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL LAWYERS NETWORK

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### **Are you ready for some FOOTBALL....Commercials? (The Good)**

While I know that most people watch the Superbowl for the sports (myself included, I do like the game!), the biggest football game of the year is also the Superbowl for marketers - because of the commercials.

I've heard mixed reviews of last night's spots from people via my social networks, but I have to say that unlike recent years, I was very pleased with this year's ads. As I did last year, I'll give you my thoughts on the good, the bad and the ugly, starting with the good...

Overall, I'd say that humor won out this year. To me, the commercials that did "funny" right were the real winners...and also the most memorable. However, one funny, expensive ad spot doesn't change a lot, but it's fun to see where they went right and the lessons that law firms can take from them.

We'll start with my hands-down favorite. It was tough to pick just one, but I went with the Oikos spot.

There are some good reasons to like this commercial - for one, it's funny. As the commercial starts, you assume it will be another of Stamos' rather blah commercials for the brand, trying to make you believe it's the best Greek yogurt out there (he's Greek, the yogurt's Greek). But suddenly, the actress head butts him to get her taste of the yogurt - unexpected and funny. Those of us in the Full House generation can't resist seeing Uncle Jesse get head-butted.

The humor makes it memorable, and the underlying message is that this yogurt is so good, you'd be willing to head-butt John Stamos to get some of it. At the end of the commercial, I liked the Oikos brand for their creativity, and it makes me want to try their yogurt (I'm currently a Chobani girl). That's some good marketing.

What are the lessons for law firms? It's important to be memorable in a way that incorporates your brand. Anyone can be funny, but does it reinforce who you are and what your service is? Does your "advertising" (be it commercials, print ads, web placement, etc) make your clients want to learn more about you? How could you communicate your message like Oikos did?

Next up, Chase's Football QuickPay commercial featuring Drew Brees...

This commercial does an excellent job of knowing their audience - football fans - by catching your attention initially with Drew Brees. Plus, Chase has been on my radar for a while, because their commercials communicate to me that a) they listen to their customers about what would make their lives easier and they implement those things and b) they're friendly.

Chase isn't my bank, but all of their user-friendly features are making me think I should switch.

Again, this ad does a great job of using smart humor, while at the same time reinforcing the service that they're advertising. When it's over, you know that you can send money to other people using your Chase app on your smart phone. And subliminally, you're thinking "Well, if Drew Brees uses Chase, maybe I should too..." All in all, an excellent commercial.

What can law firms take from this? A couple of things - again, the idea of using humor in a smart way to reinforce your service and the type of brand you are (in this case, accessible, user-friendly, and fun). Also, they're just featuring one part of who they are - Chase does a nice job of reinforcing their overall brand, but the focus of the commercial is on the ability for their customers to use their smart phones to transfer money. That one piece makes you want to learn more about them - and law firms can do this too.

Sometimes, I've heard from firms that they don't want to highlight just one particular practice area or feature of their services, because then clients might think that they're not as accomplished as the others. However, view that in light of this commercial - I don't assume that Chase is any less qualified in their other services because they're featuring this one. And clients of law firms won't either. What you do accomplish is giving viewers a laser focus on something that makes you unique (i.e. phone banking transfers), which may hit a need they have at that moment, and it makes you more memorable - and that opening can lead to a discussion where your clients learn all about who you and your firm are.

Another great spot is Audi's Vampire Party commercial...

Now, admittedly, I'm not a vampire fan (other than reading some Anne Rice books as a teenager). I've seen Twilight (under duress) and hated it. So when this ad started out, and it was clear that it was a vampire ad, I thought that Audi had missed the boat completely. Not only was it alienating anyone who isn't into vampires, but it's also

misjudging the audience (while I'm sure there are a lot of teenagers and young adults watching the Superbowl, how many of them are the purchasers of Audis?).

However, when vampires start to disintegrate in the lights of the car, I changed my mind - not only was Audi using humor in a way that I'm sure many of the anti-Twilight fans cheered, but they were (like Chase) focused on one useful feature of their cars - new headlights that are as bright as daylight.

The only downside of this commercial is that it could have been for any car on the market - I wouldn't necessarily associate those lights with Audi (though after seeing it again today, I would), so Audi could have done a better job of underscoring their brand as well as the feature they were highlighting.

The takeaway for law firms? Again, using humor can be effective, and it doesn't hurt the overall brand to focus on one special feature that makes you and your firm unique. If luxury car companies can do it, so can law firms.

Next up, the Skechers Mr. Quiggly commercial...

I admit, I'm a sucker for a commercial with a cute dog, especially, in this case, an "underdog." I have basset hounds, so I could picture them in this role just as easily as this adorable French bulldog.

This commercial was brilliant, again because they used humor combined with underscoring their product and brand. The idea of putting a dog in sneakers is ridiculous, but the idea that those sneakers might make you faster than everyone else? That's one that hits home with a lot of people.

The takeaway for law firms? Again, humor used with emphasis on an individual product, while reinforcing the brand is a winning formula. Is your firm the "underdog?" - maybe in the sense that you're a midsized firm, but you can compete "with the big dogs" because of a certain attorney you have on your team, or a service you offer. What sets you apart?

And finally, to round out my top five...the Fiat

I thought this commercial was adorable, and not just because I love small cars. This is another commercial that starts off confusing you - I had no idea what the product would be when it began. Theories at the Superbowl party I was attending mostly involved coffee. Because it was unclear, it got your attention, and then surprised you with the appearance of the car.

The brand reinforcement was great, because they used a beautiful Italian woman to represent the car - men will see her as desirable, while women will want to be her (and Fiat is Italian). Plus, it leads you to think that you might want a car like that too. Funny and smart.

What can law firms take from this? You've got to catch people's attention right away - within the first few seconds, viewers are wondering "where is this going to go?" and cheering for the small, slightly nerdy guy who might get the beautiful woman. How can your firm draw in your clients? (I should add the caveat that while everyone always says "sex sells," I do think that law firm advertising - particularly for business firms - is one area that shouldn't look to racy advertising to market their services) And again, they use humor in a way that is smart to reinforce their brand and support a specific vehicle.

And I'll throw in some honorable mentions:

- [Doritos Sling Baby](#): While I'm sure many a parent watched in horror as grandma used a bouncy swing to launch her infant grandchild at her older grandchild, I got a kick out of this commercial. The message - you'd do anything to get some Doritos. How can you encourage your clients to think that they'd do anything to have you as their lawyer?
- [Man's Best Friend](#): Another Doritos commercial, which I also loved. This one alienated cat owners in some cases, I'm sure, so that's why it didn't end up in my top five. But I thought it was excellent and funny, and again, gave the message that you'd do anything for Doritos.
- [M&M's Sexy & I Know it](#): M&M's have done some clever commercials in the past, so it's difficult to reinvent the wheel and come up with something fun and memorable - this was both. The idea of a brown M&M being naked? Juvenile, yes, but ultimately funny. If this means that M&M is bringing back their lighter brown M&Ms, then it was a hit for me.
- [The Dog Strikes Back Volkswagen](#): I had mixed feelings about this commercial to start with, since I've known some sad and chubby dogs in my time. But his triumph in the end was a winner. The reasons I didn't put it in my top five? It wasn't as good as last year's Darth Vader spot and the extra piece trying to tie it into that spot at the end completely missed the mark and left the ending feeling a bit strange.
- [Seinfeld Commercial](#): I'm not a Jerry Seinfeld fan, but I got a kick out of this commercial. It gives the idea, like many other successful spots, that you'd do anything to get this car, in a fun way, and the swoop in by Leno at the last minute makes it memorable. If they could have reinforced the vehicle and brand a bit better, it would have been a hit for me.
- [Best Buy](#): I've had mixed experiences at Best Buy stores in the past, but this commercial made me want to try them again. I thought it was very cool (I'm a bit of a nerd) to bring together some of the people who have invented the things that we use every day on our smart phones, like Instagram, cameras, text messaging and more. I definitely said "cool" more than once during the piece. And, as a traveler, I was particularly tickled when the "Words with Friends" guys got "the look" for having their phones on on the airplane. It also taught me something new about Best Buy - I didn't realize they had every phone, every carrier and

every plan. The reinforcement of their brand could have been better (and I'm not sure how many techies were in the Superbowl audience, and how many non-techies think it's cool to see the guy who sent the first text message), but it was still a smart ad.

So what were your favorites? How can your law firm learn a lesson from these ads in communicating with your potential clients?

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