

## **HANDS-ON CASE: VERIZON REALIZES OPPORTUNITY** **[HTTP://TAHIRHEMPHILL.COM/PORTFOLIO/REALIZE.HTML](http://TAHIRHEMPHILL.COM/PORTFOLIO/REALIZE.HTML)**

As discussed throughout this chapter, the copywriter's job is to find a memorable way to express the creative concept. All of a copywriter's talent will do no good if the audience cannot relate to the "magic words." Copywriters bear the responsibility for understanding their audience.

Verizon is one company that has earned high marks for its approach to attracting a multicultural audience by listening to those with whom they intend to communicate. Chicago-based Burrell, a leader in understanding and motivating consumer behavior in the African American and young adult Yurban (a term coined by Burrell meaning young and urban) markets, helped Verizon create a first-of-its-kind integrated, multicultural grass-roots marketing campaign. The campaign attempts to reach young entrepreneurial types and those who have a passion for community service.

The campaign showcases real people from the neighborhoods where the advertising runs, focusing on how they are making a difference with the help of Verizon's services. People featured in the campaign include a photographer who used Verizon to send his photos around the world, a translator who helps clients around the world using Verizon Online DSL, and a barber with a passion for helping young boxers in an after-school program who uses Verizon to download videos of boxing greats to share with his kids. The concept is executed using traditional and nontraditional media. Posters, mobile billboards, wraps for hair salon magazines, radio and bus shelter ads, and the Verizon incubator, where a real entrepreneur worked for 21 days in a Philadelphia storefront, communicate the message.

The recognition that marketers need to be able to communicate with diverse audiences dates back to the 1940s. Today, diversity has expanded to include many multicultural efforts, including Verizon's award-winning "Realize" campaign.

### 1. Why is it important for copywriters to understand diversity issues?

As illustrated in this case, all of a copywriter's talent will do no good if the audience cannot relate to the "magic words." In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is critical that copywriters understand diversity issues. Beyond this, copywriters must also be able to also appreciate and celebrate diversity. Because we can only write what we know and understand, these perspectives must already be in the copywriter's head and heart.

### 2. How can advertisers do a better job reaching diverse audiences?

As underscored throughout this book, advertisers must start by understanding the hearts, minds, and experiences of consumers. This can be accomplished through a variety of research techniques including surveys, focus groups, or content analysis. Understanding and executing the principles of IMC is also critical. What kinds of

experiences do diverse consumers have with the company's brand and its representatives, including employees and salespeople?

Beyond research and IMC approaches, advertisers must also research and understand the media preferences of diverse audiences, both traditional and nontraditional. A more thorough understanding of media should translate into smarter creative strategies and better media buys.

3. How important is it that copywriters come from the same background as the audiences for which they write? In other words, should advertising intended for a particular ethnic audience be written by someone of similar heritage? Does this hold true for age, gender, or class characteristics as well? If you are copywriter or account manager for a campaign targeted to a different cultural group than on with which you are familiar, how can you cross this barrier to be able to better assess the effectiveness of the copy?

In the real world of advertising, it is not always possible to exactly match a copywriter's background with those of his or her audience. This will be true for race, age, gender and social class. However, where possible, a close match is helpful.

At the same time, if the copywriter is sharp, perceptive, and open to learning about the experiences of others, they can still cross the divide and do an excellent copywriting job with some insight and effort.

Techniques to help copywriters cross the barrier could include research techniques such as focus groups or one-on-one interviews with target audience members, "day-in-the-life" experiences with target audience members, or job-shadowing copywriters who specialize in writing for multicultural audiences.