

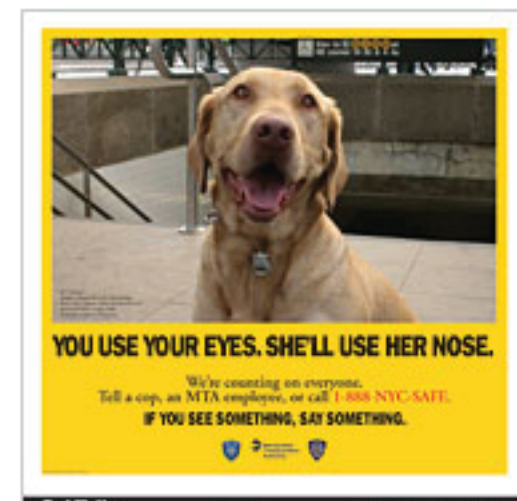
ADVERTISING

Do You Know Where Your Slogan Is?

By STUART ELLIOTT

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MADISON AVENUE'S ability to contribute phrases to the vernacular has always been prized as a way to amplify the voice of an advertising campaign.

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The "If you see something, say something" campaign for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, created by Korey Kay & Partners, has traveled beyond the New York market to as many as 30 organizations.

Examples of slogans that have entered the popular culture include "The pause that refreshes," for [Coca-Cola](#); "Ask the man who owns one," for Packard cars; "Quick, Henry, the Flit," for Flit insecticide; "Look, mom — no cavities!," for Crest toothpaste; and "Where's the beef?," for Wendy's hamburgers.

The opportunity to enter the public discourse is becoming more valuable as so-called buzz marketing or word-of-mouth marketing grows increasingly important to advertisers. If the goal is to encourage consumers to tell one another about ads, a knack for creating a word or phrase that will come readily to their lips is priceless.

Indeed, "Priceless" — introduced in 1997 for [MasterCard](#) by McCann Erickson Worldwide, part of the [Interpublic Group of Companies](#) — has been so enthusiastically adopted by consumers that MasterCard decided last year to introduce a Web site named [priceless.com](#) to complement its Internet mainstay, [mastercard.com](#).

The [priceless.com](#) site has become the home of a variety of nontraditional marketing efforts. They include a contest asking consumers to provide endings for MasterCard commercials and a humorous promotion centered on the theme of golf obsession, which began this week.

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Catchphrases are not confined to product pitches. For instance, WNYW-TV in New York plans to celebrate tonight the 40th anniversary of "The 10 O'Clock News," now called "Fox 5 News at 10." A special on the station will pay tribute to, among other things, the words that have opened the broadcast since 1969: "It's 10 p.m. Do you know where your children are?"

Another example is "If you see something, say something," which is the theme of a security campaign introduced in 2002 for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

An online search yesterday for the phrase found 45,500 results on [Google](#), 26,900 on [Yahoo](#) and 6,046 on [MSN.com](#). They ranged from creative writing inspired by the slogan ([saysomething.org.au](#)) to a short comic film that uses the theme as its title ([imdb.com/title/tt0801339/](#)).

The M.T.A. theme, created by Korey Kay & Partners in New York, has traveled beyond the New York market. More than 30 transit and governmental organizations have been given permission to use it or variations like "See it, say it."

They include the Alexandria Transit Company in Virginia; the Australian states of New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia; Bay Area Rapid Transit; the Chicago Transit Authority; the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority; and TriMet in Portland, Ore.

"We wanted something that was punchy and catchy enough to not fade in the background," said Christopher P. Boylan, a deputy executive director at the M.T.A., "and makes a connection with every one of our passengers."

At the same time, said Allen Kay, chairman and chief executive at Korey Kay, "there was concern there could be backlash, concern we were using fear tactics," so consumer research was used to determine perceptions of the theme.

The responses, Mr. Kay said, were along these lines: "People understood that officials could not be everywhere, so the M.T.A. was asking them to participate in each other's safety."

Still, there is some resistance to the slogan and its infiltration of the vernacular.

For instance, artists in Sydney, Australia, recently took part in an exhibit that questioned the campaign, which they labeled "a government-sponsored vision of the world" that asks people "to view those around us with fear and suspicion"

([ifyouseesomethingsaysomething.net](#)).

Whatever people are saying about the ads, the talk value bolsters the impact of the campaign beyond the signs appearing in buses, trains and subways and the commercials on local radio.

The budget for this year is \$4 million, Mr. Kay said, compared with \$3 million last year. The increase may be enough to start running television commercials, he added.

Perhaps some of those commercials will appear on WNYW, which is part of the Fox television stations unit of the [News Corporation](#). The anniversary of the 10 p.m. newscast — the first in prime time in the New York market — has led managers of the station to take another look at the value of "Do you know," which like the M.T.A. slogan is also used across the country.

"When you say it, it brings people back to their childhood and directly to the station," said Debbie von Ahrens, vice president and sales director at WNYW, which was known as WNEW, a Metromedia station, when the 10 p.m. newscast began on March 13, 1967.

That is "especially important with the way things are changing now," Ms. von Ahrens said, referring to the shifts in news anchors and news programming schedules locally and nationally.

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Whenever the station changes general managers, the newcomers have typically considered rewriting or dropping the phrase, Ms. von Ahrens said, but eventually choose not to change it.

Among departments at the station that argue to keep the opening, she added, "Sales is just as protective as news."

The phrase is also a revenue source for WNYW because the station sells sponsorships to advertisers like J&R Music and Computer World. Previous sponsors included Nobody Beats the Wiz, now defunct, and the watch retailer Tourneau.

For several years, celebrities made guest appearances to speak the phrase; among them were [Bill Cosby](#), Walt Frazier, Kitty Carlisle Hart, Judd Hirsch, Cyndi Lauper and Gwen Verdon.

Records of the origins of "Do you know" are incomplete, executives at WNYW said, because of the ownership change to Fox from Metromedia in 1986. Most sources seem to indicate the phrase dates at least as far back as June 30, 1969.

Maybe for the anniversary, the two catchphrases can be combined: "It's 10 p.m. Do you know where your children are? If you see something, say something."

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