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HIS TURN

What You Won't Find on Google



Allen Kay

I've often said, "Everyone has access to the same information. It's what you think, not what you know you know, that's important."

Well, I've come to re-think that. At least the first thought.

It's conceivable that since the Internet everyone has access to all of the information that's been digitalized.

But what about pre-Internet thoughts that weren't published, and others that are just verbally expressed and not recorded? Bright ideas that lead to other bright ideas. Notions that inspire inspired executions. I was certain that all of that information did not reside on the World Wide Web.

Figuring it was a sure bet, I decided to draw from my own experience to see if I was right.

I went to Google and typed in "Lois Korey."

Lois was my close friend and partner for twenty-two years. She passed away all too young in 1990. Everyone who worked with her agreed she had one of the most insightful and incisive minds in advertising. People would marvel at the way, at the end of dizzying discussion, she'd simply say a sentence or two that would get right to the center of what everyone was circling.

Many of her ideas broke new ground. I am glad I was there to participate, as I found out, not all remarkable thinking comes up in a Internet search.

Here are a couple of examples:

When we were introducing Lancôme makeup and treatment products, Lois shunned the idea of breaking the campaign in beauty and fashion magazines. "Revlon has locked up the first few hundred pages, and what's the the big surprise in seeing another lipstick and face cream in Vogue and Bazaar?"

Instead, knowing the audience was affluent women, and most affluent women's interests extend beyond the latest designer collections, and many have successful careers, Lois's idea was to introduce the Lancôme line in Time magazine.

"Advertise to women in Time?" was the incredulous response from the men in the room. Lois responded ever so politely. "We do have a brain." End of discussion. Send out the insertion orders

Needless to say, the colorful images and beautiful women did not get confused with the ads for insurance companies and computers. They also provided a welcome contrast to the black and white business briefs and reports of war and gore.

I learned more about advertising to women (and men and children and blacks and whites, straights and gays) from Lois than any of the other bright and talented people that I've worked with.

Another example of Lois Korey's uncommon common sense is the case of the revival of MaGriffe perfume. At the time, MaGriffe, a once popular fragrance, was collecting more dust than dollars. Lois and I were assigned the task of depleting the inventory before the manufacturer was asked to buy it back. Tough challenge, as you could well imagine.

This was at the start of the women's movement, with women burning their bras being headline news. Lois, a practicing feminist, was also a realist. "Most women aren't burning their bras. They want to meet a guy, fall in love, get married and have children. They are who we have to appeal to."

So we created a counter-trend campaign that was about as politically incorrect as you could be at the time. The ads looked totally un-fragrancelike and used humor (another no-no for perfume). Big headlines like, "You lead a woman's march for equality. You carry the biggest placard. You wear MaGriffe. A man comes along and carries your placard for you." Below, next to a small picture of the bottle stood the words, "MaGriffe apologizes for unliberating the liberated woman."

Both the fragrance and the woman's movement survived. Stores not only sold out the dusty bottles of MaGriffe, but actually re-ordered. The manufacturer apologized to liberated women for becoming #1 on the NOW hate list, beating out "Fly me I'm Diane."

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She cut through gender, race, and sexual preferences and talked to the human feelings that most of us share.

Lois began her career as a comedy writer at 18, working alongside Woody Allen and Neil Simon for comic legends including Ernie Kovacs, Sid Caesar and Steve Allen. When the industry moved West, Lois who had never even schlepped to New Jersey stayed in New York. With her career 3,000 miles away, she was at a loss for what to. Then her husband, a photographer's rep, saw a classified ad that read: "Advertising copy writer wanted. No experience mandatory." They both agree it had Lois Korey's name on it." After one interview Lois was hired as a Junior Partner at Jack Tinker & Partners. With Mary Wells at the helm, it was the hottest creative agency at the time.

Lois's ideas were never superficial. Often funny, but never frivolous. Humor was very much part of the person. When she applied it to advertising, she used it to make a point, not a joke.

When she got serious, Lois wrote about issues that grew out of people's lives, not superficial slogans born and born-again in advertising agencies. In Lois's cosmetic copy, instead of "Glitter and Gleem," she wrote, "You're changing jobs. Careers. Husbands. You're looking at the world through new eyes."—the headline for Charles of the Ritz eye color and care products. Two other favorites in the series were for hand care and lip color: "What rocks the cradle, runs the business, prepares a meal, signs a lease, parks a Porsche: Hands." "Fashion says do this. Convention says do that. You've earned the right to do what's right for you. And say so with your own lips."

Lois believed that women were people, too. And spoke to them as such. And was one of the first women in advertising to do so.

The point is, in business, information leads to inspiration, and not all inspirational information is available to all on the Internet. Ideas and approaches that companies have born and bred is a key factor that sets them apart. And, like the wisdom of Lois Korey, you can't always Google them up.

Although, with some help from Womensbiz.us, the information available to all will soon increase by these few hundred words when this story makes its way to the Internet.

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