A ADVERTISING

Fire the whole advertising department and your old agency. Then go get the best new agency you can. And concentrate your efforts on making it fun for them to create candid, effective advertising for you. Unless you've just done this, the odds favor that you have a bunch of bright people working at cross purposes to produce—at best—mediocre ads. We started at Avis by asking a few people for a list of the hottest agencies. Then we called on the creative heads of those agencies and tried to interest them in the rent a car business. Ultimately we stumbled on the right question: "How do we get five million dollars of advertising for one million dollars?" (our competition has five dollars for each dollar we have, and yet we have to pay the same price for cars, insurance, rent, gas, oil, and people).

Finally, Bill Bernbach heard the question and answered: "If you want five times the impact, give us ninety days to learn enough about your business to apply our skills, and then run every ad we write where we tell you to run it. Our people work to see how effective their ideas are. But most clients put our ads through a succession of Assistant V.P.'s and V.P.'s of advertising, marketing, and legal until we hardly recognize the remnants. If you promise to run them just as we write them, you'll have every art director and copywriter in my shop moonlighting on your account."

We shook hands on it.★

★ To keep people at Avis and at Doyle Dane Bernbach from violating Bernbach's vision of the ideal account, I wrote "The Avis Rent A Car Advertising Philosophy," had it framed, and hung it in everyone's office (at both client and agency). It reads:

Ninety days later, Bill Bernbach came out to show Avis his recommended ads. He said he was sorry but the only honest things they could say were that the company was second largest and that the people were trying harder. Bernbach said his own research department had advised against the ads, that he didn't like them very much himself—but it was all they had so he was recommending them. We didn't like them much at Avis either, but we had agreed to run whatever Bill recommended.

The rest is history. Our internal sales growth rate increased from 10 per cent to 35 per cent in the next couple of years.

Moral: **Don't hire a master to paint you a masterpiece and then assign a roomful of schoolboy-artists to look over his shoulder and suggest improvements.**

Avis Rent A Car
Advertising Philosophy

1. Avis will never know as much about advertising as DDB, and DDB will never know as much about the rent a car business as Avis.

2. The purpose of the advertising is to persuade the frequent business renter (whether on a business trip, a vacation trip, or renting an extra car at home) to try Avis.

3. A serious attempt will be made to create advertising with five times the effectiveness (see #2 above) of the competition's advertising.

4. To this end, Avis will approve or disapprove, not try to improve, ads which are submitted. Any changes suggested by Avis must be grounded on a material operating defect (a wrong uniform for example).

5. To this end, DDB will only submit for approval those ads which they as an agency recommend. They will not "see what Avis thinks of that one."

6. Media selection should be the primary responsibility of DDB. However, DDB is expected to take the initiative to get guidance from Avis in weighting of markets or special situations, particularly in those areas where cold numbers do not indicate the real picture. Media judgments are open to discussion. The conviction should prevail. Compromises should be avoided.

ALPHABETICAL ORDER

Make sure that whoever types your infrequent memos (*see* Memorandum, the Last) uses alphabetical order. Otherwise some of your people will go through Freudian agonies as their names rise and fall on the addressee list and they appear to rise and fall in your favor.

ASSISTANTS–TO AND MAKE–WORKING

The only people who thoroughly enjoy being assistants-to are vampires. The assistant-to operates in a very different way from an assistant. The regular line assistant has the authority of his boss when his boss is away and can therefore make the tactical day-to-day decisions that permit the surrounding areas of the company to keep functioning.
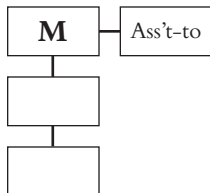
The differences can be seen by drawing three kinds of organizations:
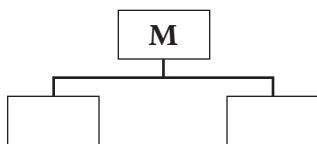
1. Best organization.
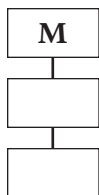
2. Twenty-five per cent less effective. Each level of management lowers communication effectiveness within the organization by about 25 per cent.

3. The absolute worst. Usually the sign of a weak, ineffective manager.

The assistant-to recommends itself to the weak or lazy manager as a crutch. It helps him where he shouldn't and can't be helped—head-to-head contact with his people. A good man deserves direct confrontation with his boss—especially when they're not in full accord. If all he gets is visits and memos from an assistant-to, he's entitled to blow his stack and go find a smarter boss somewhere.

There are some intelligent people doing assistant-to work: getting between the boss and the people who report to him, usurping power, crossing wires, and draining the organization's strength and zeal. You can't really blame the assistant-to. He wound up there because the boss got overworked and then followed his instincts. Instead of giving pieces of his job to other line officers, or carving out a whole job and giving it to someone to run with, he hired an assistant-to, and immediately became much less effective than he was when he was just overworked.

Another problem. You can't tell an assistant-to by his title. Some are called V.P. or Senior V.P. or Executive V.P. or even Chairman of the Executive Committee. But you can always tell one by the way he operates. He moves back and forth between the boss and his people with oral or written messages on real or apparent problems—overlapping and duplicating efforts and make-working.

In my book anyone who has an assistant-to should be fined a hundred dollars a day until he eliminates the position.