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# When One+ One = Three

*How two advertising men put their heads together for **brand. new. thinking.** and created M<sub>2</sub>H, the fastest-growing health-care agency in Canada.<sup>†</sup>*

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Left to their own devices, most product managers would be hard-pressed to say exactly what makes one pharmaceutical agency different from another. And yet there is a difference. I know, because I was once a product manager myself and learned, first-hand, that not all agencies are created equal.

My first agency experience was with an executive named Phil. Phil was in a tough spot because he didn't know what I knew — that I knew everything. Phil couldn't tell me anything I didn't already know. There were plenty of times Phil was wrong. He didn't know it. But I did because remember, I knew everything. Consequently, I didn't get much value from the agency, but I was too smart to know that at the time.

Later I learned what a good agency could do; how it could help me and the brands I managed.

That's when I began to understand what set one agency apart from another.

I learned that the best kind of agency doesn't work for you, it works for your brand. It protects the brand from competitors, sometimes from you. What I learned is that a good agency knows your brand (whether it created it or not); knows what it needs, how to help it stand out, to grow, to overcome obstacles. At times, a good agency will tell you what you don't want to hear, because it's just what you must hear.

What I learned was that by doing all this, my agency really did work for me. It could make me look better and smarter and more astute than I actually was. And through it all, I learned to



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*“Good ideas come when people with different perspectives work together on the same problem”*

— Mary Ellen Heyde

<sup>†</sup> Not PAAB Approved

trust my agency — and they me. Together we did build something — a relationship, one that went deeper than any minor glitches or setbacks we faced. It was certainly deeper than any meaning that can be conveyed by the overused word “partnership.”

Today I sit on the other side of the equation. What excites me is the opportunity to work with clients in the task of creating, building and maintaining brands.

At M<sub>2</sub>H we talk about **brand. new. thinking.** We have time, where clients don't, to think about their brands, their challenges, their opportunities. We look for new

ways to do things better. One recent example saw us develop a direct-to-consumer branding ladder that moved through seven stages from totally unbranded to fully branded. A unique vehicle that employed TV programming, the Internet, public relations, advertising, direct mail and continuing health-care education components — all within accepted guidelines.

So what makes for a good agency? The thinking. The people. The passion. The mutual trust. Basically, it involves all the things that make for a good client.



## M<sub>2</sub>H CHECKLIST

### What an agency must offer

- Strategic partnership
- Strong creative
- e-business expertise
- Senior people on business
- Proprietary models
- Global network
- Small agency responsiveness
- Big agency resources
- Direct-to-consumer expertise
- Integrated services

### What an agency must earn

- TRUST

**M<sub>2</sub>H Principle #17:**  
*“Every problem contains  
the seed of its own  
solution.”*

- Stanley Arnold

## M<sub>2</sub>H MacLaren McCann Healthcare



**Nelson Smith  
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Creative Director  
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**R**ight off the top, let's admit that, as consumers of advertising, we spend most of our time oblivious to what's around us. Think of all the ads, messages and communications that fly past in a normal day, yet barely register on the radar screen of our consciousness.

Why would we think doctors are any different? Is it because we have such important messages to deliver?

To demonstrate his approach to journal advertising, one doctor in research picked up a magazine and fanned through it—demonstrating we have two, maybe three seconds to grab him before he moves on.

So how do we get his attention?

Through surprise.

Have him open the journal. Have him encounter himself.

At one time, advertising used to shout, believing the louder you were, the more you'd be heard. In reality, this only encouraged people to put their fingers in their ears and turn their backs on the message. Often, this also led to resentment towards the advertiser.

Today the best advertising reflects the mind-set of the reader. Or viewer. Or Internet user. A good double-page ad, for example, is a mirror in which readers recognize themselves—how they feel, what they care about, what they need.

Everyone has had the experience of shuffling through a magazine or surfing TV channels, when something so fresh, so engaging appears that you can do nothing but be caught up in it.

That is what good advertising does. And its entry point is generally visceral, not rational. The mind is a vault that opens, cautiously, only to logic. The heart, on the other hand, is double doors



**M<sub>2</sub>H Principle #12:**  
*"The art of creative imagination is to reveal the essential beneath the extraneous."*

- Wilfred Wong

that swing wide whenever the right emotional connection is made. It is through here that most advertising passes.

Admittedly, while this brand of inspiration remains the domain of consumer advertising, there is certainly more opportunity within pharmaceutical advertising to employ these techniques. As more than one person has said, doctors are people first.

With more and more drugs that are more and more alike, good branding is crucial. In a me-too world, it's personality that wins the day.

At M<sub>2</sub>H, the rallying cry for brands is "Truth Well Told." At its heart, every brand has a truth that will surrender itself up to those persistent enough to find it. And a personality that will be reflected in the creative execution, which should be fashioned as carefully as the product positioning.

Too often, the knee-jerk reaction is to create an ad, when the need is to make a connection. Instead of the automatic assembly of photo, headline and logo, perhaps there is another approach. Perhaps not an ad at all.

Remember, the goal is surprise. The pay-off is the difference between expensive wallpaper and a communication that truly resonates.

### **Plant the seeds of a new thought today.**

Want to think outside the box? First recognize that you are the box. Your preconceptions hold you back. You know too much. Dare to be stupid. Ask stupid questions. You'll be surprised what smart answers you get. You can't learn anything if you know everything. Try to remember when you knew nothing and every moment was a learning experience. What have you learned new today? Don't waste time trying to impress. Life's too short. Find in the complex, the essential. The simple. It worked for Einstein. Why not for you? Be still. Listen for the voice inside that knows. Honour it. Put divergent thoughts together. Like the mathematical concept of a square and the organic shape of a tree. Learn to do it in all aspects of your work. And your life. Don't promote a product. Create a brand. Give it a personality, not just a name. Of all the trees in the forest, which do you think will be remembered?



# M<sub>2</sub>H MacLaren McCann Healthcare



*“I am looking but I won’t know what I have found until I find it.”*

— Edward de Bono

The process of **brand. new. thinking.** is intended to see things from all sides, without limitations or restraints, without preconceptions or prejudices.

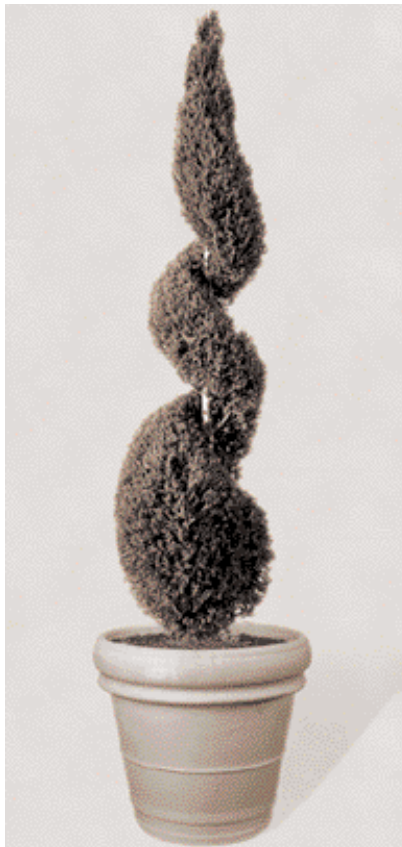
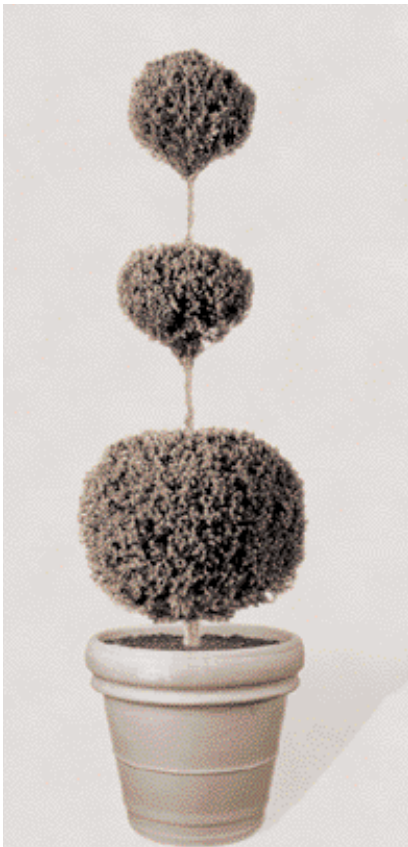
With every brand we begin at the same place—the beginning. Experience helps us with the process, but doesn’t determine its course. When it concludes, we are surprised at where we have arrived, knowing we got there not by leading the way, but following our instincts and our insights. And that

the place we eventually arrive is just where the brand wants to be.

If you would like to hear more about the **brand. new. thinking.** process, contact Brian at [brian.honda@maclaren.com](mailto:brian.honda@maclaren.com) or (416) 643-8571. [CPM](#)



**brand. new. thinking.**



***What shape is your brand?***

In a world of “me-too” products, the challenge is to differentiate. When personality becomes product, the likability factor cannot be underestimated.