

So... You Want to be in an Advertising Agency?

Introduction

The glamour, the unlimited expense accounts, the exhilarating lifestyle - all these popular portraits of life in the big-time advertising agency are misleading. Advertising is **demanding, challenging, hard work**. It is also **interesting** and **fulfilling**. Advertising requires a mix of personal abilities, considerable business skills, and an ability to work under pressure to meet deadlines.

This booklet has been prepared by ICA, Canada's industry association for advertising agencies, to help acquaint you with the variety of careers to be found in a full-service advertising agency.

Compared to larger industries, there are never many entry-level positions open in advertising agencies (dozens rather than hundreds). And competition is stiff. The industry, however, is constantly on the look out for **skilled, bright, articulate, creative and personable men and women with a well-rounded education and a good business sense**.

What is the Advertising Agency's Role?

Suppose you are a company with a product. It may be a totally new product. As a company with a product or service to sell, designing and making that item is only part of the battle. People are not going to beat a path to your door. You have to seek **a channel of communication**.

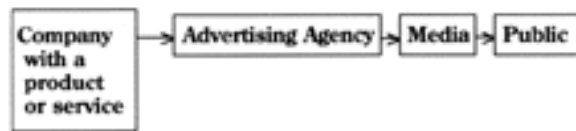
You need to consider, for example:

- For whom is the product or service designed?
- Who would use it?
- Who is the "target group"?
- What's special about the product? In what way is it distinct? unique?different?
- What's its "position" in relation to other similar products?
- What do you want to convey to the public about your product?
- How should your company contact the public?
- What medium should it use? radio? TV? newspapers? magazines? billboards? bus/subway ads? Direct mail? etc.
- How extensive a region should your company try to cover?
- How often?

Communication and marketing decisions involve specialized expertise. Many companies that design and produce products or offer services lack these specific capabilities. This is where advertising agencies fit in.

Advertising agencies exist to help companies:

- communicate with the public
- market the company's product



The process of advertising involves considerable specialized knowledge and expertise

- **about people** - their interests, preferences, needs, wants, lifestyles, expectations
- **about media** - their "reach", their effectiveness, their specific appeal
- **about the company and its product** – and about competing companies and their products

How is an Advertising Agency Structured?

Just about every agency has a different point of view on how best to do this and so the structure and titles will vary somewhat from agency to agency. However, there are some useful generalizations.

The Basic Structure

The traditional, full-service agency (we'll discuss "full service" versus "specialty" or "boutique" agencies later) is divided into 3 functional parts: account management (sometimes called client service); creative and media. These parts report to a central authority, often the President. There is a central administration and the accounting department. There are Canadian-owned agencies where the top of the agency structure is the President and/or Canadian Board of Directors. There are also international agencies where the structure extends, with varying degrees of involvement and authority, to international management.

The structure of a typical agency looks, then, like this:



Each functional area has a vital but different role to play in developing advertising for the agency's clients. The account group, for instance, works with the client in developing the advertising approach and objectives and oversees the whole process through the agency. The creative group plans out the words and the artwork, in keeping with the advertising objectives. The media group develops the placement plan - where, and for how long, and in what media, and in what specific outlets, etc., the advertising should run. Some agencies may also have a research unit which provides basic marketing information to assist in developing advertising objectives.

Additional Features

Much of the advertising in Canada is still created and placed by full-service advertising agencies, and these agencies provide most training positions. There are, however, a number of "specialty" or "boutique" agencies which specialize in just one of the functional areas (account management, creative or media) of the full service agency.

Many agencies have not only a central office headquarters but also branch offices in major centres across Canada. Advertising agencies must take into account the English and the French Canadian markets and the corresponding English and French media.

All agencies must avoid account conflict. For example, an agency that has one major manufacturer as a client would not also have that manufacturer's competitor.

What do Account Management People do?

It is exceptionally difficult to offer a brief definition of the role of an account person within an agency. In fact, it is simpler to define what account management personnel do not do. By definition they do not:

- write advertising
- produce advertising
- buy or plan media
- develop research
- handle the payroll
- take the client to lunch (all the time)

Account management personnel, used to their fullest capabilities, perform a dual function as consultants and co-ordinators. The job of the account service person is to understand totally his or her client's business in order to:

- a) advise the client on a variety of marketing/strategic/financial issues.
- b) identify and motivate the correct agency resources to build the client's business.
- c) co-ordinate overall agency involvement and projects between client and agency.

The account person is expected to be an expert on consumer behaviour and understand how the client's business relates and is perceived by the consumer. Account service personnel communicate what they know about a specific product, the total market and the consumer, as direction and background for the individuals who create and place the actual advertising.

Account Management Jobs

Account Co-ordinator or Junior Account Executive

This is an entry-level position. Responsibilities include control of client budget (monthly reconciliation), issuing of status reports, keeping track of a project as it moves through the various departments, and some limited client contact

Account Executive

Depending on the size and complexity of the account this can be an entry level position.

Responsibilities of the Account Executive include client contact, planning of projects, budget control, annual advertising plans and advising on strategic issues with the help of the Account Supervisor.

Account Supervisor

A middle management position: he or she manages the account within a medium term perspective. This includes strategic planning, market analysis, competitive activity analysis, as well as recognizing and capitalizing on business building opportunities.

Account Director

Deals with senior members of the client organization. Responsible for agency performance as a whole with limited involvement in routine agency projects. The Account Director is responsible for forward, long-term planning, deployment of agency personnel and overall account profitability.

What Do I Need To Become One?

There is no one basic set of skills or educational requirements required for success in Account Management.

1. Education

For an entry level agency position most individuals now have a Bachelor's or Master's Degree from a recognized university. Many have commerce or business degrees.

2. Personal Qualifications:

Again, there is no "formula" personality which guarantees success in the advertising business, but the qualities below can only help you land your first job and progress in the industry:

- People skills - an ability to get on well with a variety of people (peers, superiors, juniors, creative people, and clients at all levels).
- A sense of humour.
- An inquisitive mind and an interest in a wide variety of topics.
- Excellent verbal and written skills.

How Do I Get A Job In Account Services?

Persistence is the best answer. In any given year there are very few jobs available for the number of applicants. Some industry leaders have estimated that fewer than one in twenty applications are successful in securing an agency position. The best guidelines we can offer are:

- prepare a carefully organized resume
- send it to the individual responsible for hiring at each agency to which you apply
- follow up a few days later with a phone call requesting an interview.
- Spend some time researching the industry: find out as much as you can about the agency and its clients.

What does the Creative Department do?

The Creative Department is responsible for ideas. Creating them. Selling them. And executing them. This includes a wide range from coupons on cereal boxes to annual reports, to print advertisements, to radio and television commercials. All are important. A Creative person's starting point is a strategy which comes on a sheet of paper from the Account Executives. With that briefing, creative sessions are held and ideas are generated and ultimately presented in preliminary, rough form.

How Is The Creative Department Structured?

The Creative Department is composed of writers, art directors and producers all under the jurisdiction of a Creative Director. A Creative Director is a senior member of the department who started either as an Art Director or Copywriter.

The Copywriter

The Copywriter is traditionally responsible for words. But first, one must research the product intensively. Is there anything that makes it stand out from the competition? One must understand the target group. What turns these people on? What will make them buy this product over another? You've got to be intrusive to be noticed and then hit with punch, surprise and relevance. This you will do with the help of an Art Director who works as a teammate with the Copywriter.

The Art Director

If a Copywriter is words, then an Art Director is pictures. As an Art Director, you don't have to be a fine artist yourself. But you have to be knowledgeable, have design and taste so that you can live up to your title. An Art Director directs artists and is the "visual" part of the team.

What Are the Education Requirements For Creative People?

The Copywriter

There is not much specialized training for a Copywriter. Outside of perhaps a B.A. in General Arts or Journalism, there are few courses to take. Copywriters master the English language. A Copywriter needs overall life and people skill experience. A general knowledge of many things. Experience in newspaper, magazine or broadcast writing is helpful. Even working in a retail store or as a taxi driver. You need experience that will help you write convincing copy. Copy that sells.

How To Get A Copywriter's Job

Hundreds of people are pounding the streets trying to get the handful of jobs available. They are seldom advertised so you must call Creative Directors to make appointments. They are very busy so keep trying. A portfolio of sample advertising campaigns is a must in your door-to-door search. Take ads you don't like and make them better. And be prepared to tell why you think they are better. Take ad campaigns you do like, and show how they could develop over the next few years. A campaign consists of two or three media, so we're talking about a combination of print, TV, radio, transit, and outdoor. If you know an Art Director or Artist, coerce them into helping you with your layouts. Nothing is more boring than to see a binder full of words.

The Art Director

Art Directors have more options open to them in developing their craft: colleges of art, some community colleges and some universities have courses. When you leave these institutions, you'll have a portfolio to get you on your way. Any training you can get in a visual arts studio or with a magazine, newspaper or

department store is very helpful. It could also be worth your while to do some ads or posters for some small retailers. These would augment your portfolio.

How To Get An Art Director's Job

Read the section for Copywriters. Jobs are very scarce. Unlike Copywriters who may be somewhat pessimistic about job opportunities, Art Directors may feel that they will automatically get a job because they've had three to four years of advertising art education. Not so. There are very few openings. Try to get in anywhere even if it's paste-up artist at a studio. Try the smaller agencies. You may not start as an Art Director, but you will have your foot in the door.

What does the Radio & TV Broadcast Production Department do?

The Broadcast Production department is responsible for making television and radio commercials to be aired across the country. Each project is different and the job demands both creative and administrative ability. The most successful people in Broadcast Production have strong aptitudes in both creative and administrative areas. This means that they should be active in creative spheres. They must also have a very high organizational ability as there are a myriad of details to attend to in any production.

There are two basic classifications of jobs in Broadcast Production:

- Producer
- Production Co-ordinator and/or Traffic Co-ordinator

The production team's main function is to purchase the services of the correct film or videotape production company and to administer and produce the TV commercial production on behalf of the advertising agency and the client.

The Producer

The Producer is responsible for supervising all aspects of a TV commercial production, from the selection of the production company through budgeting, scheduling, casting, locations, sets, music creation, production meetings, filming, editing, sound mixing, to the final approval of the finished commercial. This means that the Producer must be completely familiar with all aspects of the film and videotape process, including animation, live action, and stop motion.

Production Co-ordinator

The function of the Production Co-ordinator is to work with one or more Producers, providing administrative and creative support in such fields as budgeting, scheduling, producing production books, and auditioning talent. A Co-ordinator very often will handle revisions and adaptations of TV commercials with the production company. They may also have experience in Broadcast Traffic learning other rules on talent or how to "traffic" a complex television schedule.

Education Requirements

The educational requirements vary according to the position, but basically they break down as follows:

- *Producer* – Community College or University
- *Production/Traffic Co-ordinator* – Practical Background or Community College

In order to get the necessary background in the technical and creative fields the minimum requirement now is a Community College Diploma in Broadcast Production.

If, however, you want to keep your options open to other aspects of advertising or management, a university degree specializing in the Communications Arts and Broadcast Production is a valuable asset. You could also consider ICA's Television and Radio Commercial Production course to help you train for an agency position.

What does the Print Production Department do?

Print Production, more than any other agency department, relies on graphic art technology to help give birth to an ad. If there are to be no complications in the ad's delivery to the printed page, then strict technical rules must be followed. Of course, rules were made for valid reasons. An ad must obey that magazine's exact size and film requirements. To defy those specifications, even slightly, would make it incorrect and therefore not publishable.

What Print Production People Do

Print production people:

- **Meet deadlines.** Publications insist on strict deadlines and it's crucial that production pay strict heed to them.
- **Use sophisticated technology.** To ensure that those deadlines are met, the Production Manager must possess a solid working knowledge of the latest graphic art technology. As technology changes it is now imperative to be computer literate and understand their function.
- **Co-ordinate and manage.** The Print Production department's job is to ensure that print advertising is reproduced correctly whether in colour or in black and white. This means exact attention to detail and it is up to the Production Manager to provide the specifications to suppliers.
- **Skills and training.** What are the skills necessary to make it in Production? Technical art expertise and a willingness to keep abreast of new developments; an aesthetic feeling for some of the craftsmanship involved in the graphic arts; accounting and math skills; and a sharp eye for detail. Computer literacy and an understanding of systems is another necessary skill. Production skills aren't something that can be bought, nor are they something that can be learned overnight. It takes a few hard years of training under the wing of an experienced Production Manager.

What does the Media Department do?

The Media Department of an advertising agency is responsible for the planning and placement of advertising time and space. It is a function that in recent years has undergone considerable change. The proliferation of media forms and the escalating cost of media time has brought a new focus to the Agency Media Department.

Functions of the Media Department

Media Planning

The Media Department is responsible for the preparation and the actual presentation of the media plan. This document recommends media and media vehicles that in the agency's opinion best fulfill the client's marketing and advertising objectives. The recommendations are based on a careful assessment of the client's strategic requirements and the subsequent matching against these of the various available media forms. In the process there is great reliance on research and the known strengths and weaknesses of various media. Computer analysis is frequently used to sift through and compare all the media audience data that is available. The final media plan will present a carefully thought out recommendation that delivers the right target group, at the right time, in the right place, with the right number of messages.

Media Buying

Once a media plan has been approved by a client, it must then be purchased. The procedures for this vary according to the medium under consideration. In print media, for example, most purchases are made on the basis of rate cards issued by various newspapers or magazines. In broadcast, however, negotiation is involved. The objective of this negotiation is quite simple - to achieve maximum media efficiencies in obtaining the most for the least, or, in other words, the most audience for the least amount of money.

Media Estimating

Every single purchase made by the Media Buyer must be recorded in advance of the actual running of the advertisement. This is to enable the agency to bill the client for monies spent on their behalf and to check the invoices submitted by the media. This document is called an estimate.

Job Descriptions

Media Planner

With grounding in media buying, some Media people then prefer to pursue a career in media planning rather than to advance in Media Buying. The Media Planner is responsible for developing and presenting the media plan. A first-rate knowledge of the strengths, weaknesses, cost efficiencies and communication potential of various media is required. Analytical ability is important as is a thorough understanding of the purpose and components of a media plan. Communication skills are essential as the Planner will be expected to both write the media plan and then to sell it within the agency and eventually to the client.

Media Buyer

Most Trainees aspire to a media buying or planning position. These are attainable providing that there has been a consistent demonstration of the required skills at the trainee level. Promotions are generally possible after one or two years at the trainee level.

The good Media Buyer will possess, particularly if involved in broadcast buying, excellent negotiation skills. Good communication skills are critical as they will be dealing in person or on the telephone with numerous media or their representatives.

Finally, the very best Media Buyers combine a delicate balance of judgment with statistical data. This results in media buys that are not only efficient but also effective.

Media Assistant, Trainee or Estimator

Almost without exception, all people new to the media business start as Assistants, Trainees or Estimators. In this position they are trained in the agency's operating procedures and acquire a working knowledge of the fundamentals of media and the various data sources available. Computer literacy is a must.

Other Factors

A clearly defined career path is available in the Media Department of most agencies. The media business is not for everyone, however. The demands can be onerous, the pace frantic. The deadlines are never-ending and the responsibilities can be unnerving. Financial rewards are very poor to start. The competition can be intense and promotion tough to come by. In spite of the heavy demands, the Media Department of an agency provides an interesting and challenging career. The new era of media technology will mean that Media planning and placement will play an increasingly important role in the advertising process.

Educational Requirements

Media people come from varying academic and occupational backgrounds. Some have had previous working experience (perhaps in another agency), some have come straight from school or university. On the academic side, a B.A. in Marketing, Economics, English or Mathematics/Statistics would be useful as would an M.A. An advertising or marketing course or ICA's Introduction to Advertising course would also provide good background. Previous working experience that might be useful could include retail sales, banking and accounting. People without the background described above should not, however, be discouraged. Computer literacy, the right attitude, a willingness to learn and a genuine desire to produce first rate work are important credentials.

Getting a Job

There are no short cuts to getting a job in a Media Department. It may take some time, but if you are determined, if you have the right credentials, and you persevere, you should get in - eventually. Many Media Directors look upon a job application as a real-life test of the applicants skill. This means properly developed resumes, business-like approaches to the company, knowledge of the agency and its accounts and professionalism during interviews. There are too many applications from people looking for a job. Only someone who has done their homework and who exhibits a genuine desire to work in the business and for the company, will make it past the first interview stage.

What does the Marketing Research Department do?

Marketing research is three things:

- 1 The identification of information needs (i.e. defining the problem)
- 2 The systematic gathering, recording, analyzing and interpreting of data about problems relating to the marketing of goods and services (i.e. providing a solution to the problem)
- 3 The analysis and evaluation of action taken on the basis of information (i.e. monitoring and modifying the initial solution).

The single most important reason then for doing marketing research is **to guide the marketer in the analysis, planning, implementation and control of marketing and communications programs** to satisfy both customer needs and organizational goals.

It does this by providing decision-makers with **information** necessary to choose between alternative courses of action. While marketing research information can never eliminate all risk from decision-making, good research can and should substantially reduce the odds of failure. In short, the essence of marketing research is "problem-solving".

Career Opportunities in Marketing Research

The field has grown rapidly over the past ten years and is likely to continue growing at a healthy pace during the next decade as more and more companies and even governments come to recognize the benefits of doing marketing research.

Unfortunately, this rosy picture contains a "Catch-22". Well-trained Marketing Researchers are in high demand and are well paid because there are relatively few of them in Canada. Untrained people with high hopes and good intentions, however, have the big problem of convincing someone to train them to become good Marketing Researchers.

Here are two ways to increase your odds of getting your start in marketing research:

1. Complete university, and even better, get your Masters or Ph.D. Degree.
2. Apply for an entry-level position as a research analyst in the following types of organizations: large, full-service marketing research firms; client companies with their own marketing research department; government departments with a "program evaluation" group; advertising agencies with a marketing research department; and research consulting firms.

Job Opportunities in Advertising Generally

Advertising agencies have the highest profile in a much larger advertising industry, composed of various media, advertisers, printers, photographers, typesetters, and others that act as suppliers to the industry. Accordingly, agencies attract most of the people who want to get into advertising.

This booklet has been prepared to describe the various career paths open in an advertising agency, but it would be unfair to the reader not to talk about the difficulty of getting the opportunity to begin in any one of them. Generally speaking, an agency is not the place to start an advertising career until the candidate has acquired two sorts of knowledge not available in most academic institutions. First, an extremely good working knowledge of how a wide variety of businesses work is necessary, for agencies serve so many kinds of clients. Second, one must develop good interpersonal business skills to be successful in the agency industry, and these skills are usually developed only in on-the-job experiences. So where can you start? You could begin by contacting the following:

- The hundreds of printing and lithographing shops that abound in every city. In Toronto alone, it is estimated that there are over 5,000 printers.
- The advertising departments of weekly (community) newspapers, in which advertising must not only be sold but often created for the local retailers who form the bulk of the advertising volume. There are about 1,000 of these in Canada.
- The advertising departments of daily newspapers, which must also sell and create a great volume of advertising every day. There are about 90 of these.
- Radio stations, which number about 350 in Canada.
- TV stations, of which there are about 70 in Canada.

- The advertising management department of the manufacturers who advertise, which number well over 1,000.
- The advertising departments of the larger retailers, both in the department store and chain store field.
- Business publications and magazines, which number several hundred outdoor and transit advertising companies. There are also Sales Promotion and Direct Response agencies which specialize in aspects of advertising and communications.

These businesses represent perhaps 5,000 places to start an advertising career and they probably employ between 50,000 and 100,000 people.

Now let's look specifically at the advertising agency field.

There are only 500 advertising agencies in Canada. Don't be fooled by the Yellow Page listings which may include printers, photographers, and others who are trying to attract advertising business.

The advertising agency industry represents about 40% of all the advertising done in the country with the remainder done by retailers, manufacturers, and others who do it themselves.

In employment, the advertising agency business accounts for no more than 6,000 jobs out of Canada's total of 100,000 advertising jobs. What is more, the total number of persons employed in agencies has not grown very much in two decades, because, as agencies become more specialized, they've found they need fewer employees per million dollars of business handled. The reader might begin to understand then, why it is so very difficult to find a job in the advertising agency field.

Expecting to land a job in an advertising agency, straight out of school or college, is to be honest, very unlikely. For every entry level job filled, it is estimated that an advertising agency has received 100 resumes sent to it.

If you are convinced you'd like a career in the advertising agency field, get a job in one of the other corners of the industry that we've talked about, and keep your name in front of the agencies you'd like to work for.

Eventually, you'll get in, but it may take up to two years. When you do get your chance, it won't be because they've got your resume on file, necessarily. It will more likely be that a job has opened up on the very day that you call, and you'll get it, because you've been persistent and you're there at the right time.

So ... you still want to be in an Advertising Agency?

As the descriptions of career options indicate, advertising is a challenging, interesting, demanding, diverse, highly skilled endeavour.

Skills

Three kinds of skills are absolutely basic:

- good people skills
- good communication skills
- good business skills

Preparation

There is, of course, no one route into advertising. Everyone has his own story to tell, and they differ immensely. But as a generalization, the best basic path to a career in advertising lies in a broadly-based community college and/or university education, one that focuses on the development of the three basic kinds of skills mentioned above.

Employment

In an approach to an advertising agency for entry-level employment, prepare a first-rate resume, focusing on the skills you have acquired (education, work experience). Send also a covering letter, focusing on the area of the agency for which you wish to be considered. Be specific here: don't pose as a jack-of-all-trades. In some areas (art, copy), prepare a portfolio. Become knowledgeable about the industry. Read the basic industry weekly periodicals, the Canadian ones being **Marketing** (a Maclean-Hunter publication) and **Strategy** (a Brunico Communications Inc. publication) and the American one being **Advertising Age** (a Crain publication).

But that's not all

Once you have been successful in landing a job with an agency, you can expect further extensive and demanding training. Many agencies operate in-house training programs designed to make you a self-sufficient, productive, skilled person in that area of the agency's business. In addition, in a cooperative way, the industry provides, through The Institute of Communications and Advertising, a number of educational programs for those already employed in advertising. These include the 12 week Introduction to Advertising course and the 2-year course Communication and Advertising Accredited Professional leading to the coveted CAAP diploma.

For more information about ICA education, call 416-482-1396 or 1-800-567-7422. You can also fax ICA at 416-482-1856. In addition to this, the following bibliography will be helpful for information about the field:

Canadian Advertising in Action, (second edition) Keith J. Tuckwell; Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., 1991

Confessions of an Advertising Man, David Ogilvy: This is a classic available in most public libraries

Kleppner's Advertising Procedure, J. Thomas Russell, Ronald Lane; Prentice-Hall Inc., 1985

Marketing (First Canadian Edition), Eric Berkowitz, Roger Kerin, William Rudelius, Frederick Crane; Richard D. Irwin Inc., 1991

My Life In Advertising/Scientific Advertising, Claude C. Hopkins, Crain Books, 1966