

UNCOMMON SENSE – *Do we have it?*

-Sam Balsara

It is said, “Common sense is not so Common”. The good marketing company that Marico is, has sought to turn this old adage on its head, glamorized it, made it provocative and relevant to its target audience of marketing and communication professionals and launched a corporate campaign using the theme UNCOMMON SENSE. Launching a corporate campaign aimed at projecting the company to the marketing and advertising community is in itself a fine example of the very theme, the company projects.

The theme of the campaign is extremely relevant to professionals like me because of the times we live in. And has certainly struck the right chord in me. And I am reading more into it than even what the campaign explicitly expresses

The steady growth of the advertising business and the large number of professionals who work in it in an established hierarchical system and the creation of specialized disciplines within it has no doubt brought recognition to the discipline, made it universally acceptable as a business necessity and established it as a serious career option that is now offered at many universities and specialized business schools. But this has brought about its own problems. If the basic steps and processes followed, to arrive at a combat plan to overtake a competitor, are the same as those used by most players in a market, how successful can a combat plan be? Instead of creating an impact on the consumer by beating the clutter, most plans created using similar processes actually end up contributing to it!

Consider this:

- What if we hired a bunch of innovative managers from different disciplines, with no particular expertise in marketing or no baggage of established marketing practices? Have at least one such person in each team?
- What if we asked housewives to throw pointers on how to develop a media plan, what media to use, when to reach them?
- What if we insisted that every agency executive spend one hour a day interacting with consumers and non-users of the brand that he or she handles?
- What if we kept aside one hour a day, everyday for brainstorming, for coming up with new innovative strategies and plans for the brands we handle?
- And another 30 minutes a day for making the agency we work in, more productive?
- What if we asked our own people to go out and observe how people shop and buy brands? How they open packs? How they use them? Rather than have a bunch of experts go and ask respondents questions, record them in a structured questionnaire and get a neat report, which we glance through in the car on the way to work?
- What if we paid for value received rather than product/service/exposure offered, when it comes to paying for film production, research or media?

- Do we need Account Executives and Service Reports?
- Do we need multiple levels of approval, where all levels have the authority to reject, but only one, the highest has the authority to approve?
- Should political boundaries define marketing territories?
- Should multi brand companies rigidly follow A to S ratios for each brand?
- Should agency executives be paid less than marketing executives? Yet have to work closely with them?

Isn't all this commonsensical? Or do we leave our commonsense behind when we come to work because we get overwhelmed by a set of entrenched but unquestioned rules/beliefs/systems/processes that we feel too humbled to question? Is this what Marico calls UNCOMMON SENSE?

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