

That's Creative!



Clever advertising proposals open doors for the national sales team

> By Carol Weber Thomas

'She's one hot momma!'

Are they talking about actual moms? And Mother's Day?

This cheeky reminder speaks directly to women likely to buy J.Jill fashions – active, sporty, with-it women – and to the men who buy presents for them.

J.Jill has 100 stores in 34 states but has always relied on catalogs and, more recently, the Internet to reach customers. The company has used newspapers only rarely in its marketing mix, usually to promote new store openings.

The "Let Her Know She's One Hot

Momma" approach for Mother's Day was part of a presentation to J.Jill executives by Knight Ridder's creative marketing team, working with Knight Ridder National Retail Sales Director Linda Dorsch. Impressed, J.Jill scheduled a two-month test with the Mercury News in San Jose, where it has three stores and an outlet.

"We showed them the variety newspapers can offer," said Bill Whiddon, creative services director for Knight Ridder and The Miami Herald. "We used a stick-on note that looked like a \$10 bill on the front page,

keying to their \$10-off ad inside. We used teaser ads all through the paper, including business and sports."

Not to mention the Hot Momma tease on the newspaper poly bag.

The sales test was a coup for the new national sales team – and just one example of how it is getting in the doors of major advertisers across the country.

Advertisers who have only used the newspaper to deliver preprinted sales inserts, or who have never used newspapers at all, are sitting up and taking notice. Sales tests are bringing in millions of dollars in additional revenue. The national sales staff expects many to take regular advertising schedules in the future.

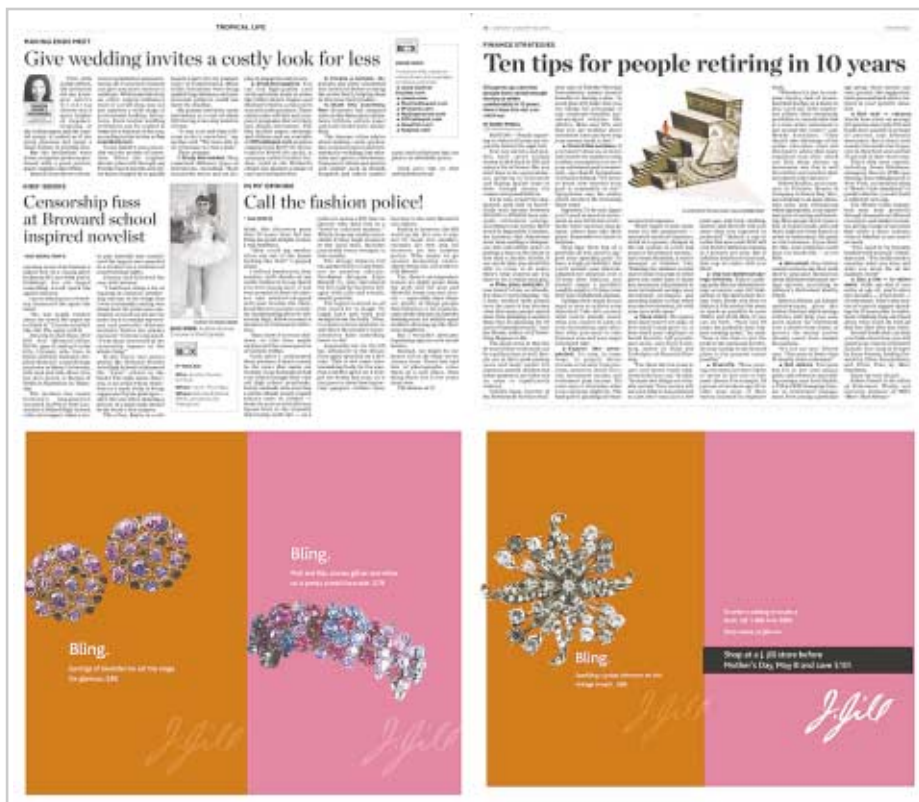
RadioShack and Tire Kingdom are analyzing data from ROP (run-of-paper) tests in 10 and 16 papers respectively, and Walgreens has indicated it will repeat last year's successful Christmas ad run.

"Things are going well for our national marketing team," said Larry Bien, corporate director of retail and national advertising. "We sold ads worth almost \$6 million in incremental revenue in only six months. This year, we're ahead of our budget for the first six months, and we've got some retail and national accounts we expect big things from in the last half of the year.

"One of the attributes we have is Bill Whiddon and his creative team. I've been told by some of my peers that Bill is one of the best talents in the newspaper industry."

Whiddon is quick to point out that the best work bubbles up from the team.

Collaborating with him on J.Jill were copywriter Eileen Pryel, who spent most of



These innovative new ad concepts catch the eye because they break with the traditional look. (The ads would not cut into news copy, and they would be clearly labeled as advertising.) Knight Ridder publishers and editors have said they're willing to give some of them a try.

her career in Chicago ad agencies before joining Knight Ridder three years ago, and Art Directors Thomas Taylor and Susi Cruz.

The assignment came from Dorsch, who "sent us a three-inch package of stuff to start our thinking," said Pryel. "She throws out a lot of freewheeling thoughts to get us started.

"Next, we looked at tons of art books – and stuffy Mother's Day ads. Most ads depict Mom as so sacred and proper, with all her



LONDON COLLIS/The Kansas City Star

Knight Ridder National Retail Sales Director Linda Dorsch, based at The Kansas City Star, pitched ad campaign concepts to J.Jill, a company that rarely advertised in newspapers. The retailer was so impressed that it ran test ads in the San Jose Mercury News for two months this summer.



children around her, tending to everyone else's needs. We decided to treat her like a modern woman."

Taylor, a 15-year Herald veteran, proposed a hot raspberry-and-orange color scheme. "We wanted a fun way to bring attention to the items, so we picked a palette that went with the products," he said.

"We work just a few steps from each other, so we were constantly running back and forth with scribbles and ideas," said Pryel.

They spent some time discussing which section or page

would resonate with J.Jill's audience. "We don't look at the newspaper as a whole," Whiddon said. "We look at it as separate magazines: sports, lifestyle, business, news. Each has its own audience and we can match that audience to the client's."

For the J.Jill proposal, Susi Cruz's Mother's Day ads targeted men. She used a close-up of a woman's eyes and bare shoulder for a sports page ad that assured men: "You're just a couple of keystrokes away from impressing your mom."

"It was a kind of sexy, flirty call to the men. We wanted them to know how easy it was to order from J.Jill's Web site," Cruz said.



ROBERT KIPPENBERGER

National sales team members based in Miami, copywriter Claudia Profili, left, Art Director Carey Kelley, copywriter Eileen Pryel and Art Director Thomas Taylor, are the creative force behind many of the groundbreaking ad concepts that are opening doors to major advertisers.

Using newspaper ads in unusual ways

Part of the sales team's challenge is to get the newspaper itself to move away from the standard advertising formats of the past – full, half or quarter pages; ads stacked in pyramid form.

Making the rounds among big-market publishers this summer was a 16-page newspaper mockup that showed off some of the creative group's ideas. One sample demonstrated the impact of a front-page, bottom-strip color ad. Another featured a riding mower chewing up dummy type in the ad block. In an L-shaped car ad, eight golf bags lined up on the left; the car sell on the bottom declared "Cargo room for an eightsome."

One of the proposed J.Jill ads showed a series of raspberry and orange blocks stretching across the bottom of two facing pages, each showcasing a brooch in lavender, lilac or crystal, with a simple word sell – the hip-hop-inspired word for jewelry, "Bling!" "Bling!" "Bling!"

Across another two pages ran a prizewinning ad proposed for Hummer. EKG waves move across a graph; a huge spike shoots up through the ad copy when the car is

revealed: "An uncontrollable reaction to the new H2 SUT."

That ad, imagined and designed by Whiddon, Pryel and Cruz, won first place in the 2005 International Newspaper Marketing Association competition in the category for promoting newspapers as an advertising medium.

St. Paul Pioneer Press market development team writer Rose D'Acquisto, left, strategist Sara McDonald and artist Sue Stanford (not pictured) worked on ideas for Target, including a kids' page with a cutout mask of the company's canine mascot.



MONA TOFT/St. Paul Pioneer Press

Such ads get clients' attention. But they require publisher approval, because they break through a lot of traditions, especially "No section front ads and no messing around with editorial copy."

Joe Natoli, publisher of The Philadelphia Inquirer and Philadelphia Daily News, was one of the first to respond to the prototype ads. "I've approved the positioning of everything except for section-front ads. I haven't said 'no,' but I want to see what other publishers are doing."

He noted, "Other media are getting more creative without blurring lines between news and ads. We have to look for opportunities to be more creative, both in position and in bundling. We have popular local Web sites, shoppers, community newspapers, plastic bags, Post-it® note capability that can be bundled for the advertiser."

Newspapers are not the only ones facing challenges, Natoli said. "National advertisers have always gone to broadcast for the broadest reach and least segmentation. But broadcast is losing eyeballs in droves. TV advertising as we know it today is going away. The Tivo generation is growing. A lot of young people don't want to watch live TV. They want shows when they want them. They tape them. They skip commercials.

"TV is going to have to reinvent. With satellite radio evolving, radio is also going

to have to reinvent”.

“Newspapers, for all our problems, are doing a better job of holding on to readers, and we’re growing online,” said Natoli. “We have a great opportunity to grow national advertising, especially since we have such a small share of it to begin with.”

The Knight Ridder sales staff is depending on the creative services team to develop campaigns that show national advertisers innovative ways to use newspapers as a broadcast alternative.

Mini ad agencies

The creative services team is growing. Whiddon uses members of his Herald team to work on national accounts. Last year, he added a group of nine at the St. Paul Pioneer Press, led by Director of Marketing Lori Swanson. This year, he tapped Fort Worth Star-Telegram Creative Director Diane Wigger’s group and began sending assignments to eight staffers there. First out of the box was a sales pitch for a major clothing chain; another was being presented to a fast food company.

For all the cleverness of the ads, the most important thing is the way the creative team works with each advertiser.

“Big clients are possessive of their own stuff,” Dorsch said. “Frequently they’ll take the creative design we produced and rework

if for themselves.”

Walgreens is a good example, she said. “We gave them ideas for a year-end holiday campaign; they took them and came back with a slightly different rendition. That’s fine with us. They ran a good campaign last Christmas and are considering it again this year.”

With national advertisers, it sometimes takes six months to go from presentation, to acceptance, to tweaking, to a space in the newspaper.

Often, those doing the initial work don’t know how the scenario finally played out. “But that doesn’t matter,” said St. Paul’s Swanson. “Our job is to get the sales staff a foot in the door. We love working on national campaigns.”

Target and Best Buy are big in the St. Paul market, and Swanson’s team has come up with creative ads for their campaigns. “We’ve also done Kohl’s, Best Buy, Marshall Field’s, Hallmark, SBC Communications, Payless Shoe stores, RadioShack, Circuit City and Michaels,” she said.

One of the St. Paul team’s local Target ideas went national. The promotion, “On the day you were born,” partnered with hospitals to give new moms a copy of the birthday paper and coupons for baby items at Target.

Fort Worth’s Wigger is working with Whiddon as part of a team studying strategies to increase circulation, including promoting newspapers. The Star-Telegram has had its own campaign going for some time, using outdoor and broadcast advertising that is attracting 20-somethings to the paper.

“Our team is really excited about getting involved with the national advertiser sales effort,” Wigger said. “This is a wonderful



STEVE EDMONDS/Fort Worth Star-Telegram

Fort Worth Star-Telegram Graphic Designer Bernie Gerstlauer, Creative Director Diane Wigger and Art Director Chris Green are helping design sample ads for TKG Group, a joint effort by Tribune Co., Knight Ridder and Gannett Co., to approach potential major accounts with creative new advertising concepts. (Each company negotiates sales on its own; they collaborate only on initial presentation of ways to advertise effectively in newspapers.)

challenge for them.”

Whiddon continues to look for creative talent throughout the company. “At the end of the day, you don’t want to be part of the gray matter that makes up the rest of the paper,” he said. “You want to stop people. We need to stand out in that environment.” <>

