



The 16 Laws of Scientific Advertising

In 1923, Claude Hopkins set down 16 advertising principles. What follows are his original words:

Regardless of principles, we must always experiment. But there are certain basic laws so well established, so generally accepted by those who know returns, that all who are wise will recognize and generally employ them ...

1. Brilliant writing has no place in advertising. One should be natural and simple. Never try to show off.
2. From start to finish offer service.
3. Forget yourself entirely. Have in your mind a typical prospect, interested enough to read about your product.
4. Do not boast. Boasting is repulsive.
5. Aim to get action. People are dilatory. They defer action, then forget. One cannot afford that.
6. Frivolity has no place in advertising. Spending money is usually serious business. Money comes slowly, and by sacrifice.
7. Never seek to amuse. The only interest you can offer profitably is something people want.
8. Make every word count to the limit. Cut every word that is not worth \$10. Never repeat.
9. Do not waste space in any way. It is expensive.
10. Tell the full story. People do not read ads in series. All appeals which prove themselves important should be included in every ad.
11. Superlative claims do not count. Give actual figures, state definite facts. Indefinite claims leave indefinite impressions.
12. Never advertise negatively. Always present the attractive side, not the offensive side of a subject.
13. All experience in advertising proves that people will do little to prevent troubles.
14. There are many things in advertising too costly to attempt. The world is full of things that appeal to the 1 percent.
15. A simple change in headline can multiply results from an ad by eight or ten.
16. The best school is canvassing, going from home to home. Many great ad writers spend half their time in that.

... Every ad is surrounded by countless appeals. Every effort involves much expense. The man who wins out and survives does so only because of superior science and strategy. He must know more, must be better grounded, must be shrewder than his rivals. The only way to that end is to start with fixed principles, proved by decades of experience, from which you never swerve.