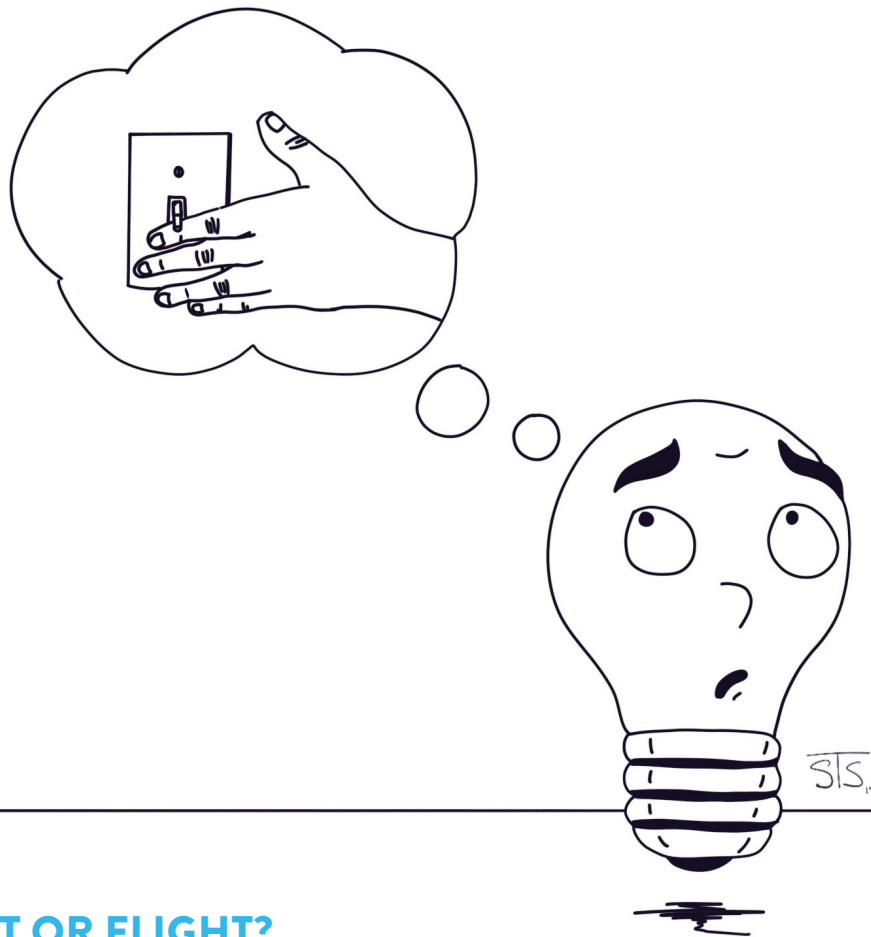


A Farewell to Ads

This is the story of how ads died happily ever after.





FIGHT OR FLIGHT?

New Ideas are Terrified.

Entering the world often as the only member of their species, new concepts have a hard time making friends. After all, it's tough for newbies to relate to all those established good ideas from the past.

Our job as professionals is to introduce clients to the best new ideas we meet.

That's because shepherding good ideas to clients is what moves the needle in every professional industry. And while that kind of work is often as important as it is thankless, those doing it well prove its power every day.

Because even the simplest, oldest, tried-and-true-est idea can release a flurry of newborn butterflies when it's reconceived with the right timing.

That's the dilemma we face in the persuasion industry: how do we change peoples' minds without scaring them off? Put another way: how do you sell your truth in a sea of shiny deception?

The wise fishermen would remind you that nothing out-fishes live bait; that you can't beat the real deal. And while that's true for fish, it's even truer for humans. Fake rewards earn accidental bites.

But let the fish sink their teeth into something real and we could eat for a lifetime, even after we caught a few of their friends. Credibility and honesty, it turns out, thrive in the ecosystem as much as they do in the economy.

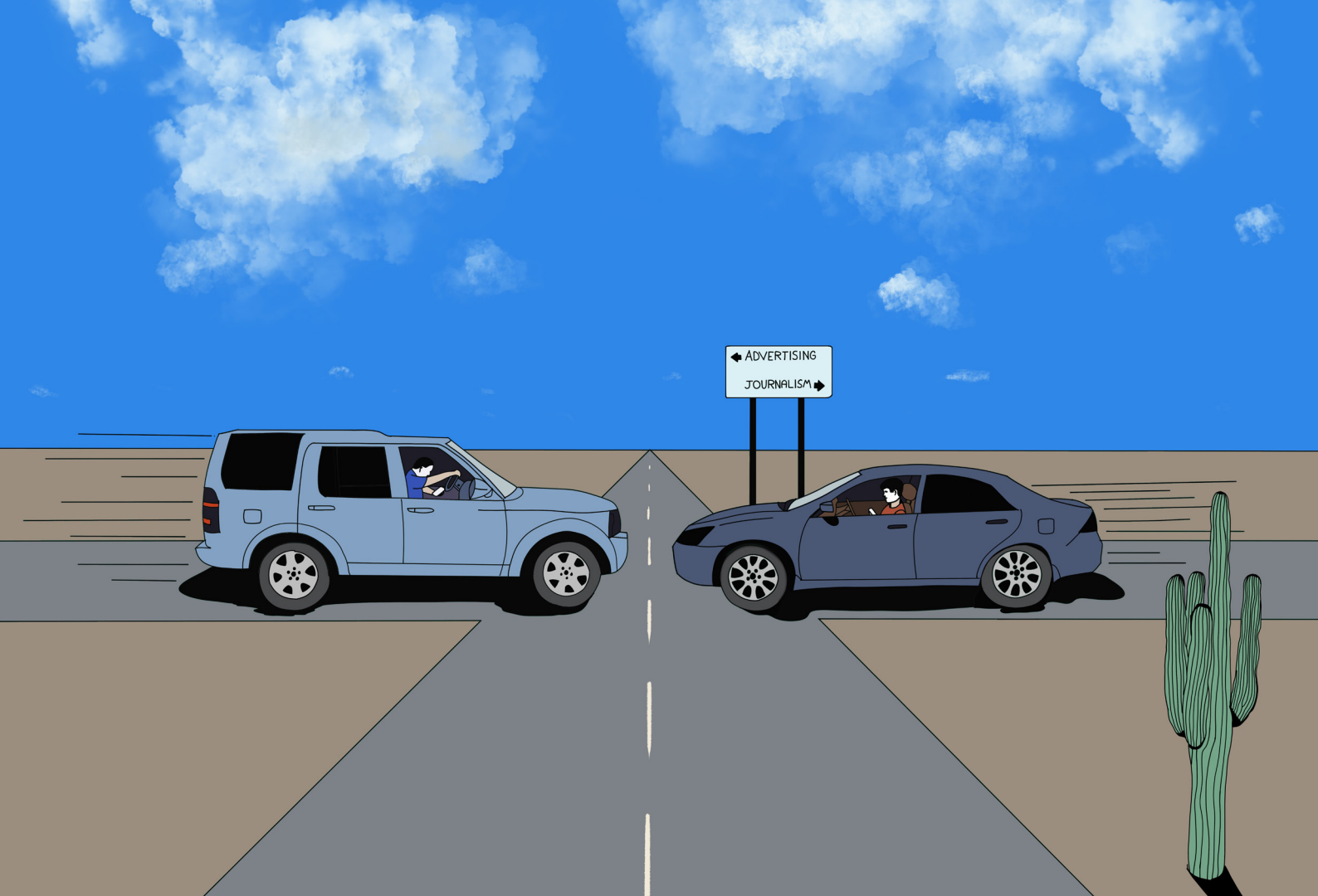
Humans, like fish, try our hardest to spit out the hook once we realize it's there. Then we fight while we're on the line and want nothing more than to feel it snap. Suffice to say, people aren't huge fans of being talked into stuff.

Because anytime humans are confronted with an idea in conflict with their current understanding of the world — a trait most good ideas share — the fight or flight response is triggered.

That's the same neurological process triggered when you spot a grizzly bear in the woods (or for our underwater friends, a shark swims by).

Fight? Flight? Two terrible options if you ask us.

We propose a third: *dance*.



THE BIG DANCE

Fake Rewards Earn Accidental Bites.

Overused phrases get overused for good reason.

Many of our industry clichés (perhaps unknowingly?) circle the same runway. Take a few of these all-time word-vomit classics for example: “*Increase Your Bottom-line!!!*”, “*10x Your Sales!*”, “*BUY NOW!*”, “*ACT FAST!*”, “*HURRY, LIMITED TIME OFFER!*”, “*TOP TEN THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT _____.*”

The list goes on and on (and on). But while throwaway phrases tend to get,

well, thrown away, they point to an important truth we'd be foolish to overlook: The future of marketing is strategic storytelling, and it sits somewhere at the intersection of advertising and journalism.

Often considered conflicting concepts rooted in opposing belief systems, it's now more important than ever that we operate under the open secret that advertising and journalism are two sides of the same coin: persuasion.

But the persuasion pill is a hard one to swallow. And there isn't enough sauce in the world to cover up the bad taste it leaves behind.

“Peoples' most delightful emotion is learning something without knowing they're being taught.”

– Robert McKee

That's what great stories do; they get remembered. So the next time you sit down with a client, write an email, produce an ad, write a blog or make a promotional video, ask yourself: is this a unique story that will resonate with my target market?

Or is it a crunchy word salad full of phrases and ideas we've all heard before?

If your answer is the latter, do yourself a favor; don't.

The low hanging fruit rots first.

Reach higher.



THE WAY FORWARD

Ads Were a Necessary Evil.

That was the relationship, as we understood it, between fiction and non.

For a while, we thought ads were an elaborate (but necessary) bait-and-switch. They kept the lights on in the background so truth-warriors and reporters could do their important work keeping the stakeholders of a democracy informed.

We grew used to that rhythm. Three pages of news, followed by one page of “for-a-limited-time-only!” But today, we’re learning more problems with it.

For example: can two diametrically opposed philosophies coexist for the same goal?

Reporters regularly uncover truths in direct conflict with advertisers' interests. Advertisers regularly convince reporters to take business-friendly angles.

It's kind of like spying on the neighbor, only to learn they're spying on you. Like, then what?

This brings us back to the fight-or-flight response. And let's not forget the third option we penciled in: dance. Dancing means we don't run away from the new thing we don't understand yet. Dancing means we welcome it and we turn the problem into the solution.

What's that mean? To put it another way, that means instead of hiding behind the curtain to create the Wizard of Oz, we think it'd be infinitely more interesting to tell the real story. What kind of madman in the Land of Oz would attempt such a thing?

If you let it be, the real truth is a lot richer, more important and more fascinating than the Disney-fied version.

The solution? Admit we're doing performance art. More often than not, our clients need to hear the opposition's best argument in order to begin trusting yours, so don't do yourself the disservice of making it hard to find.

Time to hand the microphone to the person who's actually talking.

Time to stop hiring middlemen to mix oil and water and instead, bottle yours straight from the source. Sure, people will still drink oily water if they're thirsty enough. But one taste of pure spring water corrects that behavior in a heartbeat.

Because at the end of the day, consumers wonder one thing: what's the catch?

Could be you.



THAT'S ALL FOLKS!

(IF YOU MADE IT THIS FAR... WE SALUTE YOU)



SHARKBAIT
BRANDING TANK

SHARKBAIT.AGENCY