

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Agencies should be more involved with researchers

Despite my desire to believe the good news in Stuart Elliott's May 18 *New York Times* article that researchers are being eagerly sought out and are addressing the role emotion plays in advertising, my recent attendance at the ARF conference in New York City this April did not leave me convinced. If conference attendance is any measure, the creative community also remains unconvinced, with researchers outnumbering agency representatives by a pitifully wide margin. That's a shame, since it's the agencies that have so much at stake in holding a researcher's feet to the fire and making them prove they not only understand numbers, but actually understand advertising. The difference in that point was painfully obvious to me sitting in the Ipsos-ASI ARF presentation "Generating Emotions is Just 1<sup>st</sup> Base."

An idea out there is that copy tests favor vanilla advertising. That idea is largely responsible for driving a wedge between those who make and those who evaluate advertising.

When a researcher like Ipsos-ASI advocates in an ARF presentation that advertisers avoid negative emotion and focus on more passive positive emotions, they continue to perpetuate the idea that only one kind of advertising works. We are all educated film viewers. Sometimes the most powerful thing you can do is use intended negative emotion to drive up drama and motivate behavior. Think of the best anti-drug campaigns out there. The best dramas often have the most evil villains. The funniest humor can have the sharpest edge. In other words, advertising can work in different ways depending on the job it's trying to do. This is something the creative community has always understood. It's high time for the research community to develop a more sophisticated understanding of how different emotions can be deployed by advertising in the service of building brands.

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