

3. Du Pont's Advertising Director Describes the Impact of World War I, 1918

The effect of the war on advertising is a large subject. We cannot consider it in detail, but only in fundamentals.

We cannot state it maturely because we are still at war. But we can be guided by history and by knowledge of human nature in estimating the probable effect of the war on the world at large, which is the field of advertising, and on the civilized peoples of the earth, who are the subjects of advertising.

Tremendous as is the present war, it is no larger in proportion to the size of the civilized world than other great wars have been. World dominion has been attempted heretofore and almost attained. Each succeeding century makes its attainment more nearly impossible.

This line of argument bears on the first effect of the war on advertising, namely, an atmosphere of hesitation and uncertainty which is fatal to the success of any project that demands clarity and fixity of purpose and constant, aggressive action.

No one can advisedly question the wisdom of hesitation and just cause for uncertainty on the part of the advertiser seeking chiefly temporary results. But the business man who realizes that the chief value of advertising is its institutional rather than its merchandising effect, does not halt his constant effort to build for his concern and its products that enduring structure of which each selling appeal may be likened to one of the myriads of bricks that compose a towering building.

This type of advertiser—he who is always building a commercial structure, rather than making temporary sales is one of the great steadying factors that sustain the business morale of a nation during periods of stress.

An important effect of war on advertising is to disclose who are the structural and who the tentative advertisers. This classification is of importance not only to those chiefly interested in advertising, but also to all devoted to the progress of America.

Preparedness Taught by the War

In the commercial war that will follow the cessation of military activity, the big guns that America will have for her peace armament are the institutional advertisers who have the foresight, resolution and courage to "carry on" whether the way be plain and easy or dark and difficult.

The war has surely taught the necessity for and value of preparedness for any great undertaking. We have always known, as we know now, that America had within itself all the spiritual, physical, and financial powers to protect itself and to help other nations needing protection.

But we were like the manufacturer who has all the materials, machinery, money, and workers to produce an important necessity, but no organization to market it. Our lack of preparedness or national organization has cost us and our allies a lot of trouble, losses, and expense.

George Frank Lord, "War Will Make Us Plan Advertising Further Ahead: The Advertiser Will Dig Deeper and Build Bigger," *Printer's Ink* 102, no. 10 (March 7, 1918): 25-26.

Germany's half-century of preparedness has enabled her to terrorize the world and stay in the fight against odds that in theory should have overwhelmed her two years ago.

The thoughtful advertiser must see the moral of preparedness as applied to advertising. He will dig deeper and build bigger. He will forsake tentative policies for long plans, catch-penny schemes for sound constructive effort. He will wisely plan ten years ahead and stick to that plan and all the experience thus far recorded in advertising tells us he will succeed.

The business man who has never advertised must have noted the tremendous strength of educational publicity as employed by all the nations concerned in the war. Propaganda is a mixture of promotion and advertising. It is operated on the theory that the way to achieve any great public undertaking is to influence public opinion in favor of it.

Germany, through domestic propaganda, has held her people together through three years of suffering, sorrow, and near-starvation. By the same means she has put Russia out of action, seriously checked Italy and delayed for months important American activities. France, England, and America have, through propaganda, secured patriotic support, induced their peoples to undertake tremendous financial burdens and make heroic sacrifices.

These campaigns are based on the same principles on which commercial advertising campaigns depend for success. Undoubtedly the war is creating, and to a greater extent will create, new advertisers and they will be of the enduring, constructive type.

Finally, the effect of war on advertising in America has been to nationalize it, in the sense that it is no longer conducted solely along the narrow line of individual advantage to the advertiser.

Every big business man, and every man with the capacity for bigness, realizes that his business and his efforts are American in origin and American in effect. The patriotic note runs through all important advertising messages. We advertise to-day along lines that will advantage our concerns because they strengthen and promote the development of our country, which must prosper as a whole, if we hope to prosper as individual advertisers.

At least one of the products we are advertising is being advertised because of the effect of the war, and that is Ivory Pyralin [a plastic used to make hair ornaments, combs, and brushes]. The most serious competition we have for this class of goods is with imported goods sold at low prices. We started to advertise this product when we couldn't fill orders and when it looked as though we couldn't catch up with orders. There was every apparent reason for us to stop advertising.

We started on the theory that it is necessary for us to entrench our brand before the war should end and we were subjected to cheap competition. There must be lots of other manufacturers in the same boat who either hesitate or have stopped advertising. If they started now they would be in a far stronger position to meet after-war competition.

We have found it necessary greatly to expand manufacture, and have a large cash surplus. We're trying to build up a shock absorber for an eventual drop in war sales. The further we go in building up a strong sales organization for peace goods, the readier we will be to absorb the shock of the transformation to a peace basis.