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### Soaring in a Raging Wind of Change:

#### The Impact of Technology on the Advertising Industry

Wow, you can pay your bills, order prescription medicine, book airline tickets, earn a college degree, find a date, and put in an eight-hour workday, all without leaving your home. Isn't Internet technology great? (Just so no one hacks into your personal data, steals your identity or credit card information, pirates or plagiarizes your ideas and creations, exploits your children, or lures your husband into an addiction to pornography.)

Convenience comes at such a great cost. Yet despite the risk, "everyone is online", according to Barbara Brynko. She published an article in Information Today (Dec. 2007): "Life in the Digital Age" and reported that "93% of teens" and "94% of their parents" are online. In 2006 there were "100 million Web sites in the world —more than twice as many as existed in May 2004" (Abate). Some people like, fortysomething Carla Toebe, are actually addicted to the Internet. She spends up to "15 hours per day online" visiting dating Web sites. She isn't an isolated case. Support groups such as Internet Addicts Anonymous now exist (Payne). In addition to addiction, sitting sedentary at a computer for several hours a day is adding to America's growing obesity epidemic.

I know I am one of them. I spend up to 16 hours a day at the computer, and I've become fifty pounds overweight in the last five years, but it's out of necessity to stay employed. The convenience the Internet has brought to consumers has come at a great cost to those who are employed by the advertising industry. As a graphic designer, I feel like I've been gripping tight to the tail end of a kite soaring in a raging wind of change the last 20 years.

The introduction of desktop publishing was the beginning of rapid changes that have occurred in the advertising industry since the mid-1980s, from the traditional methods of keylining and typesetting catalogs to electronic desktop publishing to Web site design and e-mail campaigns. For me this ride has been challenging, exhilarating and exhausting, but at least I'm still working in the industry. This has not been the case for everyone. Every change produces winners and losers and when the changes are rapid, winners don't stay on top for long, and there seems to be a lot more losers.

Since I was a child, I've been intrigued with the advertising world—creative, inspiring, motivating, and solution-oriented. Advertising as an industry dates back millenniums beyond my time with its early beginnings in the form of cave paintings in 4,000 BCE, and then advertising took off in the 1500-1600s after Gutenberg's invention of the printing press (Wikipedia).

In 1985 I pursued this interest in advertising as a career and began as an advertising sales intern with Skyway News, a weekly newspaper that was supported exclusively through paid advertising. Realizing sales wasn't my strength; I accepted an entry-level job with a typesetting firm. Here I learned the traditional roles of typesetting (setting type using DOS coding to produce galleys of type), keylining (splicing waxed type galleys and line art and aligning them onto boards and acetate overlays), and operating a stat camera (reproducing line art by exposing

and developing film in a dark room). According to Wikipedia, a recent Web 2.0 open content, community-built encyclopedia, “practically all typesetting [keyboarding, editing and production of paper or film output] for publishers and advertisers were performed by specialist typesetting companies [before the 1980s]...and formed a large component of the graphic arts industry”.

Then in 1987, I was hired as a keyliner at Fingerhut, a successful direct-marketing catalog company. During this time desktop publishing entered the scene. It was the birth of the computer-age for the advertising industry. Little did I know that it would transform the roles and processes of the advertising industry and leave many displaced. Lucky to have been selected, I eagerly accepted the opportunity to experiment with Macintosh desktop publishing for the creative advertising process.

Over the next three years, I witnessed the rapid growth of desktop publishing. This came at the expense of typesetters, keyliners, marker-rendering artists and stat camera operators. Those who didn't embrace change and learn computer skills lost the living-wage jobs they thought they would retire from.

Computers required new skills and the ability to become a generalist: you needed to know how to format text like a typesetter, align a layout like a keyliner, have the eye for visual eye flow of a graphic artist, produce scanned images with the quality of a stat camera, and apply realistic color correction to images like a retouch artist. The introduction of desktop publishing morphed several jobs into one and demanded more expertise for the same pay.

Through the 1990s I worked in direct marketing creative departments as a graphic artist, advertising designer, and art director. I designed brand identity, advertising campaigns, direct marketing materials and catalogs using desktop publishing. I loved working on a computer and

with direct marketing strategies: knowing demographics; appealing to target audiences with product features and benefits; and the measured success of the medium.

At the same time that technology was revolutionizing the advertising industry, I noticed a trend develop: privately-held companies were merging with larger publicly-held corporations. For many of the companies I worked for, such as Fingerhut, NordicTrack, North American Outdoor Group, and Medical Arts Press, they promised a 20% growth goal to shareholders. The unattainable goals seemed like a staging opportunity to “clean house” the next year when growth did not meet expectations. There were massive layoffs, jobs were outsourced, longer work days for remaining employees and more work load expected in less time, reductions in benefits, higher medical premiums, and zero to little pay raises that didn’t keep up with inflation.

The Twin Cities was a major hub for graphic art jobs, but not anymore. Many Twin City companies that employed hundreds of graphic specialists have gone out of business or were absorbed through corporate merging and downsizing: Fingerhut, Medical Arts Press, NordicTrack, Dymark, and Dayton’s to name a few.

By 2000 the graphic arts industry had shrunk and roles were being integrated (Wikipedia). Among jobs that became obsolete were keyliners, typesetters, stat camera operators, prepress and separation jobs, scanner operators, color-correction specialists, film developers, proofers, and strippers; all of which were living-wage jobs. Computers morphed several roles into one and those who weren’t soaring with the raging wind of change were quickly blowing away like tumbleweed through a deserted town.

I was one of the fortunate ones who continued to pursue new opportunities and hang on through the rapid changes. Today I am more of a generalist than ever. The many hats I wear

include graphic designer, copy writer, editor, and web designer for three non-profit corporations. You would think that I'd have an impressive title and be making more money. On the contrary, my title is Communications Coordinator; I make half the wage I made four years ago with no benefits, work more hours, and have gained fifty pounds by sitting all day in front of a computer. Clearly the winners are corporations that stay ahead of the trends and the losers are the unemployed, displaced, overworked and underpaid.

Adding to the decline of the graphic arts industry is that direct marketers are mailing less. Why? Mainly because of the next phase of technology: the impact the World Wide Web has had on the advertising industry during the last ten years. Companies are reducing or replacing direct mail and catalog mailings with Web sites and e-mail campaigns.

Gregory Barton is the executive VP of licensing and legal affairs at Ziff-Davis. In an article in Folio last October, he said, "Print was more robust a decade ago, but today's marketers are seeking newer, faster, and cheaper ways to reach the audience. The audience is increasingly responding to digital formats, and marketing is following that lead." Beth Brinton, group operations manager at Penton Media, agrees that "digital is the faster-paced marketing vehicle, where you can change the message or the entire campaign on the fly." (The Power Of Print In An E-Marketing World 3).

According to the Interactive Advertising Bureau "online ad revenue in the U.S was up 35% over 2005." The rapid growth of Internet technology has created "an employment gap". Numerous surveys indicate that it is hard to find trained specialists to produce advertising materials using the latest technology (Booker 1). Personally, I think technology is changing so fast that the work force cannot keep up. Many displaced workers are returning to school, but it

takes time to earn a degree. I wonder if the education they get will become obsolete by the time they graduate.

Tom Crann, MPR host of All Things Considered said, “Technology is not going to stop changing. It’s changing and it’s changing fast!” (Class Panelist). He opened my eyes to see that print advertising isn’t the only industry hit hard by rapidly changing technology.

Many believe that “ad expenditure is linked to the overall health of the U.S. economy” (Creamer 1). Additional effects that technology has had on the advertising industry are the changes to the media purchased to deliver advertising. People, especially under the age of 24 years old, are spending their time online, and it is “leaving other media standing. It’s now roughly three times that of radio advertising and is already in excess of one-third of television ad spend, up eight-fold on 2001... If TV, newspapers, radio and other old media want to retain their relevance over that period, it’s clear now that work must be done.” (“News Analysis: Online Shows Biggest Growth Of All Media” 2).

Robert Coen is the senior VP-director of forecasting at Universal McCann. At a presentation at the agency’s Advertising and Media Outlook Mid-Year Update, he said, “The outlook for advertising this year is not very good. Large companies have been cutting expenses wherever they can as they focus on productivity and profit growth. Online advertising and search marketing have “violently” impacted established media” (Maddox 2). “Also according to the forecast, Internet ad spending will grow six times faster than traditional media between 2006 and 2009, increasing its share of the ad market from 6.1% to 9.4% during this time period. The biggest growth will come from online ad spending, while newspapers will be the slowest-

growing segment, according to the report” (Maddox 2). “We will continue to see the migration of advertising dollars from traditional offline media into the Internet and other new digital media opportunities” (Maddox 1).

Internet technology is threatening the existence of the radio and newspaper industry. According to Jim Boyle, analyst at CL King & Associates “If 2008 doesn’t pull some surprises [for radio], an eighth straight slow-to-no-growth year looms” (Bachman 2). As for the newspaper, Wachovia Equity Research reported, “Newspapers are losing the most ad dollars to the Internet compared to other media” (Saba 1). Business Week reported that “early on, the Mercury News saw the Web threat coming. It's still struggling to survive. Many dailies are losing circulation at an alarming rate” (“A Cautionary Tale for Old Media” 2).

Last September, Advertising Age reported that “as the TNS numbers demonstrate, the picture is bleak-how bleak generally depends on the maturity of the medium you're talking about. Network and spot TV and national newspapers were hit hard-especially compared with the internet's 17.7% growth.” Internet advertising is projected to grow “even in a recession” (Creamer 2).

In response to the Internet’s growth and the newspaper’s desperation to survive, some newspapers are thinking out-of-the-box, like newly formed QuadrantOne, an online advertising network that will compete against search-engine technologies like Google, Yahoo, Microsoft and America Online (AOL). This advertising consortium is made up of Gannett, Hearst, New York Times and the Tribune and is “dedicated to attracting marketers that seek big audiences through local channels” (Holahan 2).

Internet technology brought e-mail into the convenience of our businesses and homes where we can send a message anywhere in the world instantly (provided that the recipient has

Internet access). Twenty years ago, junk mail and false advertising gave direct marketers a bad reputation. Now the evils behind them have crept into Internet technology in the form of spam. According to Brightmail Inc., a maker of spam-blocking software, “fully half of all e-mails” are unwanted solicitations that originate “from shady sources using false identities, flogging everything from Viagra and other drugs to pornography and dubious investments. Of 11 million spam messages collected by the Federal Trade Commission, 44% came from phony addresses” (Woellert 1).

From a consumer’s point of view, spam and identity theft have left many leery. Marketers that use Internet technology need to overcome many trust factors. Advertising Age recently reported that marketers will wrestle “between consumer privacy and information access”. They will need “to explain and justify the lifestyle benefits of highly individualized, personalized commercial communications” (Liodice 1).

Joe Barrett, AOL’s senior vice-president for network operation indicated that because consumer apprehension exists, the industry cannot tolerate spam long term otherwise “[spam is] going to destroy e-mail” (Woellert 2).

If e-mail dies, then what? An entire society is being blown around by this raging wind of technological change. It’s like a tornado dotting the landscape, taking out homes, business and leaving others standing—at least for now—until the next technological storm hits. It’s leaving jobs obsolete, workers displaced, and companies bankrupt or forced to merge and downsize to keep profitable. It’s changing how we do business and how colleges prepare students for the career world that may become obsolete by the time they graduate with a \$100,000-plus student loan debt.



Over the last 20 years the graphic arts industry was made up of many specialized, living-wage jobs that today have been morphed into a handful of average paying jobs. What has happened to the casualties along the way; those who didn't embrace change or tried and couldn't keep up? Has history repeated itself? Have they become the modern-day costers and toshers of the Victorian era just struggling to stay alive when land owners changed to a corporate model?

We need to do our best to stay aware of changes and apply our skill-sets to emerging technologies or learn new skills if we want to stay employed. As long as I can keep my grip on this kite tail soaring in a raging wind, I will consider myself a winner. The day I let go, I too will become one of the casualties of the raging wind of technological change and fight my way through the sewers of life.

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