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At the time this article was published in May 1996, Laurie Brandalise and Marc Deschenes were partners in Deschenes/Brandalise, Headhunters. Both had worked for major agencies on the West and East Coasts.

You've spent a staggering percentage of your unreclaimable youth—and god knows how much money—preparing to enter the world of advertising. Let's assume:

1) You have talent; and 2) you're going to get a job. How good the job is and how fast you get it will depend both on the work you've done and how you present it. Here are some tips:

1. Don't overdo the résumé.

You'll have plenty of time to show off your writing and art direction skills later. Keep your résumé brief. And please indicate whether you're an art director, writer or something else at the outset. There is nothing more frustrating for a creative director than having to wade through a junior's life story to find this information buried in the last sentence.

2. Don't put more than one ad on a page.

You want to give a good ad all the help you can, which means you don't want the viewer to be distracted—even by other ads from the same campaign. A good ad deserves its own place in your book. Besides, most junior books don't have much work in them, and one ad per page can make your book seem "heavier."

3. Don't build a book of one-shots. Try to stick to campaigns, though the occasional one-shot ad is fine if it's a great ad. Campaigns are what advertising is all about; make sure your potential employers see that you can create them. Having said that:

4. Don't add a weak, third ad to make a campaign.

If it's not as good as the others, it simply should not be in your book. And contrary to what you might have learned, two ads is a campaign. Really.

5. Don't over-edit or under-edit.

What's the magic number of ads, you ask? There isn't one. But as a general rule, ten ads won't get you a job, and we've yet to see a junior book with 30 or more really good ads. The average junior book will succeed with 15–25 great ads.

6. Don't write an explanation for every ad.

In fact, don't write an explanation for any ad. If an ad needs to be explained, it probably isn't working (there are rare exceptions).

7. Don't ask too many people for advice when editing your book. You'll only get confused. Pick three or four people—tops. Guard against asking your friends in school (what do they know?) or a star creative known for only one style of advertising.

8. Don't go Mac crazy.

Knowing how to produce some cool effect on your computer doesn't mean you should use it. In fact, you probably shouldn't. A technique is not a good concept. Neither is a color—except vermilion (now, there's a great idea).

9. Don't show radio scripts.

Most creative directors are too busy to wade through scripts. One prominent creative director said he has never read a radio script in a book. If the applicant is sitting in front of him, he just pretends to read it.

10. Don't show TV boards.

You probably won't listen to us on this one, so if you have to show boards, they'd better be really great. And simple. Show key frames instead of the traditional story board.

11. Don't show condom ads.

12. Don't use four-letter words.

It will only serve as a reminder that you're a junior and that, if hired, you might produce a lot of funny ads that won't stand a chance in hell of being approved.

13. Don't limit your book to super-trendy ads. If you do, you'll be limiting yourself to working for three or four agencies in the country. And if they don't hire you, then what?

14. Don't buy a really expensive portfolio case.

It will be beaten up in transit. Spend your money on several nicely reproduced mini-books. And don't do elaborate presentations like boxes within boxes or a Japanese motif tied with rice straw.

15. Don't get discouraged if someone doesn't like your work. Even the best creatives make mistakes. But if the criticism feels right, fix the ad. Remember that when you do get a job in an agency, your work will be trashed all the time. Consider it training. Good luck. ■ CMYK