

# Seven deadly sins. Seven dandy marketing tools.

## Part two: The final four—sloth, wrath, envy, and pride.



Long before they were codified in the sixth century the seven deadly sins were motivating human behavior – just as they have ever since. And because they are powerful motivators they're very effective tools of marketing communications.

Last week's article looked at the first three, lust, gluttony and greed. This week, the final four:

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**Sloth:** Two sloth commercials aren't really about deadly sins. An Italian Alfa Romeo spot and a nearly identical British Honda commercial feature a lethargic South American three-toed tree-hanging mammal who is transformed into a hyperkinetic dynamo by the car in the commercial.

But the sinful kind of sloth is also well represented. There's a wonderful Ikea spot in which a man does a desultory job of straightening up his apartment before his girlfriend arrives. When she gets there she embraces him passionately and pulls him down onto his sofa. From that point on she is totally unresponsive. When the puzzled boyfriend pulls her up he discovers that she has been impaled by a knife he neglected to pick up.

Domino's Pizza's new "You got thirty minutes" campaign has a spot in which the guy answering the door asks the Domino's delivery person if she can guess what he did with his thirty minutes. She guesses nap, and a reverse angle shot tells the audience why. The guy has the most monumental bed hair ever.

Our favorite sloth spot is just about any of in the Corona beer "Beach" commercials. The protagonist doesn't move, or makes one small movement. The product doesn't move. The camera doesn't move. The spots are the epitome of lethargy – or sloth. And they convey the laid-back attitude of the beer perfectly.

**Wrath:** Wrath is used very effectively in Alltel's "Wizard" commercials. A quartet of dorks representing other cell phone companies become wrathful because Alltel has introduced a service superior to theirs. They make the reason for their anger clear – which makes Alltel's product-benefit point – then summon a wizard to smite the guy who personifies Alltel. The wizard sees the benefit (stating it yet again) pounds his staff onto the ground and often inflicts some hurt on one or all of the competing-carrier-personifying dorks. The wrath works because it's not on the part of the advertiser, but rather expressed by competitors. And because the cause for the wrath is a consumer benefit that gets heavy emphasis.

Jack Links Beef Jerky uses wrath in a campaign in which a couple of guys who are, appropriately

enough, jerks, antagonize a Sasquatch who wreaks some heavy-duty vengeance upon the perpetrators. Seems a weird way to sell a snack until you realize that the target audience for beef jerky is adolescent boys and twenties-something men with severely arrested development. These are people whose last words are frequently "Hey, you guys, watch this!"

But wizard and Sasquatch wrath is minor league compared to what we'll be exposed to as the 2008 election campaigns heat up. Survey after survey shows that voters hate negative advertising. And election after election proves that it works.

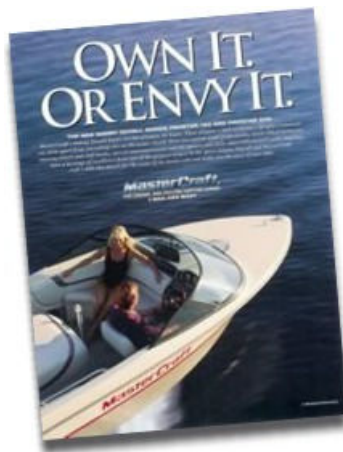
**Envy:** Smilin' Bob and the Enzyte "natural male enhancement" commercials might seem to be about lust, but Smilin' Bob is seldom shown one-on-one with a potential lust partner. Many scenes in the spots show him with a group of men who are envious of his performance in an activity which is an obvious metaphor for sex. (Bob's long, straight golf drive is a special favorite of ours.)

In the '80s a Pantene spot featuring Kelly LeBrock surprised viewers with its opening line, "Don't hate me because I'm beautiful." The mild shock viewers felt when the very beautiful Ms. LeBrock confronted the reality of envy made the spot memorable, and put the phrase into popular use, where it remains to the present. The spot used beautifully-written copy and a wonderful delivery by Ms. LeBrock to segue from the initial surprise to an appeal that included women in the audience who could use the product and become beautiful (and presumably envied in their turn) themselves.

The BrainPosse principals made shameless use of envy in an ad for MasterCraft, the world's leading ski boat for as long as we did the brand's marketing communications. At the time the ski boat market was divided between up-market brands and bargain brands at about half the high-

end boats' price. A number of boats in both price categories were capable of tournament-caliber performance. Ski boat prospects skew younger – they haven't reached their peak earning years, and many are still paying off student loans. So how to convince them to spend tens of thousands of dollars more for a MasterCraft? By persuading them that if they bought any other boat they were settling for second best. The headline of the first ad in the series was "No wake. No Spray. No compromises." Which set up the second ad in which we went right for the sixth deadly sin: "Own it. Or envy it."

**Pride:** In 1973 McCann-Erickson copywriter Ilon Sprecht wrote *"I use the most expensive hair color in the world. Preference, by L'Oréal. It's not that I care about money. It's that I care about my hair. It's not just the color. I expect great color. What's worth more to me is the way my hair feels. Smooth and silky but with body. It feels good against my neck. Actually, I don't mind spending more for L'Oréal. Because I'm worth it."* and that last line, the self-affirmation, self-esteem – pride – of "Because I'm worth it." catapulted a virtually unknown import past Clairol's Nice 'n Easy to leadership in the hair coloring market. The campaign has changed only slightly – it's now "Because you're worth it," and L'Oreal is still the country's leading hair coloring brand.



Another great McCann-Erickson campaign was based on pride. McCann's strategy guru, Van vanBortle did a psychographic analysis of heavy beer drinkers and discovered a correlation between the reparative personality type and consumption of six or more brews daily. The men (and they were virtually all men) in the reparative personality group felt that their work kept the economy moving, supported their families and was underappreciated. Their daily half-dozen or more beers were their self-bestowed recognition and reward for their otherwise unrecognized contributions.

Van's portrait of the heavy beer drinker was the raw material from which Bill Backer and Billy Davis crafted the great Miller Time campaign in 1972. Here's a reminder of the kind of copy used to open the spots: "Today you poured enough steel to build a bridge across the Mississippi. But the five o'clock whistle just blew, and now it's Miller Time." Which segued into the music: "If you've got the time, we've got the beer...Miller Beer...taste too good to hurry through. When it's time to relax, one beer stands clear...Miller Beer...If you've got the time, we've got the beer." The steel mill foreman and construction site supervisors at whom the campaign was targeted felt recognized, respected...and proud. And Miller's share took off like a rocket.

The deadly seven may be hazardous to your soul, but they can definitely be beneficial to your marketing communications program. In fact, it would be a sin to overlook them.

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