

Short Takes

Reading between the lines of business, politics and culture

Edited by Robert Klara

SPINNING IT

Resume BS... in Just a Few Clicks!



Call it: Bullshitjob.com helps out with that corporatespeak everyone uses.

like "embraced user-centric vortals" or "syndicated mission-critical mindshare." Wow.

Not sure what to call your last marketing job? Head over to the Bullshit Job Title Generator (www.bullshitjob.com/titles.html) and even your last so-so creative title becomes: Dynamic Paradigm Strategist! A few clicks of the job-title generator for the fictitious Gigan-ticMegaCorp (www.cubefigures.com/job.html) will suddenly make you a "Level B Marketing Specialist." Aw, go ahead, make it Level A. Nobody knows what that is, either.

EVEN THE BEST MARKETER can't put a good spin on being jobless, and right now plenty of them are. According to ClickZ's "Layoff Tracker," 3,874 marketing jobs have been lost this year in the digital sector alone. It's safe to say a lot of branding folk are working on their resumes.

Just in case you're one of them and you need help weaving some of that nifty corporatespeak into your job description, Internet-based business BS generators are here to help. With the Web Economy Bullshit Generator (www.dack.com/web/bullshit.html), marketers are just a click away from killer job descriptions

EBAY: GIVE GIFTS, AVOID RIFTS

With thrifty Americans predicted to go online en masse in search of bargain-priced gifts this holiday season, execs at eBay may be among the relatively few wearing smiles in the retail sector. But for the uninitiated shopper, eBay—where 112.3 million items are for sale at any given time, ranging from tube socks to vintage Rolls Royces—can be a daunting place. What to buy? Just turn to "The Prized and the Despised," a new survey predicting what gift items will be most—and least—in demand for 2008.

While the list (generated via Opinion Research Corp., which surveyed 1,000 adult shoppers during mid-October) is meant to give ideas to shoppers, it's an illuminating document for brand managers, too. Here's one reason why: The single most wanted holiday item isn't an item at all—it's a gift card. Clothing and shoes came in at No. 2, while the third slot went to personal electronics (including laptops and various digital gadgets).

As to the Nintendo Wii—which led to lines around the block last year—it's now in the No. 7 slot (with gaming systems), and still edging out the PlayStation by a few points. Surprisingly, *Guitar Hero* can be found in the tier just below (videogames and accessories) at the No. 8 slot.

Figuring out the in-demand stuff is easy. What about the goods that people don't want to find under the tree? Woe to the makers of socks, candles and picture frames; your items



Presents of mind: Wanna make 'em happy this year? Wrap up the plastic, not the silk.

occupied the least-wanted spots (Nos. 5, 3 and 6, respectively.) As for the most unwanted holiday present, well, "it's time to 'just say no' to the necktie," advised eBay pop-culture expert Karen Bard. (She added that eBay boasts a variety of gift cards for sale.)

Chances are the office switched to the casual dress code awhile back anyway, right?

JUST SUE ME

Test on a spare piece of fabric to assure satisfactory results.

The Vanishing Fabric Marker should not be used as a writing instrument for signing checks or any legal documents, as signatures will fade or disappear completely.

OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST FROM COLLINS:

You idiot: The Collins-brand Vanishing Fabric Marker features this helpful warning on the back.

Warning: Dumb Users

FOR ALL THAT BRANDS DO to try to make their packaging look (and read) as cool as possible, leave it to the corporate attorneys to ruin it all with a singular, obligatory element of package design that makes every marketer want to leap from a high floor: the warning label. Sure, some of them are necessary. But what about that classic one on fire crackers that warns: "Do not light in mouth?"

"I think [brand developers] firmly bite down on their tongues when they write these things," said Bob Dorigo Jones, president of the tort-reform group Michigan Lawsuit Abuse Watch. "They know that consumers are going to say, 'C'mon, do you *have* to tell me that?'"

Twelve years ago, Dorigo Jones decided to start collecting the most absurd warning labels, which resulted in the Wacky Warning Label Contest. The contest is in its 12th year, with Dorigo Jones preparing to announce new winners in January. (He's not talking about any of them yet.)

A few of 2008's top-placers: A label advising operators of a tractor to "Avoid Death" by staying in the operator's seat; an iron-on T-shirt transfer that admonishes users not to wear the shirt while doing the actual ironing; a letter-opener reminding users that "blades are sharp;" and, a warning label on a scooter that reads: "This product moves when used."

"We not making fun of the manufacturers," Dorigo Jones said when asked if he's taking aim at the good folks in the branding world. "We're highlighting the legal climate that's created the *need* for these things."

Like, say, an invisible laundry marker with an advisement not to use it to sign checks? Bad news for the marketers who wince with embarrassment over dumb warning labels. They're not going away anytime soon. "I thought we'd eventually run out of submissions," Dorigo Jones said. But, "they're actually increasing."

Please send story ideas and info to: Short Takes, c/o Brandweek, 5055 Wilshire Blvd., 6th floor, Los Angeles, CA 90036, or bebenkamp@brandweek.com