

tl;dr. David Ogilvy wants advertisers to do their homework, come up with big ideas and “work like a sonofabitch.”



All quotes from David Ogilvy unless otherwise noted.

Introduction

In 1962, Time magazine called David Ogilvy “the most sought-after wizard in today’s advertising industry.” We’re still attentive to his work because it still works. A peer of Ogilvy’s, Bill Bernbach wrote, “Human nature hasn’t changed for a billion years. It won’t even vary in the next billion years.” Bernbach went on to explain, “a communicator must be concerned with the unchanging man - what compulsions drive him, what instincts dominate his every action, even though his language too often camouflages what really motivates him.”

Ogilvy matters because he figured out what matters. He focused his ads on sales, not fluff. He relied on field work, not guesswork. He built a community of collaborators, not rivals. How?

Ogilvy wrote that five things helped him achieve material success:

1. "I'm the most objective man who ever lived, including objective about myself...I'd see the creative thing, through a researcher's eye."
2. "I'm a very, very hard worker."
3. "I'm a good salesman."
4. "I had a reasonably original mind...(and)...I thought as clients think."
5. "I had a gimmick - my English accent, which helped to differentiate me from the ordinary."

It was these five things that led to the creation of one of the greatest advertising agencies in the world. But, material success isn't everything. Ogilvy warned, "Stop thinking about success entirely in terms of material achievements and careers and all that stuff and think of success in terms of happiness."

Happiness metrics are immune to fumbled accounts or sales dips. Though focused on happiness it doesn't mean Ogilvy was always happy, that kind of reflection only comes when you've had a life to reflect on. For most of his career, "I was terrified for many years that it would blow away."

But it didn't blow away. Ogilvy & Mather is a global brand builder. The company's success is due to following David's advice; "don't bunt, try to hit the ball out of the park,

compete with the immortals... Try to get ideas, great ideas no one has had before." And Ogilvy himself was happy because he enjoyed the process more than the product.

From David Ogilvy's writings, talks, letters, and speeches we'll focus on three suggestions for any organization.

- **Research your customer.** Ogilvy frequently said, "the customer isn't an idiot, she's your wife." People act for reasons and Ogilvy spent a lot of time figuring them out.
- **Create advertisements around big ideas.** Good ads created curiosity and intrigue and help the customer. Big ideas also stand out.
- **Groom your culture.** Ogilvy would give his managers Russian nesting dolls and explain to them that if they only hired people smaller than themselves, they'd be a company of dwarfs. But if each hired someone bigger, they'd be a company of giants.

Before devouring these three ideas, we should set the table. First, a pair of formative jobs. Then, how to balance an ego. Last, what is a good education?

Background

David Ogilvy was born in 1911. The first employment scar - or medal - pinned to his breast was when he worked in a French kitchen. It was hard work. Ogilvy worked six days a week, ten hours a day. He recalled that on his only day off he would do nothing, letting his mind and body recover.

But, he learned things in the kitchen. The master chef was a monster of a man. Ogilvy recalls that he fired people on the spot. *Sortez!* From him, Ogilvy learned the importance of competency. "To begin with, he was the best cook in the whole brigade, and we knew it." Years later, after starting Ogilvy & Mather he wrote, "I could apply the same kind of leadership to the management of my advertising agency."

Before he began the agency - at thirty-eight years-old - Ogilvy needed another formative experience. For this one he left the kitchen for an office.

Ogilvy immigrated to the United States and began work for George Gallup at Princeton University. Gallup, the namesake of the Gallup poll, conducted research on movies and consumer patterns. Ogilvy learned how to predict film attendance before a movie's release. "In particular," George Gallup, "taught me the concept of analyzing the factors which make success in advertising and which factors make for failure."

With the intensity of a chef and the wisdom of a researcher, Ogilvy headed to New York City. Upon arriving, "the people on Madison Avenue thought I was nuts."

Ego Equilibrium

To start anything requires some amount of ego. *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.* Ego is like the early-stage, fuel-only, shuttle thrusters. An entrepreneur needs enough ego to escape the pull of gravity. But too much of this initial force and companies can blow up. Ogilvy's ego equilibrium meant doing the hard work, but also the humility to believe the data instead of himself.

Ogilvy's agency was located on Madison Avenue, but it was built on facts. But facts don't mean anything if you think they're wrong. Ogilvy looked for people with "intellectual honesty." If someone wanted a job in his research department he advised:

"You probably need a degree in statistics or psychology...the ability to write readable reports...(and) above all you must be intellectually honest. A researcher who injects bias into his reports does awful damage."

Early in his career, Ogilvy spent forty percent of his time doing research. That's how important it was. But people had to believe in the work they did. He wrote:

"I admire people with first-class brains because you cannot run a great advertising agency without brainy people. But brains are not enough unless they are combined with intellectual honesty."

An error of advertising, said Ogilvy, was to **use research like a drunkard uses a lamppost, for support rather than illumination**. The best advertisers weren't connected to any particular point of view. They needed an independence that allowed empathy.

The best creative people, he wrote, "are especially observant, and they value accurate observation (telling themselves the truth) more than other people do."

Besides the ego balance of 'what I see' with 'what I believe', Ogilvy wanted his staff to balance their ego with each other. He wanted managers to hire people that could surpass them or complement them. "If you are strong in production and weak in strategy," he wrote, "have a strategist as your right arm."

This can be difficult to swallow. "Who wants to admit, even to himself, that he has no taste, or is bored by television production, or inadequate on strategy? Ah, that is the question."

In one letter to his creative heads, Ogilvy asked them for names of employees who could do their jobs. "Eleven of you told me that nobody could qualify to become a Creative Director. You have problems. Something is wrong with your hiring methods."

Instead, “We admire people who hire subordinates who are good enough to succeed them. We pity people who are so insecure that they feel compelled to hire inferior specimens as their subordinates.”

In his speeches, interviews, and articles, Ogilvy verges on arrogant. He addressed that this way:

“If you detect a slight stench of conceit in this book, I would have you know that my conceit is selective. I am a miserable duffer in everything except advertising. I cannot read a balance sheet, work a computer, ski, sail, play golf, or paint. But when it comes to advertising, Advertising Age says that I am ‘the creative King of Advertising.’ When Fortune published an article about me and titled it: ‘Is David Ogilvy a Genius?’ I asked my lawyer to sue the editor for the question mark.”

He’s confident because he believes he must be. “Great leaders almost always exude self-confidence. They are never petty. They are never buck-passers.”

In building his agency, Ogilvy established ego equilibrium. Before our three lessons; research your customers, have big ideas, and develop a culture we need to address an umbrella that covers all three; education.

Education, but not schooling

Ogilvy was expelled from Oxford. His story on why varied. Once he mentions an injury and surgery. Another time he blames not studying. For whatever reason, structured school

wasn't Ogilvy's cup of tea; black, green, Earl Grey or otherwise. Here are his comments about schooling once he retired:

“I am deeply sorry for the present generation of Fettesians (the school he is addressing). You have to endure the horror of A levels and O levels. The masters have to cram you all of facts, so that you can pass those odious examinations. This is like cramming corn down the throat of a goose to enlarge his liver. It may produce excellent pâté de foie gras, but it does the goose no permanent good.”

When he started Ogilvy & Mather he looked for people with “well-furnished minds. I don't care if they got it in college or selling newspapers.” Self-education was a passion for Ogilvy. “For 35 years I have continued on the course charted by Gallup, collecting factors the way other men collect pictures and postage stamps.”

It's also something worth more than money. “At the start of your career in advertising, what you learn is more important than what you earn.”

With that inspiration, let's move onto the three parts of advice; research, big ideas, and culture.

Do your research

Ogilvy liked to say that his rules weren't really his rules at all but conclusions of the research. If he did something it wasn't because he liked it. If he did something he did it because it worked. Early on this took much of his time.

“When I started Ogilvy and Mather, I wore two hats. On Thursdays and Fridays, I was the Research Director. On Mondays, Tuesday, and Wednesdays I was the

Creative Director. I was a hermaphrodite. Jekyll and Hyde. The age-old conflict between the Creative function and the Research function was fought out in my throbbing head.”

Ogilvy did this much research because he wanted to be the best-informed person. It was this novel knowledge that pinned Ogilvy & Mather on the map.

One example was Guinness beer. Ogilvy created a “Guinness Guide to Oysters” poster. It was an attractive, informative poster with an offer for a “free reprint suitable for framing.” How did he come up with it? "I read a book on shellfish by a Yale biologist and came up with this advertisement, the Guinness Guide to Oysters."

Another example was a Rolls Royce add that claimed, “At 60 miles an hour the loudest noise in this new Rolls-Royce comes from the electric clock.” That line wasn’t a line at all. Ogilvy unearthed it from a twenty-year-old English automobile magazine during a three week deep dive on the company.

This kind of research was worth it because “the more you know about the product the more likely you are to come up with a big idea for selling it."

During his agency's infancy, Ogilvy did much of this work. Paying for research was too expensive. Sometimes that wasn't a hindrance. “Informal conversations with half a dozen housewives can sometimes help a copywriter more than formal surveys in which he does not participate.”

And he took much of the work at home. “When I was the chief executive of my agency, I always took home two briefcases, and spent four hours reading their contents.”

When asked for advice for young people he wrote:

“Set yourself to becoming the best-informed person in the agency on the account to which you are assigned. If, for example, it is a gasoline account, read books on oil geology and the production of petroleum products. Read the trade journals in the field. Spend Saturday mornings in service stations, talking to motorists. Visit your client’s refineries and research laboratories. At the end of your first year you will know more about the oil business than your boss, and be ready to succeed him.”

Naturally, Ogilvy extended this to advertising too. "I read every book that had ever been published on the subject, and I was really a student of advertising.”

The research, conversation, and study were the journey. The destination was the City of Empathy, population: 1 customer.

Empathize with customer

Ogilvy learned the magic of empathy early on. During one shift in the French kitchen, a recruiter showed up looking for someone to sell Aga Cookers. Ogilvy signed on. He traded his chopping knife for door knockers.

He was a good salesman. He even wrote a guide for his fellow salesmen, advising them to, "Find out all you can about your prospects before you call on them; their general living conditions, wealth, profession, hobbies, friends, and so on. Every hour spent in this kind of research will help you and impress your prospect.".

Among other suggestions, Ogilvy advised to "Learn to recognize vegetarians on sight." For them, note the ease of roasted vegetables. For doctors, tout the health aspects. For an octogenarian, praise the simplicity. Each person wanted an Aga for their own reason. Ogilvy wanted to know what that reason was.

Adopting the client's point-of-view was something that appeared often in his writings. In a 1965 note to Cliff Field, Creative Head of Ogilvy & Maher, David wrote:

"Cliff: (So-and-so) thinks that this is a great advertisement. I don't. It lacks charm. It plods. Heavy as lead. The models - most of them - look like automobile dealers from South Dakota. Not the way to capture the affections of the people who read The New Yorker."

It wasn't, 'Do I like this advertisement?' but 'Will people who read The New Yorker like this advertisement?'

Ogilvy would drive, cook, or walk a mile in his customer's shoes. "I always use my client's products...Almost everything I consume is manufactured by one of my clients. My shirts are by Hathaway, my candlesticks by Steuben. My car is a Rolls-Royce, and its tank is always full of Super Shell."

Ogilvy also tried to think like the brands he represented. "The recommendations we make to clients are the recommendations we would make if we owned their companies, without regard to our own short-term interest. This earns their respect, which is the greatest asset an agency can have."

The most successful agencies, he wrote: “show the most sensitive insight into the psychological make-up of the prospective client.” Sometimes that meant assigning people with better insight than himself. "At the age of fifty-one I am finding it increasingly difficult to tune in to the young married couples who are starting out in life; that is why most of the copywriters at our agency are so young. They understand the psychology of young consumers better than I do.”

Ogilvy also wrote. "It costs \$500,000 to launch a new pattern (on Reed & Barton flatware), and no male executive can predict what patterns will appeal to nineteen-year-old brides.”

Deliver value

For his clients, value meant brand building. “Any damn fool can put on a price reduction,” Ogilvy wrote, “but it takes brains and perseverance to create a brand.”

For his customer’s customers, value meant a benefit. “The key to success is to promise the consumer a benefit - like better flavor, whiter wash, more miles per gallon, a better complexion.” When clients - like Rolls Royce - failed to keep-up the promise, Ogilvy broke his contract with them.

An early experience in the French kitchen set the mold for this mindset. About to tell a server to explain to a customer they were out of something, the head chef collared Ogilvy and explained:

“The next time you see that we are running out of a plat du jour, come and tell me. I will then get on the telephone to other hotels and restaurants until I find one

which has the same dish on its menu. Then I will send you in a taxi to bring back a supply. Never again tell a waiter that we are fresh out of anything."

Good research led to empathy and empathy led to value. What kept this process motoring along was a lunchpail attitude.

Lunchpail attitude

Art isn't divine. Art is drafts. The word CREATIVITY wrote Ogilvy, "strikes me as a highfalutin word for the work I have to do between now and Tuesday." According to Ogilvy, good ideas are the offspring of luck and midnight oil. "Creating successful advertising is a craft, part inspiration but mostly know-how and hard work."

Fellow Ogilvy & Mather employees noticed the long hours, homework, and output of the man in charge - just as Ogilvy did in the French kitchen. After some success, one executive left Ogilvy & Mather and wrote to David: "You set the pace on doing homework. It is a disconcerting experience to spend a Saturday evening in the garden next door to your house, carousing for four hours while you sit, unmoving, at your desk by the window doing your homework."

Big ideas, different ideas

David Ogilvy wanted all of his advertisers, copywriters, and researchers to generate big ideas. A lack of germination meant death. "It is sad that the majority of men who are responsible for advertising today, both the agents and the clients, are so conventional. The business community wants remarkable advertising, but turns a cold shoulder to the kind of people who can produce it."

To get big and different ideas, an organization needed to reward that kind of thinking. In a speech to American Express Executives, Ogilvy elected himself “Vice-President of Revolution.” In that role he asked each division head to consider:

“Do I encourage my people to bombard me with new ideas? Is the atmosphere around here creative and innovative, or dull and bureaucratic? Walter Wriston recently said, ‘There's no reason you can't have an innovative bureaucracy if you put out the word that fame and fortune come from rocking the boat.’”

Ogilvy would do whatever he could to help clients take risks. When a representative from the Hathaway Shirts company visited Ogilvy he offered little money but even less feedback. Promising not to change a word of the copy, he became one of Ogilvy’s clients. This marriage between willing client and creative agent would conceive Hathaway’s man with an eyepatch.

These ideas came from a combination of research - “On the whole, however, I have observed an increasing tendency on the part of clients to welcome different, particularly when it is based on the results of consumer research,” - and the unconscious.

Ogilvy's big and different ideas needed the raw materials of research and time to stew. One night he was riding the train home and “I suddenly had the idea for an ad, which was the guide to oysters. I was so astounded by the idea that I got off the train at the next stop and called into the office.”

A rest then stress cycle seemed to work best. “Stuff your conscious mind with information,” Ogilvy said, “then unhook your rational thought process. You can help this process by going for a long walk, or taking a hot bath, or drinking half a pint of claret.

Suddenly, if the telephone line from your unconscious is open, a big idea wells up within you.”

In the case of the Pepperidge Farm baker: “It was an idea I dreamed up in my sleep. I woke up and had the good fortune to wake up at two o'clock in the morning and wrote it down.”

Each of these ideas; a Guinness poster of oysters, a shirt model with an eye patch, a twenty-year-old Rolls Roys quote, were novel. This mindset, “I believe is most likely to be found among nonconformists, dissenters, and rebels.”

Too many businessmen are “incapable of original thinking because they are unable to escape from the tyranny of reason.” Yet, that’s the path to success. “The beginning of greatness in advertising is to be different, and the beginning of failure is to be orthodox.”

Curiosity over artistry

To turn consumer research into advertising campaigns was like taking flour and water and turning it into bread. The question was, which type; loaves, biscuits, pastry? For David Ogilvy, the goal was always sales. He loathed advertisements that looked good for the sake of looking good. He even declined industry nominations.

"I no longer enter my agency's layouts in contests organized by art directors' societies, for fear that one of them might be disgraced by an award. Their gods are not my gods."

Awards were the wrong incentives.

“The second problem (after discounts masquerading as advertising) is that advertising agencies...are now infested with people who regard advertising as an avant-garde art form...Their ambition is to win awards at the Cannes Festival.”

“Resist the temptation to write the kind of copy which wins awards. I am always gratified when I win an award, but most of the campaigns which produce results never win awards, because they don't draw attention to themselves.” Good campaigns are like sports referees. You need them to help the process along but in the best outcomes viewers don't notice.

Sometimes beautiful images catch attention. In a noisy world, this can be tempting. Ogilvy strove for something else, story appeal. “Dr. Gallup has discovered that the kind of photographs which win awards from camera clubs...don't work in advertisements. What does work are photographs which arouse the reader's curiosity.” *Why does that man have an eye patch and where is he going?*

The eye patch was the seventeenth idea and the first with 'story appeal.' “I'd read a book called Attention and Interest Factors in Advertising by Harold Rudolph. He'd got a fact called Story Appeal Picture. He showed that the more story appeal in a picture, the more people looked at your ad. I wanted to find this magic ingredient of story appeal.”

Not everything needs a good image. If you asked Ogilvy about what makes a good picture he'd turn the question around and ask you what the research suggests. In the fifties, sixties, and seventies the research said pictures over drawings, images above copy, and headlines written in clear language.

Headlines and copy

Clarity, simplicity, and familiarity are the holy trinity at the temple of words in the religion of Ogilvy. He was aware of jargon from his days selling Aga Cookers. “Some salesmen expound their subject academically so that at the end the prospect feels no more inclination to buy the Aga than she would to buy the planet Jupiter after a broadcast from the Astronomer Royal.”

Instead, think conversationally. What should the Aga salesman do? “You must be specific, definite and factual. The prospect is not interested in your personal opinion as to what is or is not expensive for her.”

You must deliver value in your headlines and your copy. In an advertisement for Rinso soap, Ogilvy showed different stains and offered cleaning solutions - all involving Rinso. One of the stains was Ogilvy’s blood. Years later he bragged, “How many copywriters have bled for their clients?”

In an ad for Dove Soap, the headline was “Darling, I’m having the most extraordinary experience...” Why those words? Ogilvy explained, “I used the word ‘darling’ for this ad because a psychologist had tested hundreds of words for their emotional impact and ‘darling’ had come out top.”

But had the word been cherub or some other oblique, obtuse, or opaque term he’d never have used it. Write like people talk, Ogilvy would say. DON’T PUT HEADLINES IN ALL CAPITAL LETTERS BECAUSE THIS IS NOT HOW PEOPLE TALK (EXCEPT ON THE INTERNET). NOR IS IT HOW WE LEARN TO READ. In fact, we are so adept at reading uppercase and lowercase writing that the words don’t even need to be spelled correctly.

Sometimes people cite Ogilvy's rules for headlines or copy. Ignore them. Ogilvy's first principle was to ask, 'what appeals to the customer?' Let your rules follow that. Then you can experiment and test.

Experiment and test

“The most important word in the vocabulary of advertising is TEST.” Yet many advertisers don't do that. They're worried about, among other things, flights to Cannes. However, there one group that understands this, direct marketers. “That's why I think everyone should start their advertising career in direct response because in direct response you test all the time and develop the habit of testing.”

We may not test because testing is hard. For one, testing could upend our ego equilibrium. But advertisers need to test. Consumers change. Products change. “Keep your mind open because advertising will always be full of surprises.”

Ogilvy ran his own a/b tests. “When in doubt as to which of two illustrations to use, test their relative pulling power by split-running them in a newspaper.”

If he wasn't testing images he was testing promises of value. “Your most important job is to decide what you are going to say about your product, what benefit you are going to promise.” Once you had ideas, try them out, preferably with a coupon to track and research further.

Much of Ogilvy's writings - about testing things, what makes good headlines and copy, the lunch pail attitude and value of research - was to his staff at Ogilvy & Mather. He wanted people to learn what he knew. These ideas could only grow in the right

environment and the Ogilvy & Mather culture would be the greenhouse for these seedlings.

Culture

At some point in his or her career, each head of an office would meet with David Ogilvy, usually in their office, not his and he would give them a stack of nesting dolls. Each manager would open the largest, then the next largest, and so on. In the final doll would be a slip of paper. It read, “If each of us hires people who are smaller than we are, we shall become company of dwarfs, but if each of us hires people who are bigger than we are, Ogilvy & Mather will become a company of giants.”

This was his warning about ego. Hire people who are better than you, hire people who can do your job, listen to people below you. As Ogilvy & Mather grew he learned the advantage of a decentralized command.

Decentralized command

A decentralized command is a military principle that individuals present for a situation know more about the situation than those not. Ogilvy noticed the importance of this and in a 1958 letter to the staff titled “How to Be Helpful at Meetings” he wrote: “junior people should not hesitate to speak out. For example, if they disagree with something I am saying, they should say so - before it is too late. Very often, I lack information which is available to them.”

In one of his books, written decades later, he still gave this advice. “It is vitally important to encourage free communication upward. Encourage your people to be candid with you. Ask their advice - and listen to it.”

Decentralized command requires the right corporate culture. It can only work in organizations which reward big ideas, new research, and mistakes. When asked what makes the Ogilvy & Mather culture successful David wrote, “We give our executives an extraordinary degree of freedom and independence.”

And “After fourteen years (on Madison Avenue) I have come to the conclusion that the top man has one principal responsibility: to provide an atmosphere in which creative mavericks can do useful work.”

What makes decentralized command work isn't just the environment but the people in it too. When Ogilvy hired people, he looked for “gentlemen with brains.”

Gentlemen with brains

“I have always tried to hire what J.P. Morgan called ‘gentlemen with brains’...Brains? It doesn't necessarily mean a high IQ. It means curiosity, common sense, wisdom, imagination, and literacy.”

We noted that it wasn't schooling but education Ogilvy thought important. He wanted “well-furnished minds. I don't care if they got it in college or selling newspapers.”

Within Ogilvy & Mather, David tried to keep the right balance between creative and account executives. "If you were a dairy farmer and kept cows, would you employ twice as many milkers as you have cows?"

In addition to the right internal people, he aimed for the right external ones too. He admitted that in the early days he had to take whatever clients he could. But even then he

was thinking about who he might want to work for. An adage he often repeated was to do "first-class business in a first-class way."

"The great thing is to have the right clients. There are plenty of agencies and plenty of clients, the thing is to match them up so that the relationship is a good one."

That meant clients who let you work. Advising potential clients he said, "Why keep a dog and bark for yourself?" This was the deal Ogilvy made with Hathaway, and part of the reason, the campaign flourished.

He was able to recruit these "gentlemen with brains" because he gave them autonomy - through decentralized command - but also because he made Ogilvy & Mather a fun place to work.

Fun place to work

"When people aren't having fun, they don't produce good advertising." Ogilvy - I think - thought it was so much fun because he enjoyed it. He was "collecting factors the way other men collect pictures and postage stamps."

At the age of seventy-five and reflecting from his home in France he said: "retiring can be fatal." Like his work, I think this quote reflects the research of his life. He cherished work.

When asked for advice on someone not performing well he suggests demoting them. Then, answering a potential follow up question himself, he explains that no, it won't feel that bad. "There are worse things than loss of face. Like staying home and having

absolutely nothing to do and no interest in life and being lonely, out of touch with all the people you like, and so forth.”

Ogilvy’s advantage was being David Ogilvy. Not because of any innate talent, he once scored ninety-six on a self-administered IQ test. His advantage was a love of what he did.

He looked for people with this same kind of interest. “My success or failure as the head of an agency depends more than anything else on my ability to find people who can create great campaigns, men with fire in their bellies.”

Once someone joined the Ogilvy & Mather agency he tried to take care of them as well. More than once he offers a solution for alcoholism; a leave of absence, spousal support, and a rehabilitation clinic. Then if all goes well, a job to return to. There are the stories of three-martini lunches and scenes from television but I never knew how much was true. Not until I read that *Ogilvy the Prepared* confessed to being too potted in a meeting did I realize the width and depth of the tumbler of alcoholism.

It is hard work to build the right culture.

Build up, don’t mark down

Discounting is the first problem with advertising (The second was choosing personal artistry over customer curiosity). Ogilvy was fond of reminding people, “Any damn fool can put on a deal, but it takes genius, faith, and perseverance to create a brand.”

Brand building was getting dirty digging the foundation. Deal cutting was superficially painting the facade. In speaking to American Express executives he asked (and

answered), "What's so great about short-term profits? I'll tell you. They impress the jackasses on Wall Street."

Actions for short-term goals (like profits) also served the individual more than the firm.

"Why are so many brand managers addicted to price-cutting deals? Because the men who employ them are more interested in next quarter's earnings than in building their brands. Why are they so obsessed with next quarter's earnings? Because they are more concerned with their stock options than the future of their company. Deals are a drug."

Here Ogilvy ate his own cooking. He hired *gentlemen* to do the difficult things. The short or easy "can never do Ogilvy & Mather any permanent good."

Around 1950 Ogilvy came up with his Creative Credo. The first part was:

"Every advertisement is part of the long-term investment in the personality of the brand... We hold that every advertisement must be considered as a contribution to the complex symbol which is the brand image - as part of the long-term investment in the reputation of the brand... I find that if you take that long-term approach, a great many of the day-to-day creative questions answer themselves."

Building a brand is hard work. It's easier to inflate numbers and egos by offering discounts rather than building value. But that's not what David Ogilvy existed to do.

Summary

David Ogilvy pioneered advertising processes that led to great outcomes. The images, headlines, and copy are celebrated but it's the process that matters most. **Do objective research, have big ideas, and groom a culture among 'gentlemen with brains.'**

Ogilvy's greatest advertisement is his body of work, and we get that for free. That's a good deal.

Thanks for reading.

Sources

David Ogilvy is the author of four books. The most comprehensive which includes images of the advertising is Ogilvy on Advertising. Good but not as great is The Unpublished Ogilvy which is a collection of letters and speeches. Last, and fine but not extraordinary is the book Confessions of an Advertising Man. He also wrote an autobiography, Blood, Brains, & Beer which I did not draw from.

As of January 2018 there were two video interviews of Ogilvy on YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FcTB9goxSAg&t>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0kfsnjcUNiw>

The photo of David Ogilvy is from Flickr user Stijn Vogels.