YOUR Big Ideas and Careers in Advertising

www.YourBigIdeas.org
Thinking of new solutions to common problems … organizing information so that it’s clearer and more meaningful … developing clever ways to say something.

You reach for the nearest notebook, sketchpad, sticky note—or whatever you can get your hands on—to jot it down. Sound familiar?

You have big ideas, and they can lead to big things. Such as a rewarding career in advertising. The advertising industry is always looking for a diverse range of people with a wide variety of skills and ideas. You will be surprised by just how many opportunities exist.

This booklet can help you learn more about advertising careers. Use it as a handy guide for determining what area of the industry might be the right fit for you. And use it as a resource for learning even more about this exciting field.

[www.YourBigIdeas.org]
Advertising is about ideas.

Every year, hundreds of thousands of people work to create hundreds of billions of dollars worth of advertising, from online banner ads to TV commercials to magazine ads. There is one thing that all of these people all have in common—they all begin with ideas.

From car makers to soft drink manufacturers, from financial services firms to software vendors—every business under the sun seeks to advertise its products and services in one form or another. And they are looking for talented advertising professionals to help them do it.

It is estimated that ad spending in the United States is over $250 billion each year and steadily increasing.
Thanks to new technologies, such as digital media and the Internet and the growth of independent media services agencies and branding consultancies, there are more opportunities within the field than ever before.

All of which adds up to a great deal of variety. No matter how you channel your ideas—dreaming up eye-catching graphics, analyzing research data or organizing large teams of people—you can apply them to advertising.

So let’s take a look at some of the jobs that are available within the industry and learn about the people who actually do them.

Over 400,000 people work in advertising in the United States. Advertising professionals work for ad agencies, media agencies, branding consultancies and a wide range of nonprofit and for-profit companies.
Some agencies call them account planners or strategic planners. Some agencies call them cognitive anthropologists, or “cogs.” They’re the people who get inside consumers’ heads, analyzing their perceptions and behaviors so that the rest of the advertising team can build an effective campaign.

Account planners do lots of research. They conduct interviews with focus groups and observe people as they go about ordinary tasks to understand how they use and perceive specific products and services. Planners also sift through mountains of market research to identify current trends.

But while planners pay attention to statistical patterns (such as, “How many Americans own a car?”), they also use techniques borrowed from anthropology, psychology and sociology to interpret what those patterns mean (“Do people buy cars just to get around, or because cars are a symbol of personal freedom?”).

The insights that account planners gain into consumer behavior inform the goals and objectives of the campaign. Ultimately, those insights help shape the style, tone and underlying message of the creative concept.

Profile of an Account Planner

“I think people are just giant puzzles. And I like seeing the fundamental insights we have becoming this amazing work.”

Name: L. Allison
Hometown: Memphis, TN
College: University of Miami
Major: Double major in Psychology and Advertising

Do you ... account planning
Do people buy cars just to get around, or because cars are a symbol of personal freedom?
The name varies—account management, account services, client services—but the idea remains the same: Someone has to serve as the point of contact between the agency and the client. And someone has to shepherd every project through to completion.

Working in account services requires strong people skills, since account managers need to be able to communicate both with their clients, and with everyone else in their agency—from copywriters to accountants. Account managers must explain the client's needs to the agency, and the agency’s strategy to the client.

Account managers get to learn about every aspect of the projects they supervise, and to see each one from a global perspective. They're also responsible for ensuring that the client's best interests are served.

“There's never a day when I have one thing on my to-do list. You have to know the media plan, you have to know the strategy, you have to know what the executions are ... you have to know everything that each department knows.”

Name: E. Harper
Hometown: Vancouver, WA
College: University of Missouri-Columbia
Major: Dual major in Journalism (with an emphasis in Advertising) and Business
... consider yourself a people person?
Most ad agencies once had their own in-house media planners who determined what kinds of advertising media (print, TV, radio) were best suited to a campaign, and their own media buyers who bought advertising space and time at the best possible prices for their clients.

Today, many media planners and buyers work at independent media services agencies. And with a contemporary media landscape that includes everything from Web sites to satellite radio, media professionals have to think carefully about both strategy (where to place ads) and tactics (how to get the most bang for their client’s buck).

Media planners have to make sure that the media they select will reach their client’s target audience and fit the style and tone of the overall campaign. Which means spending a lot of time coming up with ideas by talking to clients, vendors and other advertising and media personnel, from copywriters to market researchers.

“We’re not just buying a bunch of 30-second TV ads, but tactically choosing media for reach and exposure. You may or may not like a commercial or an ad—but if it’s reaching you, I’ve done my job.”

Name: V. Beauchamp
Hometown: Seattle, WA
College: DePauw University
Major: Communication Arts and Sciences
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... dream in numbers?

Launch Podcast campaign during Spring Break!
Next time you can’t get a great tagline or a stunning image from an ad out of your head, thank the creatives who invented them: the copywriters who wrote the words and the art directors who produced the visuals.

Copywriters and art directors are the artists of the advertising world. Together, they create the content that makes ads memorable. The process begins when the account services and account planning teams brief the creative team on the goals and strategy behind the campaign. Creative must then develop a pool of ideas to show the client.

Once the client approves a particular concept, creative works with production to turn their idea into reality. It’s a collaborative process, and a lot can change from beginning to end. As a result, creatives need more than just creativity—they also need patience, resourcefulness and strong communication skills.

Do you ... 

“A lot happens between first-round concepts and the produced concept.

You have to learn to communicate well, otherwise the product will never come out nicely.”

Name: T. Eng
Hometown: New York City
College: School of Visual Arts
Major: Graphic Design
... find new ways to express yourself daily?
The rise of the Internet has led to the creation of many new ideas, roles and opportunities in the advertising industry. For example, interactive designers devise the look and feel of promotional Web sites. Interactive programmers write the code that makes the sites work. Information architects ensure that the sites are user-friendly. And interactive producers combine aspects of several traditionally distinct roles, from account management to production, to ensure that each project proceeds according to plan.

And as Internet technologies evolve and become even more pervasive, the boundaries between interactive and other, more traditional disciplines will continue to erode.

Profile of an Interactive Producer

“I get a concept created by the folks on the creative team, and my job is to bring that concept to fruition. I manage the timeline and the budget, and I make sure we stay true to the creative vision. And I get to work with pretty much everybody at the agency, from accounting to creative to traffic.”

Name: P. Sutton
Hometown: Columbia, MD
College: Boston College
Major: Communications with a minor in Computer Science
... get tech and love it?
Someone has to make sure that print ads get printed, TV ads get shot, and Web sites get built—on time and on budget. That’s where the production and traffic departments come in.

Producers deal with just about everyone in their agencies, and with many people outside of them, as well. They work with the creative and account services teams to ensure that the big idea behind a project is translated into something that the client will like. And they work with outside vendors such as printers and recording studios to assemble the finished product—whether it’s a magazine ad, billboard, radio spot, TV commercial or specially designed giveaway items for a viral event.

On any given day, a producer may be on the phone with a printer, on location at a TV shoot, or manipulating video in an editing suite. Once the final product is in hand, traffic makes sure that it is distributed, seen or heard. These are the folks who ultimately get things done, no matter what it takes. And what it takes may vary from project to project, or even hour to hour.

Profile of a Producer

“There is no typical day. That’s sort of why I love my job so much: it’s always different. So many people to deal with, so many schedules to coordinate. Sometimes it gets crazy, but it always keeps me on my toes.”

Name: K. Bormaster
Hometown: Ladue, MO
College: Indiana University
Major: Journalism
... know what it takes to get things done?
Got big ideas?

Producers. Copywriters. Account planners. These are just a few of the roles described in the preceding pages that offer exciting opportunities to anyone interested in pursuing a career in the advertising industry.

Some advertising jobs require specialized skills and knowledge. Interactive programmers, for example, need to know how to write computer code. Other jobs call for distinct talents and abilities. Art directors must have graphic design skills. And account planners must have a knack for interpreting research data.

But in a fast-paced industry where deadlines are tight, collaboration is key and change is one of the few constants, successful advertising professionals—while wonderfully unique—also tend to share certain basic traits. They’re dedicated. They’re resourceful. They’re articulate. They enjoy working as part of a team. They’re willing and eager to learn new things. And they love their work, in part because it allows them to collaborate on challenging projects with equally smart, creative people. People from diverse backgrounds and experiences. People with big ideas.

So if you’d like to learn more about a field in which energy, intelligence and creativity are recognized and rewarded, take a look at some of the books and Web sites listed in the Resources section. And be sure to visit [www.YourBigIdeas.org](http://www.YourBigIdeas.org) where you can take a quiz to discover which area of advertising is right for your unique talents, and register to receive more information about careers in advertising.

“It’s a team business. You rely on so many other people to help you do your job.”

E. Harper,
Content Manager

“I work with some really smart people, and that’s a really cool thing.”

V. Beauchamp,
Associate Media Director

“Things are constantly evolving. That keeps things fresh, but it also keeps things challenging.”

P. Sutton,
Senior Interactive Producer
Use your resources.

Check out the following Web sites and books for more ideas and valuable information about advertising and the advertising industry.

On the Web
American Association of Advertising Agencies: www.aaaa.org
American Association of Advertising Agencies Careers in Advertising: www.YourBigIdeas.org
American Association of Advertising Agencies Multicultural Advertising Internship Program (MAIP): www.aaaa-maip.org
American Advertising Federation (AAF): www.aaf.org
(contains information on internship opportunities, networking with top agency and corporate recruiters, career guides, and job listings)
AdForum: www.adforum.com
Advertising Age: www.adage.com
The Advertising Council: www.adcouncil.org
Advertising Education Federation (AEF): www.aef.com
(contains a “Career Guide,” “Career Advice from the Pros,” “Career Stories” and links to other “Career Resources”)
Adweek: www.adweek.com
Media Life: www.medialifemagazine.com
University of Texas, Dept. of Advertising: www.advertising.utexas.edu/world/index.asp

On the Shelf
More ideas?
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Andrew Dawson, Associate Strategic Planner, Chicago
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Tiffany Graeff, VP, Strategic Planning Director, New York City
Elizabeth Harper, Content Manager, Miami
Paul Sutton, Senior Interactive Producer, Miami

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