



Paul Harvey, Will Rogers, And Me

QUICKREAD

- Some of the greatest broadcasters never learn “Ad-Speak.” They talk like people.
- Long ads push softly. Short ads hit hard.
- In writing an ad, treat it like a garden: Pull the weeds. Leave the tasty bits to glow in the sun.

It’s unlikely you’ve ever heard of Will Rogers unless you grew up, as I did, in Oklahoma. Will was a famous storyteller, comedic actor, columnist, and radio personality in the 1920s and ’30s. He and Paul Harvey are Oklahoma’s two great claims to fame.

Will was once asked to speak to a business club. “Sure,” he told his host. “When do you need me?”

“Next Tuesday,” was the man’s response.

“How long do you want me to talk?” asked Rogers.

“About five minutes.”

“Five minutes!” exclaimed Rogers. “It would take me at least two weeks to prepare a five-minute speech!”

Surprised, the man said, “If a five-minute speech takes two weeks, how long would it take you to prepare to speak for an hour?”

Rogers replied, “Hell, I’m ready to speak for an hour right now.”

Long ads push softly. Short ads hit hard. Will Rogers knew it. Paul Harvey knew it. And now you know it, too.

The radio ads of Paul Harvey were the stuff of legend. They always produced big results. Right now you might be thinking to yourself, “Well, of course they worked! Everyone always listened whenever Paul Harvey had the mic.” But why did they listen?

Paul Harvey and Will Rogers never learned the language of “Ad-Speak.” They never forgot they were storytellers. And they always talked like people. During the depths of the Depression, Will Rogers stepped up to a radio mic and spoke to all of America: “Now don’t get scared and start turning off your radios. I’m not advertising or trying to sell you anything. If the mouthwash you’re using is not the right kind and it tastes sort of like sheep dip, why, you’ll just have to go right on using it. I can’t advise any other kind at all.”

How many people do you suppose quit listening after an opening line like that?

Will Rogers was a true broadcaster. Paul Harvey was perhaps the greatest there will ever be. I’ve written three *New York Times* bestsellers, and a possible fourth one was published on October 2, but the glistening moment of my career was when Paul Harvey said my name on the radio. Paul Harvey knew I was alive! He said, “Roy Williams is a marketing man. His clients want to buy whatever advertising sells the most product. He encourages them to buy radio. In the current issue of *Radio Ink*, Williams notes...” Paul then went on to quote something I had written on these pages.

OK, I’m done bragging now.

If Paul Harvey were still with us, he would shout “Amen!” to this: Most ads have too many words.



In last month’s *Wizard of Ads LIVE* webcast, I edited an ad Rod Schwartz of Grace Broadcast Sales had sent in for my review and comment. He knew it needed something, but he wasn’t sure what. He wrote, “The client is the Washington Idaho Symphony, about to embark on its 41st concert season. Our immediate goal is to try to sell season tickets to new subscribers. We would like —

actually, we need — to double or triple attendance over what it’s been in recent years.” Rod attached an MP3 of this ad, with symphony music playing in the background:

If you’re tired of stress and anxiety robbing you of the enjoyment of life, it’s time to fight back with classical music. Exposure to classical music improves your ability to concentrate and think clearly. It makes you less likely to experience depression. Older adults who listen to classical music have fewer injuries and enjoy better health. Children benefit, too, with enhanced cognitive function and a greater ability to articulate their emotions. So if you want to feel better, think better, and live better, just add classical music to your diet. There’s no better way to enjoy it than with a friend at a live concert performance. So right now, when you buy one season ticket to the Washington Idaho Symphony’s 41st concert season, you’ll receive a companion season ticket absolutely free. I’m symphony conductor Jeremy Briggs-Roberts, promising you an unforgettable season of great classical music beginning Saturday, September 22, so buy your season ticket today and get another season ticket free. Order online now at Washington Idaho Symphony dot org. That’s Washington Idaho Symphony dot org.

Pull the weeds. Leave the tasty bits to glow in the sun. And lose the symphony music. We’re trying to attract a new audience, remember? Here’s the edited, accelerated ad:

You’re tired. Stress and anxiety are robbing you of the enjoyment of life. Fight back. Classical music. Get a dose of classical music and you’ll think more clearly. You’ll quit being depressed. You’ll have fewer accidents. If your kids listen with you, it will raise their IQ. I promise I’m not making this stuff up. It’s been scientifically proven. Every bit of it. I’m the conductor, Jeremy Briggs-Roberts. Buy a season ticket and I’ll give you another one free. Trust me, we’re going to rock your world this year. The only thing you need to decide is who else’s world needs to be rocked. Classical music makes you smart, healthy, and happy. Who do you want to give that to? The season starts Saturday, September 22. Get your free companion ticket online right now at Washington ... Idaho ... Symphony ... dot org. Bless the beasts and the children.

That’s how Will Rogers and Paul Harvey would say it in 2012. And who would know better than me? I was raised in Oklahoma and Paul Harvey once said my name. **XXX**

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