



By Richard D. Czerniawski

COACHING THE OVERVIEW – WHAT’S THE PURPOSE?

No, this isn't going to be about the purpose of the overview when coaching, but the purpose of the meeting in which you will be called on to provide it. I'm focusing this musing on the latter subject because an overview needs to be consistent with the purpose of the get-together, coupled with your appraisal of the topic under consideration.

Now that I think about it, it probably will be helpful to backtrack for a moment to remind ourselves of the purpose of the overview. The overview frames where we stand on a subject or an issue. That's it! It's about crystallizing our conclusion. If we are reviewing creative work from an ad agency, then the overview is about where we stand on their work consistent with their purpose for sharing. After all, it's not just a "show & tell" meeting.

We need to know and be explicit about the purpose of the meeting. Why are we gathered here? This applies to any meeting, so we don't fritter our time away in unnecessary meetings or miss the point of why we've chosen to convene. Ministers know what they're doing when they preside over funerals. They greet mourners with something like, "We're gathered here to honor and bury our dearly departed..." OK, they make the purpose clear. Is this the only time when we are clear about the purpose of our assembly? At the very end of life?

I hope not. If so, then we haven't lived life with intention. However, it takes a connection with our conscious mind to identify the purpose of the meeting and proceed with intention. Oprah Winfrey, the mega-magnate and spiritual being, begins each meeting with a clear statement of intention. She asks, "what is the intention of this meeting?" In other words, what is its purpose? What do we hope to accomplish? Why the hell have you pulled me away from everything I have to do to be here, at this moment, with you and these other managers? Why? WHY? **WHY?**

That brings me back to agency meetings where they share their advertising ideas for our brand. Alternatively, it could be a meeting where designers share their ideas for new package designs. What is the purpose of these engagements? Simple, it is to determine if there is anything that they are sharing that we, clients, judge worthy of pursuing? That's it! That's the basis for your overview. Your overview might be:

- Start again – "As much as it troubles me to say so, we need to go back to the drawing board"; or it could be

- Revise and develop new creative – “While we have a few idea fragments worth pursuing, we have considerably more work ahead of us”; or it could be
- We’re on track – “While we have some more work ahead of us. I’m impressed that we have some solid ideas worthy of further development”; or
- Let’s go – “WOW, we have an abundance of riches. There are several ideas here that I’d like to explore with target-customers.”

Each of the overviews offered above addresses the purpose of the meeting within the context of your assessment of the creative work. Once you've stated your overview then, and only then, do you provide detailed direction of what you'd like to see to make the work (regardless of whether it is advertising, packaging design, etc.) more productive in winning customer preference and achieving your target-customer behavior objectives.

Now that I think of it, we should emulate Oprah and clearly state the purpose of the meeting to kick it off. We might do one better to state the purpose of the meeting in the invite. After all, many marketing managers spend more than 80% of their time in meetings. These simple practices might help reduce the number of meetings, or shorten them, or make them more productive so we can get on with getting more real work done.

It would be a pity if the only time the purpose of the assembly is stated is when the minister says, "We are gathered here...," at our funerals.

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