

Key Takeaways From “Confessions of an Advertising Man” by David Ogilvy

- When people aren't having any fun, they seldom produce good work
- People are more productive when they drink. I find if I drink two or three brandies, I am better able to write
- Pay people peanuts and you get monkeys
- Leaders grasp nettles; don't keep a dog and bark yourself; hire people who are better than you are; you can't save souls in an empty church
- I admire people with gentle manners, who treat other people as human beings. I abhor quarrelsome people who wage paper warfare. I despise toadies who such up to their bosses; they are generally the same people who bully their subordinates
- Don't bunt. Aim out of the park. Aim for the company of immortals
- Put your coupon bottom right
- Companies that have cultivated their individual identities by shaping values, making heroes, spelling out rites and rituals, and acknowledging the cultural network have an edge
- The common characteristic of success is the deliberate creation of a corporate culture
- We do our damndest to make it a nice place to work
- We treat our people like human beings
- Our system of management is singularly democratic
- We like people with gentle manners
- We like people who are honest in argument, honest with clients, and above all, honest with customers
- We admire people who work hard, who are objective and thorough
- We sell- or else
- You cannot bore people into buying your product; you can only interest them in buying it
- We prefer the discipline of knowledge to the anarchy of ignorance. We pursue knowledge the way a pig pursues truffles. A blind pig can sometimes find truffles, but it helps to know that they grow in oak forests
- Once a salesman, always a salesman
- Creating successful advertising is a craft, part inspiration but mostly know-how and hard work
- The temptation to entertain instead of selling is contagious
- The key to success is to promise the consumer a benefit

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Taken directly out of the book

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- The function of most advertising is not to persuade people to try your product but to persuade them to use it
- Good campaigns can run for many years without losing their selling power
- A messy office creates an atmosphere of sloppiness and leads to the disappearance of secret papers
- If you can make yourself indispensable to a client, you will never be fired
- To be a good father requires that he be understanding, that he be considerate, and that he be human enough to be affectionate
- I admire people who work hard, who bite the bullet. I dislike passengers who don't pull their weight in the boat. It is more fun to be overworked than to be underworked. There is an economic factor built into hard work. The harder you work, the fewer employees we need, and the more profit we make. The more profit we make, the more money becomes available for all of us
- Be happy while you're living, for you're a long time dead
- I admire people with gentle manners who treat other people as human beings. The best way to keep the peace is to be candid
- I try to be fair and to be firm, to make unpopular decisions without cowardice, to create an atmosphere of stability, and to listen more than I talk
- The majority of businessmen are incapable of original thinking because they are unable to escape from the tyranny of reason
- Many of the greatest creations of man have been inspired by the desire to make money
- To reign is worth ambition though in Hell: better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heaven
- What counts is the real motive power of the agency, the creative potency
- Solicit by personal visitation
- The more you listen, the wiser he thinks you are
- Play to win, but enjoy the fun
- Hard work never killed a man
- I like to succeed in public but to fail in secret
- I have noticed that when an antique dealer draws my attention to flaws in a piece of furniture, he wins my confidence
- Devote your best brains to the service of your clients, instead of diverting them to the pursuit of new ones
- Avoid hiring unstable, quarrelsome executives
- I have always tried to sit on the same side of the table as my clients, to see problems through their eyes

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- When I take a total view of their business, I am better able to give them sound advice
- Once a client loses confidence in your discretion, you've had it
- If you get into the habit of seeing clients when the weather is calm, you will establish an easy relationship which may save your life when a storm blows up
- It is important to admit your mistakes and to do so before you are charged with them
- It pays to take immense pains in preparing the plans you present to clients
- American businessmen are not taught that it is a sin to bore your fellow creatures
- Bad advertising can unsell products
- Frightened people are powerless to produce good advertising
- There is one word which characterizes the ideal relationship: Permanency. If permanency is to be achieved, it must be in the minds of the parties from the very beginning
- The relationship between client and agency has to be an intimate one
- If you pretest your product with consumers and pretest your advertising, you will do well in the marketplace
- Back your winners, and abandon your losers
- What you say is more important than how you say it
- Give the facts
- The two most powerful words you can use in a headline are “free” and “new”
- The more facts you tell, the more you sell
- You should always include testimonials in your copy. The reader finds it easier to believe the endorsement of a fellow consumer than the puffery of an anonymous copywriter
- Give the reader helpful advice, or service
- When a company boasts about its integrity or a woman about her virtue, avoid the former and cultivate the latter
- You must be ambitious
- Conceal your arrogance and keep up your studies
- Managers promote the men who produce the most
- Become a senior account executive unless you learn to make good presentations
- Good presentations must be well written, and well delivered
- If you are brave about admitting your mistakes to your clients and your colleagues, you will earn their respect
- Hard work never killed a man, men die of boredom, psychological conflict, and disease. They do not die of hard work

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- In the best establishments, promises are always kept
- Tell the truth, but make the truth fascinating
- I admire people with gentle manners who treat other people as human beings

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