

# What's he thinking about?



George Prince is pondering over an article that appeared in TIDE, August 28, 1954. The particular piece he's mulling over told about our motivation research program. Now, the reason George is deep in thought about it is simple—he provided the information for the people at TIDE. And after going over their presentation, he wonders if a few things need clarifying.

He makes a few marginal notes—then sends his marked copy in to the rest of the brass for their perusal. Turn the page and you'll find both a reprint of the article and George's "after-the-fact" notations. (P.S. On the back, you'll find out in a few words just where we stand on this interesting—albeit somewhat controversial—topic of motivation research.)

# Agencies

## Motivation studies: how and why one agency is using them

**Charles L. Rumrill is going all out for the psychological approach in campaigns.**

The idea of an agency using a "motivation" survey to discover the psychological feelings of consumers toward products is nothing new. Dr. Ernest Dichter has plumped for the psychological approach in advertising for years; McCann-Erickson, Weiss & Geller (Chicago) and Young & Rubicam, to name a few, have all used the technique to some degree. However, the Rochester (N.Y.) agency, Charles L. Rumrill & Co., (billings: about \$5,000,000) is so pleased with its experiences with motivation tests during the past two years that it has applied the psychological approach to the campaigns of most of its clients. Besides a particularly intensive year-old survey for Union Trust Co., the agency is using motivation studies with success for Fanny Farmer, Richardson root beer, a cutlery company and Kurlash Co., maker of eyelash curlers.

**WHAT'S MOTIVATION?** Basically, a motivation study of consumers is a series of questionnaires filled out by a selected group of subjects, turned over to a psychologist for interpretation, with the results supposedly indicating the basic, subconscious feelings of individuals toward certain products or institutions to be used by an agency in slanting its campaign.

Such motivation surveys generally give no hint as to what the subject is or isn't supposed to say or feel. A typical series used by Rumrill included a thematic apperception test (an illustration interpreted differently by different personalities) sentence completion tests and straight interviews.

**WHAT MOTIVATED RUMRILL:** G. M. Prince, Rumrill vice-president, says that when the agency got its first commercial bank client (Union Trust), it was "in the fortunate position of having had no commercial bank promotion experience and hence had no ingrained ideas to guide our thinking." Then too, explains Prince, most bank advertising seemed pretty dull to the agency and "we wondered if others thought so too."

Accordingly, the agency ran a straight, factual survey (in the Rochester area) to find how people used

banks, and, if possible, what they thought of them. When the results of the first survey were compiled the agency was surprised to find a very large number of downright bitter complaints about actual (or imagined) "mistreatment" at the hands of bank employees. As far as Rumrill's initial survey showed, no one bank seemed to rate a better opinion than any other.

In checking back, Rumrill noted that people would tolerate the same treatment at their grocery or department stores but would resent it when they got it at the banks. This gave Rumrill the impression that there was some special emotional "loading" in the relationship of people to banks. Since the agency had already been dabbling with motivation, it decided to apply the same technique of motivation research to the bank's entire campaign.

To do this, the agency undertook a motivation study of some 117 subjects (68 women and 49 men). The sample ranged all over the social-economic scale; about 75% of them had some regular dealings with some Rochester bank. The results, Prince feels, were eye-opening. First of all, people have a conflict about money: they like it on one hand, but on the other they like to show an open contempt for it (e.g., "filthy lucre"). Then, too, the average consumer is apparently haunted by a variety of special fears about banking: fear that he will be turned down for a loan, fear of the bank officer prying into personal details, fear of having a check bounce, etc. In addition, the Rumrill survey found out that the subconscious attitude of people toward banks is pretty much the same as that toward a parent. Therefore, a politely cool banker becomes "very rude"; an unpleasant letter, a personal affront.

**BUILDING THE ADS:** The first step for the campaign was to establish a favorable emotional relationship with the reader—make him believe the bank understands his feelings, will help him get over any uncomfortable ones. Prince believes Rumrill ads emphasized the bank's attitude that the prospect did the bank a real favor by coming in with his problems.

The campaign for Union Trust was based, says Prince, on "observable logic." The ads, six column, 15 inch, ran in local and regional papers in up-

*They make it sound like we're using it instead of thinking.*

*It's part of overall planning — a way to give the consumer more satisfaction in his buying.*

*when + where it is appropriate + usable!*

*questionnaires are only one phase. More important — psychologists design + give the tests as well as interpret them.*

*Also — there are two kinds of motives, obvious + hidden (subconscious). Both are important. The right balance in advertising is what is sought.*

per New York state, made constant use of non-professional models, let readers identify themselves in an important situation such as loans, etc. (see cut). Prince believes the ads have helped Union Trust's business and certainly they have created a great deal of favorable comment in and around Rochester.

**NEW MOTIVATION CAMPAIGNS:** Besides the bank campaign, Rumrill is actively going into more and bigger

motivation studies for its clients. Right now, the agency is conducting one for a large consumer product manufacturer, which, because of the nature of the product, delves even more into personality "profiles" of subjects. Prince, who says some of Rumrill's latest interviews last as long as three hours, adds that the tests' reliability depends largely on the calibre of the field force. He believes the reason why people react to a product or service is vital information for any marketer.

### "Motivation" ad



The picture above and the copy below are the kind of advertising Rumrill has developed from its motivation research (story on page 32):

"The night before, we'd looked at all the bills. It was a bad moment when I realized the truth:

"We can't pay any of them.

"For a long time we'd been trying to get our budget back on an even keel. We'd stalled one company, paid a little to another, told ourselves we'd catch up 'next' payday.

"Now we were in real trouble—and I didn't have the faintest notion of what to do about it.

"Then I thought of our bank. They had always treated us well, but I hated the thought of borrowing.

"Next morning, it took all my courage to open that door. I hoped my voice would behave when I asked for the Loan Department.

"Well, I didn't have to ask. There was a fellow my age leaning on a desk. He offered me a chair and acted as if I were his best customer come to call.

"When I told him my problem he knew just how I felt. He said good businessmen often consolidate their debts with a personal loan. (I stored that up to tell my wife.)

"He said other men in my situation often used the bank's help in working out a more efficient budget. We talked a while, and decided on a loan plan that would get me going again.

"Then he fixed up the paper work—and do you know, after he'd literally saved my neck, and I was about to leave—he thanked me for giving them my business!

"Personal feelings or personal finance—a bank must understand every kind of problem if it is to truly serve its customers. Union Trust tries to be the kind of bank you'll enjoy coming to. Try us soon—and see how pleasant we can make banking for you."

*It sounds pretty easy here - which ain't the case. Collecting the information isn't too bad. But evaluating, interpreting and applying what's known is the real problem. We certainly don't know all about it but we have a good start*

*← The ad on being "all alone" perhaps would have been a better choice if it were really more "basic".*

**When you need money you feel all alone**

It isn't a good feeling. You wonder to whom to turn and how you'll be treated. We'd like you to turn to us. Thousands of people do when unexpected large bills come when bills add up to more than they figured — or simply when they want to purchase something at a cash price and pay low bank rates. We'll be glad to see you even if you only want to discuss how a single word. We hope you'll stop in because we'd like to help you.

**Union Trust Company**  
OF ROCHESTER

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NEW YORK  
PHILADELPHIA  
PITTSBURGH  
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