

BRANDWEEK

Writers' Guidelines for *Brandweek's* "Top of Mind"

The Top of Mind department, like the magazine itself, is a continuously evolving work—one that not only illuminates the issues and challenges that confront the successful branding professional, but also embodies our determination to provide content that readers simply can't find anywhere else.

As part of this vision, Top of Mind seeks to air the points of view of informed contributors who *take a decisive stand and express a unique and sharply defined opinion about current topics and trends in our industry*. We strive to make Top of Mind a platform for savvy, unconventional, and highly creative approaches to the issues that face readers, delivered with verve, wit, and rhetorical savvy. The fresher, the more strident, the more insightful the opinion is—the better. *We do not shy from controversial points of view; we want to print them.*

Topic-wise, we're interested in most anything related to marketing (including advertising) such as new-product development, media trends, demographic trends affecting consumer products, as well as management and organizational issues.

Essays generally run 800-950 words and include a photo of the author (color or b&w headshots are fine; jpegs must be high-resolution, which means at least 300 d.p.i.)

Please be advised that *Brandweek* prefers to entertain submissions that have not been offered to other publications. If your submission *has* been sent in for consideration elsewhere, *please* do us the courtesy of letting us know.

Would you like to maximize your chances of getting published? *Heed the following Big Five*, and your essay will stand out.

1) Choose your point and stick with it. Your essay must have a clearly defined topic—and opinion thereof—that's supported by facts or examples drawn from your experience. As a useful rule of thumb, if the main point of your piece can't be adequately captured in a compelling headline of a few words, your work likely needs greater focus. Be aware, too, of the risk of starting with one topic and then skipping around the garden of prose to touch on various other subjects that may seem related, but in the end only create a meandering and confusing essay that proves nothing.

2) Write about something that will speak to a variety of readers. Your subject should be of fairly broad interest to *Brandweek's* readership, rather than focusing on issues of specific interest only to players involved in a narrow marketing discipline or product or service segment. Such issues can be addressed, but only if their broader implications are spelled out in the essay itself.

3) Please do not tell readers what they already know. Our slush pile is piled high with pieces that reiterate bland conventional wisdom, clichés, or the sort of truisms that everyone learned in Marketing 101. We simply cannot run such things. Remember: *Brandweek* has sophisticated readers who are every bit as accomplished at what they do as you are. Your submission must fire their imaginations with fresh topics or observations that will build on their knowledge, not recycle it. Some common examples of this error:

The Internet is changing everything.

Women are actually really important consumers.

Your advertising really needs to reflect the product you're selling.

You have to "walk the talk," (or any permutation of that loathsome nugget.)

4) Write lively; avoid jargon. Your story need not rouse the Pulitzer committee, but we look for writers who have a convincing, confident, colorful style that can hold readers' attention and, in effect, say: "I am worth listening to." Avoid being didactic (as though you're addressing a class of students) or preachy. Also of great importance: Banish industry jargon from your prose, and this includes the confounding rhetorical sin of transforming common nouns into verbs (i.e., "Mr. Smith does not office from this location.")

5) Essays should be about marketing, not be the marketing. *Brandweek* will not consider submissions that are blatantly self-serving of the writer's interest. That is, while it is understood that writers will tend to focus on areas of their direct expertise and experience, the "Top of Mind" section is not a platform for the promotion of their firm's expertise. If your essay's main point is that readers must have the help of a firm just like yours, it's time to start over.

A few housekeeping points:

Please be advised that *Brandweek* assumes all rights to copy that runs in our pages. Should your piece be published, usage rights *will* revert to you after a term of six weeks, but you will share those rights with *Brandweek* in perpetuity. A contract to this effect will be furnished to you upon our acceptance of your manuscript.

Submit your manuscripts to Robert Klara, Features Editor, via e-mail: rklara@brandweek.com. We prefer that you attach all submissions as Word files. Please furnish a short bio of yourself (or of the author, if you are submitting on behalf of someone else), and how he or she may be reached.

Brandweek reserves the right to edit all submissions for style, content, and length.

Good luck, happy typing, and thank you for your interest in *Brandweek*.