



Hoffman Speaks at AAAA

By John Eggerton -- Broadcasting & Cable, 3/5/2007 1:06:00 PM

With issues like [childhood obesity](#) and direct-to-consumer prescription drug ads making headlines, advertisers need to shift their focus from finding the latest new technological platform to monetize to how socially responsible the message is that they are trying to market.

That was the advice American Association of Advertising Agencies senior VP and counsel, Adonis Hoffman, offered in a speech to the AAAA during a conference in Las Vegas March 2.

Hoffman said that the industry was facing a new era of "responsible advertising," in which the goal was to protect consumers from advertising, marketing and media that "many in our society deem harmful and socially irresponsible."

Hoffman said that while the courts still continue to uphold First Amendment protections for commercial speech, advertising has come under fire from the Federal Trade Commission, the FCC and Congress. There have been some 30 bills in the last Congress to limit or alter advertising and marketing.

Saying his audience can "bet your last bonus that the policymakers in Washington are watching this stuff very closely," he argued the advertising industry and media could do "a whole lot more to stem the growing tide of public criticism and public policy regulations," that outside interest groups don't get to define what is socially responsible advertising, or what products get to be marketed.

His list of regulator-friendly marketing rules follows:

1. Focus on CSR (corporate social responsibility), rather than just ROI.
2. Put the "social" in social responsibility by involving consumers in the marketing. "People want to be in control of their media," he says.
3. Pay attention to them. Don't hide your values. Lead with them.
4. Be careful with protected groups: children, disadvantaged, seniors.
5. Build strategic alliances by inviting critics into the mix.
6. "Find some public service stuff to do. Latch on to a cause and ride it all the way to the top."
7. Embrace diversity. "The market for just about everything is getting broader. Marketing has to reflect that."
8. Be technologically neutral.
9. Police yourself by setting up your own codes, commissions and rules, and then monitor the results.
10. Do good and look good doing it. "Spend the time and money to be seen as a good corporate citizen."