

FROM BRAINWAVES TO BRILLIANT CREATIVE

An abstract graphic on the right side of the page, featuring a series of overlapping, wavy lines in various colors (yellow, blue, pink, green) that resemble brainwaves or signal patterns. The lines are both solid and dashed, creating a dynamic and complex visual effect.

The neuroscience behind creative that
influences behaviour and **9 techniques**
to turn it into memorable messaging





WHAT IS CREATIVE?

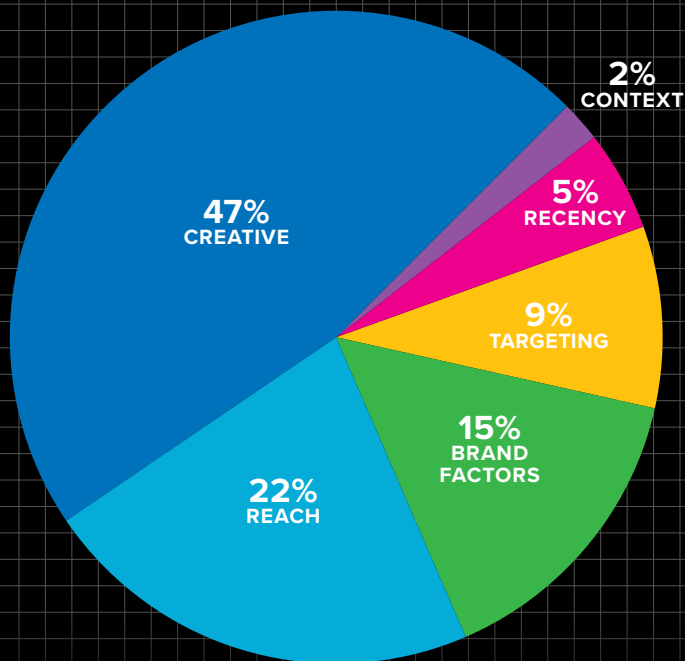
In the marketing world, it's the biggest question
that is debated—even obsessed about.

*Ask 20 people,
and you'll most likely get
20 different answers.*

*Ask 100 people,
and you'll most likely get
80 different answers.*

It's no wonder, then, that creative is both
the most important product in marketing communications—
and at the same time—**the most misunderstood...**





PERCENT SALES CONTRIBUTION BY VARIABLE

Source: Nielsen Catalina Solutions; 2017

CREATIVE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT

For every advertising campaign, brand and agency teams have to decide on an array of variables. It's important for marketers to understand how the different variables of advertising affect sales (aka behaviour) so they can make better, more informed decisions.

The Nielsen Company did a landmark study analyzing nearly 500 campaigns across all media platforms and identified the percentage of sales contribution by advertising variable. The research revealed 5 key variables in a campaign—plus brand factors (like price, market share)—that affect the overall results.

There's no doubt that creative is the undisputed champ in terms of sales drivers. And it's not even close. In fact, by itself, creative is almost equal to all the other variables combined! And it's over 2 times more important than that of the next variable (47% vs 22%).



CREATIVE IS THE MOST MISUNDERSTOOD

Creative has been said to be somewhat elusive, something that is hard to put your finger on. Some say you don't know it until you see it. Others have very strong "opinions" of what creative is. There are a lot of theories and hunches about what makes strong creative—all built on different points of view, ideas, and trends.

Sprinkle a little speculation-of-what-works on top, and it's no wonder that creative is the most misunderstood...

THE BUSINESS WE'RE IN

As creative marketers, we're in the business of influencing other people's choices. In essence, influencing other people's future behaviour. However, there are big obstacles in our way to making that happen. First, messages need to break through the noisy, overloaded clutter in the marketplace.

Then, messages need to get the attention of people who are busy and pre-occupied. And finally, messages need to be remembered in order to influence people's choices. For creative and agency teams, it's a herculean task...



NEUROSCIENTIFIC LAWS OF MEMORY AND BEHAVIOUR

There is, however, good news—a silver lining if you will—and at its core is based on neuroscience. Leveraging neuroscience, with all of its advancements in recent years, enables brand marketers to improve the probability of developing creative that is remembered and influences behaviour.

Most fields have only a few laws. Lots of theories, hunches, observations, trends, and rules. But laws—things that are always true, all the time—are few and far between.

The following laws are founded in current neuroscience research.



I. MEMORY NAVIGATES THE FUTURE

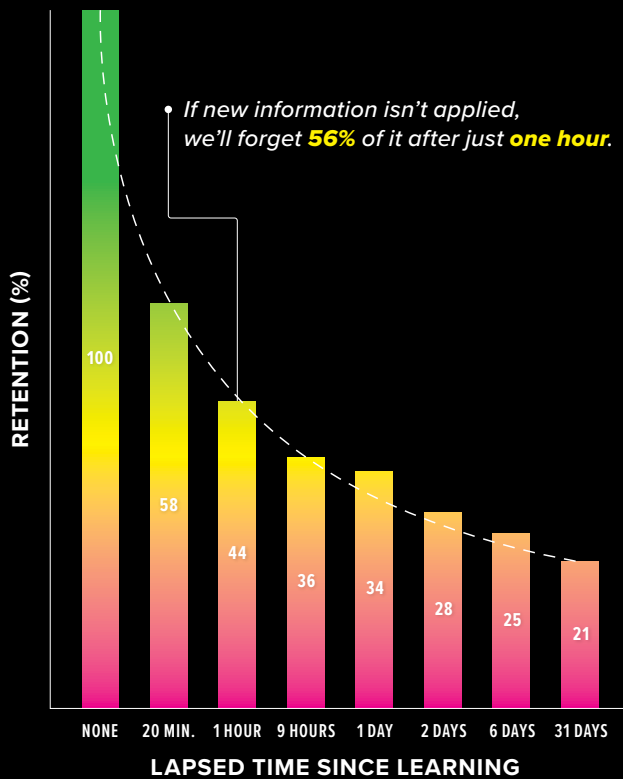
Conventional wisdom would have us believe that memory is all about the past. But, in reality, that is only half of the story. The other half is about the future. People can only act on what they remember, not on what they forget. So, if we want to influence other people's behaviour, our messages need to be unforgettable—they need to become part of their memory.

People take future actions based on what they remember—and memories are the fuel that helps them make decisions. As such, memory doesn't just keep track of the past—memory helps to navigate the future.

2. WHERE MEMORIES LIVE

Current neuroscience research suggests that memory isn't "stored" in any particular spot or part of the brain. But rather memory lives in the synapses or connections between brain neurons. These connections are known as neural circuits. This means that memories are neurally encoded in what is called a memory "trace".





3. THE FORGETTING CURVE

Psychologist Hermann Ebbinghaus pioneered the study of memory and developed the concept of the forgetting curve. It basically quantifies the time it takes for people to forget new information if it isn't applied.

And here's the rub. Most people forget more than 70% of new information—and they forget it fast! In fact, people forget 56% of new information within one hour—and forget 72% within two days.

4. 300 MILLION PATTERN RECOGNIZERS

According to Ray Kurzweil in his book “How to Create a Mind”, humans learn through a process referred to as pattern recognition. Essentially, there are approximately 300 million pattern recognizers in the human neocortex that are recognizing and defining a pattern—which in turn becomes part of another pattern—and so on.

Through the process of building patterns, each one of these patterns is essentially a metaphor—a representation of what is being learned—making the brain a metaphor machine.





5. HIPPOCAMPUS PLAYS ROLE WITH MEMORY AND BEHAVIOUR

The part of the brain called the hippocampus plays a major role in governing the neural circuits and the memory process. It organizes memories, consolidating them and preparing them for storage.

If the hippocampus is injured or does not function properly, people's memories are negatively impacted—faulty at best or have no memory at worst—making it difficult to make decisions and take actions, as future actions are based on what is remembered.

6. AMYGDALA PLAYS ROLE WITH EMOTIONS AND BEHAVIOUR

The part of the brain called the amygdala is responsible for handling emotions—especially detecting and responding to threats. This heightened emotional state results in the secretion of neurochemicals and hormones throughout the body—which directly governs decision-making and invokes action.

People's emotional state directly influences their memory. Neuroscientists are showing just how quick and powerful our emotional circuits are in the brain. According to brain imaging, emotional (unconscious) circuits process about 195 milliseconds faster than deliberate (conscious) circuits. Our brain encourages us to make choices (decisions and actions) well before logical thinking even enters the picture.





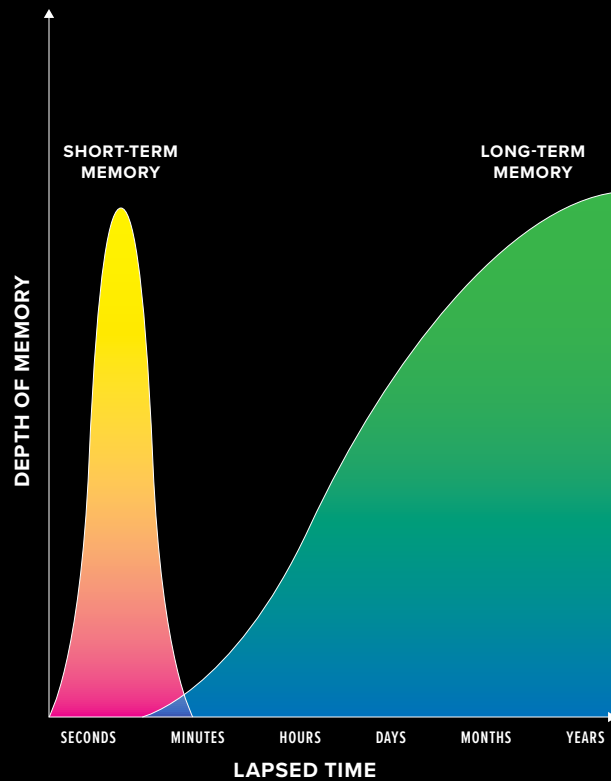
7. MEMORIES ARE EDITABLE

It's amazing how this works. As soon as you retrieve a memory, it becomes editable—just like a text document. Unlike a text document, a memory can get rewritten without your intent, consent, or even knowledge. New information gets grafted on to and stored with the old memory—all seamlessly, and without your conscious awareness.

8. MEMORIES ARE ASSOCIATIVE

The events and information that constitute memories link to one another in an associative network. One thing can “trigger” another—making recall more likely. Emotional triggers are especially significant. If there was a specific smell (or song) that was associated with a memory—encountering that smell (or song) again, even in a different context, brings back a stream of associated memories. This is one of the reasons why things like metaphors are powerful.





9. RECALLING MEMORIES

When you recall memories, they become easier to retrieve. The act of pulling a memory out can improve its future accessibility—or in other words—make it easier to remember. Frequency of memory recall is one factor that moves specific memories from what is known as short term memory to long term memory. The other factor is how emotionally significant the event or information is to the person.

IN SUMMARY

Understanding the neuroscientific laws of memory and behaviour offers a promising avenue for brand marketers to enhance their creative. By leveraging these insights marketers can craft unforgettable messages that resonate with audiences, influences decision-making, and ultimately drive action.





9 TECHNIQUES THAT MAKE MESSAGES MEMORABLE

As brand marketers, we're in the business of influencing other people's future behaviour. And people can only act on what they remember. So, if we want to influence other people, our messages need to become part of their memory. And there is no better way to influence memory than leveraging neuroscientific laws of memory and behaviour.

Many of these techniques may sound familiar. But knowing the neuroscience behind them—knowing why they improve memory—makes all the difference. Up to now, marketers may have been aware of these techniques, but used them accidentally or by-chance. Now, brand marketers can employ these techniques deliberately and on-purpose.

And, with practice, marketers can unlock the process of how to employ these neuroscience-based techniques.

These memory-makers or neuroscience-based techniques improve the brain's ability to remember. And memory is the foundation for influencing behaviour.



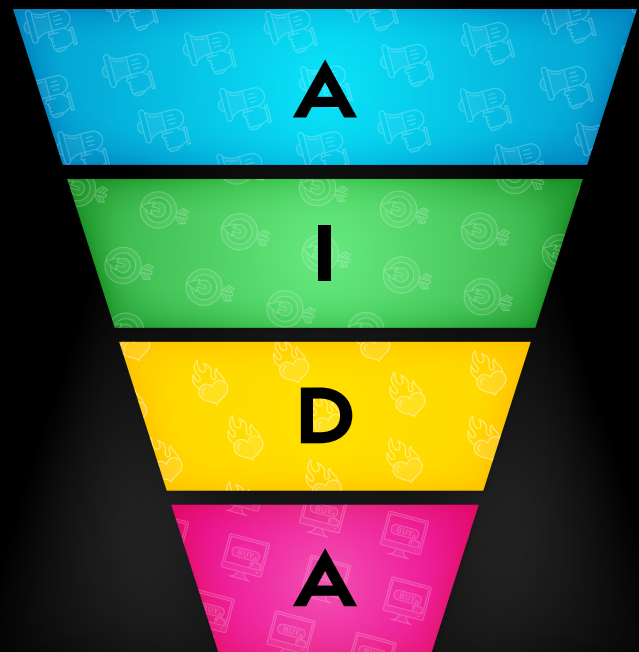
I. METAPHORS

This technique should not be a surprise, as it has been mentioned previously. (Reference sections *300 Million Pattern Recognizers* and *Memories Are Associative*).

The technique connects different things as if they are the same—associating them together—which provides recognition and meaning. By connecting new information/ideas/products to familiar information/ideas/products in a figurative way making them the same—makes the “new” easier to remember and have meaning.

2. ACRONYMS

An acronym is an abbreviation of several words in such a way that the abbreviation itself forms a word. That word may already exist, or it can be a new word. Usually an acronym is formed from the initial letters of other words—and is pronounced as a word itself. This process helps the brain make a series of words or a phrase easier to recall.



AIDA is a marketing model that outlines the four stages a consumer goes through when exposed to an advertisement: **Attention**, **Interest**, **Desire**, and **Action**.





3. SIMILES

This technique is a way of associating new things by making a direct comparison to familiar things. (Reference section *Memories Are Associative*)

Frequently, this is done by using the words “like” or “as”. For example, a new thing/idea/product is like a familiar thing/idea/product. In this way, the new thing is easier to remember.

4. SEQUENCE OF 3'S

This technique is also known as the Rule of Three. It states that any ideas, thoughts, events, characters, or sentences that are presented in threes are more effective and memorable.

The secret to the sequence of 3's has to do with the way the brain processes information. It turns out that 3 is the minimum number of elements the brain can use to create a pattern. (Reference section *300 Million Pattern Recognizers*)





5. STORY ARC

According to Brian Solis (in his book *X: The Experience When Business Meets Design*), brand campaigns are largely ineffective because they are not using the classic story arc. Rather than engaging with customers—brands scream and holler for their attention. In essence, companies are talking to themselves, saying how great their brand is, but not connecting with their audience/customers.

That's because the most common mistake made by many companies is assigning the role of “hero” to their brand. For marketing communications to be effective and engaging, the key is to assign roles as follows:

- **Protagonist (Hero)**—your audience/customers
- **Antagonist**—all the challenges, obstacles, and struggles the hero is facing
- **Mentor (Enabler)**—your brand, helping the hero (customer) overcome all the obstacles on their way to success

This story arc ensures that companies are engaging with their customers and communicating with them in relevant ways—creating an emotional connection with their brand.





6. RHYME MNEMONICS

Ever wonder why a poem or lyrics to a song are so easy to remember? Well you've just experienced rhyme mnemonics!

This technique works by tapping into how the brain naturally stores data. Strategically rhyming words (and sentences) can be used to improve communications by making information easier to recall.

7. ANALOGIES

An analogy can explain something unfamiliar by pointing out its similarity to something familiar. This immediately gives the unfamiliar thing meaning and makes it easier to remember. (Reference section *Memories Are Editable*)

Analogies can also make communications more vivid and engaging—important criteria when it comes to making things memorable.



The boiling frog analogy suggests that gradual changes in surroundings can go unnoticed until reaching a critical point of harm, likened to a frog in slowly heating water.



An array of apples, avocados, and assorted artisanal cheeses, adorn an antique armoire, adding an air of abundance to the artful arrangement.

8. ALLITERATIONS

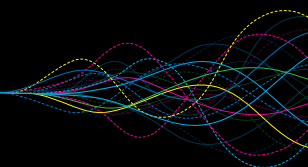
Alliteration is the repetition of the same letter or sound at the start of a series of words in succession whose purpose is to provide an audible pulse that gives communications a lyrical and/or emotive effect.

Alliteration creates a pattern which helps the brain to remember things. (Reference section *300 Million Pattern Recognizers*). Ever wonder why organizations like Ted Talks, DoorDash, Dunkin' Donuts, and PayPal are business names that are so easy to remember? Now you know!

9. PRIMING/CUES/NUDGING

This technique is based on the idea that by engineering (choreographing) the environment, you can influence the likelihood that one thing is chosen over another thing. (Reference sections *Memories Are Editable* and *Memories Are Associative*).

“Setting the Stage”—by purposefully using deliberate auditory and/or visual cues—the behaviour and decision-making of groups or individuals can be influenced in a pre-determined direction by tapping into their memories.



TO WRAP UP

As brand marketers, we're in the business of influencing other people's choices. In essence, influencing other people's future behaviour. And to do that, our messages need to be remembered.

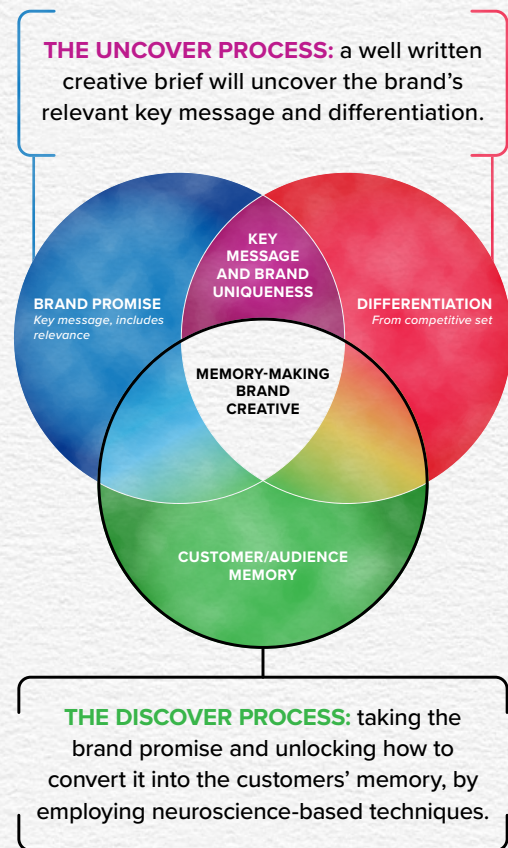
People take future actions based on what they remember—and memories are the fuel that helps them make decisions.

Leveraging neuroscience enables brand marketers to improve the probability (better the odds) of developing creative that is remembered and influences behaviour.

THIS IS THE BRAND MARKETERS' QUEST FOR THE HOLY GRAIL:

Creative that sparks imagination, ignites emotions, is on-brand, and memorable. It's how people make decisions, behaviour is influenced, and competitive advantage is created.

BEHAVIOUR-INFLUENCING CREATIVE INTERSECTS:



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

CLINT SZAKACS BUSINESS GROWER

I am very grateful to have the good fortune of being involved in marketing and sales for 45 years and counting. Along this journey, I've developed a special focus and keen interest in the intersection of marketing, sales, and human decision-making. In essence, the study of influencing decisions and behaviour.

"Change is the only constant" is a popular phrase in business, and has been for some time (often a lament). My approach is different, especially from a purely marketing and sales perspective. For me, "the only constant is human nature," and at its core is the study of human psychology and neurology. In other words, how we, as humans, are hard-wired.

This approach has led to doing a deep dive into how the brain works—and identifying the neuroscience-based laws and techniques detailed in this white paper. Want your messaging and communications to influence behaviour? Leverage human nature!

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To learn how to unlock the process and develop memory-making, behaviour-influencing creative—that builds a strong competitive advantage for your brand—let's talk...

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