

After These Messages: Shining a new light on what's beamed at us

by The Editors

As competition for our short attention spans heats up and advertisers attempt to find new and novel ways to touch our hearts and minds, a growing group of savvy consumers is starting to question the motives behind the messaging. Advertisers had better beware: They may soon find all those ad dollars going to waste and their messages hitting a brick wall. Welcome to the age of consumer skepticism – a.k.a. the Awakening Consumer.

For years, advertisers have been given almost carte blanche to peddle their wares, even if their products or services offered dubious benefits or in some cases actually did harm. An increasingly skeptical public, however, is throwing attention back on advertisers and the responsibility they have in ensuring their actions do not have negative consequences for society.

Now, as public opinion begins to coalesce around major issues such as global climate change and energy conservation, childhood obesity and diabetes, as well as a host of other social concerns, more scrutiny is being applied to what corporations, politicians, and stakeholder groups are saying.

Until now, there were very few systematic ways to evaluate the impact of messaging from an ethical standpoint. That's why Green Team has established *After These Messages* – a site where users can view and evaluate examples of communication on several different criteria. The results of visitors'

evaluations are then plotted on a matrix, where they can each see how their opinion compares with the average of other users.

Campaigns will be evaluated not only for the quality of their creativity, but also by a series of questions not normally associated with the creative review process. These questions are intended to help reshape the nature of traditional creative evaluation by introducing themes such as ethics, integrity, responsibility, and pride.

Registered members (registration is free) also have the ability to post any piece of communication for further evaluation. This can include advertisements (in any medium), newspaper and magazine articles, packaging, photographs, political speeches, and books.

The site offers discussion boards and encourages the free flow of ideas on the specific communications being reviewed, as well as general issues relevant to the communications industry.

Green Team hopes *After These Messages* will become a medium for Awakening Consumers to articulate their views on what's being projected by advertisers, while at the same time providing a useful resource for the creative community.