



Real Ad Men Talk About *Mad Men*

By Meghan Keane | October 17, 2008 | 7:32:43 AM | Categories: Mad Men



410 diggs Every week on AMC TV's *Mad Men*, the men and women at Sterling Cooper create and design retro 1960s ad campaigns, all while obsessively chain-smoking, drinking and womanizing.
digg it Looking for a little fact in the fiction of *Mad Men*, Wired.com is asking some real-world ad men and women to talk about the show's realism and relevance to the advertising industry today. This week, we spoke with Mike Doherty, president of Cole & Weber United.

Doherty has created award-winning digital brand experiences for clients from Nike, Microsoft, and Pabst Brewing to Jones Soda. We asked him to talk about this week's episode, his firm's efforts selling the space station to the American populace, and Peggy Olsen's strange new haircut.

Wired.com: This week on *Mad Men*, the creative group got bored of sitting around in the boardroom and decided to head out for lunch on the client. Is that what life is like at your agency?

Mike Doherty: Yeah, as I was watching that, I thought to myself: This is just like our office. Hold on, I have to stop drinking for a second and work.

Wired.com: Oh, sorry to interrupt.

Doherty: No, no. Watching the scenes in L.A., I thought "I wish." Everything is so lean now — those days are just gone. It feels like now you're trying to squeeze as many meetings into an airline ticket as you can, flying down in the morning and back that night so you don't have to spend money on a hotel room.

Wired.com: Before the Sterling Cooper team left for their free lunch, Peggy told them to create a product for women and come back to them. How often does that happen?

Doherty: Well, deodorants always say "made for a woman," but if you read the label it's probably the same stuff. It's really about how you present it.

Sometimes simply remarketing products can be very successful. When Nike wasn't connecting with women, we created *nikegoddess* and launched it with a website (*nikegoddess.com*) specifically aligned with how women view themselves within the world of athletics. It enabled women to navigate based on what they needed emotionally and physically that day ... e.g. Needing a lift, needing to connect etc. This was complemented with a mag-a-log and was so popular that it became its own retail concept.

Wired.com: Before Don Draper escaped into his bohemian Eurotrash paradise, he and Pete Campbell were in Los Angeles talking to their new customers: congressmen. How do you win over politicians with advertising?

Doherty: Well, it's actually about winning over their constituents. Cole + Weber worked with Boeing for about twenty five years. To gain support in Congress for funding some of Boeing's projects, we did mass advertising and got people excited about Boeing initiatives like the space station. Individuals aren't going to go out and purchase Boeing products, but across the country, we created this groundswell of support in swing voting areas and made it a source of national pride so that congressmen in swing districts felt compelled to vote yes.

Wired.com: How has that sort of campaign changed today?

Doherty: Today there would be social media ways of doing this. If you were trying to influence Congress, there are huge advocacy groups that have email lists and overnight you can mobilize an army of supporters with your Congressman's email address and the letter to send. Likewise, you could use social media and frequent flyer groups to get people excited about the experience they were going to have on a certain airplane, so an airline felt compelled to purchase a Boeing plane.

Wired.com: It looks like Duck is planning some sort of hostile takeover with that English guy from Fran Drescher's "The Nanny" sitcom (Charles Shaughnessy). Is Sterling Cooper in trouble?

Doherty: I was kind of laughing during that scene, because we're owned by a British company. Cole + Weber was a West Coast boutique when Ogilvy bought us in 1976 which was then purchased by WPP. What seems so out of the question and absurd in the show is now just kind of the norm. You're either really small and independent, or you're part of a network of some sort.

Wired.com: How do agencies interact with their networks usually?

Doherty: It really depends on the network you're a part of. Some networks are about the network first and the office second. But we're part of United. Cole + Weber United is an independent operating company first, and part of a network second, so we can leverage the advantages of our global network without having to sacrifice who we are as a company.

Wired.com: There wasn't really a lot of advertising in this episode, so I'm going to ask the question everybody's sure to be wondering: Was Kurt's Queer Eye makeover Peggy supposed to make her look better?

Doherty: It depends on how you define better. Peggy has moved up from a lowly secretary to a copywriter and yet still gets pushed around. I think this was an attempt to help her to begin to leverage her assets. And in the end, it got Pete's attention...