Creating recruitment advertisements can be a thankless task. Just ask any creative person who’s ever had to do it. These jobs always come in at the last minute, so there’s never enough time to do them properly, and let’s not even begin to discuss budgets!

Just about every industry will claim to be in the people business and every company will insist that people are their most important assets. Yet, chances are their recruitment advertisements, at least in terms of the effort put into it, reflect an entirely different set of values. Not many realise that a simple black & white recruitment ad can say more about a company than four full-coloured pages of corporate image ads. When asked to comment on two different recruitment ads, I tried to follow this line of reasoning and identify what the ads were really saying.

The first ad, which happened to be my favourite, is from Singapore Management University (SMU). What I really like about SMU’s series of advertisements are the instantly recognisable visuals. Their creative focus is always on the people. These include students, lecturers and, appropriately enough in this case, a member of staff. The headline is straightforward and reflective of what SMU does. The layout is clean and simple in keeping with its corporate image. My only gripe about this ad is the bundle of visually conflicting logos that now seems to be mandatory in every recruitment ad, not only SMU’s.

The ad that I felt was the weakest is by Asia Pacific Breweries (APB). One of Singapore’s biggest brands has apparently brewed up some “great career opportunities”. Sorry guys, I hate this kind of forced pun. And clichéd expressions like “select few” should be banned from all recruitment – and even property – advertising. The layout is rather ordinary despite the attempt to dress it up through a watermarked background image. Since the ad is for APB, which as the ad copy says, has a portfolio of over 40 beer brands, why does it feature the Tiger Beer brand so prominently? Oh well, at least they don’t have half a dozen accreditation logos at the bottom of the print ad.

It’s clear that the recruitment advertising scene is not what one could describe as a creatively vibrant environment. This also means that the time is ripe for someone to come up with a really hot breakthrough idea. I would like to wrap up this review with an appeal. To all those ambitious creative people who are keen to make your mark, remove those blinkers about deadlines and budgets and put your thinking caps on. You never know. One great idea for a tiny, no-budget, headline yesterday, recruitment ad could lead to awards, job offers and a big pay rise!

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