

MIZZOU

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Manifesto of an ad man

Associate Professor Steve Kopcha shares what he's learned since college

Introduction by Sarah Garber | Excerpt by Steve Kopcha | Photo by Nicholas Benner

Steve Kopcha, a 30-year advertising executive turned MU journalism professor, feels his professional experience in the advertising arena was in some ways, only preparation for his teaching career. He shares an excerpt of his personal manifesto, “82 Things I Have Learned Since I Graduated From College,” below. For more on Kopcha, check out the [Q & A](#) and see him [in action](#) at three MIZZOU magazine photo shoots.

What credentials do I have for counseling you?
Mainly that I’m an admirer of the great sage, seer, and borderline genius Yogi Berra, who once said: “You can observe a lot by watching.”

And I’ve been watching.

12. If you want to become famous in Advertising, do funny Advertising. Everybody — especially an Advertising creative competition judge — likes to laugh. (Well, maybe not everybody; I’ve had clients who must not have liked to, since they did so precious little of it.)

13. Playing in a band or performing on stage are two great ways to prepare for the Advertising



business; they make you acutely aware that there's an audience out there — and that your job is to get a response from them. It's Communication, pure and simple: message sent, message understood — and then something happens. In the band business, that “something” is people booty-dancing. In Advertising, it's people buying stuff.

22. I suggest: if at first you don't succeed, you might want to stay away from skydiving.

25. I have been happily married to my best friend for more than 40 years, so I know the secret to marital bliss: I don't try to run her life, and I don't try to run my life.

33. When you're creating Advertising, make sure you stretch way out to the boundaries of the envelope, and maybe even punch past them once in a while. It's easier to dial down outrageous wonderfulness (if you must) than to inject some into dull work.

36. In life, if you concentrate on where you're going and how great it's going to be when you arrive, you'll miss a lot of wonderful scenery along the way. My preferred method of living this concept is to straddle a big black Harley and ride long distances as often as possible. I recommend it: there's absolutely nothing like hitting the highway on your Hog to fill your life with serenity, meaning, joy, and bugs in your teeth. But please — be careful out there.

37. Try to carpool with your immediate supervisor, or your immediate subordinate. You will be amazed at how much work you can get done in the car, thereby leaving your office time free for schmoozing over coffee and cinnamon buns.

38. Speaking of journeys ... always try to live East of where you work. This way, the sun won't be in your eyes when you drive to the office in the morning, or when you go home in the evening. Little things mean a lot.

44. Stay current. Have teenagers. Watch Oprah and Dr. Phil. Graze the mall, alertly. Read those supermarket tabloids to keep up with what's happening in the Alien and Elvis and Paris Hilton and Britney communities. You will find, as the years go by, it's more difficult to stay on top of things, because pop culture seems sillier and more trivial to your jaded eyes. But hang in there: you've got to know what's happening in the world of your consumers, even if it means watching “reality” shows on TV — and caring enough to root for somebody!

54. Save as much money as you can. One shrewd way to do this is to disobey the instructions on shampoo. It always says, “Wet hair. Lather. Rinse. REPEAT.” I have found that you do not need to “REPEAT.” The savings really add up.

66. Speaking of love and happiness, let me put them together and remind you of what Crosby, Nash, Stills and Young once sang. Did you know they came up with the formula for true happiness, all the time? They did. They said: “If you can't be with the one you love ... LOVE THE ONE YOU'RE WITH!” That's brilliant: instead of wishing your present situation was somehow different, or how things would be better if only you were doing something else somewhere else with someone else by your side, do this: throw yourself wholeheartedly into

what you are doing, even if it's not perfect. You can do it: tomorrow morning, just say to yourself, "Man, this is great! I really, really like it." Even if it's not true, it will become true after a while. It sure beats the alternative of being growing older and grumpier and saying over and over, "If only ..." Try it. Love the one you're with. If you do, you'll never be unhappy. It's a lot more fun going through life that way.




67. One of my favorite things about the advertising business is the pleasure I've had of seeing young, eager men and women come into the business, learn their trade, grow, flourish, move up and become major players. Anytime I've felt cynical about our chosen occupation, I just look at the rookies; their energy, enthusiasm, and gumption have always restored my faith.

82. And that brings us back, finally, to where we started, 81 previous Things ago: Have fun! Have fun today and tonight. Have fun tomorrow. Have fun next week, next year, and all the days and nights of your life. There is nothing on earth I could wish for you better than that.

Thanks for listening.

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