

Propaganda writing

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“Who would you rather see live?” An uncomfortable choice many people in cities across the U.S. had to make. In April 2011 many Americans were faced with this question when they looked up and saw a peculiar billboard. On that billboard a mouse on one side and a smiling little girl on the other and in the middle the question is “who would you rather see live?” In cities such as Los Angeles, Seattle, Portland, Chicago and Baltimore people had their ideals tested and forced to ask themselves would they exchange a rodent’s life for a child’s life? The obvious answer to this question is the little girl. Anyone with a sense of humanity would choose the girl, and that is exactly the point. This billboard was put up by the foundation of biomedical medical research. A non-profit organization that promotes public understanding and support for biomedical research. Research that heavily relies on the use of testing on animals. This billboard was used to reinforce the idea that research done using animal testing saves lives. It also conveys the thought that if you’re against animal testing it means you want little children to die.

The foundation for biomedical research was founded in 1981 and is funded by hospitals and universities. Since its creation the foundation has been an advocate of animal research and common medical practices. The foundation for biomedical research believes that without the testing of animals we cannot safely test and find cures, medicine for several illnesses that will work on humans. The foundation for biomedical research has been dealing with declining support. In the 1990’s public support for the foundation was at 74 % but now it is at 50 %. On

top of declining support they are under constant attack from animal activist groups. So in retaliation they launched an 150, 000 dollar campaign, posting this billboards where ever they can sending the message in the most provoking way that their work makes a difference.

The opposing group is animal rights activist. Several animal right activist groups condemn animal testing because it is cruel and that animals are living beings and there lives should be cherished. Many animal rights activist groups claim that they are different forms of testing that are more accurate and does require the use of animals. Some of the methods they suggest instead of animal testing are:

- Invitro
- Computerized patient-drug databases and virtual drug trials
- Computer models and simulations
- Stem cell and genetic testing methods
- Non-invasive imaging techniques such as MRIs and CT Scans
- Micro dosing (in which humans are given very low quantities of a drug to test the effects on the body on the cellular level, without affecting the whole body system).

Many animal rights activist are very passionate about preserving the lives of animals and are unrelenting in their efforts of stopping all forms of animal cruelty and mistreatment.

The goal of the foundation of biomedical research is to regain support and attack back at animal activist groups. To achieve this with their campaign they careful use thought and emotion provoking images that would leave the greatest effect. The first thing to point out in this billboard is word choice. The term used in this ad that is the most provoking is “rather”. The word rather convicts you to make a choice but even more so, the cleverly put separation of the word in half with color design makes it in to two words. So now not only it reads “rather “ but also “Rat” or “her”. Asking people to think which is more important the life of a rat? Or a life of a fellow human. It creates a sense of obligation almost to subconsciously choose the girl. But also creates a sense of shame if your animal rights activist. It uses of a photo of girl and deceitfully making it seem you’re the cause of someone’s death. This technique completely wrong and built on a false premise of animal testing being the only option. To the casual animal rights activist or animal lover who are unaware of other methods might feel guilty that they are choosing an animals life over a humans life when advocating for animals. This billboard use of a cute little girl is also manipulative. They use a child’s photo to cater to a person’s sentiment but an unaware the bystander does not know how much of a misrepresentation the billboard is of the actual situation.

This billboard is a classical example of untruthful, bias and offensive writing, information and campaigning. As technical writers we want to write things for people to understand, learn and to follow. This type of writing does get a lot of attention and causes a lot controversy but it does not accomplish any good. If the foundation wanted to gain supporters they achieved the opposite and received less support. This type of writing is the kind that makes people angry and offended. And as technical writer for an organization like that you want people to join your side. There is a number of ways they could have done things differently.

Ex1: animal research leads to 100,00 lives being saved each year. (Picture of healthy patient)

Ex: 2: animal research came up with cures for: small pox, polio and malaria.
Also improved methods of managing diabetes and open-heart research.

Ex3; could you imagine a world with out insulin? Well thank the research done with animals.

These are just a few examples of you could use facts and accurate but crafty language to get across a point. People may not agree but they will respect it, look into it and even think about it more in a positive light rather than negative. Truthful language is much more effective in gaining support and technical writers should always seek to write in such a manner.