

What is This Ad Selling?

Article By:

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Today's winner of the latest "What the Hell are They *Selling*???" award is THIS ad I found for "The Moses, Bertha & Albert H. Wolf Fund"

First, let's discuss some things that make an advertisement *effective*.

An *effective* ad presumes that readers do *not* know the company or what it does (unless it's obvious, like McDonald's or Nike).



A Special Notice to all Lawyers Who Reside in or Practice in Cook County

The Moses, Bertha & Albert H. Wolf Fund

The Chicago Bar Association manages the Moses, Bertha, and Albert H. Wolf Fund to aid attorneys who reside or practice law in Cook County and are ill, incapacitated or superannuated. Through the Fund, the CBA provides financial assistance in the form of grants and loans.

Eligible recipients also include lawyers in Cook County who receive assistance from the Lawyers Assistance Program and are in need of medical assistance.

"I can say without hesitation that the generous support that I have received from the Wolf Fund has enabled me to receive medical treatment for several disabling conditions and prevented me from becoming homeless. My hope is that I will be able to return to the full-time practice of law and someday make a substantial contribution to The Chicago Bar Association's Wolf Fund in return for all the help they have given me. I am ever so grateful."

- Wolf Fund Recipient

 THE CHICAGO BAR ASSOCIATION

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It commands your attention with an eye-popping visual; it grabs you by the lapels and *shakes* you, to fight through the publication's visual clutter. No generic cliches or "safe" images.

The headline *compels* you to keep reading; it is somehow unique, clever, or intriguing.

In a two-second skim of the headline and graphic, it tells you everything you need to know. You'll know if you're in its target audience, and the basic message.

Unfortunately, perhaps 90% of any publication's ads, are so bland that they're effectively *invisible*. Few readers, if any, notice them; they fail to register on your consciousness. Any memory of their existence vanishes when the page is turned.

Among the few who *do* notice the headline, ~80% or more of *them* won't bother to read the paragraph of explanatory text. So you must tell readers who you are, what you do, and what you want them to know *in the headline* or you've wasted most of your money.

In other words, the headline is your only shot. Don't squander that valuable resource with something ambiguous or obtuse.

For that reason, at Fishman Marketing, we try to find a way to include (1) the firm's name, and (2) the word "Law" in every headline. Sure there are exceptions, but you can't finesse the rules until you have thoroughly mastered them.

So let's look at the Wolf Fund ad again. How many of these must-haves does *this* ad include? *None of them.*

The vague visual doesn't grab you. It's fine, but it doesn't clearly tell readers what product or service they're selling, or who the ad is intended to target — it's a generic guy looking at water. So the headline must work harder to grab you and convey the message.

The green headline is simply a bunch of names.

Actually if you were to bother looking more closely, you'd see that it's actually the name of a "Fund."

But it doesn't say who, or what *cause*, the fund supports.

So most of its target audience will flip right past it without realizing it applies to them. Few of its targets will stop and exclaim:

*"A man in silhouette and some names I don't know?
I must read the fine print to learn more!"*

The tiny text at the top, next to the tiny scales of justice icon, "A Special Notice to all Lawyers Who Reside in or Practice in Cook County," is too weak to even get noticed. Nothing above an ad's most-powerful visual element (here the strong green bar) gets noticed. Gravity and habit pulls your eyes *down*, you rarely go back up.

If you were to choose to read the text, it doesn't tell you to whom this ad applies until the fifth line of text, *i.e.* Cook County lawyers who are "ill, incapacitated, or superannuated." (Sorry, who says "*superannuated*?" Who knows what that word means? Why not just say, "too old to work?")

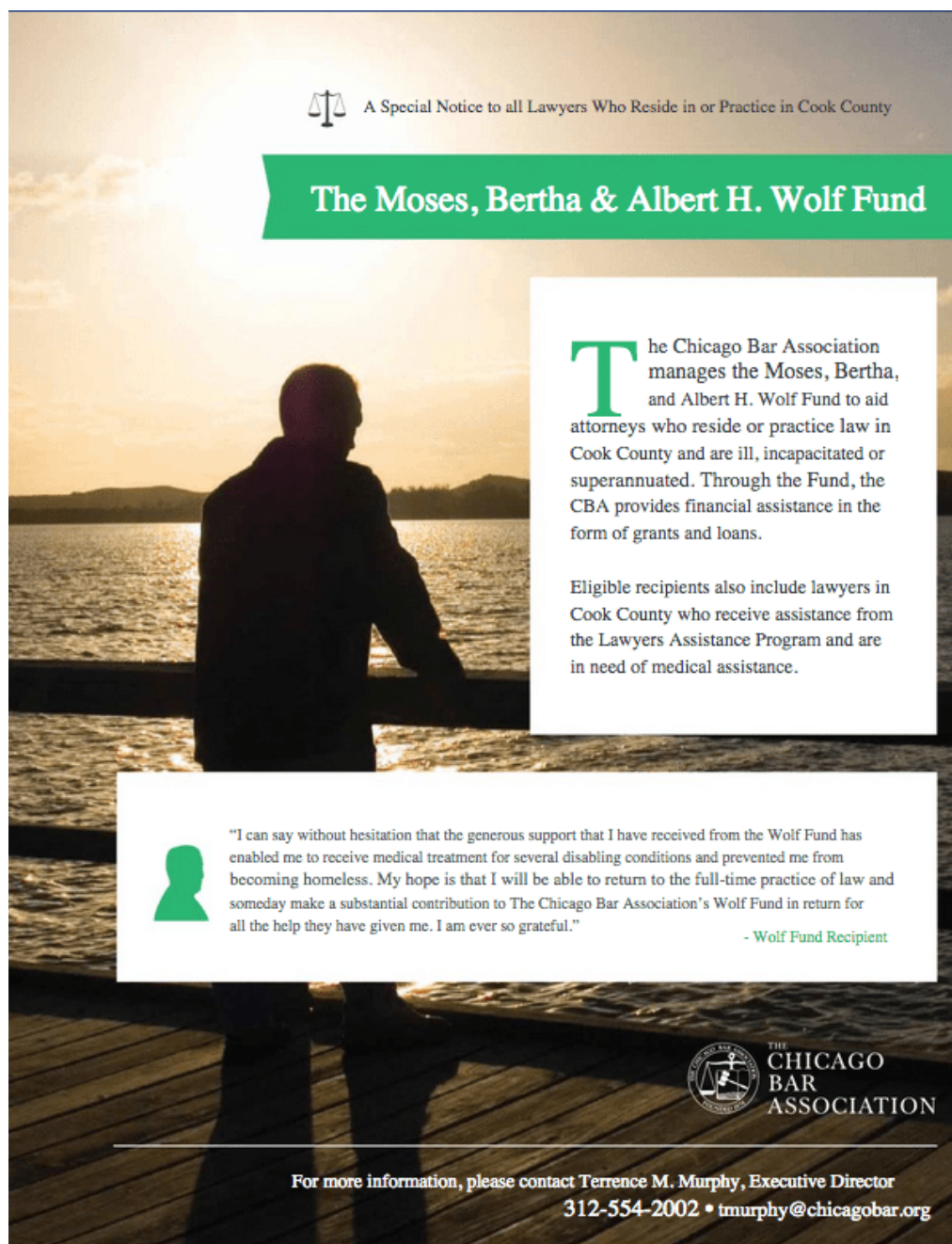
The headline should somehow convey,


"Cook County lawyers! *Are you ill?* There's financial help available!"

So does this ad achieve its goal? Does it inform disabled Chicago-area lawyers that financial assistance is available?

Probably not.
And that's a shame.

Because if you were to learn what this fund *does*, it sounds pretty great.




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