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— no holiday cheer in that firm, and we secretly began to call him “Uncle Ebenezer.”

I was reminded of that when I saw a BDO ad on television, touting the fact that clients could call a partner of that firm to discuss business at midnight. What they were trying to do was tout their dedication to client service. But I had to wonder what kind of masochist would want to work for a firm where you clients could assume you have no life?

Don't get me wrong. I've spent a lot of years in both advertising and marketing, and was doing that in the early days when the industry first began to grudgingly admit that a little advertising would not bring about the end of the universe. In general, I think tasteful and professional ads are good for the industry.

But you have to be careful about the message. The message should flow first, not from the fervid mind of an ad copywriter, but from the firm's mission statement. And the message, if delivered through a mass medium like television or the newspaper, needs to be weighed not just for its impact on potential clients but also on potential and present employees, vendors and referral sources.

You obviously can't stick to just the weary message of how precise your number-crunching is. That, in my mind, is as counter-productive as the current advertising for the dental industry — “We'll numb you so much you'll never know your teeth are gone.”

As an old ad guy — both copywriter and account manager — I'd love to see more firms touting their value as a trusted business adviser. Showing how accounting services can help startups survive. Showing the reasons why accounting is a grand and noble business profession.

There is a balance to walk in advertising an accounting firm that lies somewhere

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