JCPenney Priced for Life Campaign

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A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at Syracuse University

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Honors Capstone Project in __________________________

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Abstract

The JCPenney “Priced for Life” campaign was designed as Syracuse University’s entry for the National Student Advertising Competition, an event held by the American Advertising Federation. As a member of the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications team for the competition, I helped to make this integrated advertising campaign a reality.

The goal of this campaign is to retain women aged 25-34 who currently shop at JCPenney and also capture new customers who fall within that demographic. It is also designed to increase frequency and grow share of wallet among members of this target audience. The proposed campaign runs from February 2012 to February 2013, employing a budget of $100 million.

This proposal chronicles all major steps involved in creating an integrated advertising campaign. Beginning with defining the target audience, it presents the results of research we accumulated through surveys, ethnographies, and interviews. Using this information, it provides key insights into the targeted subjects’ mindsets and proposes strategies to develop advertisements that resonate with them.

This proposal also includes the campaign’s media plan, outlining the budget for each communications medium we use and specifying which media vehicles would best reach our target audience. In addition to covering both traditional and non-traditional media, this section of the proposal also proposes a new method of dividing media which is based on how well it engages consumers. These new labels are called “lean back,” “lean forward,” and “stand up.”

This proposal also includes creative executions that will be used throughout the course of the campaign. These creative examples are built around our new tagline for JCPenney, “priced for life.” They range from print advertisements to a Facebook application, to a new advertising medium we call “Livespaces.”

This proposal also extends beyond pure advertising, introducing new ways for JCPenney to show customers that it is priced for life. These include public relations events and partnerships with non-profits that will encourage other media outlets to pick up on JCPenney’s role in the community. In doing so, this campaign will reach consumers via multiple touchpoints. As these touchpoints help familiarize people with JCPenney and its merchandise, the campaign will achieve its outlined goals.
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Ed Russell, thanks for being my advisor and for giving me hope when it all seemed lost.

NSAC JCPenney team, thanks for being great teammates through thick, thin, and 5am in the morning.

Frosh Cru (and Honorary Members), thanks for everything – these past four years, impromptu adventures, and just being awesome.
Advice

The first piece of advice I received about this project came from my advisor, Ed Russell. In response to my question of, “What would look good to employers?” he responded, “Doesn’t matter. Do something that you love.” You’re going to spend a lot of time on this project, so make sure it’s something that you can eat, drink, and breathe when crunch time comes. If you’re reading this and you don’t have a capstone topic in mind, set the book down and start brainstorming now. All the advice below won’t be of any use to you if you don’t have an idea.

Talk with your advisor on a regular basis and be frank about the progress on your project. Mine would’ve never seen the light of day otherwise.

Apply the same train of thought to other professors you’ve met. I brought up the subject of my capstone with at least four others.

Get started early. If you don’t, come to terms with the fact that you may not have a perfect senior spring break.

On that note, have fun. Your friends will keep you sane throughout this crazy process, so make sure you keep up with them.
*The body of my capstone project is a transcript of the proposal book I and my teammates produced for the National Student Advertising Competition. Page breaks and layout elements are designed to reflect the final product.

**Priced for Life**

Katie wakes up every morning and asks herself, “Will I be able to afford my life today?”

**Meet Katie**

Katie is our target.

She’s 30 years old from Sacramento, California. She and her husband just celebrated their seventh anniversary. They’re off to a great start. Their first home is a fixer-upper, but Katie’s husband Matt isn’t nearly as handy as he promised he was. Katie’s a nurse, Matt manages a restaurant while going to night school, and their daughter Jenny just started kindergarten.

They’re doing better than they thought they would be at this point, but it’s been a getting a little tougher every year. They’d been counting on bigger raises, but with so many of their friends getting laid off, they’re happy they still have jobs. They’re sure it’ll get better. The question is when.

How do we get Katie, a 30-year-old woman from Sacramento, CA to rediscover JCPenney?
We needed to understand the world of retail and the women who live there.

“There is so much more to retail marketing then just moving inventory.”

**Amanda Nicholson,**
Assistant Professor of Retail Management at Syracuse University and former Divisional Merchandise Manager at Carson Pirie Scott

We read books, conducted surveys and led focus groups for over six months. We spoke with experts like Matt VanDyke, Director of Marketing Communications at Ford, and Jana Steadman, Senior Manager of strategic insights at MTV. Then we lived in the malls where our customers shop and in the digital world they retreat to when the stores close.

Our retail research consisted of a dozen books relating to retail marketing and eight interviews with experts on the subject. To better understand our target, we conducted forty-two ethnographies, five focus groups, ninety-one in-depth interviews, and two hundred ninety-four surveys.

We first took our quest for understanding into stores, developing a research technique we call Shadow Shopping. This combines observing shopping behaviors and interacting with customers to learn about their lives and needs.

Stepping back from the physical space, we found a need for a new type of research that exploits the advantages of the virtual world. Our Digital Ethnography involved talking with and listening to JCPenney followers on social
media channels, blogs, and product forums. Our count for digital ethnographies continues to grow.

Because we created Shadow Shopping, we needed to lay down some ground rules for the proper method of applying it practically. This is what we did:

1. Pick an unsuspecting individual from the target audience.
2. Trail her and observe which items catch her eye.
3. Approach during different shopping phases.
4. Ask probing questions about products and why she’s buying them.
5. Say thanks and leave politely.

Similar to Shadow Shopping, Digital Ethnographies were a new concept. Our journeys across the Internet revealed a few helpful tools which are listed below. These helped us to gauge the target’s perception of JCPenney

1. Paper.li and socialmention.com, where we found collections of every mention of JCPenney and competitors on Twitter and Facebook.
2. Google Discussions, Realtime, and Blog Search, where we found forums and blogs frequented by women in our target demographic.
3. Spezify.com, where we found YouTube videos and photos that are relevant to JCPenney and competitors or posted by these women.

Our research is ongoing. We have been deeply engaged with our customers in the digital sphere and continue to track them today.
Chapter 1

Loves to Shop, Hates to Spend Money

Katie springs out of bed. Hard to do, after pulling a late shift last night. She makes a PB&J for her daughter’s lunch and writes “Jenny” on the brown bag. Turning toward her calendar, she smiles at the sight of her best friend Steph’s wedding penned in for next week. She’s excited but bites her lip when she thinks about the toll it’s about to take on her wallet.
Our target for this project is females 25-34 years old. We looked at these women and identified their demographic and psychographic differences. They exhibit a range of life stages. Some are just beginning adult life while others have families and very different responsibilities.

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There is no quintessential 25-34 year old woman. But their differences are not nearly as powerful as what makes them similar. There are compelling human truths that unite them and define the insight underlying our campaign.

These women *love* to shop.

While Shadow Shopping, we talked with customers about their in-store experiences and found they were most excited about sharing their thoughts while browsing merchandise.

Cultural anthropologist Dr. Clotaire Rapaille explains this phenomenon, “[shopping is a] joyful life-affirming experience.” He also notes it “allow[s] us to get out into the world and reconnect with life.” Women use shopping as a chance, even excuse, to get out of the house. To them, shopping is not simply about buying. It’s “a wondrous experience filled with discovery, revelation and surprise.”
Women we spoke to confirmed Rapaille’s study. They love to shop!

“Shopping with my friends is my favorite thing to do.”

**Ashley, 29, Texas**

We noticed as the shopping process nears an end, excitement cools significantly. Standing in line, customers check the price tags of their selections and do the mental math. At the register they fumble with their wallets, make comments about totals and, in some cases, even put things back on the shelves.

These observations led us to the totality of our insight.

These women *hate* to spend money.

The walk to the register means that shopping and its pleasures are over. The thrill of browsing is replaced by a kind of remorse.

“I walk around the store picking up items I love but whenever I step up to the register, I can’t help but feel guilty.”

**Ashley, 29, Texas**

It pains these women to spend money. This has worsened because of the economic climate of the last five years. Stagnant income, massive job losses, and a devastated real estate market have decimated discretionary income in America. These young women have 70% less discretionary income than their parents had twenty years ago.

“There are a lot of great things in my life, but I can’t always enjoy them because I’m always worrying about money.”

**Marie, 29, California**
Living paycheck to paycheck is common. But this isn’t seen as an economic horror film, it’s reality. Everyone’s cutting back, and there’s less “frivolous” spending than ever.

This is a catastrophe for the retail industry. In a healthy economic climate, the Consumer Confidence Index has a rating of 90. It fell during the recession, and by 2010, had dropped to 52.5. (The Conference Board, 2010.) Department stores have adapted by slashing prices and quality to drive store traffic.

So what do you do with a classic love/hate relationship? She really does love shopping. A day at the mall with her girlfriends is a reminder of more carefree days. Sometimes she really misses those times. But it’s hard to spend money. Will there be enough? She’s heard rumors of layoffs. She thinks she’s safe, but who really is safe these days? And then there’s her daughter’s college...
fund. That’s been put off the last several years. She’s stressed and feels pangs of guilt. She just wants to enjoy it all like she used to.
Later that day, Katie grabs lunch at the mall. She browses the shops and lingers over some throw pillows. They’re perfect, but the price isn’t. Katie doesn’t shop like she used to.
The customer needs an ally.

The retail industry is fighting this trend with a “forever sale.” The red “% off” signs that cover every major store twelve months a year are just wallpaper to the customer.

“10% off? No way. I know I can get 60% off at the other end of the mall.”

Tracy, 27, Illinois

JCPenney is in a tough spot: the middle ground. Its dominant competitors are Kohl’s and Macy’s. Kohl’s offers competitive prices and Macy’s strength is style. Both price and style can be vivid differentiators. However, JCPenney doesn’t stand out because it lacks a powerful claim to either.

“You have to offer either the lowest prices or the highest quality and style. In a recession, it’s either Wal-Mart or Gucci.”

Susan Wayne,
Former VP Marketing, Old Navy

We found this perception of JCPenney common among these women. With 1,100 stores nationwide, JCPenney is everywhere except Katie’s consideration set. It’s what we call “ubiquitous invisibility.” This is the condition that occurs when a familiar brand is everywhere but goes unnoticed.
In order to re-emerge, JCPenney needs a Blue Ocean Strategy. This term was coined by W. Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne in their book of the same name. In terms of advertising, it means a strategy created in the marketplace where a brand’s position both reflects a core company distinction and introduces a new value proposition to customers. If everyone in retail is playing by one set of rules – price or style – we must rewrite the rules of the category.

We recognize price is important, in fact critical, in this economic climate. But to build a long-term relationship with Katie, we can’t focus only on discounts. We must supplement classical retail tactics with messages that powerfully connect to her life.

Retailers promote prices to “make their numbers.” But retailers seem to have forgotten the sheer joy of discovery and connection shopping brings, which is the real reason women shop.

Customers don’t believe large corporations care about them. They believe corporations care only about the bottom line.

But that’s not JCPenney.

Caring about its customers is ingrained in JCPenney’s DNA. Since its founding, JCPenney’s brand mission has been built on the most caring of human
principles: The Golden Rule. James Cash Penney, founder of the store, best lays this idea out in his description of the store’s opening day:

“When the sun rose of Kemmerer, Wyoming, April 14, 1902, it gilded a sign reading GOLDEN RULE STORE, and I was in business as a full partner. In setting up a business under the name and meaning of Golden Rule, I was publicly binding myself, in my business relations, to a principle which had been a real intimate part of my family upbringing. To me the sign on the store was much more than a trade name. We took our slogan “Golden Rule Store” with strict literalness. Our idea was to make money and build business through serving the community with fair dealing and honest value, and did business cash-and-carry.”

Today, JCPenney has earned accolades for customer service, its sustainability efforts, and using a human voice in all of its digital platforms. These prove on a daily basis that the company cares about its customers.

It’s time for JCPenney to do something game-changing and stand for higher-end benefits – repositioning itself as the customer’s ally.

With this foundation of research on both the customer and JCPenney, we next moved on to the creative brief, the document designed to inspire every creative execution for our new campaign.
Creative Brief

Challenge

Lift JCPenney to the top of the customer’s consideration set.

Consumer Insight

The target loves to shop, but hates to spend money.

Brand Insight

JCPenney uniquely understands the lives of its customers, the things they need, and the prices they can afford to pay.

Brand Positioning

JCPenney is my ally.

Single Minded Proposition

JCPenney is priced to fit my life.
There was no question what this meant for our JCPenney creative. It needed to acknowledge what our customers’ lives are really like – a daily negotiation between continual needs and limited means. Because JCPenney has everything these women need at prices they can feel good about, it invites them to enjoy shopping again.

This led us to our creative idea.

“priced for life.” Three words that completely capture the new JCPenney promise. They underline JCPenney’s legendary value proposition while celebrating the lives these women are creating.

Regarding design, we saw a lot of potential in the new logo JCPenney introduced in February, especially the red box element. The red box evokes a sense of movement, anticipation, and discovery. We’ve used it throughout our integrated campaign including shopping bags, pop-up stores, mobile apps, and other executions.

The same sense of anticipation led us to the concept of signifiers in our advertising. They are icons that signify larger life events. They demonstrate that JCPenney understands the emotional aspirations that bring these women to the store in the first place.
Chapter 3

JCPenney, Priced for Life

Steph’s wedding is a tough assignment; they’ve been best friends since third grade. On her way home Katie thinks about what she’ll need: a dress, a gift, new shoes, her hair done, nails painted. But there’s more she has to save for: the family vacation this summer, new clothes for her daughter, wardrobe for work. There always seems to be a need for something.
Print

Print executions parallel life events with the products they require.

Signifiers on the left page identify the life events that call for the items portrayed on the right. All of the items can be found at affordable prices at JCPenney.

Magazine ads like this will be placed in magazines that can be found in bridal, parenthood, women’s fashion, health and fitness, and women’s magazines.
**Girls Night Out**

We will launch our campaign in February by creating a new holiday called “National Girls’ Night Out.” Inspired by the Super Bowl’s importance in men’s lives, this will take place on the Friday following the Super Bowl. JCPenney will use email and Facebook to send “underground” invitations to women. We will offer coupons and deals on fashionable merchandise, and stores will be open late the entire week leading up to the new holiday. Representatives from specialty brands will also come to JCPenney to offer fashion advice. Featured brands will include: Allen B., MNG by Mango, and I Heart Ronson. Additionally, Sephora will host in-store makeover sessions. The coupons and deals will help increase shopping frequency and therefore grow share of wallet.

**Newspaper**

To honor one of the most important life events for our target, JCPenney will sponsor the annual bridal section in local newspapers. Offering an understanding of all the expenses involved, JCPenney will also include a “Coupon for Life” for all things bridal. This sponsorship will drive readers to use the JCPenney bridal registry and highlight their partnership with David’s Bridal. It will also advertise portrait and salon services. The coupons can be used by wedding guests or couples-to-be, encouraging them to shop at JCPenney for all their wedding needs.

**Yelp Banner Ads**

JCPenney will establish a partnership with Yelp, a site based on user reviews to find the best local restaurants, nightlife, shopping, entertainment, and
more. Our target often visits Yelp to find quality, well-priced deals. Based on the business description, JCPenney will sponsor banner ads of “what to wear” tips tailored to specific locations on Yelp’s website or smartphone app. The functional and stylish tips showcase JCPenney’s most popular brands like Allen B., MNG by Mango and I Heart Ronson. They will also include a link to the JCPenney website. If the style of the clothing matches with Katie’s personal style, she will be driven to make a purchase.

**Real Event Discounts (RED) Planner**

To help with Katie’s busy life, JCPenney hosts a custom calendar titled “RED Planner” on its website. This customizable calendar allows Katie to input important events and tag them by life events, such as “Birthdays,” “Anniversaries,” etc. She may also sync it with her existing digital planners or import information from Facebook. When an event is approaching, JCPenney sends Katie a relevant “Coupon for Life,” along with purchase suggestions. Additionally, the RED Planner will highlight the Salon, Portrait, and Gift Registry services where applicable. For example, the planner will offer portrait services when it recognizes words such as “baby’s due date,” “birthday,” “holiday,” “engagement,” “graduation,” and “first communion.” This RED Planner will showcase JCPenney’s relevant inventory and spur Katie to purchase merchandise through jcpenney.com. As a result of interacting with the calendar on a daily basis, her shopping frequency will increase.
Style Space

Sharing is an essential part of our target’s shopping experience. When Katie wants a friend’s opinion on a dress for her daughter’s first birthday, she adds it to her Style Space through the JCPenney website, mobile app, or Facebook. Once in her Style Space, Katie’s dress is viewable to her friends, who can give feedback or recommend other JCPenney products. This online space increases shopping frequency by allowing Katie to shop with her friends even when they’re not in the store, putting JCPenney at Katie’s fingertips.

Mobile

Katie has the benefit of adding items to her Style Space directly from her mobile phone. She can either scan or text the barcode to her Style Space account to add items to her closet. The use of mobile media will make JCPenney accessible to Katie wherever she is. 95% of these women have a cell phone, of which 90% use it to take pictures, and 65% use to access the Internet.
**Ambient**

The ambient is a fun, disruptive promotion for Style Space. Our clothesline moves JCPenney products in exaggerated sizes from one building to another, representing the sharing feature of Style Space. The clothesline leads to a billboard with a call to action, prompting customers to use Style Space.

**Pop-Up Shops**

JCPenney Pop-Up Shops are mobile stores selling products based on specific live events and parked in relevant locations. One example is a Pop-Up Shop located outside hospitals that offers new mothers and families a place to buy gifts more attractive than those available in hospital gift shops.
**Livespaces**

To anticipate coming seasons and the expenses they bring, JCPenney will introduce a new interactive medium. Called Livespaces, these will feature corridors that utilize projection mapping, a technology that transforms a space into a 360 degree interactive digital playground. Katie can interact freely with the environment, creating a uniquely disruptive experience. The projections introduce various games, such as beach volleyball, where after a short time of play the projections reveal everything needed for that life event.

**FindMore Kiosk**

JCPenney’s FindMore kiosks, which are available in certain stores, let users view all of the company’s available products. By moving the existing kiosks outside the stores, we can create more opportunities to engage consumers. We place the kiosks in transportation areas including train stations, bus stations, and airports within our target markets. Here, we will turn Katie’s waiting time into valuable time engaging with the brand. Kiosks placed in airports provide convenience for Katie while travelling. It allows her to rush-deliver items purchased through the kiosk directly to her travel destination.
**Back to School**

Each year, 56 million children go back to school. In 2010, the five week back to school period alone generated $1.48 billion in sales for JCPenney. No retailer currently monopolizes that event. Through the following print, television, radio, and non-traditional executions, JCPenney will own the back to school season and establish itself as the place to go for all back to school needs.

Radio/Pandora Script

September’s here. With each summer month, restless legs have grown, longing to stretch into new jeans. Little feet step away from sprinklers and into that first class, astronauts and doctors in the making. Magnets on the fridge wait patiently for that first great masterpiece as the promise of a new school year rounds the corner. September’s here for them, and JCPenney is here for you. JCPenney.priced for life.
Television Spot

The TV spot follows the premise of signifiers indicating life events.
Television Script:

To the PB&Js and the proud parents who made them, to the glistening hallways and the men and women who polish them, to the bus driver, to the crossing guards, to the coaches, teachers, and cafeteria crew: Welcome back. And to the 56 million kids who are getting back to school: Get dressed. The bus is coming.

This spot will run both on television and online, targeting shows and channels that Katie watches. The five most watched cable stations for her are A&E, Nickelodeon, Lifetime, VH!, and HGTV. Online, the commercial will run on Hulu and abc.com.
Back to School Expo

JCPenney understands that mothers like Katie need more than just clothing to get their children ready for school. To provide a convenient location for the complete back to school experience, JCPenney creates The Back to School Expo.

The expo will showcase all things back to school, from the latest clothing trends to booths featuring local tutoring services. It will generate revenue for JCPenney by creating another touch-point where Katie can make purchases. It will also raise shopping frequency after the event because Katie can return to JCPenney to satisfy future back to school needs.

Blessings in a Backpack

As a mother, Katie understands the differences nutrition and clothing make in a student’s life. She values supporting a company that shares her interest in education. JCPenney benefits the community through its existing JCPcares initiatives, and the following partnerships will effectively extend its efforts. JCPenney will its current JCPenney Afterschool program to leverage its current relationship with United Way of America. We will jointly partner with Blessings in a Backpack. This non-profit’s website describes it as “designed to feed elementary school children whose families qualify for the federal Free and Reduced Price Meal program.” JCPenney will sponsor underprivileged students through the Blessings in a Backpack program, and provide them with other school necessities throughout the year.
Modern Family Sponsorship

Modern Family is a humorous and accurate portrayal of the “new normal” in American family life. Featuring a wildly diverse family spread over three homes, the show centers around Claire Dunphy, a relatable mother and wife. It is the number two rated show in its time-slot and fourth most popular online. Our target are very heavy users of online TV, and abc.com content is viewed online more than any other network.

JCPenney will purchase ads running during Modern Family. As added value, JCPenney will receive exclusive sponsorship of three episodes (including online) featuring an integration of the JCPenney brand into one episode. JCPenney will also outfit the cast of Modern Family in a photoshoot to promote seasonal looks.
In-Store Experience

We know women love to shop, so we plan to give them the most delightful experience in the mall. For Katie, this means discovering what she wants for all the aspects of her life at prices that make her feel good.

It starts when Katie opens the door to JCPenney. Instead of a hundred different items on display, condense the selection to five. Too many options can make Katie overwhelmed, while a sampling of products will inspire her to explore. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, the father of architectural minimalism, claimed “less is more.” He’s right.

“In cluttered stores, my eyes just glaze over all the items. When it’s just a few things, I pay more attention to each one.”

Amanda, 25, Ohio

Once Katie enters her JCPenney, she must immediately feel the anticipation of an exciting shopping trip. That means bringing the focus off of the sales signage and onto the merchandise. Sale signs are crucial, as they inform Katie about the great prices, but making them more subtle allows the products to speak for themselves and bring the sense of discovery back to shopping. Only the latest trends in fashion are displayed at the entrance points to remind Katie that JCPenney has a lot to enjoy.

As Katie travels from one department to another, she wants assistance in pairing products with life events. Department signs, using the stylish design of the new logo, will transform sections of the store into life-themed spaces. JCPenney
becomes jcprofessional in office clothing. jcprom points out prom dressed and adds style to the department worthy of the event itself. Even sale signage takes on a style. jcpromotions point out sale sections where prices have dropped significantly.

The fitting room is critical, as it is where Katie decides if her selections really fit into her life. JCPenney will create fitting rooms themed to life events. Katie will choose an activity and appropriate scenery will be projected on the wall behind her. She can visualize herself at the beach, a night club or work. Putting Katie in these scenes will help her feel confident about her choices and build excitement about how the apparel will enhance her life.

In the jcpantry dinnerware and housewares section, displays will be set up to resemble real kitchens or living rooms. This will beautifully showcase the merchandise and allow Katie to better visualize it in her own home.

Once Katie has made her purchase, a nicely designed shopping bag becomes a walking billboard. Our bags will echo the attractive squares found throughout JCPenney’s advertising and the store and broadcast where Katie enjoys not just shopping, but buying. Why? Because JCPenney is priced for life.
Chapter 4

New Levels of Engagement

While her husband and her friends are watching the Super Bowl, Katie takes a break from the party to check her email. Logging on, she sees that she has an invitation for an event called “National Girls’ Night Out.” Intrigued by the title, she reads it and forwards the invitation to some friends. After seeing the deals that JCPenney is advertising, she decides to visit the store tomorrow.
The Media Strategy

We chose spot markets based on the Category Development Index, obtained from Nielsen Claritas in 2009, for the department store category. Because we are employing an offensive strategy of stealing share of wallet from competitors, we focused where category sales were the greatest, even if they were not JCPenney sales.

We chose the largest markets by DMA size, with an emphasis on the primary growth markets of California, Florida, and Texas. Additionally, the markets we selected have a percentage of women aged 25-34 above the national average.

The target markets for our campaign are listed below:

Albany, NY  Chicago, IL  Jacksonville, FL  Minneapolis, MN  Sacramento, CA
Austin, TX  Davenport, IA  Las Vegas, NV  Monterey, CA  San Diego, CA
Bakersfield, CA  Fresno, CA  Los Angeles, CA  Palm Springs, CA  San Francisco, CA
Baltimore, MD  Fort Meyers, FL  Lubbock, TX  Pittsburgh, PA  Santa Barbara, CA
Chico, CA  Green Bay, WI  Miami, FL  Reno, NV  West Palm Beach, FL
To effectively communicate our message, we had to figure out Katie’s media habits. We found that women like Katie use more than one medium at a time.

A typical media plan engages consumers when the advertising is running, but quickly fizzles when the media spend decreases or stops. We decided to create a media groundswell that starts strong and continues to rise as consumers interact with JCPenney, in order to avoid that pitfall.

We categorize media under the following terms based on customer engagement level:

**Stand Up Media** are the most engaging of our media. They are events and interactive displays that engage Katie physically.

Our stand up media will convert Katie to a brand advocate that will spread positive messages of the brand and invite people to participate in events with her. Our goal is to convert 40% of current, loyal JCPenney shoppers to become brand advocates.

**Lean Forward Media** are found on highly engaging digital and mobile communication devices that Katie uses for social interaction, information and entertainment. Katie uses them because she can interact with content and instantly give feedback.

We will develop a digital strategy combining different channels such as rich media display ads, frequently used social networks, as well as information and entertainment sites. The applications developed for these channels will drive profitable growth by including calls to action that drive in-store and online traffic.
Used throughout the campaign, this will create a sustainable competitive advantage for JCPenney. Our goal is to increase shopper frequency from 5 in-store and online visits per year to 6.6 in-store and online visits per year (+32% increase) and annual spending from $489 to $570 (+17% increase).

**Lean Back Media** such as TV, radio, print and cinema require less engagement because they can be consumed in tandem with other activities. They are best used by brands that already have significant followings and want to retain brand awareness.

Lean back media will ensure sustainable sales growth. Our goal is to increase number of shoppers in the target from 3.8 to 5 million (+32% increase).

The following graph illustrates how Katie consumes media throughout the day.
This graph illustrates the variety of media our campaign uses to reach Katie. Divided into Stand Up, Lean Forward, and Lean Back media, our advertisements allow her to engage with the brand on several different levels, all of which offer different benefits.
This illustrates how we allot portions of our budget to various media, as well as the timeframe for various executions.
Chapter 5

The Joy of Shopping

Katie walks around JCPenney draping clothes over her arm. She imagines wearing each outfit and discovers the perfect sun hat for the family vacation. She steps up to the register without a pause, and smiles as takes the receipt.

And by the way, Steph’s wedding was a blast.
Measurements of Success

We’ve suggested that JCPenney reject the current retail trends in advertising initiatives. We want to do the same with traditional metrics. Instead of asking customers to take a survey linked to their receipt after purchase, we propose something far more engaging.

Customers will be asked to opt in to a survey about their shopping experience via mobile phone if they use their JCP Rewards card or check in on Foursquare or Gowalla. If they agree to take the survey, they will receive a coupon for an upcoming life event based on their RED Planner or conversation with the cashier. The results from the survey will help us keep track of how we are faring in terms of understanding the customers’ needs. Through this mobile survey, we can find out what we’re not doing well and what changes we can make to gain more customers.

Given the plan we’ve presented, we expect to achieve the following goals:

Increase shopping frequency by target: +1.0 visits/year, +.5 online orders/year
Reach new customers: +1.2 million customers, +.05 million online
Penney Panel

As a part of our continued research, we assembled a focus group, affectionately referred to as the “Penney Panel,” to evaluate and copy-test our campaign.

The results were overwhelmingly positive. Priced for Life resonates with these women and echoes their life circumstances.

100% found the copy in our television, print, and radio advertisements relatable.

70% would invite their friends to National Girls’ Night Out activities at JCPenney.

100% said that they would invite their friends to join them on their Style Space accounts.

85% of people who previously did not believe that JCPenney meets their life circumstances were converted.

Based on the positive perception of our campaign by the Penney Panel, our achieved reach and frequency goals, and projected financial impact, our campaign will generate an 8% increase in total sales, which represents growth of 53% among the target, and total revenue gain of $1,382,900,000 for JCPenney in 2012.
Reflective Essay

In my opinion, there should be three types of honors capstone projects: capstone essays, creative projects, and advertising campaigns. This may be a bold statement, and one student’s opinion isn’t going to transform the honors program, but I think something should be said for a project that leans equally on both research and creative elements.

As you know from reading the preceding materials, this honors capstone wasn’t written in a vacuum. I worked on it with a team of fellow advertising students as an entry in the American Advertising Federation’s National Student Advertising Competition. The AAF and the Renée Crown Honors Program were looking for different things regarding my involvement in this project. The former was concerned with my copywriting ability. I’m listed as a copywriter on the credits page of our proposal book, and they wanted to see how good of a wordsmith I am. The Honors Program wanted me to demonstrate that my time spent at Syracuse has helped me grow as a student, particularly in the field of advertising. They wanted to see a full campaign, a true “capstone,” that went above and beyond the core requirements of the advertising major. My task was to reconcile these two expectations in a project that fulfilled the requirements of both of these groups.

Perhaps it’s strange to begin a reflective essay with an overview of the research process, but it played an important role in the development of our campaign. On the other hand, the advertising field calls for creativity in all of its constituent elements, not just the execution of advertisements. Our research
strived to seek out new opportunities to reach consumers. Ethnographies are a standard in advertising research, but we performed digital ethnographies as well, making use of a number of digital tools to track mentions of JCPenney and gauge how people perceived the brand.

The timeframe for this spanned both semesters of the 2010-2011 academic year. Research for JCPenney began in conjunction with Dr. James Tsao’s research class in the fall semester, though the members of the NSAC team weren’t formally announced until a few weeks before winter break. The class was divided into separate teams that researched different elements of JCPenney. The topics ranged from how women’s different stages of life interact with shopping methods, to how retail manages its relationships with customers to the impact of specialty brands on JCPenney.

When we looked at the collection of research reports, there was a wealth of findings that would inform our planning strategy, but there were still holes that we wanted to fill. We felt that there were a few topics that deserved more attention, such the in-store experience and “mommy blogs.” Our team split into pairs to further research these subjects. I and my partner were assigned the subject of coupons. We looked at both traditional and digital coupons and found statistics tracking their usage. Coupons seemed to be a significant incentive among consumers, particularly the customer audience that we were targeting. Young members of the audience in particular appeared to be swayed by coupons with significant discounts, as these women are not as loyal to particular brands as older women who have been purchasing from retail stores for longer parts of their lives.
In retrospect, this was a great introduction to the management side of advertising. As one of the last students on the old advertising creative track, I came into this project with minimal background on how to track down information for various campaigns. Even though I was familiar with databases like MRIplus and LexisNexis, those didn’t provide the sort of information we were looking for in our research. By working with members of the management team, I received crash course training in advertising research. Although the coupon research was designed as a small part of the big picture of retail, it helped to ease me into the position of an active researcher.

We compiled this collection of research and had a much better idea of what the target thought of JCPenney. But, that wasn’t enough to build a campaign—we also needed to form our own opinions of the store. All of us had already been inside a JCPenney store, but when we went to the one at Carousel Mall, we entered as aware participants of the whole in-store experience. Walking around the store, we took mental notes of the layout of the store, how the departments led into one another. We commented on the size of the inventory, how it appeared that they didn’t keep anything in the back, but made a point of putting everything on the floor. We couldn’t help but notice the red signs that permeated the store, how they pointed out every deal, of which there were a lot.

Perhaps more telling were the occasions where we picked up merchandise and made comments like, “I didn’t know they had this.” I realized on this trip that all the JCPenney ads I was familiar with highlighted the store’s fashion merchandise. This moment of recognition marked a turning point in my
conception of JCPenney. Rather than thinking of it as a clothing store, I started to think of it as a store that offered a variety of items, all of which relate to different parts of life.

We returned to campus with new insights into both customers, who we talked with about their experiences at the store, and into the store itself. This helped shaped our understanding of JCPenney as a brand. This first-hand experience, combined with our secondary research from digital sources, formed the foundation upon which we could build our integrated campaign for JCPenney. At times, our creative method may have diverged from how it’s done in the advertising field, but we felt that the circumstances called for a new approach. Rather than twiddling our thumbs and waiting for the strategy team to deliver a creative brief and the media team to tell us what media we needed to use, we worked in tandem with them. As a result, we produced a creative brief that articulated JCPenney’s challenge of reentering the target audience’s consideration set and a media plan that offered a new definition for advertisers to think about how media engage consumers.

We extended our creativity to elements of the campaign that normally are not known for their creativity. The rationale for this lay in the belief that it makes more sense to draw creative inspiration from pieces that practice what they preach. Dry creative briefs and media plans demand more imagination from creative team members. Interesting ones, however, make the process easier by beginning to inspire creative executions.
As a copywriter, my role in this process was helping the strategy team write a creative brief that was succinct in its presentation of JCPenney’s situation without losing any of the facts. I worked with the strategy team to produce a piece that retained all the information they wanted to present without becoming too lengthy. Similarly, I worked with the media team to present the plan in a way that creatively demonstrates how the different media will uphold the campaign and engage customers on various levels. These posed challenges for me in regards to having to convey information that’s integral to the campaign to both fellow creative team members and people who aren’t as familiar with the store as we had become. Because both of these pieces were going to be placed in the proposal book, everything needed to be explicit in its meaning without being wordy.

The biggest challenge of this portion was defining the target audience. Drawing from the research report that discussed the shopping habits of women in different stages of life, we originally had three targets for our campaign. Named Mary, Ashley, and Jane, these conceptual targets represented three core types of the intended audience of women between the ages of 25 and 34. Mary was a married mother skewing toward the older end of the spectrum with one child and expecting another. Ashley was 25, only a few years out of college, and beginning her first real career. Jane fell somewhere in the middle of these two and was described as a woman about to be married and beginning to settle down.

Whenever we came to these targets as a creative team, they continually bothered us. Every time we held up an advertisement idea to these character sketches, we found that at least one of the women wouldn’t identify with the
proposed execution. We soon realized that the number of advertisements that would appeal to Mary, Ashley, and Jane wouldn’t be enough for an integrated campaign. Taking our concerns to the strategy team, eventually condensed our target into one woman: Katie. At first glance, she seemed like Mary. She was a 30 year old married mother who had settled down with her husband and young daughter. Our rationale for this choice lay in her history. She had lived life in Ashley and Jane’s shoes, and was familiar with the choices they made in the course of their lives.

As we continued to flesh out her background and personality, this choice actually proved beneficial for the whole campaign. We came to view her as the main character of her story, a perspective that was aided by my minor in English and Textual Studies with an emphasis on creative writing. This also influenced the layout and design of our proposal book, which presents the campaign, research, and executions in tandem with the story of Katie. The story follows the journey of how she becomes a JCPenney customer. Our goal in doing this was to invite people reading the book to identify with Katie, because there are pieces of her character in all of us. Particularly in the wake of the economic downturn, everyone places value on saving money. Although this aspect of Katie’s character drives her shopping habits, she exhibits a resiliency that drives her to continue to provide for her family. We found this to be her most admirable quality and wanted to create a campaign that helped to bolster this personality trait. In doing so, we positioned JCPenney as an ally to shoppers throughout the nation and strived to create advertisements that echoed this sentiment.
The bulk of the project, however, came from the executions that we produced as members of the creative team. These executions ranged from the deceptively simple tagline that names the campaign and accompanies the logo in every media execution to the fully produced television spot that we created together with a TRF class. In developing these advertising executions, we drew from lessons learned in past advertising portfolio classes.

Strategies for coming up with creative ideas for advertisements vary from person to person. Some people prefer to work alone, while others thrive when it’s a team process. Some draw mind maps in which they connect the product or service with related words, while others try to associate them with completely different concepts. Because the creative team had eight members, each of us had various methods for discovering new ideas. This was both a blessing and a curse. There were times when opposing trains of thought threatened to impede forward movement. In these situations, uninvolved parties helped to point out merits of both styles. For example, in one meeting that was running late, there were two opposing schools of thought on the act of self-censoring. One person believed that the best way to reach our best work was to put every idea on the table. Someone else was of the mindset that dictated only ideas with kernels of potential should be presented to the whole group. While the general majority of the group tended advocated the former attitude, we did so with the caveat that some self-censorship would be in the best interest of everyone’s time.

This process helped me to become more aware of my own style of brainstorming. Due to the nature of previous portfolio classes, I had been
accustomed to developing creative ideas on my own. This left more room for me
to entertain every idea that sprung to mind, even if it resulted in little opportunity
for further development. This high number of ideas came from my style of
intimately familiarizing myself with the product or service being advertised. This
in turn led me to a better understanding of how I first approach making
advertising concepts. I also became more conscious of my inclination to look for
verbal rather than visual ways to convey the advertising message. Even though
advertising makes equal use of words and pictures, I place more emphasis on the
strength of attention-grabbing headlines, succinct taglines, and informative body
copy.

Working with a number of art directors on this campaign helped stretch
my process to include giving equal importance to the visual element of
advertisements. Especially in the realm of fashion advertising, the visual aspect of
an execution far outweighs the verbal part, sometimes to the point of eliminating
words entirely. Our resulting campaign wasn’t exclusively based on JCPenney’s
clothing, and did rely on words as much as pictures, but it taught me to give visual
solutions a chance to convey the message, especially when verbal solutions are
less effective at doing so.

Despite this new strategy of developing advertising ideas, it was not one
that I could apply to the tagline. Earlier, I alluded to this element of our campaign
as “deceptively simple.” What I mean by this is the fact that a campaign’s tagline
is present everywhere, and therefore has to convey everything from the brand’s
attitude to what the campaign is about to how the product or service solves
consumers’ problems. To give an idea of how we treated this part of the campaign, we had four different meetings as a creative team devoted just to creating the perfect tagline. The notes from those meetings alone would be as long as a capstone project. From all of the research that we had assembled, we knew that we wanted the tagline to position JCPenney as a retail store that has more merchandise than just clothes. To that end, we entertained the idea of “that’s it” for a short time. However, the variety of implications that people could associate with that short phrase led us to pursue other avenues. We then experimented with plays on words that emphasized deals and value. The problem with most of these was the suggestions that JCPenney was cheap and low-quality. The tag line’s turning point with the insight that, for people who already shop at JCPenney, the store is an irreplaceable part of their lives. Inspired by this understanding, we wanted to write a tag line that introduced the store as a partner in navigating events that happen in life. We struggled with the idea of JCPenney being something “for life” before one of our art directors walked to the whiteboard and wrote “priced for life.” It was just what we needed.

Another core element of any advertising campaign is the brand’s logo. When we first received this challenge, JCPenney’s logo really just word treatment – the name JCPenney placed inside a red box. Part of our intended plan was to refresh the brand with a new logo that made it modern and more appealing to a younger audience. As members of the advertising community, however, we caught wind of the company planning to reveal a new logo and campaign in February, coinciding with the 83rd Academy Awards. The store was one of the
show’s biggest sponsors, running seven commercials during the course of the broadcast. The new campaign idea, building off their former “New Look, New Day, Who Knew?” campaign claimed, “We make it affordable, you make it yours.” Our proposal didn’t need to interact with this line at all, but the same couldn’t be said for the logo. The new logo, which had been designed by a student at the University of Cinncinnati, retained the red box, but positioned the name so that only the “jcp” letters were inside. Our initial reaction was mixed. We had been hoping to create a new logo for the company ourselves, but decided that it would be unreasonable to propose a new logo only a year after this one was introduced. This choice worked in our favor, as the AAF and JCPenney later told all student teams to use the new logo in their executions.

As time passed, however, the logo grew on us. We appreciated the fact that this logo was more modern than the previous one. We also realized that the box conveyed more about JCPenney than we first realized. Even though it shares the same color as the logos of competitors Macy’s and Target, the fact that it is a square sets it distinctly apart from both of these shapes – a star and circle, appropriately. It also evoked a feeling of anticipation, suggesting the moment before a person opens a box to receive a gift. On a more personal note, it also recalled the store’s “It’s all inside” tagline that I and my teammates remembered from when we were younger. By the time we had reached the end of developing our proposal book, the box had become such an important part of the campaign that, with the exception of a couple technical requirements, it was the stand alone as the only image on the cover of our proposal. We made this aesthetic choice for
the same reasons that we liked the box in the first place – it built a feeling of anticipation, inviting people to open the book and see what was inside.

Although this reflection essay makes it appear as though the creative process was carried out in a methodical and organized manner, this is far from the truth. While we were trying to settle on a tagline and figuring out what to do with the logo, we were simultaneously beginning preliminary brainstorms about how we could give this campaign tangibility. We were also working in the shadow of a national victory – Syracuse’s NSAC team won first place at the national competition sponsored by The Century Council two years ago. We were reminded of this fact throughout the course of development, both by our advisors and ourselves. I would be lying if I said that there was no pressure involved, but we believed that we could achieve the same result if we applied ourselves and were smart about the decisions we made.

From the beginning, we knew that we were going to use traditional media like magazine advertisements and television commercials. We also knew that digital media would play a strong role in the campaign, though it was too early to tell whether those would take the form of Facebook interaction, banner ads, or mobile apps. There was originally a little contention on the subject of radio, but I pointed out that we could also use those scripts as advertisements for online radio, such as Pandora and Grooveshark. We also kept our eyes open for new methods of advertising, though we trusted that the media team had a better grasp of that area and would present new opportunities to us as we built the campaign.
Ideas for our traditional media stood to be the most influenced by our tagline. Renamed “Lean Back Media” by the media team, these sorts of advertisements needed to convey the core idea of our campaign as explicitly as possible. Lacking the engagement levels of other types of media, they needed to be memorable and separate themselves from the cut-and-paste advertisements of other retail stores. We looked at print and television advertisements from JCPenney and its competitors and saw that a lot of them looked the same. We wanted to create a unique style that would ensure that people instantly recognized our executions as advertisements for JCPenney.

The most effective way to do this was to come up with an original style. Originality plays an important part in putting together any advertising campaign, and every other time someone made a suggestion, someone else would point out that it was too similar to a different company’s campaign. The one company that kept coming up was Target, a brand that has defined itself as “cheap chic.” The fact that it was a retail store that advertised all its wares appealed to us. Like them, we wanted to show that JCPenney’s has products for everything that comes life’s way.

It was a moment of serendipity that finally brought us an idea that we could make JCPenney own. Realizing that big life events such as marriage and a new job are usually preceded by an indicative object, we decided to build our campaign on that relationship. We labeled these indicators “signifiers” and the events “signified,” even though our idea had no connection with the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure.
After this breakthrough moment, our creative output started gaining momentum. We brainstormed major life events that require buying new items that JCPenney offers. Starting a new job. Getting married. Having a kid. Family vacation. Back to school. Each of these could be foreshadowed by an object as small as a business card or “It’s a Girl” balloon. These provided the impetus for our print advertisements. We thought the back to school season also had the most potential for developing a television commercial, and started working on that script. In doing so, we found that this spot lent itself to a larger signifier that was even more related to back to school: a school bus.

We looked at digital opportunities for advertising at the same time. The media team had started referring to these types of media as “lean forward media.” Our research had shown that JCPenney placed emphasis on its digital initiatives, and was one of the first department stores to make its merchandise available online. We were impressed with what they were doing on social networks like Facebook and Twitter, and we wanted to expand on that established presence. We believed that creating a new Facebook application that would interact with and influence how women shop would be the most effective use of that space.

We brainstormed several ideas, but we always returned to something that would allow women to comment on their friends’ wardrobes and make new suggestions. Named StyleSpace, this digital execution included a mobile application extension. Customers who downloaded the app would be able to scan tags on their clothes, uploading them to their personal StyleSpace closet. Women could use this digital space to interface with their friends on Facebook and see the
clothes they had bought from JCPenney. In a similar vein, we explored a partnership with Yelp, a website that lets users find and review local businesses. Our partnership with them placed banner ads on strategic pages that made recommendations on what sort of clothes people should use at different businesses based on the formality of the attire required, city culture, and current climate conditions.

Even with these traditional and digital concepts, we wanted to create something new that would add another dimension to our integrated campaign. The media team had started calling this area “stand up media,” referencing the idea of getting people actively engaged with the brand. We as a creative team also kept our eyes open for new media opportunities that would grab people’s attention. We found the answer to our problem when one of our members emailed a video of a new technology called projection mapping.

When this technology is installed in a white space, it projects patterns and designs to give the space realistic-looking color. Furthermore, people can interact with elements of the projection in real-time, giving them the power to change the environment. It may sound unprofessional, but we were blown away by this technology and immediately started brainstorming how we could turn it into something that could function as an advertisement for JCPenney. Returning to our idea of signifiers and signified events, we realized that we could outfit spaces with projection mapping and use it to transport people to these different events. The example that we most fully concepted was based on family vacation. When people walk into the space, they find themselves on a beach where they can
interact with several elements, such as being able to throw a projected volleyball back and forth. In working on this idea, we knew that this execution would grab peoples’ attention and engage with them.

After we had developed the main components of our campaign, we researched how JCPenney’s audience would receive it. Contacting women who had helped us in preparatory research for the project, we asked them to complete surveys asking for their opinions on our proposed executions. They said that the “priced for life” claim resonated with them and that our creative executions made it believable.

As we neared the deadline for submitting our proposal book, I was placed on the team responsible for compiling all of our materials within a 32 page book to present our campaign to the NSAC judges. The primary pieces of information I wanted to convey were where we diverged from the type of proposal the judges had become used to seeing in the competition. The character of Katie was particularly important. If the judges found themselves incapable of identifying with her, none of the campaign would make sense to them. Our strategy for writing the book was admittedly flawed, as we wrote five drafts for it and each of them was drastically different from the one before. The length of the book also limited the number of executions we could present, and we were saddened whenever we needed to cut something from the campaign.

As I mentioned, this entire process was strange to me due to the fact that I had two audiences. Ultimately, I chose to treat the campaign as the entry for the NSAC, and the whole process as my capstone project. The result was a project in
which I had to be aware not only of what I was doing, but also why I was doing it. This external perspective was both a blessing and a curse. I believe that I grew as an advertiser and copywriter by analyzing how I worked, but it disadvantaged me at times when I needed to be “in the moment.” It also forced me to experience projects like this with a sense of detachment – as an external observer looking in. On one hand, it enabled me to draw connections that I otherwise would not have been able to see. On the other hand, it’s a difficult habit to turn off, as you probably have noticed every time I meta-reference this capstone project.

In summary, this is more than a capstone for my major, as honors would have it. It’s a capstone for my college career. Yes, advertising has played a significant role in that, but the shaping of my nature was even more important. As of this writing, we have about two weeks until we make our presentation at the regional competition. We may not progress to the national competition. I may not even graduate with honors. But I have relished every step of this adventure.
Summary

This new advertising campaign proposal for JCPenney came about as Syracuse University’s entry for the National Student Advertising Competition. Sponsored by the American Advertising Federation, this is competition is open to colleges throughout the country, particularly their advertising clubs, and welcomes students to refresh brands and their promotional efforts.

Because of this nature of the capstone, there were a few parameters that I (and the rest of the Syracuse team) had to follow. JCPenney and the American Advertising Federation defined the campaign’s goals: acquire new female customers between the ages of 25 and 34, retain current female customers between the ages of 25 and 34, and increase shopping frequency and share of wallet among all female customers in the same age range. In other words, we wanted to expand the store’s current customer base, encourage them to shop there more often, and increase the percentage of discretionary income spent at JCPenney. We worked within the constraints of a $100 million budget and targeted the time frame between February 2012 and February 2013.

The first step in developing the campaign was research. We looked at both JCPenney and the intended target audience. While the former helped build a foundation for our understanding of JCPenney, the latter allowed us to identify with the target audience. In advertising, we try to condense this concept of “the target audience” into one individual. We conducted surveys and focus groups with women in the age group. We also looked online to see what they were saying about JCPenney – both good and bad – and contacted them for more insight.
When all of this had been accomplished we named our primary customer Katie. Combining our research with JCPenney’s goals, we further defined her as a 30 year old mother from California. After outlining more details about her life story, we had our quintessential JCPenney target customer.

The step that followed our research was the creative brief. This is a single piece of paper that is meant to inspire creative executions. In some cases, the strategy team writes an individual creative brief for every single creative element, but the nature of this project called for just one that spoke to the entire campaign. The creative team provided input on this piece in order to maximize the potential output. Providing information such as the campaign objective, a description of the customer, and brand insight, an advertising creative brief sets the tone for the entire campaign.

The next step in developing the advertising campaign was the media element. This stage outlines which media choices are the best methods to reach consumers like Katie. This contains both research and creative implications. The research component looks at marketing databases like MRIplus and LexisNexis to see which media are used by consumers. With traditional media such as television and magazines, the media team then selects media vehicles. For television, vehicles are specific channels, and for magazine, they are specific publications. Marketing databases show which vehicles are more popular with particular demographics and enable the media team to determine where to place the ads. They contact the publications and ask how much running an advertisement costs to ensure that everything stays within budget.
The other part of media planning looks for new opportunities to reach out to consumers. This is more than simply looking beyond traditional media such as television, magazine, and radio. Although the “non-traditional” moniker extends to digital initiatives that make use of the internet and unconventional guerrilla tactics that reach people in the physical world, media teams look for entirely new vehicles that will break through the clutter of advertising messages. In the case of our campaign for JCPenney, we found a technology called projection mapping. With this, we can completely transform a contained environment with the use of projectors projecting images onto different surfaces. Furthermore, people inside the space can interact with different aspects of the environment and modify the virtual world using only their bodies.

This transitioned into the next step of developing the campaign. People are most familiar with the creative element of advertising because these are the executions that take the form of commercials, print ads, website banners, mobile applications, public relations events, and much more. Looking at the research and suggestions provided by strategy and media, the creative team is tasked with coming up with creative executions that fit the plan.

Even though I was first and foremost a member of the creative team for this project, I can’t explain exactly what happens in this process. Most of the ideas for implementing the plan come from brainstorming sessions in which all of the creative team, consisting of art directors and copywriters, comes together to think of ways to turn the insights, strategy, and media choices into something tangible.
Our first hurdle in the creative process was coming up with a phrase that encapsulated everything we wanted to convey in the campaign. After coining and rejecting scores of options, we settled on “Priced for Life.” This functioned both as a tagline and as a direction for all the work that followed. With each following creative execution, we looked at the idea and asked, “Does this say ‘priced for life?’” If not, it risked compromising the integration of our campaign. A fully integrated advertising campaign is one in which all the elements point to a unifying theme, in this case, “priced for life.”

After we coined the tagline, we moved on to the actual creative pieces. These come about in the same way as taglines, at roundtables where the creative team comes up with as many ideas as possible. When the team has generated a bunch of ideas, they’re whittled down to the ones that offer the most promise. By fine-tuning elements like headlines and layout, professional advertisements gradually emerge. This is a team process, and most advertisements are touched by too many people to count.

The final step in creating the campaign was evaluating how well it would be received by consumers. We contacted women who were members of the target audience and asked them to complete a survey that introduced them to different elements of the campaign including the tagline and various creative executions. Based on the reactions of respondents, this stage indicates whether or not a campaign resonates with people in an appropriate way. When a campaign isn’t received well, it means advertisers may have to return to the drawing board and develop a new strategy, media plan, and creative executions in order to be better
received by people. If it is received well, it means that the team can continue in
the plan to produce the materials and place them in the appropriate vehicles.
Fortunately, our campaign fell in the latter category.

Following the rules provided by the American Advertising Federation, we
produced a book outlining our proposal for the new JCPenney campaign. We
have yet to make the formal presentation as of the time of this writing, but we all
have high hopes of what the future holds for JCPenney’s “Priced for Life”
campaign.