

ASME, MPA restate ad policy

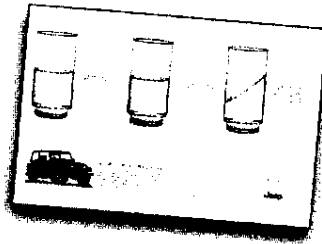
BY NEIL CASSIDY

The joint statement from the Magazine Publishers of America and the American Society of Magazine Editors wasn't meant to "slap Chrysler's hand," according to MPA president Don Kummerfeld. The statement, issued in late September, decried the advertiser practice of screening editorial content as a prerequisite for ad placement. And it's clear that the automaker's policy, articulated in a letter from Chrysler ad agency PentaCom (a division of Omnicom Group Inc.'s BBDO Worldwide), figured largely in getting the MPA and ASME to make a united stand against intrusive advertisers.

Industry observers agree there's no guarantee that the MPA-ASME statement, reassuring as it is in principle, will prevent advertisers like Chrysler from attempting to meddle with the editorial product.

The letter from Troy, Michigan-based PentaCom—dated January 30, 1996, and signed by Cindy Marshall, an associate director of print buying—says that Chrysler must "be alerted in advance of any and all editorial content that encompasses sexual, political, social issues or any editorial that might be construed as provocative or offensive."

A week prior to the release of the MPA-ASME statement, ASME president Frank Lalli, managing editor of Time Inc.'s *Money*, called Chrysler's request "over the line" and, to his knowledge, unprecedented. Lalli insisted that publishers "are not abiding by it"—even if they signed the Marshall letter.



Chrysler asks for advance notice of any controversial articles or stories.

Other editors whose magazines carry Chrysler ads said the same thing, including *Worth* editor in chief John Koten. Koten says that he's "99 percent sure" that Chrysler didn't preview *Worth's* October table of contents before buying space in that issue.

Although Chrysler said it will follow guidelines against interfering with magazines' editorial content, the automaker hasn't censured PentaCom. "We're not commenting on [the agency's] letter," Chrysler spokesman Alan Miller told *The Wall Street Journal* in September. (Repeated calls to Marshall went unreturned.)

Media lawyer Lawrence Savell, with the New York City-based law firm of Chadbourne & Parke, is among those who think the MPA-ASME's official stance doesn't provide enough ammunition for all publishers and editors. The predominant concern of some magazines, he points out, "is having adequate ad pages to survive, and different magazines may be somewhat willing to make certain accommodations ... or actually go so far as to give the advertiser some say over what the content should be." □