

# 10 Top Tips

## to improve the effectiveness of your creative

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Creative Integrated Communications

*So who WAS minding the store? (Clearly Fagin!!)*

*Suddenly, banks were failing...billions were lost...and the establishment and the business infrastructure, began to suffer by association. Knee-jerk reactions flashed instantly around the world creating a global lack of confidence and falling sales.*

*It seems that a 'lack of confidence' virus has been infecting our consumers – so we need an antidote.*

*We know(?) good creative can help.*

*Here's how.*



# 1 *Look like a winner, act like a winner*

In a downturn, potential buyers are going to be worried about continuity (after sales, guarantees, order security etc). With any number of well-known businesses failing, those of us remaining need to inspire more confidence in our customers and prospects. Buyers need to feel confident that you're going to be there when they need you – particularly if they have to hand over their hard earned cash before they collect the goods. So whom do they buy from? Obviously someone they trust.

*Quite a few marketers are picking up on this.*

Specsavers are currently including a bold caption on their ads “No wonder we've been voted Britain's most trusted optician for eight consecutive years”.

Talk to your agency about building more 'trust' into customer facing creative. It's the key issue in gaining and retaining valuable customers.

# 2 *It all works from the INSIDE OUT - don't ignore internal marketing*

In times of heightened competitiveness, even the tiniest chink in your brand armour is likely to be exploited. Make sure every new creative execution is thoroughly marketed internally so that EVERYONE is up to speed on the promises you are making. There is nothing worse than raising expectations only to find that your people can't deliver or simply aren't carrying it through to the customer because they don't know about it. The same promise should be heard and confirmed at every single customer contact point. A good creative campaign will take internal marketing every bit as seriously as customer facing material to ensure a totally coordinated delivery.

So everything matters – it's vital that everyone in the business is seen to be singing from the same hymnbook. Talk to your agency about familiarizing everybody in the business with every new creative communication and making EVERY customer touch-point consistent.

# 3 *Better creative briefing leads to better creative*

Let's face it, like so many other things in life, you get out pretty much what you put in. If your creative briefing is poor it's quite likely the creative output will be as well. But there simply isn't any room for weaknesses or errors right now. Here are a few quick tips that will help ensure you get the best creative from your agency:

> *Focus on your key proposition*

Decide specifically what it is that you are promising the customer. Don't make it too complex or you will end up trying to say too many things in one go. Be SINGLE-MINDED. Ask yourself, what is the one thing you want the customer to take out and remember from this communication. Then tell the agency to focus on that.

> *Less is more*

Once you know what you want the creative team to focus on, give them just the right, essential information they need to do the job. Giving them piles of irrelevant data will only distract them and eat into expensive creative time. You need to enlighten them, not distract or confuse them.

> *Always do a written brief*

Verbal briefs get forgotten or misremembered. A written brief means everyone knows where he or she stands and they have concrete objectives from day one.

> *Set the success criteria in the brief*

Creative teams work best when they fully understand what a successful outcome will be judged to be. And they like to know that the objectives you set are actually achievable. Armed with this information they will do their best to achieve your realistic targets.

# 4

## *Old habits die hard - avoid the dreaded clichés*

Handshakes, jigsaw puzzles, lemons, stopwatches etc, etc. What do they tell your audience? That you have no insight into individual needs.... so you have published a proposition that could apply to anyone?

Not that great really.

Customer value propositions today should be properly targeted. What kind of value proposition do you have? 'All benefits'? Comparative advantage? Or resonating focus?

You need to totally understand your customers' hopes, needs, wants and expectations from your product or service and use this insight to drive your value proposition.

# 5

## *The idea is the thing - find the drama in your product*

We can receive as many as 2000 messages a day – from radio jingles, to outdoor...from direct mail to instant online and viral. You have to break through a cacophony of marketing noise to get to your customers and prospects. To do that you have find the drama in your product to capture attention and make your message stand out.

Challenge your agency to dramatise your proposition. Ask them to turn your customer insights into engaging communications that will inform and influence your selected target audience.

# 6

## *Use the right language. Innit?*

Actually we don't mean foreign language – we mean sector 'language'. Young, old, vertical, esoteric or cult – each can have its' own peculiar (in some cases very peculiar) way of communicating. And if you don't use it, they won't listen. You need to show them you totally understand them by communicating with them their way. They are all looking for the next big thing that is designed to appeal specifically to them – flatter, surprise and delight them by showing how well you can talk their language.

And actually we can't, of course, ignore foreign languages at all. Even if you currently have no intention of rolling your bright new campaign out to other markets, a successful campaign often develops into a core marketing campaign and migrates to other territories. So it's advisable to ensure that a seemingly domestic campaign doesn't rely on English sayings or clichés that would not be welcoming or even properly understood in other countries (or even regions – Scotland vs. Cornwall?)

# 7

## *Differentiate yourself*

Today it is more important than ever to gain instant recognition to support your brand equity and customer promise. Think about the brands you know best. You could probably describe their logos and how their ads look quite easily. McDonalds, Pizza Express, Orange, M&S, Tesco, BMW...the list is endless. They all have a distinctive look and feel that defines their personality and differentiates them from the competition. Art direction, typography, photographic style and copywriting all have a role to play in this.

It is important that you decide what it is that is different about you and ask your agency to focus on it. If you put your thumb over your logo does that creative clearly and obviously still come from you?

And if you can't find it...perhaps it's time to create it...

## 8 *Clever is as clever does. Use clever ideas – they suggest clever companies*

Whatever level of marcoms you are working on, try to choose clever ideas that suggest they come from an intelligent, leading edge business. Think about the ads that have impressed you. The ones that made you feel they were worth getting to know. Businesses that had invested time in finding out what people wanted and then articulated the promise cleverly, with style and impact.

Challenge your agency to come up with thoughtful, insightful solutions that challenge perceptions and will reinforce your brand profile, further encourage trust, and portray you as an agile forward-thinking business.

## 9 *Don't stop communicating – not now, not ever*

Because if you stop communicating effectively to customers, there's a good chance they'll think you've disappeared and start looking elsewhere. Now is not the time to lose your distinctiveness – you could become invisible in the background media noise.

And that would simply make a crisis out of a challenge.

## 10 *and finally...be optimistic, always*

Everybody everywhere is becoming increasingly fed up with prophets of doom spreading negative messages about the world economy.

Let's ban negativity.

Eliminate negative copy from your ads, brochures and commercials.

BAN IT. Tell your agency to rewrite anything that has a negative context.

There are no problems, only challenges to be risen to. We don't resolve breakdowns, we maximise uptime. We don't talk in terms of short-term losses, only longer-term gains.

We don't have to pass on the virus.

We can talk business up.

And confidence will grow, and we will all grow with it.

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*If you'd like to comment on these Top Ten Tips, please email [keith@open-sky.co.uk](mailto:keith@open-sky.co.uk)*

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