

**Marketing? Advertising? Direct Marketing?
Social Media? Digitalia?**

**Forget the silo thinking. It's all about
COMMUNICATION...**

Yes, whatever your product or service, whoever your targets may be and whatever media - or variety of media - you use, the secret of success is **communication**.

If you can't communicate the benefits of what you are selling, in an engaging and influential way, then your campaigns will under-perform and disappoint.

As I have said many times in these articles, the message is light years more important than the messenger. That's why savvy marketers and business leaders employ top professional writers.

They know that young inexperienced writers and anoraks in digital agencies, have little or no idea how to structure a selling message.

These people are only concerned with what they put into their copy.

But a professional communicator is only concerned with what the reader gets out of it.

And that's an *enormous* difference...

The trend today, is to prepare communications that look good. If it looks good they say, then it will be good for our brand and everyone will like us.

Total bollocks. Because looking good has nothing to do with success.

Success is about **sales**. As Bill Bernbach said, "*The purpose of advertising is to SELL. That is what the client is paying for - and if that goal does not permeate every idea you get, every word you write, every picture you take, you are a phony and you ought to get out of the business.*"

Here's a perfect example of how not to do it and waste a lot of money in the process. This kind of thing is 'trending' right now...



I saw this load of tripe on the platform at Marylebone Tube Station, a month or so ago. A striking image, I'm sure you'll agree.

But what the hell is it all about?

Obviously, 'Go Turkey' in the bottom left corner, goes part of the way to answer that question. The rest is a mystery. I'll tell you why in a minute.

As this was so bad, I decided to take a picture of it to share with you all.

While I was taking the picture, a guy came up to me on the platform and said - "what is that selling? I don't understand it."

I told him I didn't know, which is why I'm taking a shot of it, to show people how not to advertise.

I then told him the answer to his question was lurking in the poster. He turned to look at it and shook his head. "Where?" he said.

"It's in the copy," I told him. "WHAT copy?" he said..."I can't see any..."

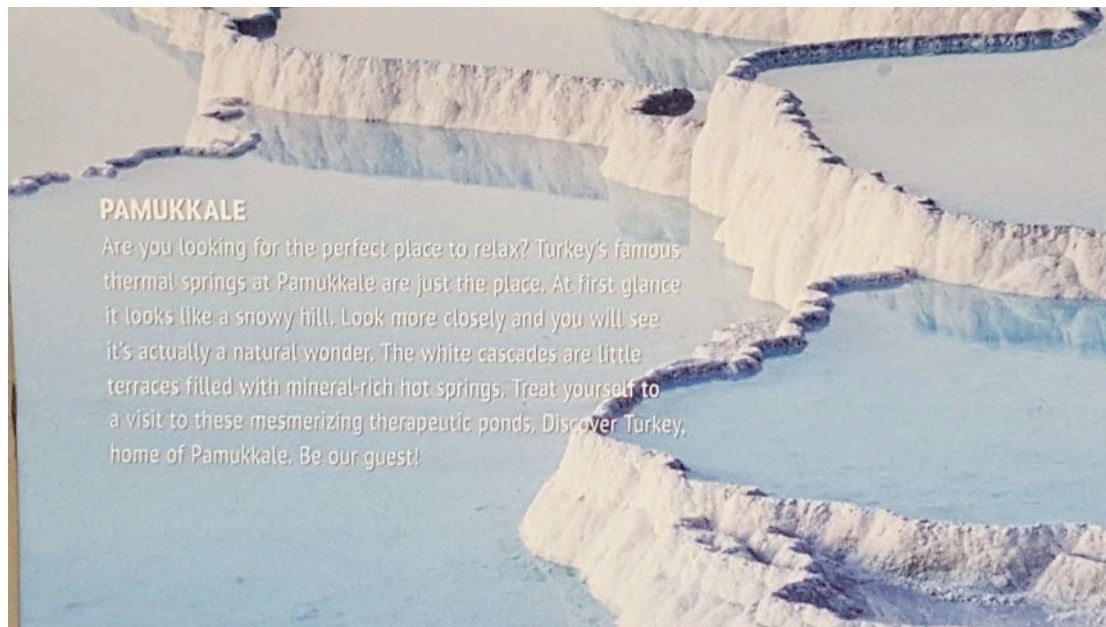
"Oh, hold on..."

"But, I can't read it. How stupid is that?"

"Yes, *exactly*. Now you know why I'm taking a picture of it".

This is just another classic case of two brainless people, wasting a lot of valuable marketing budget. Person one - the dummy who created it - and person two - the idiot who signed it off.

The copy was there. Here is the proof...



White copy out of a light blue background. Virtually invisible.

It would be funny, if it wasn't so sad. I think this poster should get a special award for creative masturbation.

Just because your ad looks good, doesn't mean it will even get looked at, let alone read. (Gulf marketers, please take note). How many people do you know who are impeccably groomed ... but dull as dishwater?

David Ogilvy underlined this many years ago, "*When I write an advertisement, I don't want you to tell me that you find it 'creative.'* I want you to find it so interesting that you buy the product."

Well, I wouldn't hold your breath in Pamukkale if I were you. I don't think the tourist hordes are going to descend on you in the near future.

Stuff like that, just makes me despair. And it's *everywhere*...

If you are one of a small minority that possess the skill and talent to 'communicate' relevant and benefit-laden offers to the right targets, in the correct way, at the right time, you will always do well.

Now - and in generations to come - irrespective of the media choices available, or anything else for that matter.

The reason is very simple. Because not many people in this business *really* understand the art of communication. And I don't just mean copywriters - I mean creatives and top marketers too.

The above ad confirms that.

And just going off at a tangent for a second, have you noticed how this communication thing, manifests itself with emails?

You write to someone you know. And you get ignored. You write again. And you get silence. Four weeks down the line, if you're lucky, you may get a note back, saying he/she has been busy.

What is THAT all about?

Email is an intrusive medium. It's easier to respond to an email than to ignore it. Just a holding message, that's all it needs. How long does that take - 30 seconds?

And don't try to justify this ignorance by saying you get over 100 emails a day. It takes no longer than 10 minutes in the morning to get your inbox shipshape.

I know. I do get 100 emails a day. And before I've finished my orange juice, I've done it all. Including my spam filter. And I also answer everyone that needs answering, too.

It's not difficult.

There is no doubt in my mind, that email is showing up a lot of individuals for what they are - bloody ignorant people. They should be embarrassed at their behaviour. I've given up on a lot of them.

Rant over. Back to the art of communication.

To communicate effectively, you have to know how to *connect* before you can sell. But, it's a specialist skill.

An art.

To do it right, you have to understand how basic communication techniques work. And the reasons why they work.

It's the same as anything else. You can't fly a plane until you know how it works. You can't cook a fine Risotto unless you know how all the ingredients work together.

And you can't write copy unless you have studied the art and you fully understand things you must do - and things you must avoid.

So, let's look at some of the key elements of how to write copy that connects, engages and really sells...

You might think it's easy. You would not be alone, as lots of people do. That's why we all receive loads of garbage, masquerading as marketing messages, every single day.

To write copy that connects, engages and really sells, you have to harness the enormous power of words - and use them correctly.

But, before you start writing, you must spend as much time as possible studying the product or service you are selling. This is absolutely vital. Get to know everything about it. Immerse yourself in it.

Discover what it is about the product that will offer a benefit to the reader. Because that is what will make him/her buy.

Not how long you have been in business, when your Grandfather started the firm, how many machines you have, or staff on the payroll.

Those are features and no one is interested in them. No one buys features.

They play only a supporting role in the sales pitch. The writer should instead, be telling the reader the benefits that he or she will enjoy as a result of all these things.

In my view, most copy fails miserably, because the writer has not studied the product hard enough. This results in copy that does not deliver strong enough reasons why the recipient should buy it - or overcomes every possible objection why they shouldn't.

Bill Bernbach put it like this:

"Know your product inside and out before you start working. And relate that knowledge to the recipient's needs. You will write better when you have something to write about. Your cleverness, imagination and invention must stem from your knowledge of the product or service you are selling".

That point about relating the product or service to the recipient's needs is a key one. As you will all know, we lost a great man in our industry recently, when the unique Herschell Gordon Lewis sadly passed away.

Herschell used to refer to this point, as 'connecting within the experiential background of the reader'.

In other words, creating a bridge - between the writer and the reader - and getting them to nod as they read your copy. If your copy can get the reader nodding and agreeing with the points you are making, you have that reader in the palm of your hand.

You are then in control. And, as a result, you have more than a good chance of getting that reader to do exactly what you want them to do. Pick up the phone, send a email, clip the coupon, visit the landing page, place the order, visit the store, etc...

To connect and to communicate effectively, you must write it like you say it. Use everyday language. Write to the chimpanzee brain.

Just imagine you are in a bar and you have your best prospect standing next to you. The prospect has a drink in front of them, like you have.

After the pleasantries, you get selling. The words you will use in that informal conversation, are the same type of words that you should use in your written pitch.

Exactly the same. Everyday words. Emotional words. Not an intellectual or clever word or phrase in sight.

Use words that connect. Words that engage. Not stiff words that bore.

Use short sentences. Be sharp. And effective.

No rambling and no boring diatribe. Don't talk about you. No one is interested in you. Talk about your prospect and what you could do for him/her. Demonstrate it. Deliver your words with energy, pace and passion.

Engage with the reader, grab that reader and don't let them go.

And sell, sell, SELL, every word of the way.

Whatever happened to selling, by the way? Why are people afraid to really sell anymore? Now marketers spend more time on the dreaded Content Marketing, than actually selling.

It's the new silver bullet, of course. And we know how marketers love the silver bullet. But, as I have said many times before, Content Marketing is like sex without the orgasm.

What is the point of that?

I'm glad that Mark Ritson – one of the smartest guys in our business clearly agrees with me, when he recently published an article in Marketing Week, called "Is Content Marketing a load of bollocks?"

<https://www.marketingweek.com/2016/10/11/is-content-marketing-a-load-of-bullsht/>

Yes it is, Mark. Yes it *is*. But how much money will be wasted, before the marketing lemmings find that out?

And, as we are talking about bollocks, here's a right plateful from an iconic brand that should know better. I have been receiving tripe like this from them, for nearly two years now.

Feast your eyes on this. This is how the most famous publishing brand in the world, tries to sell a subscription.

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The delivery is flaccid, the copy is pedestrian and the whole thing has no energy or belief. And how bad is the layout and the overall impression?

It looks boring – and it is. It also looks cheap and nasty.

They have litho printed the letter, then personalised it on top. And the address and the salutation are in a different font size to the copy.

Yes, really. It's lazy, lazy marketing. Cheapo, cheapo - and unforgivable.

Who created it? And who signed it off? Do they not realise that this load of tosh is seriously damaging their brand?

I will remind you of the line we used to tell clients 30 years ago - 'Your mailing is your salesman.' It is so true. And still so relevant today.

Well, this particular salesman from News UK, has turned up looking like he's spent a night on a park bench, has dirty shoes and stinks of curry.

This is really just reflective of the publishing sector these days. In the main, they are putting out so much dross. Bill Jayme will be laughing his head off in the Agency Bar in the sky, looking at this rubbish today.

So, I will repeat what I said at the start of this article. It is absolutely vital these days, for anyone in marketing, to know how to communicate. And communicate *effectively*...

Audiences now, are street smart and savvy. They see marketers coming from miles away. Give them the respect they deserve. They will dismiss you if you don't.

It's not rocket science...

When you have something important to communicate – and, if you are in marketing, then it won't be more important than trying to get a response or a sale - then remember this.

Firstly, you must understand the communication process - what works, what doesn't - and *why*. Then, when you feel you have that knowledge, study the product or service you are selling and discover the golden nuggets that it possesses.

Then - and only then, can you start writing. When you do, sell those nuggets passionately, using everyday words, emotional words. And deliver your sales message with energy and belief.

Engage with the reader, grab that reader and don't let them go.

Keep the faith...



ABOUT YOUR AUTHOR

Andy Owen is MD of **Andy Owen Copy & Creative Ltd**, one of the world's most respected and experienced International direct marketing consultancies, specialising in all aspects of creative, copy and strategy for direct and digital marketing.

Andy has been writing copy for marketing campaigns for 31 years. He writes copy and full campaigns every day.

He was inducted into the Direct Marketing Hall Of Fame in February 2015.

Andy runs in-house copywriting training for companies of all types and also presents direct marketing Masterclasses, Workshops and Seminars all over the world.

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