

PUTTING TOGETHER YOUR ADVERTISING MESSAGE

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1. Attract & keep your prospects eye on your ad:

Your ad must grab your prospects attention. They may turn the page at any time so keep it attractive and relevant to their needs, right through to the decision to purchase.

It's all about the headline:

Don't go overboard with pictures, its words that sell. You'll need your product photo of course but it's the caption or headline that will make the difference. And the headline will be a benefit. People buy products for what it will do for them, not what it looks like. Quite often, you'll see products like printers with features listed below an image. Here the advertiser has assumed that everyone knows the benefits of their printer and just need to know the specific features of the product. However a lot of people don't respond to pictures and lists of features, but they may respond to a photo of the product in use. For example you could show a child seated using a computer. But that's not enough. Add a headline such as...**"Now YOUR child can obtain higher grades"** and that should get parents interested. The body text would describe how the computer helps children to learn.

2. Content strategies:

a) **Descriptions:** A lot of promotional documents leave the customer to guess the benefits of the product or service advertised. They just describe it and ad contact information. This is not good and very ineffective at sending the right message to create interest.

b) **Comparisons:** Compare your product or service with your competitor's and specify how you're the better choice. You could stir-up trouble by naming the other company and/or can't back up your claims with evidence. This strategy works best when you have a major provable advantage over your competitors.

c) **Storyline:** Tell a story involving the person the customer will relate to in a situation that shows the benefits your product/service provides. Use a 'before using the product' and 'after using the product' strategy. At the end the person will summarize how much better their situation is now after using your product. And you tell your readers how it will help them as well.

d) The most effective strategy is to use the well-known AIDCA formula..see section 8 further down.

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3. How to get inspired:

You may want to go for a long walk or to a quiet place where you can clear your mind. There are two halves to our brains; the left being for logical functions and the right half for creative thinking. Apparently few logical people are able to take advantage of the creative side at will. You have to relax and trick the brain into releasing your ideas. Walking and daydreaming are a couple of techniques that work well!

4. Ideas for your website or full page ad:

You need to saturate your brain with all the elements about your product or service. Study what your product is made of, how strong it is and how it is put together. Consider the manufacturing process and the care taken throughout the production. Write down all these details with the angle of 'how much better than our competitors is our product' and 'in what ways?' Write down your conclusions. Do the same for your service. Take your service apart and study it as individual steps. Do your customers know about these steps? What benefits do these steps have for your customers? Maybe your competitors don't mention theirs and you could take advantage of this.

Your customer needs to be in the fore-front of your mind, particularly your target market. Don't forget, you'll want to aim a separate message if you have more than one target customer group.

5. Producing your rough draft:

When putting together your rough draft, don't overdo it! Start to put your ideas down on paper. Go over your notes and details about your product or service a few times then take break from that particular subject for a day or two if necessary. Don't take it too easy but don't try to overwork yourself, it won't work.

During this initial period you may well be getting flashes of inspiration and ideas at odd moments jot them down. It is advised to always carry a notebook or maybe a voice recorder to ensure all your creativity is not lost. When you have decided to formally put everything together, find yourself a quiet room and ideally use a large pad (which can be found in art stores) to record your information. Remember, you are writing down what you want to say to your customers to create an interest in your product or service!

Write down the most important 'buying factor' on the pad. Forget any logical order, put them down as they come to you, adding detail as necessary. Keep relaxed and don't censor any ideas you have (unless they are too far removed from your area). You could introduce others into this exercise and in affect hold a group of brainstorming sessions. You should end up with several pages of ideas.

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6. Compiling messages needed to sell

You will see many ideas that you are familiar with but there may be some that will be unfamiliar. Be sure to do your research on these. Your competitors may not have bothered and there could be some gold here.

Next you need to group together related ideas with colored pens. You'll find some remaining ideas that don't fit in a group, but keep them anyway. They may be useful later.

Now you need to structure your results so that you can develop your 'story' to relay to your customer. Put the group headings around a circle and then like the legs of a spider put the related ideas along them in order of sequence, importance or whatever criteria you have decided. As you do all this your creative side will flag up more ideas to add to the pool. Now you can get some feedback from colleagues or even customers on what you have produced. This will optimize your results!

7. Producing your copy framework

You have two choices here. Hand your work over to a copywriter or carry on yourself. If you are carrying on yourself you need to decide on the most appropriate approach as defined in section 2 above; descriptions, comparative, situation or benefits.

Your message will be built around the AIDCA structure.

Attention: You must get the reader's attention within seconds using your headline.

Interest: Get your prospect interested in your product.

Desire: This is where you detail how their needs can be fulfilled by using benefits.

Conviction: Provide proof that this is the product that they need.

Action: Tell them what they must do to get it. Be specific (example) call today, or click below to get yours today!

8. Using the AIDCA formula:

Attention seeking headlines:

Often the headline is left till last as it is the most difficult part of the message. You may find it in the main copy itself. Short headlines rarely work. Remember, if you are using a picture it's the words that will matter. The picture is a supporting element. Again it's all in the headline!

'Benefit' type headlines are best (even better if they are tiny storylines) with 'News' type second best. Generally you should include your product and the main benefit. Length is less important. Brochures, mail shots and magazine adverts tend to have longer headlines than straightforward advertisements.

Interest to be aroused:

tell your main story using one of the strategies described earlier; description, comparative, situation or benefits. Concentrate on how your product or service fulfils primary and secondary needs. Relate how it satisfies the customers buying factors and success factors that you have defined in your marketing assessment.

Desire to be created:

You need to be enthusiastic here in describing what the product or service can do for the customer. Convince them that they will really benefit from your product. Expand on the details. For example if your car is economical to run then write about how much money they will save and then buy a holiday with it.

Conviction needed:

Prove to the reader that your claims about your product are true. Assume that they will disbelieve your claims. If you have statistics use them. Show graphs, testimonials or endorsements from satisfied customers. Don't make them up. How could you prove they were real?

Action:

It is imperative that you tell your readers what action you want them to take. And include a benefit along with it. For example; "Send for our full color catalogue. It's FREE; there is no obligation to buy."

There you have it! 8 strategies to help compile your advertising message and get you more targeted customers improving your sales revenue!

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