

It's not all about you, nor should it be

As I was driving in today's heavy rain, I noticed whether cars had headlights on. Most did, but there were several that didn't. What reasoning would possess anyone to not turn on their headlights in the pouring rain (and I think it may actually be a driving rule here in Maryland)? Sure, some people forget. But when you look around and everyone else has theirs on, does that not remind you to do it too? I mentioned this to a friend, and she said she believes it's because the drivers think they only need lights on when they themselves can't see. They fail to think about the fact that the lights help others to see them.



Photo by Louis from Pexels

The marketing communications angle here is that whenever you produce any marketing materials, you can't just think about yourself (your company or organization) but about the people

who will be using/reading/accessing those materials. When you fail to think about what they need, like the cars without headlights in the pouring rain, you are making it harder for them to see you.

Events happening sometime during St. Patrick's weekend

Take for example the Facebook event posting from a local Irish pub for its St. Patrick's Day celebration. It listed the following information, verbatim:

Saturday and Sunday Outdoor Festival. Live Music, Pipes & Drums, Irish Dancers, Bouncy Castle Face Painting and so much more!

Do you notice anything missing (other than the comma between castle and face painting)? How about times? Is it all day? When and where is the live music? What bands will be performing? Where does this all take place? In the pub? On the street outside the pub? Is this free? Or is there a fee?

Since I was interested in attending (come on, they had a bouncy castle!), I had to message the pub and ask. They responded telling me they were opening early for brunch at 10 a.m., and that the outdoor activities would also start then, and the live music would go on at 2 p.m. I thanked them and suggested they include that information in their event page, you know, to make it clearer for anyone interested in possibly attending.

The devil really is in the details

Having seen many marketing pieces, whether it be websites, brochures or press releases, with a similar lack of salient detail, I know it is common to forget that your audience does not know everything you do about whatever you are promoting. There are the restaurant websites that fail to list their location or their operating hours. Or the product sales sheet

that doesn't list the size of the product or its cost. And on and on.

In order to produce effective, useful marketing materials, you *must* consider your audience. What details does the audience need to know? What information is relevant and is it included in your marketing piece?

It's all about the Ws

A way to gauge whether you are including the information your audience needs is to follow the journalist's guideline of asking the "5 Ws + H": who, what, where, when, why, and how. If your marketing piece answers those questions, you will have provided the most relevant information. For events, the what, where, and when are crucial. Clearly, the pub's marketing folks do not have a journalistic or events planning background. I will chalk up their poorly thought out event invitation to it being produced by an amateur. One would hope no professional marketing person would fail to include the when and where information on an event listing.

Don't be so centered on your own needs that you forget what your audience needs to know. In other words:

Turn on your headlights so others can see you.