

You must be able to answer this question

In my new favorite movie, **POM Wonderful Presents: The Greatest Movie Ever Sold**, filmmaker Morgan Spurlock goes into a meeting to pitch his movie to Ban Deodorant. Apparently, Ban is not a top-tier deodorant, and the company is pretty interested in alternative ways of expanding their presence, thus the meeting with Spurlock.

During the pitch, Morgan Spurlock asks the Ban people to describe their product. There is a long moment of silence that follows, and then the marketing people put their thinking caps on. The audience laughed at this interval because of how ridiculous the scene was—and yet, I bet it plays out every day with businesses of every size, everywhere.

You must be able to answer this question: **what is your product/service and what makes it different from any other product/service in the category.**

If you can't describe your product/service and its attributes, you are in deep trouble. If you don't do any other marketing, you must work on that description and pound it in to your marketing and salespeople's heads. Can you imagine a Coca Cola salesperson being asked to describe his/her product and not being able to do so? All he/she has to say is "Coke is it! " (Just kidding, but they would probably say something to the effect that Coke is one of the world's top selling soft drinks, and it is a carbonated, sugar loaded "delight.")

[+](#) Share / Save [f](#) [t](#) [↗](#) ...

“Faction:” learn what this is

Perhaps if you studied politics, like I did, you think faction is a party or group that is usually causing some trouble. However, if you watch Morgan Spurlock’s *The Greatest Movie Ever Sold*, you will learn that a “faction” is a combination of the words fact and fiction. Meaning that it is neither fact nor fiction. Perhaps it is a fictionalized fact, or fact-based fiction. Sounds like many of the memoirs that are making the rounds these days.

The Greatest Movie Ever Sold is a faction, and it is a must-watch movie if you are even remotely interested in marketing. Spurlock, who is previously known for his documentary *Super Size Me*, has blown open the world of product placement and movie funding.

This movie is funny and it is pure genius. To see Spurlock go pitch this movie, about product placement and movie funding, to people in marketing is just about as humorous as any parody can be. But what is truly genius, is that it is real. This is how things get done in the world of marketing. Celebrity endorsements are real. Advertisers are looking for new ways to reach more audiences. And everything is for sale.

I can’t do this movie justice here. There was too much stuff that struck a chord, from creating a pitch, to finding the brand personality, to how to market a movie.

Here’s a the official trailer:

[youtube id=T4Ng2P3zxFM&w=560&h=349]



Do you speak Jargonese?

Chances are you do...especially if you are in marketing, or the government.

I just came across the article “How to ‘unsuck’ you jargon” on Ragan’s PR Daily. The key seems to go to Unsuck-It.com and type in the offending phrase or word, such as “above the fold” or “leading edge.”

The issue is that most people who are fluent in Jargonese don’t really realize they are speaking in Jargonese. It seems perfectly natural to say things like: “We are currently working on aligning our values with our mission, while creating storytelling capacity in case there is a barrier to entry and we need to create synergies to boost the bottom line.”

But hey, Unsuck-It.com may only be a stop-gap measure. You may need to restructure your language skills.



Two different offers from one service provider

I was away for a few days and had to wade through a pile of mail on my return. Among the “important” mail that I received, were two envelopes from the Automobile Association of America (AAA). One was a co-op with USAirways (with which I have frequent flyer miles) and the other was a garden-variety membership solicitation.

I used to be an AAA member but had let my membership lapse years ago when I discovered my car insurance company provides roadside assistance as part of my fee. What I like about AAA is that you can usually get good deals on hotels, so I read the I started reading the USAirways/AAA offer first.

The USAir/AAA offer included “free enrollment” (\$15 initiation fee was waived), free second membership, free extra month and 750 miles. To find the total cost for the year, I had to read through it twice. It was hidden in the billing certificate. **The total cost would be \$65.50.**

The offer from just AAA is the following: Free enrollment, free second membership, a savings of \$25 on membership and a savings of \$5 on automatic renewals. Again, it was hard to find the **total cost of \$40.50.**

Basically, I would save money just having a regular AAA membership. Why would USAirways agree to send out an offer that when compared to the regular offer is more expensive? Remember, miles do not cost the airline anything and you can't get anywhere with 750 miles. Why would you, the consumer, pay \$25 for 750 miles? Remember, the actual service is being provided by AAA. The toll-free number for both offers is the general AAA number.

And, why make the total cost so hard to find? As I wrote about a few days ago, it is a bad idea to hide crucial information. Consumers need to make decisions with the facts in front of them.

I am not sure where to point the blame here: at AAA for not de-duping their mailing lists? at USAir for agreeing to have an offer sent out that is more than AAA's own offer, with similar timing? at AAA for thinking customers don't care about details?

My bottom line: if you are going to have different offers, make sure that one is not cannibalizing the other.

Your thoughts?

Mirror, mirror?

On the news today: The Royal Wedding. Obama Releases Birth Certificate. The Royal Wedding. Katie Couric Leaving CBS. The Royal Wedding. Trump Shows How Egomaniacal he is. The Royal Wedding.

Does the news media reflect the public's interests, or does the public reflect the newsmedia? Is it a two-way conversation, or is it a two-way mirror, where we see what they are doing, but they don't see what we are doing?

I am not sure, but I do think that what we see around us reflects a much larger problem—one where voyeurism and scandal dominate. And I don't like it.



Check your links

I know you need to add one more thing to your to-do list like you need to wake up Friday at 4 a.m. to watch the royal wedding, but do consider doing this with every blog post, website page, tweet, etc that you put out there:

CHECK THE LINKS!

Does your website have any broken links (or pages that don't

appear correctly)? Does the sharing software on your blog work? All of it? When you post a link to a story on Twitter, are you sure the link is working?

Many of us do not check these very often.

Case in point: a blogger I follow has faulty sharing buttons on her blog. I read a good post by her, which I wanted to share on Twitter. I clicked on the link and all I got was a blank Twitter page—no title and no link. No good. I created a Bit.Ly short link and posted it anyway but she would have no way of knowing that the item had been shared unless her blog records ping-backs. I reported this to her, and I hope she is able to correct it.

Prevent this from happening by occasionally checking these links. Just sayin'.



WOTD: Vacuous

Over on Twitter, lots of people tweet out their word of the day. Today's word for me is: vacuous.

Merriam-Webster gives the following definition:

1 : emptied of or lacking content

2: marked by lack of ideas or intelligence : stupid, inane <a vacuous mind> <a vacuous movie>

3: devoid of serious occupation : idle

I am thinking of this word because I have been seeing so many vacuous blog posts lately. Vacuous because they lack

intelligence. For instance, I read a post today about improving your Facebook page. One of the tips was to fill out all the information required. If that is not vacuous, I am not sure what is.

I can certainly use vacuous in a sentence when it comes to social media. There are many vacuous tweets out there. Your social media profile makes you look vacuous. And so forth.

You should not assume that your reader knows everything, but you also should not assume your reader knows nothing. The latter promotes vacuous comments and posts.

Hiding crucial information

Say you walk into a store. You are browsing through racks of pants, and see a pair you like. You look for the size, and you can't find it. You look for the price, but there is no price tag. Now, you have to consider taking this to a sales associate to have her/him look up the size and price, and find one that has both these bits of information. The problem is that this information is crucial to you making a purchase.

And then there is the bother factor. Have you ever taken an item to the cash register without a price tag? You will have to wait while a (usually slow) runner goes to find what the price is for your item. And the line will be held up. Etc. Pain. Right?

Withholding price information is going to make sales slow and customers unhappy. Yet, online, this happens all the time. There is a conference and you are trying to find out how much it costs. You have to click on the registration button. You get an invitation to an event, and cost is never listed until

you decide to register.

Why do organizations insist on hiding crucial information? Do they think by not revealing the price of the seminar/event/workshop you are going to be more enticed to sign up?

I believe that organizations need to be transparent and upfront regarding costs. If your gala costs \$125 per person, tell me. If the workshop is free, tell me that too.

It is never a good idea to force your potential customers/clients/donors/supporters to ask for a price check.

 + Share / Save    ...

1 big lesson from 3 Cups of Tea Controversy

No doubt by now you have heard about the controversy surrounding Greg Mortenson and his book Three Cups of Tea, as well as the Central Asia Institute (CAI). CBS' 60 Minutes did an expose on Mortenson, and the report alleges Mortenson fabricated some part of his story and that the CAI has been mismanaging funds.

The story has been widely reported in the media. Jon Krakauer, who was interviewed in the 60 Minutes story, has issued his own expose.

Now, there is a report that the Montana Attorney General will investigate the CAI.

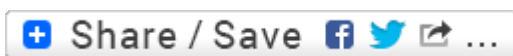
Bottom line: Mortenson is facing serious challenges to his

credibility.

One big lesson for everyone: serious investigative journalism is still a force to be reckoned with.

One big lesson for Mortenson: answer requests for interviews. 60 Minutes tried to interview him and he declined. Not answering makes it look like you are trying to hide something. Never a good idea.

What do you think?



My marketing must-haves

As a very small business, Deborah Brody Marketing Communications does not have a large marketing budget (seems a bit ironic). For instance, I have never printed a brochure, but I do have a website. Here are the list of things I do have, some of which are free, for marketing purposes:

- **Website** (soon to be upgraded...stay tuned): This is the must-have of all must-haves, for the obvious reasons that you need to know that I exist, and without a website, I may as well not be here.
- **Blog** (you are here on WordPress.com ...soon to be integrated to one site): Keeps you informed on what I am thinking.
- **Business cards**: printed, in color and double-sided. Well worth the investment. Latest ones were ordered from Greenerprinter.com and are made of 100% recycled paper.
- **Twitter**: Have met many people via Twitter not to mention the amount of information and ideas that I have picked

up.

- **LinkedIn:** A profile on LinkedIn is like an online resume with feelers.
- **Google alerts:** I track several topics, and my own name. An invaluable source of current information only topped by
- **Google reader** (with a long list of great blogs and feeds): You need to be current in the marketing field...and probably any field. A good way to stay on top of stuff is to have your Google Reader feeding you the latest from the industry's top blogs, etc.

What I have that is not a must-have: a Facebook page for my business. This is in spite of evidence that says Facebook is a good place to be for businesses and brands.

What are your must-haves? Let me know in the comments please!