3 actions to improve your marketing communications

Improving marketing means making it effective

It's not enough for your marketing efforts to include a clever headline, a fantastic design or great graphics. Your marketing communications need to be effective. To be effective, your communications must *resonate* with your intended audience. That is, audiences must *understand* what you are saying, *agree* with the premise, and then *act* (e.g., buy your product, donate to your cause, vote for your candidate).

But sometimes, marketing communications efforts don't achieve their goals. Here are three actions you can take that are guaranteed to improve your efforts. And improving your marketing communications could improve your results.

1. Explain the why

Your primary task is to explain why your customer should do business with you. Is it because you have the best quality, the best prices, the highest reliability? Do you solve an issue your customer has? You also have to establish why someone would choose your organization over another organization that does the same thing.

2. Use plain language

Plain language is about making it easy to understand what you are saying. Perhaps you think using big words and industry terms makes you look more knowledgeable. It doesn't. It makes it harder for your audience to understand what you are saying. So lose the jargon and the multi-syllable words. Focus on making things easy to read and understand.

(Read my post on plain language: People should understand)

3. Pay attention to details

The other day three packages were delivered to my door. I wasn't expecting anything, and when I opened the door, I saw none of them were for me. The delivery truck was still outside so I called out to the driver. She claimed that the GPS sent her to my house. The house number on the packages was the same as my house, but not the street. If you don't pay attention to details, you end up delivering packages to the wrong address.

You have to check and double check. Fact check and proofread everything, from the headline or the subject line to the website link to the caption. EVERYTHING. If you don't, you risk making sloppy mistakes.

Mistakes (sloppy or factual) result in lost credibility. Lost credibility results in lost support. Yes, details do matter.

Here's the bottom line: Prioritize the basics of communications to improve your marketing efforts and boost your results.

People should understand

It seems obvious that your readers should understand whatever it is you are writing for them. But it only *seems* that way because too many writers, especially those who write legal documents, don't stop to think whether their readers will get it. I know this because I've attempted to read contracts and other legal documents. Although I understand most of the words, sometimes I can't fathom the meaning.

Do you speak medical jargon? I don't

Same goes for medical stuff. A few years ago, I had an MRI done. I got the report from the radiologist and try as I might, I couldn't make heads or tails of it. In this case, it was the vocabulary. I gave it to the doctor, and I told him that I didn't understand the report. This doctor, as is usual with any insider, gave me a look indicating he thought I must be very slow because it was obvious to him that this report said I had a torn rotator cuff. But it wasn't obvious to me. And it's not because I am slow. It's because the radiologist wrote this using medical jargon that I don't understand.

Plain language required

You'd think the plain language movement were new. It's not. In fact, government agencies are mandated to write in plain English since President Obama signed the Plain Writing Act in 2010. But the directive to make things clearer goes back to the 1970s (read the timeline at plainlanguage.gov).

But there are no such mandates for other industries. Sure, writing in plain language should be common sense and many businesses strive to make their writing clearer and more user friendly but others write (and speak) in industry jargon, making it hard for the average person to understand.

Of all the posts I've shared on LinkedIn, the following from Bloomberg Law really struck a chord:

Use Plain Language in Contract—No One Wants Legalese

It was viewed hundreds of times and shared by many readers, making it my best performing post of all time.

Here's the bottom line: There's a real need for people to understand what you are writing. If you need help, there are some courses available online. You may find the "Oxford Guide

to Plain English" by Martin Cutts helpful. Or you could hire someone like me to copy edit your documents with plain language in mind.