COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVE – LET’S GET IT RIGHT

For crying out loud, let’s get it right! What are we talking about? The “communication objective” that’s found in everyone’s creative brief. That’s what we’re talking about. And, it’s worth talking about, again. It is an essential element to a strategically sound creative brief. Unless we get this right it is unlikely we will get the target and key thought (benefit promise) right. And if we don’t get the strategy right then … you’ve got it, the communications are unlikely to make a difference in your marketing.

So What’s the Fuss?
We’ve been through this before, many times. It’s all about “how communications work.” Namely, we ring the cash register when we motivate a behavior. That’s the key word “behavior.” And we can’t motivate a behavior without instilling an attitude or belief (key thought) about our brand into the mind (and heart) of our intended target-customer that is relevant and meaningfully differentiated versus the competition. The key thought is guided by the very behavior we seek with a select target-customer. If we don’t know what behavior we are seeking then it will be “hit or miss” with regard to the development of a compelling key thought and, ultimately, our ability to impact sales.

What we see in many creative briefs, and what is prompting this DISPATCHES’ article (i.e., a creative brief that was shared with us just today), is a communication objective that lacks the behavior component. So, it seems we need to understand what is a behavior.

Communication Behaviors
A behavior is all about getting customers to take action. One of the most prominent behavior objectives is to “switch” customers from purchasing or using a competitive product to our brand. (Actually, we prefer the word “conversion” since it suggests a religious experience that leads to developing evangelists in support of your offering.) Another behavior is “adoption,” which is about getting someone who is not currently doing something to begin doing it. Then, we have “trade-up” where we attempt to get current customers to trade-up to another (typically new) offering in our product line. A trade-up is an internal, as opposed to competitive, switch. Our communication behavior objective could be to “increase frequency of purchase or usage,” or increase “transaction amount,” among a few others.

Now, the key thought needs to address and motivate the behavior we seek. For example, let’s examine the act of flossing. Note the kind of thinking that goes into the key thought links to the intended behavior (even if we are talking about the same brand of dental floss):
## Linkage of Behavior Objective and Key Thought

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior Objective</th>
<th>Key Thought</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Switch from competition</td>
<td>Advantages of your offering versus competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoption of flossing</td>
<td>Importance of flossing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade-up to new offering in line</td>
<td>Advantages of the new offering versus currently used product in line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase frequency of flossing</td>
<td>Importance of flossing more frequently</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Let’s get one thing clear. While we are talking about advantages versus competition this does NOT mean that we are suggesting your key thought should be “comparable.” Not at all. So please do not tune out because you neither have the data nor are legally able to make direct comparisons. However, your key thought must be competitive. It needs to lead the customer to perceive and, better yet, discover advantages of going with your offering.

So, if we don’t have a behavior objective to guide the development of the key thought how could we possibly expect to ring the cash register?

### Non-Behaviors

Okay, what are we confronted with in client creative briefs that are not behaviors and, as such, inappropriate to the communication objective? Here are two BIG ones: awareness and trial. Awareness is vitally important and it is a valid objective but it is not a communication “behavior” objective. It is a media objective. *It has nothing to do with the appropriateness and quality of the key thought to compel behavior.* It is about being heard, seen or both. If your media budget is $10-million US and it is cut to $5-million or raised to $15-million then what happens? Awareness changes happen, that’s what happens. So do not identify awareness as a communication objective because it will not lead us to the type of key thought we need to compel behaviors.

Trial is also vitally important and is also and objective. But, it is not a communication objective. It is a promotion objective. If you arrive at trial for the communication objective then you have not gone deep enough. From whence do you expect to gain trial? Is it a customer that is naïve to the category? Then that’s “adoption.” Is it from a customer who is a competitive user? Then that is “switching.” The key thought is not the same for both.

Remember we need to identify the communication behavior objective if we are to be able to develop a key thought that is both appropriate and compelling.

### Get SMART, Quantify it

Once we have identified our behavior objective we need to quantify it. When we review creative communications we need to determine if it will enable us to achieve specific goals – the quantification of the behavior objective. We insist on making these SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant (to the Business Objectives) and Time Bound. This is not only our goal, the hurdle that we must vault, but also performance of the communications serves to inform the productivity of the communications (as is it working, or not; does it deliver an attractive ROI; is it more or less productive than other ways of deploying our limited marketing resources, etc.).
BOATS & HELICOPTERS:
Here are some thoughts for your consideration:

1. **Learn how communications work** – It might be a good idea to review how communications work. Use this link [http://player.vimeo.com/video/47017855](http://player.vimeo.com/video/47017855) to review a video we created about “How Communications Work” to appreciate each component in the process to get target-customers to ring the cash register so we might ultimately achieve our Business Objectives.

2. **Review and fix your communication “behavior” objective** – Out “awareness” and “trial” from your creative brief – NOW! Replace it with a “behavior” objective that will lead to the achievement of your Marketing Objectives, which, in turn, will contribute to realizing your Business Objectives. And make certain that the communication behavior objective is SMART.

Having a SMART communication behavior objective is vitally important to determining a compelling key thought. And, it will demonstrate that you are smart too.

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