

# DISPATCHES™

Insights On Brand Development From The Marketing Front

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## WHY YOUR COMMUNICATIONS SUCK – PART 2

*Suck (suk) verb. Be very bad*

This is the second installment in a series of DISPATCHES' articles to address a question voiced by a participant in one of our Leadership Communications Workshops. He asked, "Can you tell me why my communications don't work?" I responded, "Yes, of course. Your marketing communications suck."

This is not an indictment against this marketer, nor is it singling-out his communications. Instead, it's the norm these days. There is a vast wasteland out there, regardless of the medium, filled with marketing communications that don't just suck, but suck big time.

Why do communications suck? Well to be blunt this is about marketers not knowing how communications work and what the hell they are doing. It's about creative development processes that are broken, and a non-productive relationship between client and agency – among others. It's all rather simple, but not easy. It requires addressing each of the following essential elements required to create leadership communications:

- The Essential Creative Brief to provide the appropriate strategic direction for messaging;
- The Campaign Idea to dramatize the strategic messaging in compelling customer language;
- Execution to cut through the clutter to be noticed, showcase the Campaign Idea and establish strong brand linkage;
- Skillful means in assessing and coaching the creative team to make the work more productive; and
- A quality process to efficiently and effectively leverage resources.

Part 1 focused on the Essential Creative Brief. If you missed it, or want to review it, go to <http://www.bdn-intl.com/WhyYourCommSuck.php> This issue, Part 2, deals with the Campaign Idea.

### **The Campaign Idea**

The Campaign Idea is the most important element in engaging the customer. It *dramatizes* the Key Thought (identified in the Essential Creative Brief) *in compelling customer language*. The Key Thought is the belief or benefit that the marketer has determined is needed to influence the target-customers' attitudes in such a way that it triggers achievement of the Communication Behavior Objective. The Key Thought is strategy talk.

The Campaign Idea is customer talk. It consists of three parts, which work together to deliver the strategy in a single-minded communication. It serves to bring the strategic promise to life for the target-customer in such a way that s/he feels compelled to act in a predetermined manner of your choosing (e.g., switching, compliance, etc.) to achieve the brand's Business Objectives (of sales, market share and, ultimately, profits). The three parts are:

- ***The Naked Idea*** – This is the creative concept that informs each execution;
- ***Key Copy Words*** – These are a translation of the Key Thought into customer language.
- ***Core Dramatization*** – This is the visual or audial component that leads the target-customer to accept the Key Thought.

All three parts work together, to create synergy, in delivering the Key Thought in a single-minded communication.

The MasterCard “Priceless” campaign is a good example of a successful Campaign Idea. It is recognized as leadership communications based upon having fueled exceptional growth since 1997 (14-years and still running strong). This Campaign Idea has been executed in more than 100-countries, through thousands of executions, in a wide variety of media.

- ***The Naked Idea*** – Juxtaposition of all the things you can purchase with MasterCard linked with the one priceless moment that money can't buy.
- ***Key Copy Words*** – Some things in life are priceless, for everything else there's MasterCard.
- ***Core Dramatization*** – The priceless moment that is made possible from what was purchased using MasterCard.

The Campaign Idea is the “center of the plate” of all of your marketing communications. It is what provides your customers with the nourishment and satisfaction they need to choose your offering. The purpose of all other elements in the execution of the message is merely to serve-up the Campaign Idea in a way that showcases it. The Campaign Idea is also the backbone of not one execution, or one medium, but an entire campaign that can serve to drive brand growth for many years.

Development of the Campaign Idea is the responsibility of your creative resource partners (typically your agency). It is not the responsibility of the marketer to develop the Campaign Idea. Instead, we marketers need to be able to see, appreciate, and champion the Campaign Idea.

### **Why Your Communications Suck**

It is important to appreciate the value of the Campaign Idea, and how failure to have one, or an appropriate one, or a compelling one, can undermine successful target-customer absorption, and impact, of your message. Communications suck for any one (or more) of the following dealing with the Campaign Idea (or lack thereof):

- The communications don't deliver the Key Thought. In simple language, it is not on-strategy.
- It's the same pedestrian, expected delivery (like an overused life situation, or featuring a beauty shot of the product, etc.) that is no different than competition.
- Even if it is different than competition it is mere telling, as opposed to dramatizing.
- It does not contain a Campaign Idea.

- If it does contain a Campaign Idea, and it is on-strategy, it lacks one of the three essential parts.
- Your communications don't contain Key Copy Words.
- Your communications use a tagline as opposed to Key Copy Words. A tagline is a kiss-off. Key Copy Words drive the communications. The entire execution revolves around, and can be summed-up, by the Key Copy Words.
- The Key Copy Words are strategy-, not customer-, talk.
- The Key Copy Words are ambiguous. The target-customer does not understand them. They don't deliver the strategic Key Thought.
- The Key Copy Words are missing the brand name. Therefore, they don't link the benefit found in the Key Thought to the brand.
- The Key Copy Words lack drama.
- The Key Copy Words appear as though the client wrote them.
- The client wrote the Key Copy Words.
- There is no Naked Idea (i.e., creative concept).
- The Naked Idea is for an ad, (i.e., a "one-off"), not a campaign. (A campaign is more than one in a row.)
- It is tactical in that it is used for one medium, for one execution.
- It doesn't surprise, engage or motivate the target-customer.
- Again, what dramatization? (In other words, it is predictable and/or bland.)
- Its life is choked-out by executional mandates (dictated in the Creative Brief).
- It is burdened, and sunk, by the weight of additional objectives and/or messages foisted upon the agency by the client during the creative review.
- It does not connect with the target on an emotional level. (Its only connection is the clients' self-satisfaction that they got what they want, and the agency in that they are finally can be done with it!)
- All three parts do not work together, to create synergy, in delivering a single-minded message.
- The Key Copy Words deliver one benefit, while the visualization delivers the second benefit. (Both must deliver both).

If your communications don't contain a Campaign Idea it is unlikely that the communications will be successful, no less leadership communications. On the other hand, if you do have a Campaign Idea it will enhance the likelihood that you will have effective communications. But it is no guarantee. It will depend upon the quality of the idea in delivering a motivating Key Thought.

### **BOATS & HELICOPTERS:**

Okay, what can we do so we don't put out communications that suck? Let's make certain that our communications contain a provocative, compelling Campaign Idea.

- 1) ***Learn to identify the Campaign Idea*** – If the agency doesn't articulate it when they share their creative work, we need to be able to see it. So learn how to identify it, and get practice. Start with successful campaigns that are credited with building the business, thrived over time, and have been executed in a variety of mediums since these are likely to contain a Campaign Idea. Analyze each to identify and articulate the three parts of the

Campaign Idea. You can use the MasterCard example as your model. Some campaigns you might consider are Ubykotex, Old Spice, Allstate “Mayhem,” Mac versus PC, Cialis and Plavix. Discuss your analysis with someone else on the brand marketing team or your agency counterpart to get their reading on the creative product.

- 2) ***Make it clear to your agency that you need, and require, Campaign Ideas (if you are working on a campaign, as opposed to pooling-out one that is already working for the brand)*** – Share this article with your agency partner. If you are a member of the agency team share this issue of DISPATCHES with your client. Get on the same page regarding the Campaign Idea, its components, its value, and your objective to develop a winning Campaign Idea that will lead to the development of leadership communications.
- 3) ***Don’t settle*** – Demand communications that contain a Campaign Idea. If the communications don’t contain a Campaign Idea DO NOT go forward with it. Demand the best of your agency and creative resource team. But then we are unlikely to get their best if we are not giving our best. So go back and ensure that: you are committed to executing against a strategically sound and single-minded Essential Creative Brief; and you can recognize a Campaign Idea.
- 4) ***Use your imagination*** – Marketers are not accustomed to employing Campaign Ideas. (If they were then fewer communications would suck, and more would be in the elite class of leadership communications.) So we cannot expect to see all the reasons-to-believe, features and copy, frame-by-frame, entire website, the social media play, etc. Instead, we have to appreciate where the genes of the idea could possibly take us. (Good genes typically translate to good health.) That takes imagination on our part. If the prospects appear promising then, yes, we can go the next step to get a better feel for how the Campaign Idea might be executed.

Make sure your communications contain a Campaign Idea. If it does then it is less likely that your communications will suck. In fact, it is more likely that they will be successful and, perhaps, even leadership communications.

Richard Czerniawski and Mike Maloney

**Richard Czerniawski**

.....  
430 Abbotsford Road  
Kenilworth, Illinois 60043  
tel 847.256.8820  
fax 847.256.8847  
.....

reply to Richard:  
[richardcz@bdn-intl.com](mailto:richardcz@bdn-intl.com) or  
[rdczerniawski@cs.com](mailto:rdczerniawski@cs.com)

**Mike Maloney**

.....  
1506 West 13th Street, #17  
Austin, Texas 78703  
tel 512.236.0971  
fax 512.236.0972  
.....

reply to Mike:  
[mwm@bdn-intl.com](mailto:mwm@bdn-intl.com) or  
[mikewmaloney@gmail.com](mailto:mikewmaloney@gmail.com)



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