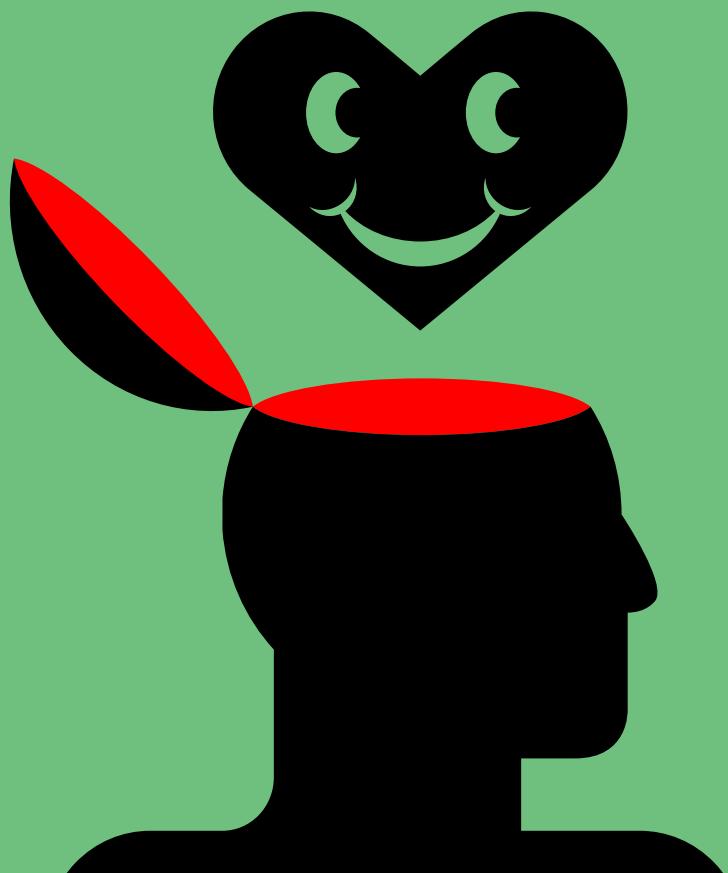


Top tips to turn communication into understanding



a marketing eBook from **thegarret**



Our Top Tips

- 1 Know what understanding really means
- 2 Use understanding to drive engagement
- 3 Be clear what you have to say
- 4 Be sure you're talking to the right people
- 5 Be clear how you're going to say things
- 6 Create a dialogue, not a monologue
- 7 Talk in a way people understand
- 8 Don't talk just for the sake of it

“Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?”

This quote from TS Elliot should be on the wall of every B2B marketing professional. We are all drowning in information. We have to make sense of it and find the information relevant to us. Marketing professionals have honed the way we communicate to ensure our messages are heard. But...are we really understood?

The skill isn't always effective communication. It's the ability to convert that communication into an understanding of why you do what you do and why anyone else should care.

This eBook gives our top tips to help you create marketing strategies based around customer understanding.

1



Know what understanding really means

Marketing orthodoxy has long held that 80% of our buying decision is governed by emotion and only 20% logic. This is supported by research from the University of Texas that concluded: ‘We are ruled by our emotions first, and then we build justification for our response.’ (See our B2B Buying Decision Infographic).

Award-winning author and ethnographer*, Simon Sinek goes a step further by stating ‘people don’t buy what you do or how you do it, they buy why you do it.’ It is the ‘why’ that really drives our buying decision. For Sinek, the goal is not to do business with everybody who needs what you have, the goal is to do business with people who believe what you believe.

So your customer’s understanding – if you wish to build a long and profitable relationship – goes much deeper than simply the functions and benefits of your products or services. Those are things they can use to justify themselves once the decision is made.

* Someone who studies people and cultural behaviours in society

2

Use understanding
to drive
engagement



The Advertising Research Foundation defined customer engagement as ‘turning on a prospect to a brand idea enhanced by surrounding context’. If ever there was a definition that sucked the life and joy out of its subject...

Let’s just say that customer engagement is about finding ways to get your customer to interact with your brand and developing the best for each customer. This is not another way of describing traditional ‘push’ marketing because the sad news is, initially at least, your customers don’t want to hear from you and aren’t quite sure they can trust you.

Research from DemandGen revealed that nine out of ten buyers say that, when they’re ready, they’ll find you. The challenge is to find the right way – both on and offline – to explain the ‘why’ of your brand and use that as the foundation for your engagement with the people you want to be interested in you.

3

Be clear
what you have
to say



Clear and consistent messaging has been seen as the secret to good communications. Add the word 'branded' and it sounds like a good formula for establishing yourself in the minds of your prospective customers.

And, it very well could be.

First, you have to reverse your thinking. Marketing communications in the past has seen us spend time telling people what we do and then how we do it. Sometimes, we'll get round to why we're doing it.

It's time to start at why and build out. We're used to the idea of mission statements but how often are these actually employed as a focus of communication? Tell people the goal of your business and those people who feel a similar way will have a much closer connection to your brand.

Those are the people you want to attract.

4



Be sure you're
talking to the
right people

It should be clear by now that job title, company size and other demographics aren't really going to cut it by themselves when you come to identifying your target customer.

But, then again, neither is saying 'people who think like me'.

As the gap between marketing and sales closes and much more of marketing's day-to-day tasks fall firmly into the lead generation arena, we should all be aware of the concept of the 'Buyer Persona'.

This allows you to map out what an ideal customer would look like. It should not just be about where they are and the immediacy of their need. It should encompass what they like, what interests them, what motivates them.

And, you have all that information. Marketing and sales just need to sit together and work out why their best customer is their best customer and why sometimes there are pieces of business you're happy you didn't get.

5

Be clear how
you're going
to say things



Let's take a moment to re-visit the idea of clear and consistent messaging. It used to be kind of straightforward. You could work up a messaging matrix and then run that through all your sales and marketing materials – from your website to direct mail to sales presentations.

Sure, there were always some mavericks in sales who did their own thing but usually without causing too much damage!

Not so today. We're all tweeting and posting and blogging. In fact, we're encouraged to do so. Terrible things can happen now before we even have a clue they've happened. That matrix seems a long way off.

Yet, the same rules apply. You can plan and execute a content schedule whatever communications channel you are using. You can ensure messaging is adhered to. You just have to...

Plan... Plan... Manage... And Plan.

Create a
dialogue not a
monologue



Response mechanism. It's a wonderful phrase. The uninitiated may even believe it to be a way to give an alternative view to existing information. But, in marketing, we've taken it to mean a way for me to give you more details about myself so you can tell me more about yourself.

Even when we use the language of dialogue, what we really mean is an extended monologue.

There's nothing intrinsically wrong with that. It may be exactly what your customer wants and expects. Then again, it might not.

Consider that Forrester Research showed 8 out of 10 IT decision makers put word of mouth as their most important source of information when making buying decisions. In effect, they aren't just talking to you, they are talking to the people who know you or have an opinion of you.

These are conversations. You can listen. And, you have a response mechanism.

A real response mechanism where you're expected to give information, opinion and advice. All that sort of thing.

7



Talk in
a way people
understand

A thoroughly depressing statistic is that the average reading age in the UK is nine years old – it's pretty much the same in the US. Even broadsheet newspapers are written at the literacy level of a 13 year old.

In this context, the development of corporate jargon seems simultaneously more bizarre and more understandable. There are definitely some professions that have aimed to keep us in our place through the opaque nature of their language.

Doctors. Lawyers. Plumbers. You know who you are.

If communicating in a plain and understandable manner is important so is using the right tone. In the B2B segment – especially technology – the ability to speak the same language and demonstrate the correct level of subject knowledge is essential to build trust.

That doesn't start at Technical Sales Support. Like the brand, it should happen from first contact.

8

Don't talk
just for the
sake of it



There's a famous Dilbert cartoon where a young pupil puts his hand up in class and says: "Please sir. My brain's full". We truly are drowning in information. IDC suggests that the world's data doubles every 24 months. Who knew so much of it was going to be rubbish?

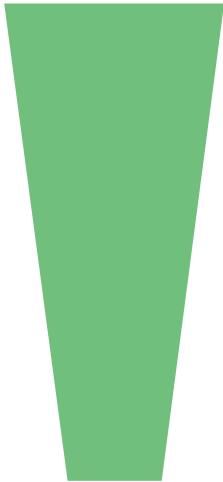
There's a simple idiom that everyone on the web would benefit from learning: 'Just because you can, doesn't mean you should'. To which, marketing professionals can rapidly add: 'If you've nothing good to say, say nothing.'

It seems extraordinarily simple and sensible but, in the internet age, people feel pressured into constantly communicating. Stop it.

Well, don't stop it. Just ask yourself one question before releasing any piece of content anywhere: 'What value does this deliver to my business or to my customer?'

If the answer is 'none', don't do it.

A final
word on
understanding



We started with a quote so it seems appropriate to end on another. This one is from scientist H H Williams:

‘Furious activity is no substitute for understanding.’

That quote could sum up many marketing campaigns. We have been so busy communicating with our customers and prospects we haven’t checked to see if they are getting the level of understanding they want to make a buying decision.

It’s time to consider how we properly explain the ‘why’ of our brand.

We need to answer the question not ‘why should I buy from you?’ but ‘why should I care about you?’.

About The Garret

The Garret is a creative B2B marketing consultancy that helps organisations build a positive understanding between them and the people who matter to them. We are content specialists. We create polished and persuasive content to address each step in the customer journey.

thegarret.uk