



The Message Makes a Promotion Sizzle or Fizzle

By Sallie W. Boyles

Today's technology has broadened the scope of marketing, making promotional efforts, which were formerly cost-prohibitive, far more accessible to all businesses. Websites, brochures, newsletters and direct mail are among the numerous promotional tools that are easily created—often in-house—for a reasonable cost.

Even so, the message is the one area in which do-it-yourself marketers tend to fall short.

The following tips can help you structure a results-driven communication:

It tastes like chicken. Avoid misleading language. If free "gift wrap" translates to "a brown bag with Scotch tape", then be straightforward. Even better, delivering service beyond expectations (providing a surprise decorative bag and bow) is a time-tested way to build repeat and referral business.

Nobody does it better. Avoid puffy adjectives and open-ended claims that boast a better offer without substance. However, do express unique qualities of your product or service in terms of real benefits to the potential buyer, or as ideal solutions to the target audience's problem. A former FBI agent, for example, could promote his experience as critical to his success as a private detective and, therefore, to solving your case.

Try it, you'll like it. Avoid promotional tactics that don't match your overall objectives. If you want to entice new customers, a buy-twelve-for-the-price-of-six offer will rarely work. Stock-up specials tend to build loyalty among previously satisfied customers, but a minimal risk offer appeals to those who have never bought from you.

Slippery when wet. Avoid touting the obvious. We expect the shoe store to sell stylish shoes that fit. "We have all the latest styles in your size," consequently, gets lost in the clutter of every other promotion in town. In contrast, a substantive benefit, such as "We carry sizes AAAA to EEEE," is more likely to grab a shopper's attention.

Life is tough. Avoid words and actions that make either the prospect or the fact of doing business with you an effort. Your language and your promotional promise should be clear. Always specify easy-to-follow conditions. Doing business with you—especially buying the first time—should be simple and, in the end, deliver satisfaction.

With countless advertising and promotional outlets available to all sizes and types of businesses at affordable costs, progressive decision makers take advantage, promoting their products and services to the masses without overspending. Even more significant than choosing the ideal promotional tool, however, is establishing a clear-cut message that aims to fulfill clearly defined objectives.

If your promotion fizzled rather than sizzled, scrutinize the communication to uncover the root of the problem.

For more information, please contact Sallie W. Boyles, Write Lady, Inc.
www.writelady.com.