



DIRECT FORUM

VOLUME 3. ISSUE 10

*** OCTOBER 2007 ***

Direct Forum is a free e-mail newsletter containing useful direct marketing tips, news updates and how-to information. It's convenient, informative and I am not trying to sell you anything!

This month's topics include:

- 1. "DEAR ME," WHAT SHOULD I CALL PROSPECTS I DON'T KNOW?**
- 2. THE LONG AND SHORT OF WHAT REALLY WORKS CREATIVELY. PART SEVEN. (SELLING YOUR COPY TO CLIENTS & THEIR PROSPECTS)**
- 3. DID I SAY I AM NOT TRYING TO SELL YOU ANYTHING? WELL, THERE IS ALWAYS ONE EXCEPTION TO EVERY RULE.**
- 4. HOW TO MAKE YOUR MOST VALUABLE COPY WORTHLESS.**
- 5. WHY PRINT IS EVEN MORE IMPORTANT NOW, IN THIS ELECTRONIC AGE.**

"DEAR ME," WHAT SHOULD I CALL PROSPECTS I DON'T KNOW?

Often we are faced with the task of using a generic salutation in our letters.

When you have to use a generic salutation, first of all, don't ever address them as: "Dear Sir" or "Gentleman"; "Dear Madam" or even "Dear Sir or Madam".

That's old fashioned, pompous, builds a distance between you and the reader and is the kind of opening you normally expect from your bank or from a bill collector.

On the other hand, starting the letter with, "Dear John," or addressing them by their first name and trying to be too informal is also a no-no unless you really do know them.

Worse still, if they don't know you, they will think, "*How dare they call me by my first name when I have never even heard of the company sending this letter?*"

The intent is good – you want to warm them up and build some rapport with them so they don't stop reading

right at the start.

So what should you do?

“Dear Friend,” “Dear Colleague,” “Dear Fellow Member,” is applicable if they are part of your inner circle or industry.

And “Dear Fellow Wine-lover,” “Dear Sports Enthusiast,” works well when the communication is limited to a special interest group.

But what about a generic letter to a generic audience?

How about a simple “Hello” or “Good Morning”.

Never let your salutation run over one line.

Last month I mentioned that all writers can learn a thing or two from great public speakers and entertainers, because they are pros at warming up the audience. They quickly introduce themselves and keep the tone conversational and friendly.

This week’s *TIME* quotes Jerry Seinfeld: *“It’s kind of that feeling before an ocean swim,” he says of facing an audience armed with nothing but jokes. “You know it’s gonna be cold at first, but once you get in, it’s really fun.”*

THE LONG AND SHORT OF WHAT REALLY WORKS CREATIVELY. PART SEVEN. (SELLING YOUR COPY TO CLIENTS & THEIR PROSPECTS)

Ironically your hardest task is right up front - selling your well crafted copy to your clients. While all good copywriters are really writing to the client’s prospects, the client first reads the copy from their company’s perspective. They are checking to make sure you have painted their company in the best light.

People don’t like to be sold, but they do like to be helped or to help—as in the case of non-profits. By making sure your copy balances ‘what’s in it for the reader’ with how well the company provides the perfect solution, you satisfy both parties.

YES! The pack I am talking about is the sugar pack enclosed.

Mrs. Jane Sample
1234 Main Street Apt 431
Toronto, Ontario
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FoodShare
www.foodshare.net
200 Eastern Avenue
Toronto, Ontario
M5A 3J1

August 31, 2006

Dear Ms. Sample,

I am sure you'll be shocked to learn that on average, children today eat over 74.4 kilograms of sugar and artificial sweeteners per year. **That's 7,444 more packs of sugar than the one enclosed!**

Just look at some of the startling statistics alongside.

Is it any wonder that our children are fat and getting fatter? More than 20% of all five-year-olds are overweight, and more than 10% are clinically obese. These figures have doubled in just 20 years.

This is of growing concern because kids who are overweight have a much greater susceptibility to Type 2 diabetes – a leading cause of heart and kidney disease, blindness and early death.

We've all been preoccupied with the effects that sugar is supposed to have on behaviour, but what we should really be concerned about is the effect it's having on their health.

A study published in the medical journal "Health Affairs" in March 2002 found that obesity is substantially harder on health than smoking. Obese individuals, according to the study, have nearly 50% more chronic medical problems than smokers. The same study reported that it costs almost twice as much to treat obesity than it does to treat smokers' health problems. Indeed, medication for obesity is almost three times more costly than medicine to help smokers.

Of course, fast food with its high sugar and fat content, though a major part of this health crisis, isn't the only culprit. Our culture has become pathologically sedentary, watching television or sitting in front of a computer for hours.

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT NOW AS CHILDREN HEAD BACK TO SCHOOL.

As children head back to school again, I am extremely worried about what they will eat. So I am turning to you, as a cherished friend *see photo*.

- A 12 ounce soft drink contains nearly 10 teaspoons of sugar. A 32 ounce bottle has nearly 39 teaspoons of sugar.
- The average school-going teenager drinks twice as many soft drinks as milk.
- One-third of all meals are eaten away from home, the vast majority at fast-food outlets.
- When you look at labels, you find sugar, sucrose, glucose, dextrose, sorbitol, or corn syrup on almost every label. These are all different names for sweeteners.
- Consumption of fruit has fallen with fresh apples down 75% and fresh melons down 60%.
- One quarter of most vegetable servings are in the form of greasy, nutrient-dead french fries.
- Consumption of processed fruit has increased by 912%, processed vegetables are up 300%, and processed fats and oils are up 139%.
- Between 1960 and 1981, food colour consumption increased 1,000%, and corn syrup by 291%.
- Most fruit juices contain refined sugar but no fibre.

Yes, I want to help children live healthier lives. Here is my gift of:

- \$50 \$75 \$100 Other \$_____
- I have enclosed a cheque or money order.
- Please charge my donation to my credit card
- MasterCard VISA

CREDIT CARD INFORMATION

Card Number: _____

Card Name: _____

Expire Date: _____

Cardholder's Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

See reverse for information on how to help children every day of the year.

FoodShare
www.foodshare.net

You may also complete this form and fax to 416-563-6474
OR include one dollar from you can donate online at www.foodshare.net

Charitable registration number: 107992359-880001 *A tax receipt will be issued at the end of the year.

Mrs. Jane Sample
1234 Main Street Apt 431
Toronto, Ontario
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That can also make you and your client's business stand out from the huge number of competitors who focus too much on "themselves" and "we", and not enough on "their customers". And never join the crowds who try to pander to their customers by going overboard with flattery but no substance.

A case in point is a letter I did for **FoodShare** dealing with the problem of child obesity. By tackling the problem in the main section of the copy and by stressing how well FoodShare is the perfect solution in the sidebars, it got both the client's approval and the reader's involvement.

Finally, one way to quickly evaluate your copy is to do a simple audit. Just count how many times you refer to your client and how many times you refer to their customers and prospects in the text. If the references to "us" and "we" outnumber the references to the customers, or vice versa, an overhaul of your copy and approach might well be in order. Try to achieve that perfect balance.

DID I SAY I AM NOT TRYING TO SELL YOU ANYTHING? WELL, THERE IS ALWAYS ONE EXCEPTION TO EVERY RULE.

I have finally published my book, **"The Handbook of Direct Marketing."**

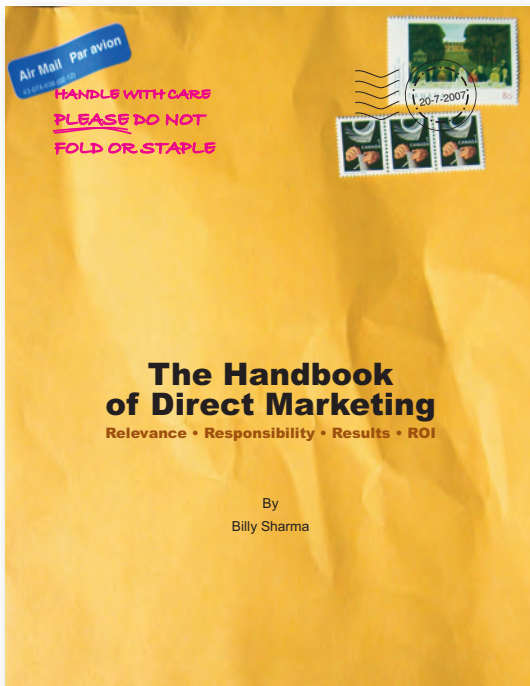
For **ONLY \$20.00** (including shipping and handling) it's yours for a risk-free 30 days trial.

YES, A RISK-FREE 30 DAYS TRIAL OFFER FOR \$20

That's right. If after reviewing **"The Handbook of Direct Marketing"**, you don't agree that it's a perfect guide for every direct marketer, or if you don't learn something new or discover an important fact that you may have forgotten, just return it to me and I'll gladly refund your \$20 payment in full. No questions asked. That way, you risk nothing.

But hurry up, this is a limited edition and more than 85% of the copies have already been sold.

Reserve your copy by emailing your mailing address at: designersinc@sympatico.ca



Or write to me along with your payment at:
Designers Inc.
1407-99 Harbour Square
Toronto, ON M5H 2H2

HOW TO MAKE YOUR MOST VALUABLE COPY WORTHLESS

To depend on words alone to sell your message is like using only one hand to clap to try and get attention.

In a world drowning in information overload you only have a few seconds to attract your target audience's attention. And those seconds are crucial. They require not just words but also a visual or design that is engaging.

Visuals make your copy more powerful. Design helps communicate your message in the most effective way.

Like the unique selling points in your copy that help it stand out, you need a designer to help make sure your words stand out visually too.

I remember reading a case study by the Hamilton Watch Company, where the same headline and copy for a watch were tested using two different concepts.

One used a close-up of the watch, while the other had no visual—just a headline and copy.

The ad with the 'product as hero' generated three times the response.

Good design can cut through the clutter and engage attention without overpowering the content. Good design is part of the message. The designer must enhance your words to make sure your prospects take the desired actions.

So why do so many small agencies and many clients continue to make the fatal mistake of hiring the best writer and then handing their copy over to a desktop designer or the art director with the lowest estimate?

That's like buying the finest foods and then letting a side order cook, not a chef, prepare the meals. How insane is that?

WHY PRINT IS EVEN MORE IMPORTANT NOW, IN THIS ELECTRONIC AGE.

There is no denying that a website today is an essential element for every business. The importance of a website and the amazing explosion in ecommerce and conversion to electronic media over the last decade is phenomenal.

After all, it is a fantastic medium that people turn to for information on many subjects. And of course we all use it to check out businesses.

A good website is designed either to function as a capability brochure or to act as a powerful lead generating tool. After all it is the most economical way of having a salesperson on duty, 24/7.

But make no mistake about it. Just having this sale sentry does not produce potential customers magically at your website's door without any additional effort on your part. You actually need to drive the right customers to your website first.

Print and direct mail are far from dead, in fact they are more important than ever for the following reasons:

1. Despite the 24/7 accessible nature of your website, it is not tactile. Your customers can't touch it, turn it, or store it away the way they can a piece of printed literature.
2. A website is passive, relying upon a wandering surfer to find it. It cannot tap your most important prospect on the shoulder and say, 'Look at me.' It is buried in cyberspace.
3. A website coupled with professional quality sales literature establishes a greater level of impact than either could accomplish alone. A printed mailer or an ad can help drive customers to your website and inform them that you have something FREE for them.

To see what I mean, just log on to: www.designersinc.ca and check out the 'Freebee' section.

OPT IN, OPT OUT, OPTIONS:

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- To participate, send me an e-mail with your suggestions.
- To post a comment, please include your name, e-mail address and your thoughts.

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