



DIRECT FORUM

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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. THE LONG AND SHORT OF WHAT REALLY WORKS CREATIVELY. PART SIX. (HOW TO COMBAT 'WRITER'S BLOCK')**
- 2. HOW FREQUENTLY SHOULD YOU MAIL?**
- 3. PROFIT vs. NON-PROFIT**
- 4. MY OFFER – A WAY FOR BOTH OF US TO BENEFIT**

THE LONG AND SHORT OF WHAT REALLY WORKS CREATIVELY. PART SIX. (HOW TO COMBAT 'WRITER'S BLOCK')

We all hit the proverbial 'writer's block' from time to time when we have to come up with a new idea.

The first 15-20 minutes of every assignment are the hardest. Often a large part of time is spent staring into thin air or at a blank screen, trying to get our thoughts organized.

So what can you do?

Here are my three suggestions:

- 1. Remember what David Ogilvy said, "You can never bore someone into buying your product."**

So look for the answer from a different perspective. Look for the type of motivation that would get your target audience to react. After all that's what this business is all about.

Flattery, greed and sympathy aren't the only emotions at your disposal you know. Use outrage or anger if you feel



that you need to stir-up your audience. Rally them into action.

For example: A package I did for Amnesty International spoke about the violation of human rights and called on people to do something about it.

2. Get visual.

People remember less than 10% of what they read -- but more than 50% of what they see.

Often the solution to a creative problem is trying to express it verbally. But, if you can come up with an arresting visual idea, you may have resolved the issue.

For example: A piece to promote Fiberglass Pink needed to show how the new product was densely compressed when packaged. We sent the target audience a pair of collapsible sunglasses. It made the point.

3. Finally, learn from great public speakers and entertainers.

Most dynamic speakers or great comedians do something that is important to all direct marketing writers.

The good ones actually talk to their audience. Their secret for keeping their audience spellbound is to use a conversational tone - to talk to them directly.

Sometimes they will just pick on one person in an audience but usually they are talking one-on-one to the crowd. They know how to communicate. So, write like you're talking to your target audience directly in the same way.

So have a plan, do your research so you truly know your target audience, put these three hints to work and you'll always have something you can write about.

HOW FREQUENTLY SHOULD YOU MAIL?

I think the answer depends on two things, the kind of client who is mailing and the target audience they are mailing to.

If you think you are mailing less, or if you are afraid that you are mailing too often to your best customers, again David Ogilvy puts it into perspective: *“You are not marketing to a standing army. You are marketing to a passing parade.”*

He meant that people come in and out of your target market all the time, depending on their needs.

Catalogue companies know that mailing often can be extremely profitable, especially to their frequent customers. Their reasoning is simple: They want to be there when their customers may need them.

For example, my wife was heading off to Florida and fretting about sun exposure. She happened to be looking at the Hammacher Schlemmer catalogue and lo and behold, they were promoting a shirt that blocked harmful UV rays. Instant order. When it came, she loved the way it looked and even better, when she got to Florida, it worked.

On the other hand if you are a charity you cannot keep going to your best donors too often.

Most charities mail between 6 to 8 pieces per year, not all to the same target group.

Next month I will explore this topic further for charities and also address the business-to-consumer and the business-to-business frequency issues.

PROFIT vs. NON-PROFIT

I was recently asked to write an article for 'Integra's Newsletter giving my point of view as to helping charities is important. It was called 'THE ART OF GIVING' and if you want to read it I will gladly send it to you.

I spent over 15 years in the 'for-profit' world, and the last 7 in the 'nonprofit' world, so, I think I understand both and feel that both have much to learn and gain from each other.

The 'nonprofit' world needs to learn more about running an organization more effectively; they need to know more about how to gain new clients or donors, understand how

to retain them, provide customer satisfaction and gain customer loyalty.

The 'for-profit' world has a pretty clear bottom line. They are in business to show a profit for the investor or the shareholder.

In the 'non-profit' world, there are multiple bottom lines; the bottom line from the beneficiary's point of view is different than the donor's point of view, which is different from the bottom line from the staff's point of view, all of which are important.

On the other hand, 'nonprofits' have tremendous leadership and commitment. They have people working for much less than they would get in other jobs and they do that because those already involved in the mission have found a way to engage the passions of people for their causes.

'For-profit' companies can learn important things from charities. How do you get your staff more engaged and committed? The constant ebb and flow of staff changes in businesses would indicate loyalty is has gone the way of the dodo bird.

So, perhaps it's time for 'profit' and 'non-profit' companies to learn something from each other.

And talking about helping each other, here's my offer below. I need your help.

MY OFFER – A WAY FOR BOTH OF US TO BENEFIT

One of the things I do for a living is review the direct mail packages of other companies and give them specific ways they can improve their packages.

I would be happy to do that for my newsletter readers for FREE. I don't claim to know your business or your market, but I do understand what makes a direct mail package work.

Having fresh, experienced eyes have a look can be very beneficial.

Besides, I also train my students to give candid feedback on packages they like or dislike and formulate their reasons why. You will be also getting the reaction of potential customers too for FREE.

So, if you'd like for me and my students to have a look at your direct mail package and give you our honest opinion - absolutely free and with no obligation - simply mail it to me or you can even email a pdf to me. Both my mailing and email addresses are below.

In return, I'm inviting you to critique my newsletter. Should I change it from a simple email to a more interactive one? Do you like it the way it is now?

I value your opinion so please email me any comments and suggestions. I would be very grateful.

Thanks,



Billy Sharma

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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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