

Does Your Message Pass the Test?

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**Does Your Message Pass the Test?**

**By Claire Cunningham**

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Develop an effective benefit message and you're well on your way to building your company's entire marketing program. After all, you need focus to create success. Without it you can wind up expending effort without getting the reward (income, that is) you're looking for.

Start with these three ingredients: Understanding of what the customer needs and wants Knowledge of the competition's strengths, weaknesses and messages Insight about what you offer

Gather the information and chart it. What you're looking for is a hole where there's a customer need that you address and hopefully, the competition doesn't.

Found it? That's the core of your message. Found several holes? You'll need to prioritize.

Now, write alternative introductory sentences. Remember, they need to be customer-benefit oriented, that is, they need to explain what the customer GETS. Got your alternatives ready? Here are seven questions to ask of potential benefit messages. They'll help you find the promise or message that will get you the most mileage:

1) Is it meaningful?

This is where knowledge of the customer comes into play. Your benefit message should be based on the real needs of the people who use your products or services.

2) Is it sustainable?

Establishing your unique position doesn't happen overnight. The message you choose should be based on what you can deliver long term.

## Does Your Message Pass the Test?

### 3) Is it believable?

Can you keep the promise you're making? For example, if your benefit message centers on "superior service," do you understand what your customers' expectations are? Are you committed to making good on this promise over time?

### 4) Is it unique?

Often there are many providers of a product or service. How do you set yourself apart from the rest of the pack?

### 5) Is it concrete and easy to understand?

If you ask your audience to think too hard, they probably won't! Simple, straight-forward messages work best.

### 6) Is it in your own words?

If you're going to be saying this as an introduction to your business, you need to be comfortable with the words and phrasing. Practice saying messages out loud to test them.

### 7) Is it attention-grabbing?

You can't bore someone into buying! Use words that demonstrate your passion, your understanding of client needs. Use words that engage interest.

Test your message with prospects. Watch for their reactions. Ask what they like and don't like. You might get stuck. If that happens, a marketing and communications consultant can craft alternative benefit statements, provide an objective viewpoint, even handle the up-front research.

Claire Cunningham, president of Clairvoyant Communications, Inc., has 20+ years' experience developing and implementing successful business-to-business marketing and communications programs. Sign up for Claire's monthly newsletter, *Communique*, at

. Claire can be reached at 763-479-3499 or e-mail to

## **Does your Book Cover Pass the "Ignore" Test?**

**By Ovi Dogar – The CoversExpert**

Your book cover is the first impression a potential client has with your book. The book cover design and message will determine if your book will be ignored or bought.

## Does Your Message Pass the Test?

Go to your website and have a look at your current cover. Ovi Dogar has put together the ultimate book cover test. Learn if your book cover will pass or be ignored.

**Color Test:** Colorful covers can add to your professional image. Too much color can be detracting. Trash your cover if it has more than 3 colors unless it's a photograph.

**Message:** Your book cover should clearly tell people what the book is about and offer a meaningful benefit. Your book cover should include: title, author's name, main benefit and your website's URL.

**Image Match:** Your book cover should match your book's message. If your book is about marketing then the cover should be designed with that thing in mind. If your book cover is out of synch with your message, it's time to get a new cover.

**Font Type:** One client of mine thought that it is a good idea to use many fonts on his cover. I've asked him how many fonts he wants me to use? His answer was: "How many do you have?" :)

Well, needless to say: use more than three fonts on your book cover and it is doomed.

**Font Size:** Is your book cover crammed with information? White space (as in "less text") on the cover will make it easier to absorb your message. If you have a lot to say, just keep in mind the small image your visitor will see at your site. Is the text so tiny that it is unreadable? This one is going to be ignored.

**Image Quality:** Is your book cover of professional quality or is it unconvincing and cheap looking? Cheap covers are ignored.

You only have one chance to make a great first impression. Make sure you invest in the best book covers you can afford. The book cover is your introduction to a reader, for the today's low cost of professionally designed covers that is money well spent.

Ovi Dogar is specialized in the creation of virtual book covers that really sell. Check out some recent samples of his artwork at

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