

Sell with KISS, as in "Keep it Simple, Stupid"

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By Stan Rosenzweig

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(From "Smart Marketing - What big companies practice and you should learn about marketing branding and business development" by Stan Rosenzweig).

One of the most useful and fundamental communications lessons that has been repeated to me over the years, ever since my earliest days of formal business training, is the fabled, famous, and fabulous "KISS" formula.

In my college marketing class we were told "Keep It Simple, Stupid!" When I entered my three-month sales-training orientation at New York Telephone way back in 1968, it was a more refined "Keep It Short and Simple." New York Telephone didn't want us recruits to hear negative words like stupid. In Army OCS we were given a variation of KISS. KIFSS wasn't quite as short and simple, but it left its firm, indelible training mark with a greater sense of, uh, military bearing. Even though he was never in the service, I see from recent news items that Veep Dick Cheney has picked up that same military jargon.

However we choose to use it, simple messages have the greatest impact. That is why concept slogans like "Intel Inside" are so successful.

Think about how the major players in today's highly successful technology sector apply the KISS formula. Microsoft simplifies its message in its definitive product names: Word, Office, At Work, Excel. These are all KISS names that don't require you to think too much to figure out what the products are about.

If your product or service is not already a household word in your vertical niche market, rather than rely on words like fast and easy, what you really need to convey is a word that you can brand that tells it all.

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Which brings us to your message. Here's are four steps for simplifying your marketing message and defining your market position.

STEP ONE

Think of all the things you do and sell as accommodations to meet customer demands, and then work up a more narrowly defined, focused list of those things you prefer to sell to make money.

When you get right down to it, you probably offer a lot more products and services than you want to, but you have to, in order to meet certain customer expectations.

This is fine, but let's face it. Unless you're a distributor like Wal-Mart or Costco, you don't really want to promote everything you sell, do you? I know I don't. Loss leaders are not a part of the value-added service niche that we are comfortable with, although dozens of Internet companies are willing to lose

money to buy market share in the hopes of selling, not profitable products, but their own stock on Wall Street. I've been reading the red-ink quarterly financials of the latest of these short-term wonders.

STEP TWO

Determine who your competition is and what makes him/her better.

Determine why other people buy from him and not from you.

How does a fresh competitive analysis assist you in simplifying your message and improve your chance of success? First, it's a reality check to determine if you have chosen the right niche to dominate, or if you merely are suffering the after-effects of second-hand smoke from Cheech and Chong's cigarettes. (If you don't understand this, ask your folks and I guess I am older than I think).

Second, how can you even consider communicating a competitive positioning message unless and until you can verbalize what you are competing against?

STEP THREE

Now, let's discuss what you bring to the marketplace that's newer, cheaper, stronger, better tasting, less filling, fat free, or otherwise truly unique.

Under no circumstances are you allowed to say that you "care more" than the competition, or that you are "more service oriented". Everybody says that.

You are not all things to all people, but you are all things to some people, sort of like Rush Limbaugh or Ralph Nader. You probably fit the same description. If you take the time to write down what you do that is all things to some people, you can take it all the way to the bank.

STEP FOUR

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You've defined your focus, decided where you can't beat the competition, and determined where you can beat them cold. Now tie it up in a neat verbal bundle.

Remember, the point of all this is not to see how cute you can write; that's my job. Instead, just try to communicate simply and directly what you do and what you want the reader to do (like call you). Most importantly, don't forget to test your message on the unsuspecting to see if what they read is the same as what you think you wrote.

A winning message is one that can be read on Monday and recalled on Tuesday or, dare we hope it, Wednesday. I test my mate-rial out on friends, relatives and the guy who owns the local diner – people not in the business.

I figure that if those outside the business can easily understand what I'm talking about without explanation, then I won't have to worry that my message is too obscure or cryptic. That's the heart and soul of the KISS formula.

Stan Rosenzweig is a sales trainer, marketing consultant and author. He creates customized corporate sales training and directs strategic marketing, product development and cost management consulting for large and middle sized companies.

For ten years, he was senior contributing editor for a major computer trade publication, writing over 120 articles on sales and marketing management. He has published five books, including "Smart Selling", "Smart Telemarketing", and "Smart Marketing" which can be sampled at

Rosenzweig has written and collaborated in writing of monographs for clients, including "Engineering a Technologically Superior Building", "Technology Construction Planing – Completing The Project Management Mission", and a series of self-paced training courses for specific clients.

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Kiss (Keep It Simple Stupid)

By Rose DesRochers

Not every web surfer is going to understand lawyer talk. Most online privacy policies are written by lawyers and as a web user we don't know half of what it means. Therefore I suggest that you write a privacy policy that people can understand. Phrase your policy as a FAQ with questions like

1. Do you sell my personal information to third parties? 2. How do you secure my personal

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information? 3. Why do you need my information/why do I need to register? 4. Do you collect information from children? 5. What other information do you collect and how is it used? 6. What are my options to control the use of my personal information? 7. What is a cookie?

When writing your company's Privacy Policy make sure that you have covered the following topics

1. The "we collect" statement
2. If you save, share, or sell your customers' email addresses.
3. If your site uses cookies ,what information is collected with the cookie.
4. Your site's security , what steps you take to protect from hackers.
5. Coppa (Statement Regarding Children)
6. How you protect their privacy.
7. Changes to your policy
8. Links
9. Updating your information
10. Your business contact information.

My advice on writing your efficient Privacy Policy can be summed up in one word , as my husband Shawn DesRochers web developer, free lance programmer and owner of invision–graphics.com would say " Kiss" (Keep it simple stupid).

Rose DesRochers, Canada

Rose is a

published author and web columnist. She is also the founder of Today's Woman a supportive online community for men and women over 18. Their goal is to help writers succeed in the writing industry by offering a useful selection of services including author interviews, regular columns, interactive forums, and a place to share your writing for critique by your peers.

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