



Suzanna Cardash of The Advertising Shop

# How to win customers and influence people

*“The consumer isn’t a moron; she is your wife. You insult her intelligence if you assume that a mere slogan and a few vapid adjectives will persuade her to buy anything”*  
 David Ogilvy, Confessions of an Advertising Man

Be honest. Do you like being sold to, patronised or told what’s right for you? Well, strangely enough, nor does anyone else. So when you’re cooking up your next customer-winning campaign, remember that advertising isn’t about selling. It’s about finding people who want to buy.

It’s not just a question of listing your services or using a great headline, punchy, jargon-free sentences and pretty pictures. Yes, tangible benefits and good words and design are important, as is tailoring your message to your marketplace. But you have to make what you’re selling ultra-desirable to convince the right buyers that you’re right for them. Choosing your product, and being seen with it, should say something to – and about – your customers. Something good. Something emotional. Something relevant.

The way you portray your company – in the press, a flyer or letter; on the web, radio or television – reflects what you stand for. It’s visual shorthand. It says – instantly – what customers can expect from you. Get your branding right and you may grab some new business. Get it wrong and readers will move on faster than they can say ‘what’s the product?’. And yes, all these media – in print or on screen – are forms of advertising. They extol your virtues, educate customers and are created expressly with a view to winning more of them. Hey presto: they’re ads! And they’re also brand-builders.

Your image is a tool that can differentiate you from your competitors. If your

business cards or literature are cheap and the person answering your phone sounds bored, it taints everything else you do. Who trusts or wants to be associated with cheap and bored? That doesn’t mean, however, that your image has to be posh or pretentious. Some customers are in the market for a Ferrari; others want a cheap, fun runaround. If I say ‘safe car’, Volvos will probably spring to mind. You might even think Vorsprung durch Technik, though if you’re sensible you won’t try to say it in public. That’s not coincidence. It’s clever branding.

The intangible value this can add to a business is called brand equity, and can run into billions. Take Apple’s iPods. Who listens before buying to see if they’re better than other MP3s?

Who cares? Thank branding. Have customers selecting Stella Artois over a supermarket’s own-brand lager conducted a taste comparison? Actually, I suspect my partner Paul might have done, but that’s another story.

Should you decide to write your ads yourself, don’t fall into the trap of crowing about how high the quality of your widgets is. Think about what’s in it for readers, instead. Show us that you understand our problem – whatever it is – and offer a solution; the more interesting detail, the better. And, however foolish you feel, read your copy aloud. If it sounds silly, pompous or contrived, it is. Start again. Finally, importantly, find something unique to hang your ad’s concept on.

Every company has something different about it, even if it’s the boss’s passion for doughnuts. So use your USP or, if you can’t think of one, pay someone like me to invent one for you.

If you can afford professional help I suspect you’ll find it worth every penny. An ad agency will come up with fresh ideas, copy and layouts much faster than you can, freeing you up to run your business. A splodge of creative expertise and dab of lateral thinking will allow us to portray your offer in a whole new light because we’ll see it with new eyes: those of your customers.

At The Advertising Shop, we love nothing more than hearing amazed clients exclaiming “How on earth did you think of that?”, ideally followed by “It’s brilliant!”. What these clients haven’t seen, of course, is the mountain of ideas we’ve quietly binned. We like them to think we find it easy, you see. As a Guinness ad might say: pure genius. □

*Suzanna Cardash is creative director of The Advertising Shop, which offers affordable, unpretentious consultancy, copywriting and design services for businesses.*



The Advertising Shop  
 144 Walcot Street  
 Bath BA1 5BL  
 01225 447474  
[www.theadvertisingshop.com](http://www.theadvertisingshop.com)  
[creatives@theadvertisingshop.com](mailto:creatives@theadvertisingshop.com)

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