

THE MARKETING ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND



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of Australia and New Zealand

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presence at events like the Rose Bowl parade.

The scooters, which travel as fast as 12.5 mph (20 kph), also allow an officer on patrol to cover a much greater distance than on foot, and go indoors, onto elevators and other places bigger vehicles can't. Blair said the added efficiency allows a force to cut down on the number of patrol officers on each shift and recoup the Segway's cost in as quickly as a month.

In other applications, several bomb squads such as those in Ventura County, California, and Little Rock, Arkansas, are using Segways to transport officers in bombproof and hazardous-material suits that can weigh as much as 100 pounds (45 kilograms). The Segway allows them to scoot in and out of a scene quickly, without having to waddle in on foot in the bulky suits. Segway marketing Vice President Klee Kleber said emergency workers responded to the London bombings last year on Segways, as traffic clogged the routes for larger vehicles.

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Inquiry report one small step for CSR

Recommendations from a parliamentary inquiry not to force directors into ensuring their companies behave ethically have earned kudos from business. But corporate social responsibility practitioners say the report does not go far enough, and that the problems confronting companies about CSR will not go away.

Deloitte corporate social responsibility director David Newhouse says companies need more guidance when it comes to the quality and content of their reports.

He also warns that it is just a matter of time before standardised industry-based guidelines for CSR reports are introduced.

"CSR in Australia and globally is still developing and there are a number of steps to be taken for CSR to become entrenched and reliable," Newhouse says.

"The report is the first step on a journey for Australian business to improve CSR, and non-financial risk reporting generally. Ultimately, standardised industry-based reporting guidelines will be needed."

The parliamentary committee is leaving it to the stock exchange to provide guidance. But what if the company is not listed? And how will it be enforced?

"Investors and stakeholders have been left on their own to lobby companies to manage and provide sustainable reports on corporate responsibility," Newhouse says. "The committee recommendations do nothing to resolve the quality and content debate about CSR reports. Companies will still be able to put whatever they want in their CSR report, if they choose to do one, making it very difficult for investors and the community to compare apples with apples."

The director of the Australian Centre for Corporate Social Responsibility, Leora Black, says the report is a "step in the right direction but not enough steps have been taken".

"It's disappointing that more encouragement for sustainability reporting has not been provided."

She says the recommendation to start an Australian Corporate Responsibility Network, modelled on Britain's Business in the Community, a business-led group with more than 750 companies, including 71 of the FTSE 100, is encouraging. "Whether it's going to be a token gesture or something more substantial remains to be seen."

But company secretaries have praised the decision not to change the Corporations Act and impose a requirement on directors to take public interest into account.

Tim Sheehy, Chartered Secretaries Australia chief executive, says tighter regulation would not make

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certificate authorities. "As an anti-phishing measure, the padlock has become increasingly unimportant."

Melih Abdulhayoglu, chief executive of Comodo, another issuer of traditional certificates, said the padlock is still a good sign that a site is encrypted so sensitive information won't be leaked in transit, but "you could be encrypting for the fraudsters for all you know." So all certificates -- those with and without thorough checks -- are being put into question, because a customer is not likely to know what went on behind the scenes.

Fortunately, change is on the way.

Later this year, the certificate authorities that undergo thorough checks will mark their certificates differently. Browsers could then highlight sites with such high-assurance certificates. The address bar might turn green, for instance, when visiting such sites, distinguishing them from ones that carry only a padlock.

Until then, still look for the closed padlock.

If it's missing, or if a warning appears about a missing or expired certificate, that's a sign that something could be wrong. Newer browsers are trying to make the padlock easier to see -- in Firefox and Opera, for instance, the padlock is moved up top, next to the address bar.

"Just because you see the padlock, it doesn't mean it's meaningful, but it's not meaningless," said Greg Hughes, chief security executive at Corillian Corp., a provider of online banking technology. Comodo, meanwhile, has a free tool at <http://www.vengine.com> to help identify legitimate sites.

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Microsoft has iPod killer in the works

Microsoft is developing a music and video device to compete with Apple's iPod and creating its own music service to rival Apple's iTunes, sources familiar with the plans said on Friday.

Robbie Bach, a rising star at Microsoft who headed development of the Xbox video game business, is overseeing the project, one source said.

The company has held licensing discussions with the music industry and is already demonstrating the entertainment device,

Reuters.

Traditional media still fumbling with new technology

Consumers know it's a new world but sellers are slow to catch on.

Big media and marketers are finally accepting that the way consumers absorb information and entertainment has changed. Their responses to how consumers perceive, retain and respond to brands are reshaping media.

Companies that once relied on regulation or engineering smarts for their edge are learning the ways of integrated marketing across many platforms. From iPod to BlackBerry, consumer review websites to blogs, Quicktime and MP3 - all are part of a complex new media landscape that marketers must traverse as easily as do the consumers they are trying to catch.

The surest way to track this progression in media thinking is to follow the advertising dollars. Australian media ad spending is expected to grow by 11 per cent to \$11.6 billion this year. Of that, online advertising is tipped to add 60 per cent on last year, to \$620 million, stealing thunder from

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China's consumer prices are expected to rise 1.3 per cent in the first half, and full-year inflation will be about 1.7 per cent, the report says.

Inflation in the second quarter is expected to reach 1.4 per cent, accelerating to 2 per cent in the second quarter and 2.1 per cent in the fourth quarter.

Personal housing loans rose 12.3 per cent from a year ago to 1.9 trillion yuan as at end April.

Investment in real estate development rose 21.8 per cent in the first five months from a year earlier. The Government has recently adjusted loan, tax and land policies to curb property prices, including raising the minimum down payment for larger apartments.

Bloomberg

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Translating Teen Web Talk

An undercover crime officer in the USA has published a book on online safety, including a glossary of common instant-messaging terms.

For many parents, the acronyms that dominate online instant messages might as well be in Greek. But being able to decipher children's online chatter might help keep them safe.

Rob Nickel, a former undercover officer specializing in online crime for the Ontario Provincial Police in Canada, put together a glossary to help adults "speak Internet" in his book "Staying Safe in a Wired World." Some key phrases in the local lingo, according to Nickel:

- A3 is "anytime, anywhere, anyplace."
- ASLP is "age, sex, location, picture."
- BD is "big deal."
- CMI is "call me."
- CTN is "can't talk now."
- F2T is "free to talk."
- FYEO is "for your eyes only."
- IAD8 is "it's a date."
- LDR is "long-distance relationship."
- LYN is "lying."
- MMAMP is "meet me at my place."
- P911 is "my parents are coming."
- PRW is "parents are watching."
- RUMF? is "are you male or female?"
- STATS is "your sex and age."
- YIWTGO is "yes, i want to go private."

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Burst of publicity

Here's a marketing coup that has exploded all over the internet. The humble Mentos sweet has been found to have spectacular properties if mixed with Diet Coke. Popping the sweet into a Diet Coke bottle causes a reaction that results in a 20ft geyser shooting into the air. Mentos has found about 800 videos of the soda fountains all over the internet and estimates the free publicity to be worth



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\$10m.

<http://media.guardian.co.uk/diary/>

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Gassing on TV

Pepsi, Frito-Lay and US Tobacco are some of the brands advertising on Gas Station TV - a digital television network that motorists can watch as they fill up on gas.

<http://go.reuters.co.uk>

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Europa's bull in a china shop

Is your brand appealing to China's middle class? Find out here with a report from McKinsey:

<http://www.mckinseyquarterly.com/>

(registration needed)

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World cup or world class waste?

Does the World Cup really make more consumers buy your products? The debate raging over this issue is almost as fierce as the tournament itself.

<http://media.guardian.co.uk>

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MAANZ Endorsed Events

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Marcus Evans 5th Annual Stakeholder Communications programme (31st July -1st August, Sydney) will offer you a series of case studies and expert advice demonstrating the techniques for effective stakeholder communications, as well as the appropriate and effective means to communicating corporate social responsibility and investment, change management, investor relations and community and government participation.

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Articles

Test Your Customer IQ

It will come as no surprise that customers want it their way (to paraphrase Burger King). Yet many companies don't have processes for figuring out what that means. Take this quiz to assess your customer "IQ" (or "Insight Quotient") and determine the necessary next steps for shortening your sales cycle.

The Questions

1. Can you describe your firm's most promising prospects?
2. Can you identify the most important problem you solve for them?
3. Do they recognize they have this problem?
4. Do you know what events trigger a need for your solution?
5. Can you rank their top three "buying criteria"?
6. Is it easy for prospects to identify your firm as a possible vendor?
7. Do they know you can help them?
8. Do you know where they turn for information?
9. Do you know how they learned about your firm?
10. Do they remember you when it comes time to buy?

The Scoring

If you've answered eight or more with a "yes"—congratulations: you probably have a line outside your door! If you've answered four to seven with a "yes," check out the tips below to increase your customer IQ. If you've answered fewer than three in the affirmative, consider spending more time with your customers.

Customer insights drive sales. To win, you need to give customers what they want, make it easy for them to buy, and ensure that they know you exist and can meet their needs. Each of these requires deep customer knowledge, because everyone buys differently. The person who buys a Merc shops differently from the guy who drives a Honda Civic.

1. Examine your past successes

Which customers were easiest to attract? The most profitable? Bought the quickest? Became steady customers? Those are the successes that you want to replicate.

Look for clues that will help you and others identify these prospects. Do they have any common characteristics such as location, size, industry or products purchased? Was there a particular event that caused them to purchase when they did? Did they hear about you from a particular source? The more specifically that you can describe your ideal prospects, the easier it will be to find and reach these individuals. Concentrating your firepower on those accounts will dramatically improve your sales effectiveness.

2. Ask, don't guess

People buy for a variety of reasons. Yet, to capture their attention, you need to communicate a simple, clear, consistent message. Only after you grasp people's attention can you provide them with all the other information that they require to make their buying decision.

The best way to identify that initial message is to focus on your most promising prospects. Ask them to describe what they were looking for, how they made their decision, why they bought from you.

Then ask: "What was the single most important reason that you selected our company?" Surprisingly, it is not uncommon for customers to produce an answer that they never mentioned when providing a



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path its development should take.

The mission statement specifies what activities the organisation as a whole intends to pursue now and in the future; it says something about what kind of organisation it is now and is to become and, by omission, what it is not to do and not to become. It depicts an organisation's character, identity, and scope of activities.

The mission statement communicates the firm's core ideology and visionary goals.

Vision Statements are often seen as different to Mission statements, although they can in fact be combined. Vision Statements should be more immediate and inspirational. The vision statement expresses the desired destination of the organisation within a certain time-frame.

Mission and Vision statements from most organisations are usually run of the mill/ordinary . They lack inspiration and a real understanding of what is needed. They tend make obvious statements about "putting customers first, ... valuing employees; making profits"; etc.

Good Mission and Vision Statements are meant not only to provide direction, but should also be inspirational to those who follow them.

Corporate Vision/Mission Statements

BMW Mission: To be the most successful premium manufacturer in the industry.

Carlsberg Mission: Carlsberg is a dynamic, international provider of beer and beverage brands, bringing people together and adding to the enjoyment of life.

Coca-Cola The Coca-Cola Company exists to benefit and refresh everyone it touches.

Ericsson Our vision: To be the prime driver in an all-communicating world.

Ford Our Vision: to become the world's leading company for automotive products and services. Our Mission: we are a global, diverse family with a proud heritage, passionately committed to providing outstanding products and services.

Our Values: we do the right thing for our people, our environment and our society, but above all for our customers.

Gillette The Gillette Company's vision is to build total brand value by innovating to deliver consumer value and customer leadership faster, better and more completely than our competition.

Google Google's mission is to organise the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful. Our philosophy:

Never settle for the best

It's best to do one thing really, really well

Fast is better than slow

Democracy on the web works

You don't need to be at your desk to need an answer

You can make money without doing evil

There is always more information out there

The need for information crosses all borders

You can be serious without a suit

Great just isn't good enough.

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Ownership of a numerical name is of course much trickier with two brands in the same sector. There was some speculation a few years ago that the UK's television station Channel Four may have been annoyed when BBC Four was launched with a similar urban, self-confident, highbrow positioning. But then there's the similarity between Channel Four and another much older entity, the BBC's own Radio Four.

By the same token, 3 might be safe within the telecommunications space, but what happens if the brand owner wants to move into a different sector? Here is a name that will cause confusion in any market where an existing operator already owns a brand called "three." This has serious implications for Hutchison's chances of successfully moving the brand into automotive, radio, and (most worrying of all) television markets.

Until recently, the main reason to adopt a number as a brand name was that the company had simply been allocated the number by the government or an industry regulator. Such numbers usually take the form of a channel number, most commonly in the case of television or radio stations. But there are other examples too: France's Neuf Telecom took its name from a dialing code and Russia's newest airline, S7, takes its name from its international airline code.

Of course, having a channel number isn't a reason to automatically adopt it as the brand name. Many TV stations don't use their channel number as their brand name. ITV in the UK is received by most households on channel 3, but never describes itself as such. ABC in Australia is transmitted on UHF channel 2, but never refers to itself as Channel 2.

So why might a business choose a number over a word for a name? There appear to be a number of reasons.

Some numbers spell out figures. Many telephones carry alphabetic characters as well as numbers, and text-friendly mobile handsets have reintroduced familiarity with letters on a ten or twelve-digit keypad. British foodservice company 3663, which spells f-o-o-d on a keypad, took this to its logical conclusion. So long as it can hold on to the right phone numbers and domain names, then this seems to make sense. But at the end of the day it's a clever stunt. One wonders whether this approach is likely to catch on for other firms.

Most importantly, clever use of a numerical brand name can achieve stand out status from competitors. Mobile operator 3 is particularly interesting in this regard. Seemingly rapt at the success of a colour as a brand name for an earlier business (Orange), owner Hutchison Telecom seemed intent on repeating the trick in even more esoteric style with a numeral. While it is difficult to imagine Orange being called Grey, I'd contend that it is quite easy to imagine 3 being called 5.

But having said that, the people at 3 have developed a fairly compelling rationale that seems to show that they have a universally appropriate number for their name. As explained on the website:

We are, after all, the third planet from the sun. In every fairy tale there are always 3 wishes. In Chinese, 3 sounds like life. There were 3 wise men. 3 is the lucky number. You can only truly know where you are if you have 3 coordinates. You can't have space without 3 dimensions. No 3, no mathematics. 3 is dramatic: act one, act two, act three.

If the company can make it work, it could be a category killer.

What is indisputable is that 3 has succeeded in building a brand personality in much the same way as it could have if its name were a word instead of a number. While a name like Orange has given that particular company a head-start in terms of positioning (it means something the first time you hear it),

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3 has no less inherent meaning than it would with a jumble of letters or a made-up word as a name.

Of course in terms of awareness-raising there are implications to taking an esoteric route. It is interesting that 3 is beginning to call itself 3 Mobile in some markets, so the brand is clearly not yet universally understood. Like acronyms or new words, numbers don't immediately express their proposition or product, with the result that greater effort, time or expenditure may be required to build associations into the brand.

In a very different way, UK directory inquiries service 118118 has also used its number to obtain category leadership. Following an EU-wide decision to use 118 as the prefix for all directory inquiry numbers, a round of auctions followed in most major countries.

While some operators attempted to gain numbers that carried some kind of meaning (118123 is the number you call to reach BT; 118247 is the number you call to reach Yell), canny operator infonXX acquired the number 118118. It then took the decision to use its telephone number as its brand name.

In the two years since launching, 118118 has undoubtedly had a huge impact on the UK market; part of the reason can be traced to its easily remembered, repetitive name. In fact, the first ad campaign played on this theme with twin spokesmen in identical 118 running clothes.

Chris Moss, chairman and former CEO of 118118, says that making numbers brands rather than just memorable numbers requires a different approach. He goes on to explain "When we chose to use our telephone number in this way, we first expected that a jingle and or tone would be the key... But everyone's heads are full of PIN numbers, house numbers, ZIP or postcode numbers, short dial numbers and password numbers... The key was to stand away from the crowd. To create a personality was paramount."

When Moss talks about creating a personality with his numerical brand, his business has clearly delivered against this objective. Originally, the only meaning 118 has is in virtue of its role as the standard European prefix for directory inquiry numbers. While this delivers a degree of prestige (and memorability) the real brilliance of the brand stems from using the number as the brand and doing so in such a successful manner.

The rare occasions where numbers will be universally recognized as "good" numbers tend to relate to mathematical symmetry or usage in counting protocols (such as time or dates). These are the closest you can get to inherent meaning as far as numbers are concerned. Numbers like 247, 0, or 365 immediately convey a stance: convenience, ubiquity (or the opposite) and availability, respectively. But, perhaps surprisingly, there are few examples of these numbers with mathematical appeal being used as brand names.

So numbers stand out in a world of words regardless of how the number is arrived at. But there are other advantages to numbers as brand names.

Perhaps most significantly, numbers can be used to neatly create sub-brands, with the added benefit that they fall neatly into an obvious hierarchy or sequence, for example, ABC1 and ABC2 in Australia, and BBC1 through to 4 in the UK. However, applying the same logic, it is interesting to note that ITV in the UK was able to launch a second channel as ITV2 by re-branding its first channel as ITV1. This would have been impossible if ITV had been in fact called Channel 3. Channel 3.1 and Channel 3.2 doesn't make much sense and doesn't sound like much of a portfolio.

Numbers have famously been used in the car industry – most notably by BMW, Volvo and Saab, but

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* Each party in an exchange is likely to have other interested parties to consider.
These exchanges (of mutual benefit) may be one offs or become ongoing and lead to relationships

What is a Value Offer?

Throughout this text the term 'offer' or 'proposition' is normally used in preference to that of 'product'. This is because:

- * First, the term is more useful in gaining an understanding that the "product" is not a simple thing (good) but a very complex bundle of tangible and intangible elements.
- * Second, we recognise that an offer or proposition is what the marketer brings to the market and is put forward in an exchange to the buyer, who may or may not purchase it.
- * Third, a value offer or proposition is only a stage towards a value acquisition, which is the buyer's view of total product bundle purchased (hired/rented) to fulfil their value needs.

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Subliminal messaging

The "black sheep" of the communication process is subliminal messaging.

Subliminal messaging consists of attempts to communicate below a person's conscious level of perception; supraliminal attempts to communicate above a person's level of consciousness.

Subliminal messaging has been most often associated with advertising, and many people believe subliminal advertising is used by marketers to sell products and services.

In his 1957 book, *The Hidden Persuaders*, Vance Packard decried the use of research to explore the thought processes and motivations of consumers in order to apply psychology and social science to sales.

James Vicary, developed a "subliminal projection machine capable of flashing unnoticeable messages during big screen movies" in that same year. He claimed to have conducted a six-week study in a theatre in Fort Lee, New Jersey, in which "Eat Popcorn" and "Drink Coke" blipped on the screen unnoticed by viewers increased the sales of cola by 18% and popcorn by 58%.

Vicary's study has never been successfully replicated, and the movie he chose for his experiment was "Picnic," about an event of the same description in which actors ate and drink throughout.

Wilson Bryan Key, a professor of psychology and communication theory at the University of Western Ontario, has written four very popular books on the topic since 1970, in which he says he's found death symbols in liquor ads and sexual depictions and the word "cancer" embedded in cigarette ads.

There are no laws against subliminal advertising; the FTC holds the position that any marketing communication message that causes consumers to unconsciously select certain goods or services, or deviate from normal purchase behaviour might constitute a deceptive and unfair trade practice.

Many consumers think marketing subliminal messaging is everywhere from children's television programming to background music at K-Mart.

Ethical marketing communicators don't use subliminal techniques and doubt their effectiveness.

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Advertorial Tutorial

Looks like editorial, works like an ad.
There's an art to it.

Product-placement-for-a-price is big business in movies; sport broadcasts feature (beer brand) replays; traffic updates and news headlines come to us courtesy of (fast food chain).

In this environment is it any wonder that advertisers are keen to lend their name to credible magazine and newspaper editorial? It's happening, after a fashion, via the advertorial.

Perhaps once seen as some sort of grubby commercial Trojan Horse trying to infiltrate traditional journalism, the advertorial is acknowledged and defined by the Press Council as "newspaper and magazine content that looks like editorial content but is published under a commercial arrangement between an advertiser, promoter or sponsor of goods and/or services and the publisher."

Because the Council believes that "readers are entitled to expect on all occasions that journalists are free to write objectively without pressure or influence because of advertising considerations", it advises that advertorials "should be identified by such terms as 'advertisement', 'advertising feature', 'special feature', 'sponsored feature' and the like so that readers are not led to believe that their content is based on editorial news values free of commercial influences."

Quite.

Hard-hitting investigative journalism the advertorial may not be, but the practice is widespread and popular. Unfortunately advertorials can also be pretty ineffective, unless some ground rules are followed. Then, they can deliver real mileage for advertisers, plenty of the 'I didn't know that' factor for readers, and some comfort for Editorial Departments that may feel as though the integrity of their pages is threatened.

Is that an ad?

Recently a 350-word draft advertorial prepared for a mass circulating national consumer magazine had the product name squeezed in 27 times - an average of one brand mention every sentence or so. Fortunately some radical surgery saved the day and it was eventually published in far more reader-friendly form, but a slab of text that is so overtly commercial can't pretend to be advertorial. Rather, it's an irritating flashing neon sign, a high-decibel, shouting radio commercial, in print. Perhaps the thinking was, "We're paying for this, and we don't want anyone to miss that it's our message." Wrong. Who would want to read it?

Consider:

Your advertorial will be identified upfront as Advertisement or Advertising Feature, but the reader won't appreciate being immediately assaulted with heavy-duty branding. Advertorials work hardest when they manage to be intrinsically good reading while they are gently delivering your commercial message; when they are an interesting supplement to the host publication's editorial content.

Your brand name should not appear until half- to three-quarters of the way through. The advertorial should be constructed so that it first of all has the reader thinking, "This looks interesting." Just like a good editorial article, your advertorial needs a headline, visual and opening paragraphs that communicate to the reader 'this won't waste your time'. Otherwise you are wasting your time. You may as well run a straight display advertisement, or just send off a press release and hope it is published.

Readers should be taken logically through different steps; for example some background, the issues, the challenge, options, and finally your message. Yes they know it's sponsored, but along the way

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they can be absorbing useful information, great tips, sage advice, and more.

For the same reason, logos and pack shots should not be plastered throughout. Save them to last, or run them in an accompanying display ad.

Copy written in the third person, being closer in style to editorial, enhances authority and credibility. Copy written in the first person for an editorial-style advertisement – e.g. “We have researched the market” – is confusing because it begs the question: Who is the “We”? The publisher or the advertiser?

Just briefly

An effective advertorial starts with a good brief for the writer.

That sounds pretty dreary. It’s like saying a car will perform better and last longer if it is regularly serviced. So basic. But there it is. Spell out who makes up your primary (and perhaps secondary) target audience; what you want to communicate to them; key themes or phrases; the tone you want to strike; how your product’s features translate into benefits; and critically, why all this is important to the reader/potential consumer. (Now’s a good time to confirm your advertorial is scheduled in the best publication for your market and objectives).

Some diligent homework on your part gives the writer a flying start in his or her mission to make the advertorial useful, interesting, and entertaining reading.

The write stuff

How to choose an advertorial writer?

You may not need a journalist. Indeed some mainstream journalists, bound by their Code of Ethics, may regard commercial writing as being likely to compromise their objectivity. Even a journalistic background may not be a pre-requisite. Good writers who can clearly communicate and promote the activities of an enterprise often come from advertising and marketing backgrounds. They are likely to be savvy with the commercial realities and marketing nuances that can help shape an effective advertorial, and as a bonus they are likely to be familiar with photo libraries and art studios.

An ability to calmly shepherd copy through regulatory minefields is critical, particularly with advertorials prepared for pharmaceutical, healthcare or financial services industries. For regulatory and legal purposes, advertorials are treated exactly the same as display advertisements – every word is scrutinized, and requests for partial rewrites are common.

Beware the writer. Whose style is so cute, so now. It’s from scripting too many TV commercials.

Hard to read. No. Flow. Mate.

They’re only words

Be clear on what you are getting. You can commission a 500-word advertorial and get just that – 500 words, no frills. But who is supposed to get those words into print? Remember they may still need to be edited to length and broken up with snappy sub-heads; appropriate accompanying images need to be sourced (perhaps from a photo library, if you are unable to supply images that are different to those appearing in your display advertising); the images will need sharp captions; a studio needs to be commissioned (often through the publisher), briefed and supervised; a layout and final artwork must be prepared, perhaps involving more fine-tuning of copy, and then material supplied for printing, all by deadline.

Look for someone who can take the project from initial briefing and writing all the way through to completion, so that you just have the far less labour-intensive role of signing off on each of the steps.

The relevancy test

THE MARKETING ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

ophthalmologists.

When you visit one of these sites, you know immediately you're in the right place. Most doctors' sites are about us... not just them.

Imagine a law firm site that invited visitors to describe their problem—what they need. Instead, virtually every law firm Web site invites readers to figure out, on their own, in which of the firm's service pigeonholes they belong. That's OK if you're a corporate counsel buying legal services—but what if you aren't a lawyer?

2. Wordiness

There's way too much black on most professional sites, and way too little white. Long words in long sentences making up long paragraphs stuck in long bios, long service descriptions and the like. Gray. Dull. Boring. That's how most pages on professional sites look.

One reason is that most lawyers and other professionals are far more linear and long-winded than most readers. Most of us scan. Or we nibble.

Looking at a screen full of words shuts people down. I doubt, for example, that even my mother has read this far. "Too many words," she thought.

This is a huge battle. Short takes discipline, and that takes work. Work is hard. Hard doesn't get done.

3. Jargon

You're probably seeing a pattern by now. The common belief is "See me. See my credentials. See how smart I am and how much I know. Hire me."

Technical jargon doesn't provide comfort. For starters, it doesn't get read. Too hard.

What it does—read or not—is send a message to those of us who aren't blessed with a medical degree or whatever: It says arrogance. "We matter. You don't."

Sites don't have to dumb down. I like knowing that my lawyer understands debentures... whatever they are. It comforts me to know this.

But professional Web sites ought to be See-Spot-Run-simple to read and navigate. That doesn't require jargon. Just good writing.

4. Staleness

Sites require a lot of energy to develop. Particularly the good ones.

By the time a practice writes or re-writes and collects enough articles, pictures, or data to launch a halfway-respectable site, everybody's exhausted. Sites then limp along for a few years until the pain of creating a new site is less than the pain of keeping up the old one.

Technology helps. The newest content management software or database-driven sites make updates a lot easier than hard-coding HTML.

But staleness is a human, not a software issue. It takes a lot of dedicated resources to keep a site fresh—something the top firms and practices have begun to recognize. Web sites cannot be maintained out of a part-timer's back pocket.

5. Cliché images

What few images you do find on a lot of professional sites are typically worn out and predictable. Law firms, for example, seem to believe that we need to see the scales of justice or a gavel or some other hackneyed image to appreciate that we're visiting a law firm Web site.

With doctors, it's a caduceus. Architects? A Corinthian capital.

It's insulting.

Better to look like your market. Want to work for Fortune 500 businesses? Then your site better start

