

Powerfully Funny March 2010 News from Kathy Klotz-Guest

I help companies innovate new products and services and then creatively market their innovations to the world. Innovation is essential to business survival, and it should be fun. If you're not having fun innovating or marketing your business, let's talk!

Hello all,

I hope this year is off to a great start for you. It is for me. I feel energized and ready to take on the world - well, at least, my little corner of it. It's also a great time for re-evaluating your marketing. When was the last time you had your marketing reviewed? Chances are that what worked for you last year isn't working now. Your target market's needs have likely changed, and thus, so must your offerings and your marketing communications. In short, you need a new "story" that connects with customers' current needs.

Marketing isn't about logos. It's not branding. To be sure, great branding is important in marketing; however, if you don't have a message, a clear story that appeals to your customers, then beautiful designs won't save you. Marketing is about your clear, compelling story.

Quick tip: Instead of spending tons on designs, review the heart of your message - your story - to see how you can refresh it to work better for you and your customers now.

Here's to your good health, happiness, and humor in 2010. So what's your story?!

Kathy

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How Do You Innovate? Let Us Know

Share your stories of creativity. Email us at: Kathy@powerfullyfunny.com

Feature: Marketing Ain't About the Logo! It's About Your Story

Marketing is about the story you tell your customers, and the stories they tell about you. If there's a big gap between who you say you are and who customers say you are, you have a problem.

I can't tell you how many times I hear people talk about marketing as branding, logos, and collateral. And design firms - oh wonderful design firms. Many of them are quite talented. But let me say this loud and clear: It's not about the graphics, the logo and the design! That is not marketing! Saying it doesn't make it so.

I had a wonderful and warm prospect with beautiful collateral, website, and logos. He had spent tens of thousands of dollars on them. I asked him how his "branding" was working. It wasn't. His firm was close to bankruptcy this past year.

His material didn't SAY anything. Sure it was beautiful, and it was also jargon-laden with cryptic taglines. I asked him what his customers said and he admitted many of his customers don't get his marketing. Then why continue to do it? His response, "Well, the design firm said..."

Stop right there! It ain't about the logo (yes, we're using incorrect grammar to capture the urgency of the point, and thus, your attention. Correct colloquial diction will simply not do here)! Yes, there are design firms that understand messaging and then there are ones that don't - the kind this prospect used. When your customers don't understand your messaging, when your benefits are unclear, when your jargon is out of control, and your differentiation is lost - you have a **MARKETING** problem! There are no points for being clever because there are no inside jokes in marketing! If your customer has to ask you what you are about, they're already gone. The burden of **clear communications** is NOT on them; it's on YOU. Test your branding first with your ideal, profitable customers. If they don't get it, junk it. Go back to your story - that's where the inspiration for branding starts.

For a fraction of what this prospect spent on branding, he could have shored up his message and moved the needle in his business. Instead, he thought having fancy collateral WAS marketing. The hardest part about this scenario is being right. I told him two years ago he needed to change his message, but a **web design firm** took all his budget and delivered nothing but beautiful designs - no clear message based on any market research. It's hard to see that happen. When I last saw him, he lamented that I was right. That doesn't make me feel great especially because I like this prospect very much and wanted him to succeed. I could have helped him

achieve results for a lot less than he spent. But he had spent all his money on sexy branding that left him with nothing. Branding and logos are NOT the heart of marketing. It ain't about the logo!

Branding is based on the essence of who you are; it's your customer story. Your promise to your customers of the kinds of service you offer and the benefits you deliver - that's the heart of your message. I don't care what your logo looks like. It doesn't matter if I don't get what you do for me as a customer! Can you have aesthetic design and great messaging? Absolutely - but your brand starts with your messaging. Not the other way around. You never start with a design and logo in mind and "back" into your story. Rather, good design springs from the essence of your story.

Another problem is the "keeping up with the Joneses" mentality: "Well, all my competitors have these buzzwords, so I have to have them to be in the same competitive space." And if your competitors were to jump off the bridge, would you? Ahem! Jargon doesn't connect you with your customer. Instead of keeping up with your competition, you should be kicking their behinds. And the best way to do that is to do what they AREN'T doing: using clear, concise messaging that communicates the story of how you help customers. You never stand out by following the herd.

Stop spending tons on branding. If money is tight, the number one thing you must do is update your messaging. Is your story the right one? Has your market changed? Have their needs changed? Is the story you are telling the RIGHT one for the current climate? This does not have to cost **lots of money** - it is far cheaper and more effective than spending on "design" work.

Many businesses fall into this trap. They spend lots of money to look good and forget about how they SOUND. When you go to a networking event, what do you SAY about your business? That's what matters. Most businesses fail because they lack a compelling story that resonates with their audience.

So forget jargon and forget logos for now. Yes, they are important, but not as important as the center of your marketing - your story.

Now that's *my* story, and I'm sticking to it.

Call [408.578.8040](tel:408.578.8040) to find out how to improve your story.

Innovating a Better Customer Experience Starts with a Marketing Review

- How hard is it to reach a live person when a customer calls? Called your own voicemail? What's your **turnaround time** on email? Ordered from your own site?
- Is your marketing (website, collateral, etc.) consistent in tone, look, and

message?

- Are your messages falling flat? Are sales?
- Do you know who your key target is? Do you need or have multiple targets?

Now is a great time for a marketing review. We'll review all the ways you touch your customer - website, voicemail, emails, direct mail, collateral, etc. - and make recommendations to improve your customers' experience and your bottom line! *Call 408.578.8040.*

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