

“How to Review Your Communications for Fun and Profit”

Research shows a large percentage of corporate communications campaigns fail to get results.

Yet, Stefano Boscutti has created successful communications for ANZ, Ford, Orica, Qantas, SBS, Triple J and others.

Each successful communications campaign began with a review process that highlighted (and prioritised) areas of improvement.

Here are 10 of the things we've learned to focus on.

1. Emotional intelligence.

Communications is an art, not a science. People first make decisions emotionally which they then rationalise logically. People all over the world want what they've always wanted - love, acceptance, beauty, health, nutrition, community, social status, relief from suffering, transcendence.

How emotional are your communications?

2. Unifying personality. Ninety-five percent of all communications are created ad hoc. Most brands lack any consistent personality from one year to another. This breeds scepticism and distrust, and weakens the brand over time.

How is every piece of communications strengthening your brand personality?

3. Key positioning. How your brand is positioned is the most important decision you face. The results of your campaign depend less on how we create your communications than on how your brand is positioned in the market.

How distinctive is your brand positioning?

4. Better promise. Most communications promise nothing and are doomed to failure. A promise is not a claim or theme or slogan. It's a benefit you deliver, clear and simple.

How unique and competitive is your brand promise?

5. Big idea. Unless your communications are built on a BIG IDEA, it will pass like a ship in the night. It takes a BIG IDEA to jolt people out of their indifference. To make them notice your communications, remember it and take action. Your BIG IDEA should be unique, long-lasting and fit the strategy to perfection.

How big is your BIG IDEA?

6. Medium is the message. Media can often negate the message which triggers psychological discomfort and cognitive dissonance. People are less likely to believe a brand that makes them feel bad. Aligning the message with the medium can double its effectiveness. And then some.

How does your media compound your BIG IDEA?

7. High-quality. If your communications look ugly, people will conclude that your brand is shoddy. Stefano Boscutti has been conspicuously successful in doing this for Apple, Ford, Levi's, Nike, Porsche, Qantas, SBS and others.

How premium is your brand image?

8. Mnemonic device. Most communications slide off people's memories like water off a duck's back. Your communications need a flourish of singularity, a burr that will stick and be easily recalled in people's mind. One such burr is the MNEMONIC DEVICE, or relevant symbol - like the triple drumstick logo we devised for Triple J.

How memorable is your mnemonic device?

9. Story appeal. Nobody was ever bored into paying attention. Yet most communications are impersonal, detached, cold and dull. It pays to involve people with a narrative that puts them at the heart of a story.

How much story appeal do your communications have?

10. Simple brand assets. The average person is now exposed to thousands of communications a day. Consistent, constantly-used, easy-to-remember brand assets are key to creating distinctive memory structures. These sensory and semantic cues refresh and reinforce memory structures and keep your brand top of mind.

How singular are your brand assets?

How to score (and prioritise)

Give each of the 10 areas a score between 0 (non-existent) and 10 (great).

You'll immediately see how much your communications score out of 100. And you'll spot (and prioritise) which areas you'll need to concentrate on to improve your communications.



'The Apple Store was probably the best ad we ever did.' Lee Clow

Words make all the difference

There's a magnitude of difference between good and bad communications.

John Caples has seen one advertisement sell 19 1/2 times as much as another. Same size, same image, same copy. Different headline.

A handful of words can make all the difference between success and failure. Words create the meaning, the value.

Think of words as music. Consider beat, tempo, timbre, rhythm, phrasing, harmony, melody, etc.

The 3 Big Don'ts of effective writing

Don't preach. Exhorting your beliefs tends to put people off. Be inclusive.

Don't finger wag. Admonishing people undermines your authority. Praise them.

Don't take a snide tone. Ease up on the sneering. Play nice.

What works best in headlines

Branded headlines. On average, five times as many people read the headline as read the body copy. So if you don't include the brand in your headline, you've wasted 80 percent of your money.

Benefit in headlines. Headlines that promise a benefit are more effective than those that don't. Appeal to your reader's self-interest.

News in headlines. Time after time, we've found that it pays to inject genuine news into headlines.

Simple headlines. Your headline should telegraph what you want to say in clear, simple language.

What works best in copy

Be brave. Fear is at the root of bad writing. Don't second guess yourself. Get adventurous. Have fun.

Write the way you talk. As if you're sitting down with a friend and sharing a story. No matter who your audience is, make it personal. Write one word at a time. Use short words, short sentences and short paragraphs

Use simple words. Never use jargon words like conceptualising, onboarding, actioning. They are (in David Ogilvy's words) hallmarks of a pretentious ass.

Avoid adverbs. Adverbs are not your friends. These timid modifiers lead to flat, lazy writing. The road to hell is paved with good intentions and adverbs.

Simple brand language. Create a consistent, constantly-used, easy-to-remember brand language which over time will create distinctive memory structures. These sensory and semantic cues will refresh and reinforce memory structures and keep your brand top of mind.

Yes, people read long copy. People read what interests them as long as it's well written. Stefano Boscutti has used long copy with notable success - for Nike, Orica, ANZ, Qantas and others.

Story appeal in words. Stefano Boscutti has achieved noteworthy results with copy structured as a story. People are naturally drawn to a universal narrative sequence that puts them at the heart of a story that leads to transformative success.

Why tell a story

A good story is a prescription for courage.

A well-structured, well-plotted, well-told story can show us how we can become our very best.

It can embolden and strengthen us, help us overcome our greatest fears and lead to profound, meaningful change.

How to tell a story successfully

There are some key elements that take a story from good to great.

Read more. Stephen King's book on writing is a good place to start. It's called, er, "On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft". Read it twice.

Bone up on myths. Joseph Campbell's exploration of comparative mythology provides universal insights into fundamental story structure. Carl Jung's archetypes and analytical psychology of the collective unconscious will help you become conscious of narrative patterns and motivations.

Bring yourself. A story is as much about you as anything else. Reflect on what originally captivated you and hand it to your audience as if it were aflame.

Set the context. Give the place, time, setting, and any relevant context without too much fuss. Keep it factual, short and sweet. Avoid unnecessary exposition.

Find a new angle. Attract a new audience with an audacious new angle. A fresh perspective that dares to show the character in a vulnerable, if not embarrassing, light.

Be vulnerable. Dare to share the emotion of your story. Be unafraid to ask your audience what you questioned along the way.

Tune in to your senses. Choose the strongest of the five senses in your story and use it to make a deeper connection with your audience.

Choose a gleaming detail. Something that best captures and embodies the essence of the story. Find one shimmering image that connects with your audience, that sparks an 'Aha!' moment. A singular, implicit moment of startling clarity. An extraordinary truth.

Spur juxtapositions. Take two ideas, images, or thoughts and crash them together to startle your audience. In posing two opposing ideas, a whole new idea is created. Thesis + antithesis = synthesis.

Be kind. Be generous. Share your story with a smile. Let it build to its natural, emotional punchline, then end it and get out fast. Leave the audience wanting more.

Invitation

This communications review process applies to most brands, most categories of products and services. But not to all.

Stefano Boscutti has developed specialised communications reviews for food products, travel destinations, financial services, media properties and other industries.

But these specific reviews are available only to the clients of Stefano Boscutti.

Stefano Boscutti

Want your communications to get better results? Stefano Boscutti can undertake a comprehensive communications review to uncover existing issues, develop a range of opportunities and clarify the way forward to a better future. To arrange a meeting, please email stef@boscutti.com