



Proof vs. Truth

Evolving your marketing communications for maximum impact

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Producing results from traditional marketing and advertising has never been more difficult, and it's not going to get any easier. More competitors and an explosion in available communication channels have made traditional interruption marketing far less effective than ever before. And despite the best efforts of marketers to capitalize on their companies' competitive strengths and tell a compelling and truthful story, prospects and customers just don't believe it anymore.

Don't we all react in the same skeptical way to marketing and advertising claims these days? With so many competitors claiming to have the best products, the best services, the best prices, etc., it's no wonder our prospects and customers don't respond the way we'd like them to. In a single day we are interrupted with hundreds if not thousands of advertisements. Billboards, radio ads, email, postal mail, etc. all day long. Then we have to deal with TV commercial after commercial stretching the nightly news or an episode of your favorite television program to an hour when it could have been twenty minutes.

Can all of these products and services really be the best? A better question might be what if your product or your service really is the best in your market, *but your success is hindered by the clutter of all of the competing claims from inferior products and services?* Your best efforts to put forth truthful and compelling marketing communications can be rendered useless. In reality, you might have the best product, service, or pricing. Your marketing communications just might be telling the truth. But unless your communications build proof of your claims, in the prospect's mind, you're just telling stories again.

GIVE THEM THE TRUTH, AND WIN THEM WITH PROOF

Marketers struggling to increase the effectiveness of their marketing and advertising efforts must now do more than tell a good story. We all like to be entertained; but frankly, we just don't have the time. Now your ads, emails, newsletters, pay-per-click activities and your web site have to deliver the goods, the proof.

Here's a quick litmus test of 5 questions for any marketing communication you employ. Put on your customers' shoes and make sure all of your marketing messages answer these questions **before** you use them.

I'm often reminded by my 4-year old son that proof is what's important these days. Riding in the car on a recent night, he asked me why the moon was following us home. To him, it looked like the moon was moving with us and not stationary in the sky. Then he noticed that the stars were following us too. In fact he said, "They're chasing us, Dad. They're gonna beat us home. Hurry up!" Of course I tried to explain that the moon and the stars weren't really following us. Attempting an early astronomy lesson, I explained that the moon, like the sun, rotates around the earth every day, lighting our days and guiding us home at night. In his words, "so the moon comes out when the sun goes to bed." Whew! I was relieved that the explanation satisfied him. But then he exclaimed, "You're telling stories again, Daddy," and as anyone with small children can understand, he just wasn't buying it.



1. Who are you and what do you do?
2. What can you do for me?
3. Who else can say that?
4. Why should I believe you? or Where can I see proof of your claim?
5. What do you want me to do now?

These are five of the most basic questions your prospect will (silently and mentally) ask as they encounter your marketing messages. You can still answer all of these questions for the prospect even if your strategy calls for minimal copy. For example, if I were writing a print or online ad for a hospital that was promoting fast emergency room care, the copy might say something like the example below.

The Waiting Room Has Left The Building

85% of University Hospital ER Patients Agree

they receive better care and recover faster
with our new **No Wait Guarantee.**

See the report and listen to patients of
the only tri-state hospital that guarantees
your emergency room wait will not
exceed 15 minutes.

www.univhospital.org/15minreport.htm

This ad answers all 5 questions quickly. It identifies University Hospital, what the hospital can do for patients, and quickly differentiates itself as the only hospital with this type of guarantee. The ad then clearly gives the call to action and the proof in the form of a link to a report that documents patient satisfaction and provides testimonials. One enhancement that I would add is to collect the email addresses of everyone who requests the report & testimonials to use in follow up marketing campaigns. Since the call to action is a link to a website, the performance of this ad can now be measured much more discretely against other marketing campaigns. Coupled with truth, the addition of proof will produce better results than previous ads that simply touted better care and facilities – something competitors

could say, regardless of how true it really is.

Now, I'm not sure how I'm going to prove my explanation on the moon to my son, but in business, we can all prove our claims to our customers. Give them a sample of your product or a free trial of your service. "Try before you buy" is still a very successful way to attract new customers. Send them case studies and testimonials from other happy customers. Let them speak to your customers and hear for themselves how satisfied you've made them. And if it can be done, consider setting up your offering on a pay-for-performance model. If your product is as good as you say it is, customers will quickly realize the benefits and you'll have no problem getting paid.

At a minimum, answer these questions with concrete information and examples and add the element of proof to your efforts. In doing so you'll differentiate your company from the rest, you'll build the type of credibility that even well intentioned truth cannot, and you'll be on your way to shockingly-better marketing results.

About The Author

Brian LeCount is founder and principle of R.O. Why! Marketing, a Cincinnati, Ohio based consultancy. The firm provides solutions to measure, quantify, and dramatically increase results from advertising and marketing. Clients experience increased sales and profitable customers, and benefit from a proprietary methodology focused on accountability, performance measurement, and dramatic return on investment. Requests for article contributions can be sent to Results@ROWhyMarketing.com. More information and an archive of past articles can be found at www.ROWhyMarketing.com.