



Are Your Marketing Materials Boring or Brilliant?

By Sandy Geroux

Do your marketing materials capture people's attention? Do they cause people to want to read (or learn) more, and then buy... or do they inspire a quick flip toward the circular file?

If you don't want your hard-earned dollars ending up in that file, you need to get creative with the materials you send to prospective customers. Creative packaging, different shapes, new twists on old ideas - or new twists on ideas from other industries and organizations - can give you great ideas on how to capture attention, make people say, "Wow!" and get them to read and learn more about you and your area of expertise.

Here are just a few examples of creative marketing I have recently seen that made me say, "Wow!":

1. A **charity poker tournament** marketing piece that arrived in a square black envelope (which stood out from the rest of my mail). The invitation was circular (marked and shaped like a poker chip), with the words "We're Expecting a FULL HOUSE!" on the front. The response card was in the shape of a playing card and had the watermark of an Ace of Spades on the response side.
2. A **Business Summit** marketing piece in the shape of a briefcase (with cut-out handles, as well as cut-out clasps) that opened and contained manila-folder colored and shaped cardboard inserts containing Summit information.
3. A **trivia quiz** (fun facts, little-known facts, wild and crazy facts about your industry or topic) that is interesting and fun, included with a brief questionnaire/letter that gets people thinking about how much they know (or don't know) about your service and points out why they need it.
4. A **book** on marketing (*The Purple Cow*, by Seth Godin) which was actually packaged in a MILK CARTON at the beginning of its

marketing campaign, in order to create buzz and get people talking about it and ordering it!

5. A **merger announcement** printed on fancy stationary resembling a wedding invitation (with ragged edge and tissue paper insert) and sent to customers of two cell phone companies. Recipients were "invited to share in the joy of our coming together. No RSVP necessary. You're already part of the family." Then, here's the kicker - at the bottom was printed: "RECEPTION TO FOLLOW IMMEDIATELY." Reception... for a cell phone company... brilliant, clever, fun - this made me laugh out loud!
(You could use this concept if you're starting a company, opening a new office, changing companies, joining with another company... there are tons of uses for this concept!)

If you want your marketing materials to accomplish their intended purpose, you must make them clever, noticeable and memorable. This will get them read; if they're clever and memorable enough, people will talk about them, show them to others and may even keep them. But be sure you don't focus solely on cleverness! A fun ad that forgets to include the contact information of the sender does you no good at all (and I've seen ads where this critical element was forgotten!)

So, in addition to creating fun and a much-needed break from the humdrum and boredom of every other piece of mail:

1. **Make them pop!** Change the size - change the shape - change the look! Make them look like a house - or a SOLD sign. Add a new slogan, mascot or logo! Do something different! Do you use bold colors, or eye-catching graphics? Don't make them look like everyone else's materials.
2. **Be sure there's a clear call to action.** Do your readers know exactly what they should do? Is

there any urgency in the call to action (perhaps a discount for quick action)?

3. **Be sure customers know how to reach you - in as many different ways as possible.** Do they know who to contact? Make sure all appropriate contact information is on the marketing piece. Have someone you trust proofread it. I can't count the number of pieces I've seen that contain incomplete or incorrect information.
4. **Be sure there's a clear "product" or "service" being offered.** Do you let customers know what to buy (and how to buy it) or do you confuse them as to what they'll actually get?
5. **Can your target market clearly recognize themselves in your materials?** Do your headlines and body text say, "Are you ready for a change of scenery?" or "Looking for a new home?" or "Tired of getting the runaround from (whomever...!)" - or whatever situation you want your audience to identify with. If not, how will they know your product or service can help them? Be sure to let the customer know why he or she needs that product or service and what it will do for them... so catch their attention (graphically, with the headline, a fun shape, color or insert) so you can tell them about it.
6. **Reduce the amount of text.** Do you ramble on and on (and on) before getting to your point? State the problem, symptom and solution succinctly, so your potential client knows that you understand their issues and have a clear solution they can easily understand and implement. Long and voluminous materials are daunting - and no one has time to read them.
7. **Be consistent in your marketing efforts,** so that when the next marketing piece is mailed, they know it's from the same person/

company that sent the last great piece they saw... so they remember you when they're ready to buy. (Very few "one-hit wonders" provide sustained business and growth.)

8. **Check your grammar and spelling.** Do you leave off periods, start sentences with small letters instead of capitals, or have big, run-on sentences and paragraphs? Is your spelling atrocious? These problems cause readers to be distracted from the

message you're attempting to convey. **And yes, this includes e-mails!** Don't fool yourself into thinking that e-mails don't say a lot about your professionalism and attention to detail. Even e-mails to personal friends and relatives must be correct. After all, if you want them to refer you to others, how can they confidently do so if you don't write legibly and intelligently to them...?

National speaker, trainer and coach Sandy Geroux is an award-winning former REALTOR® who helps others achieve breakthrough performance through her programs on sales, customer service, effective risk-taking and planning/goal-setting. To book Sandy to speak to your organization, hear her humorous song parody, "Man! I Feel Like A REALTOR!", or for more information, please visit her website at www.sandygeroux.com or e-mail her at sandyg@sandygeroux.com.