

## STEP 4 — ATTENTION

### Think location and put customer benefits to the fore

An erstwhile client of mine had been — in a previous job — a buyer for Sainsbury's. Whenever he gave us a brief, just to remind us that he expected results, he used to trot out his customary challenge: "Look, I used to be able to *double* the sales of a product simply by sticking it on a gondola end."

No discounts, no special offers, no dancing girls. All it took was to move the item from its normal position on the fixture to the shelves at the end of the aisle. Sales at 200 percent.

You might argue that sales doubled because shoppers thought there was a special promotion — but I doubt it. Customers are naturally suspicious: You must have noticed how displays of unpriced goods don't sell.

No. It's quite simple. In the supermarket, attention equals location.

Down the years, surveys have consistently reported that over 50 percent of supermarket purchases are *specifically* unplanned.<sup>1</sup> I italicize the word *specifically*, because what this means is that shoppers let the products in-store prompt them as to what they need and what they would like. (Does this sound familiar?)

When I worked at Cadbury, we used to reckon that over 70 percent of all purchases of countlines (bars like Crunchie and Flake and Twirl) were *entirely* unplanned. In an impulse market like this, location is paramount. That's why the confectionery guys pump such massive resources into display materials.

In the late 1970s the feminine protection market was transformed almost single-handedly by a chap called Ted Connor. A former Co-op buyer, Ted moved to Kimberly-Clark where he took control of merchandising. In those days most stores grudgingly stocked "fempro" in a straggling run stretching for yards along a bottom shelf. Sales were sluggish. (As a

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salesman I can remember *dusting* our packs.) Ted's retailing instincts led him to pioneer the "blocked-fixtured" theory, whereby products were displayed in a vertical block from top shelf to floor. It meant that you could comfortably preview the whole market from one spot, and that a greater number of packs were merchandised at eye level. Typically a switch from run to block led to a sales increase for the store of between 50 and 100 percent. Retailer after retailer adopted the policy, and indeed it spread to many other product categories. Today it is the standard method of merchandising.

Yet there is still much undone. Paco Underhill writes at length about watching the young, the small, the infirm, and the overweight as they stretch and bend and puff and groan in vain attempts to reach products targeted specifically at them.<sup>2</sup> One of Ted Connor's maxims was "Never place any of our products above 5'2" on the shelf" (the average female's eye level). Actually the hot-spot is a good 18 inches lower.

As every retailer knows, there is a direct, proportional relationship between site and sales. The more people bump into a product, the more buy it. I repeat: In the supermarket attention equals location.

### **Attention second**

So putting attention first — as a task, in isolation — is naive, to say the least. Attention is inextricably related to the sales environment. And that environment can range from an office to an off-license, and from a sofa to a subway.

As a salesman it always felt rather uncomfortable and paradoxical when I did a sales call knowing I was supposed to start with attention. There I was, *in* the buyer's office, *with* the buyer. What next? Clap my hands? Stand on my head? (Surely I'd already got his attention?)

In old AIDA, attention is treated as a matter of impact achieved via design. Valuable advertising space gets eaten up by "Hey!" or "Boo!" or "Look!" or a nude or a celeb or a flying hamster or a talking camel. There is a formulaic approach, blinkered and obsessed, that pays little regard to the sales environment and the customers who inhabit it.

### Profitable attention

In this regard I'm intrigued by vendors of *The Big Issue*, a street newspaper published on behalf of and sold by homeless people. Last year I wrote a cover ad for *The Big Issue*, for a Unilever tea brand, and I got to know a bit more about the publication as a result. Evidently there are a disproportionate number of buyers among younger women and older women.

However, this doesn't stop me (and, as far as I can see, every other passer-by) being assailed for £1. Often several times a day. Often by the same person.

I wish I could buy *The Big Issue*. It's hard not to feel guilty when you swing out of Starbuck's having spent £2 on a coffee you didn't need, and there's some guy in the rain trying his best to earn an honest living. But the trouble is, I don't really want the newspaper.

I want *Private Eye*, or *GQ*, or *Trail* – something I actually read. I'd happily pay an extra £1 for the convenience and feelgood factor. In fact, I don't know why *The Big Issue* sellers don't have a monthly guest publication – I'm sure magazine publishers would provide them free as a sampling exercise.

But I digress. Back to attention. In relation to *The Big Issue*, mine is random, irrelevant – indeed unprofitable. The vendor's marketing efforts are wasted on me.

Next time somebody hands you a flyer in the High Street, take a close (but suitably surreptitious) look in the first litterbin you pass. Odds on it will be crammed with copies of the same leaflet. I can't help thinking that a second message displayed at this point would be very effective.

Yet despite a skewed readership, *The Big Issue* vendors don't seem all that bothered about profitable attention. I suppose they've got time to spare and little to lose. And of course, they have one telling advantage over other forms of marketing communications: pressure selling – and sometimes the customer just gives in.

You can't use pressure selling when you're sitting at a desk in Hammersmith and your customer's watching your ad or reading your mailing in his lounge in Hinckley. You can't convert random, irrelevant attention into a sale. Your marketing will be binned before you've had the

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*Figure 37* The Big Issue vendor. Gains random attention but has the advantage of pressure selling. Reproduced by kind permission of The Big Issue.



chance metaphorically to draw breath.

This admission is really important: Profitable attention is that extended to you by an *interested* customer. And it's something I'll talk more about in the next chapter on interest. Here, it's a salutary reminder that the kind of attention you seek does not always come automatically: Location has its limits, and a few examples follow.

### **Habitual shopping**

We carried out a number of large-scale observational studies at Blue-Chip to measure the impact of on-pack messages in a store environment. In one such exercise, looking at paper products, we discovered that the national equivalent of 6.8 million householders enter the paper aisle, pick up a pack of *own-label* bathroom tissue, and then leave the aisle without looking at a single other product. If you're a brand, aiming to convert own-label buyers, what does that tell you about location? (It says that the best place for a trial-generating offer is not on your packs.)

This result, by the way, is something I have seen repeated across a number of product categories. Many of the items that most supermarket shoppers buy seem to be selected out of habit. It would be one long trip otherwise.

### **Location on the web**

If ever there were a place where the real-estate maxim "location, location, location" applied, it's on the internet. This becomes clear when you

consider that over 90 percent of people use the major search engines.<sup>3</sup> (In fact, currently Google is reported as accounting for 60 percent of all searches.<sup>4</sup>) Your competitive advantage could lie simply in finding the most popular words that searching surfers use – especially those your competitors would want to lead surfers to their sites.

How do you do this? Research among your customers, lots of trial and error, plenty of testing (and keep testing) – until you find effective keywords. Some might be obvious, others might surprise you. (Think *Family Fortunes*.) Only the other day I watched my seven-year-old daughter type the following into Google: “pitcher of doiney osmand.” The corollary? Register common misspellings, too.

Another key location factor is of course your url. That’s uniform resource locator, by the way. I don’t know why they can’t say web address. And while I’m at it, who came up with double-yew double-yew double-yew dot? Ten syllables to confound the listener before they even get started on your name. Most brand names have one or two syllables. Ho, hum... whatever. Despite these in-built handicaps, you need to get your web address in your customer’s face. And then into either their mind or, more reliably, their hand. Preferably on a piece of paper that they’ll keep long enough to remember to visit your site.

This process involves a mini “sale” in its own right. Treat the sale of a visit to your website as seriously as you would any other direct-response activity. The most frequent observation I make is that lip service is paid to the communication of a firm’s web address.

It seems naive beyond belief that 30-second television ads feature the web address as a tiny line of subtext in the endframe. (Compare this to the omnipresence of the web address that I described for DRTV ads in Step 2.) Is the advertiser just trying to tell us: “I’ve got a website, I’m cool”?

I have to say I admire the car manufacturers who enable digital TV viewers to select a brochure-request option during the ad. If only the contractor’s technology lived up to the advertiser’s vision. But it’s one to watch.

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*Figure 38 Advertising that takes the “sale” of the web address seriously. Reproduced by kind permission of elephant.co.uk.*

### Sofa vs subway

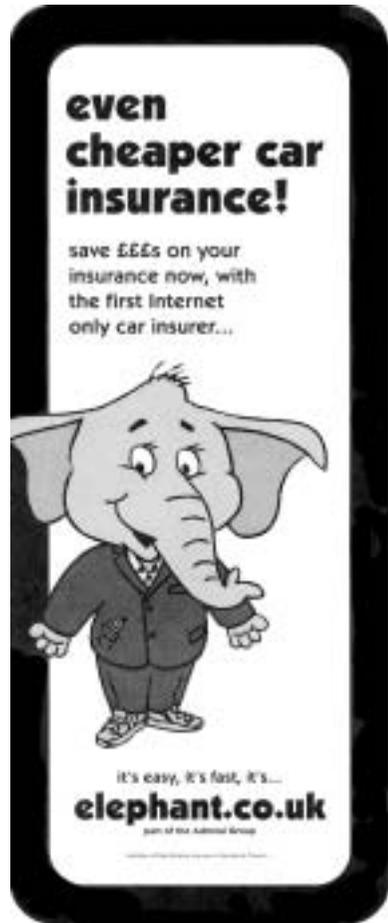
A few pages earlier I used the expression “from sofa to subway.” (And by subway I mean the tube, the underground.) These are two contrasting sales environments where your customer might meet your marketing.

Think of the subway. It’s marketing heaven! In sight of your customer there’ll be just three or four poster ads; maybe a cast-off *Evening Standard* or *Metro* newspaper they can salvage if they’re lucky. Usually they’ve got nothing to read (85 percent of tube passengers don’t carry reading material, while the average journey lasts 20 minutes, 13 of which are in the carriage<sup>5</sup>). Starved of stimulation, they’re trapped until they reach their stop, surrounded by strangers they’re reluctant even to make eye contact with.

On the subway, the location factors are firmly in your favor. Indeed, your marketing communication should come as a positive relief to your customer. It’s a real opportunity to deliver a detailed and persuasive message.

Sofa-man, however, provides an altogether different challenge. Just think of the competition for his attention:

- ☆ Perhaps a choice of over 300 digital TV channels.
- ☆ Cluttering the coffee table, a backlog of magazines and newspapers (each potentially boasting 350 news headlines, 21 feature articles, and 85-odd ads<sup>6</sup>).



# Fancy a corporate bond fund that's as good value as Sainsbury's, solid as the high street banks and trustworthy as the Government?

**G**ood, solid organisations, all of them. And they're not alone. The M&G Corporate Bond Fund holds bonds issued by 110 establishments such as high street banks, newspapers and airlines. The kind of companies, in fact, that you could take home to meet your mother.

And just to make doubly sure, we've lashed the fund up with a few gilts – bonds issued by Her Majesty's Treasury.

**Better returns than the building society, safer than the stockmarket.**

So if you're looking for an investment that minimises risk to your capital – this could very well fit the bill. In fact, *Investment Week*

usually called it one of the safest corporate bond funds.

Which is really saying something because bonds in general are regarded as a pretty safe investment and are traditionally less volatile than equities. (Of course, if you're looking for total security, sit it away in the building society.)

The real difference they have over equities is that a bond is technically a loan.

We take no initial charge to you start saving from day one and the diminishing withdrawal fee disappears completely after five years.

**One of the most tax-efficient ISAs.**

Bonds are one of the most tax-efficient ISA investments you can make. Not only are all profits tax-free, but you also benefit from a tax rebate of 30% on interest distributions (under current tax regulations, although this could change).

To find out more about our Corporate Bond Fund and for your free copy of our Guide to Investing call 0800 072 6154 quoting reference XXX. Lines are open from 9am to 8pm, seven days a week. You



**Oh yes, forget we mentioned the Government.**

We're now calling public attention. What we mean is our Corporate Bond Fund invests a proportion of your money in bonds issued by Her Majesty's Treasury, which (like long-term gilts) are generally regarded as a pretty safe investment. (Of course, if you're looking for total security, sit it away in the building society.)

Your protection will be recorded. If you prefer, you could return the coupon below, visit [www.mandg.co.uk](http://www.mandg.co.uk) or speak to your financial adviser.

**5.2% Annual Gross Redemption Yield.**  
**5.7% Annual Gross Distribution Yield.**

These figures are correct as at 22/10/97. Yields may vary and the level of income it provides is not fixed and may fluctuate. For the latest yield please call 0800 072 6154. The M&G Corporate Bond Fund aims to achieve higher returns than you if normally expect from gilt Government securities by primarily investing in sterling corporate bonds issued by companies that the independent yields rating companies have rated very highly.

Please send me a copy of your Guide to Investing and information about the M&G Corporate Bond Fund.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Job Title \_\_\_\_\_

Are you an existing M&G customer? (Yes/No) \_\_\_\_\_

Please return to: The M&G Group, FREEMONT 1021, Three Storey Dyke Road, Oldmeldreth, Cambridgeshire, CB9 9JQ.

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Figure 39 Although this example was taken from a consumer finance magazine, it's also exactly the type of long-copy ad the average subway commuter is crying out for. Reproduced by kind permission of M&G Financial Services Ltd.

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- ☆ Social interaction – in one recent study accounting for half of the time spent by “viewers” during ad breaks.<sup>7</sup>
- ☆ Freedom to roam about the house – when I asked my daughter (the doiney osmand fan) what was the best thing about television ads, she said they’re really good when there’s a movie on and you’re desperate for the loo.

The “permission” school of marketing would have you waving the white flag when it comes to gaining the attention of sofa-man. But for a good salesman, that’s exactly the time to fight on. You just fight smarter.

### **Benefits: Let the selling begin**

Five times as many people read the headlines of advertisements as read the body copy.

This well-known “fact” must be the king of communication clichés. I’ve seen it in articles on “how to write better ads” more times than I’ve had hot dinners. The argument goes that if you don’t attract your customer with your headline, not even Shakespeare could have written you some body copy that would rescue the sale.

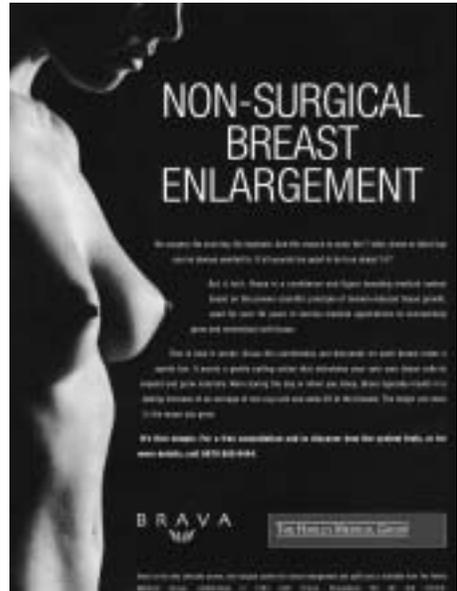
I think this is a bit of a red herring. As far as I can establish, it was David Ogilvy who first put forward the idea, over 40 years ago. He cited his source as the Starch Readership Service.<sup>8</sup>

Actually, I don’t have any problem with the figure. For some ads it’s probably many times greater than five. But why would anybody in marketing be surprised by this?

The standard argument continues that you must use your headline for all it’s worth, else your ad will be wasted on 80 percent of your customers.

The *News of the World* has around 10 million readers. Does that mean if you buy a double-page ad that everyone must pass by, only two million of them will pause to read the body copy? (Is that bad?)

Maybe the 80 percent who won’t read the body copy don’t want your product? Surely the whole thing about using mass media like the press,



*Figure 40 Ads with benefits in their headlines are read by four times as many people as those without. Reproduced by kind permission of Lever Fabergé Ltd/JWT Paris and The Harley Medical Group.*

direct mail, or even the newsagent's window is that lots of people *not* in your target audience are exposed to your ads?

Flick through a newspaper and what do you see? Lots of headlines. It's almost impossible *not* to read them. Body copy you can take or leave.

OK, I'm playing devil's advocate. But I'm warning of the danger of getting sidetracked by a separate phenomenon. Targeting and random attention are not the same as what makes your customer think about buying.

Five times as many people might read headlines as body copy, but I think a more apposite description is that five times as many people *bump into* headlines as they do body copy. With that thought in mind, consider this ostensibly similar, but actually far more profound finding:

*"Ads with benefits in their headlines are read by four times as many people as ads with no benefits in their headlines."<sup>9</sup>*

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Think about it. Why would anybody who has read the headline of an ad then go on to read the body copy? Answer: They must be interested in the product or service.

And it must have been the headline that made the difference. More specifically, the *benefit* in the headline. For profitable attention, you need a benefit.

### **True lies**

A further warning. Take a look at the disguised ad shown in Figure 41. This was a full-page, full-color ad, placed in a popular weekly marketing magazine to which I subscribe. These are more or less the original words, with the company name changed to “Tupidus.”

My first reaction was: “Welcome to Platitude City.” And if you think back to what I said about platitudes in the last chapter (they bore your customer into not buying), this is a risky strategy.

And because there’s no *true* benefit in the headline (or even anywhere else in the abbreviated copy), I haven’t got the faintest idea what this ad is for.

I’ve never heard of the firm, so I don’t know what they do. The real company name (as vague as Tupidus) didn’t help one jot.

So what next?

Phone, or get on the net, to find out what business the company is in? Just on the off chance that it might be a service that’s relevant to me or my clients? But I’m watching the late-night soccer show, which is when I usually manage to wade through all my trade magazines.

### **True benefits**

What this ad demonstrates is the fine line between communication success and disaster. I’m sure that the person who wrote it did so with the best intentions: “I’ll pack it with so many benefits that it’s irresistible to my customer.”

Flexibility, freedom, peace of mind, security. Trouble is, they’re not benefits. They’re general, abstract concepts that don’t register with the reader until they’re attached to specific, tangible facts.

# FLEXIBILITY THAT SETS YOUR BUSINESS FREE

We take care of business today  
helping you to take care of tomorrow

For further information on how to set  
yourself free call 123 4567, email  
sales@tupidus.co.uk or visit  
www.tupidus.co.uk

TUPIDUS  
Less con, more fusion

*Figure 41* The danger of mistaking platitudes for benefits. A disguised ad using the original text. Notice that unless you've heard of the company, the words give absolutely no indication of what service it provides.

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Imagine Tupidus is your firm. Say you sell telephone switchboards to small firms. Here's some copy that surely should work a bit harder:

**"The Tupidus Flexi-Exchange comes with 10 handsets as standard. It has built-in capacity to accommodate up to 100 lines with no software upgrade and no added cost. For Tupidus read *peace of mind* – you'll know you've invested in a system that will grow with your business."**

The clichés-cum-platitudes are converted into meaningful benefits for your customer. From here it's not difficult to think how you might develop some ideas for an effective headline:

**The telephone exchange that's as good as new  
when you're 10 times bigger than today**

And if you pop your navigation hat on, you'll note that a headline like this immediately signals to your customer what you want them to think about: telephone exchanges. (I was pleased to see that, a few months after the first "Tupidus" ad, a revised version appeared in the press that did indeed explain what service the company offered. I imagine it noticed the lack of response generated by the original ad.)

John Caples cited a modest yet typically authoritative example in this regard.<sup>10</sup> A maker of a hay fever remedy got a good response with a small ad headlined simply "Hay Fever." Navigation at its most basic.

But in a split-run test, "Hay Fever" pulled 297 sample requests, while the headline "Dry Up Hay Fever" achieved a 28 percent increase, pulling 380 sample requests. The simple addition of two words transformed a competent flag into a direct and persuasive promise of a benefit.

### **Effective headlines**

In the mid-1920s, not long after Strong had apparently devised AIDA, Caples proved statistically that *self-interest* was the single most important

requirement for an effective headline. After that he listed, in order, news, curiosity, and quick, easy way.

Many handbooks on advertising, copywriting, and direct marketing are packed with long lists, such as “headlines that sell.” I’m looking at one now: “57 direct marketing offers.” With so many alternatives, books like this become impossible to use. Just where do you begin?

For me, it all comes back to benefits (which I think is pretty much the same as self-interest). Analyze headlines that work, and usually they promise a benefit for the customer.

And it stands to reason that if you can make your benefit newsworthy as well as quick and easy, it will be all the more attention-getting and persuasive. Think about a real customer and what your product or service does for them. Be as tangible and specific as you can.

### **Testing**

There just isn’t enough testing. So much marketing is done from the “bunker,” you have to be there to believe it. Billions of pounds worth of communications are fired off in hope and often nobody looks to see where they landed.

The military (whose budgets compare to those of the marketing community) have whole areas of the country set aside for testing. Not a bullet is fired without somebody checking to see where it finished up and what impact it had on its target.

You might ask why a book about effective marketing communications is raising the subject of testing. Surely the idea is to use the book and you’ll get it right first time? True (I hope) – but I don’t think the two sentiments are incompatible. After all, without testing in the first place, nobody would know what works and what doesn’t.

More intriguingly, what Caples went on to demonstrate was that even the so-called experts can’t always tell which headline will work best. He prescribed that once you have developed some “good” headlines, you’ll actually need to test to find which will be most effective. And you need to keep testing to make sure the winner keeps working.

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Here's an example, two versions of an ad designed to generate applications for a free book, *The New Way to Grow Hair*.<sup>11</sup> Which of these propositions do you think was the most effective?

A *Illustration*: Man (with hair) pointing his finger at another's bald head.

*Headline*: "60 days ago they called *me* Baldy"

*Copy plot*: Story of man who got excellent results from hair-growing remedy.

B *Illustration*: Hair specialist offering a blank check to the reader.

*Headline*: "If I can't grow hair for you in 30 days you get this check"

*Copy plot*: You get your money refunded if you are not satisfied with the results.

And the winner is...? The answer was in fact proposition A. This is interesting, since both headlines promise benefits, and B even offers a refund. (You wouldn't be alone if you found it hard to judge this — both were considered good enough by the advertiser to be worthy of testing.)

Why did advertisement A succeed? There are several suggestions. Perhaps proposition B implied the remedy might fail? Maybe the picture and the word *baldy* in version A did a better job of navigation?

Of course, with hindsight it's easy to come up with reasons like this, but less so beforehand. While from a copywriter's perspective I find the idea of testing mildly irritating (aren't I paid to know best?), it's hard to argue with its value. The fact is there's no reason why any given proposition can't be bettered. As an old marketing boss of mine used to say, rather cryptically, there are more ways than one of skinning a cat.

Claude Hopkins, who became fabulously rich through his copywriting skills, said:

**"The wisest, most experienced man cannot tell what will most appeal in any line of copy."<sup>12</sup>**

If you work for a large firm, the chances are you have the resources and systems in place to test your marketing communications. If your business involves direct marketing, no doubt you will be testing as a matter of course. What always surprises me, though, is the number of major companies that conduct very little testing – perhaps because much of their output does not ask for a direct response from the customer.

This is not good logic. Starch concluded (and I paraphrase) that ads that pull best sell best.<sup>13</sup> In fact, I think that's worth highlighting, in case you're scanning:

**Starch concluded that ads that pull best sell best.**

So if you want to get a feel for whether or not your ads are selling, why not see if you can get them to pull? This is quite simple in practice. If you're running a press campaign, design an A/B split<sup>14</sup> and within the body copy of each version "bury" an identical offer of perhaps a free recipe booklet or coupon or whatever is appropriate. (But make sure you can tell which ad your replies come from.)

If you get a *significant* variation in response between your two propositions, that suggests one ad has a higher readership than the other. Which means it's doing a better job of getting your customer's attention. (And I use the word *proposition* rather than headline here, to indicate that the overall "appeal" may comprise imagery, headline, and copy.)

But what if you work for a small firm? Is testing beyond your means? Far from it.

As the faxback vs mailback case study demonstrated, invaluable testing can be done on a small scale – in fact, it's often easier. The main thing to remember is to test only one variable at a time. Otherwise you won't know what has made the difference.

At a less scientific (but no less valuable) level, there's not enough common-sense asking and watching going on. Many of the anecdotes I've related in this book are simply the result of acting the guardian salesman. But how many brand managers spend even an hour a week loitering in supermarkets and watching their customers in action? Who ever flyposts

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their ad in the tube and rides to and fro watching fellow commuters' reactions? I loved the fake poster campaign aimed at anglers, for "magic worms" that were guaranteed to catch fish – apparently there were thousands of inquiries. (The idea was to prove that poster ads get noticed. I'd put it in a slightly different way: True benefits get noticed.)

### **Attention equals *serendipity***

So two main levers work together to gain attention. The first, location, mainly concerns *random* attention. The second, the benefit, moves up a gear to *profitable* attention – which is where the selling really begins.

Yet a remarkable number of ads don't even contain a clear benefit in their headlines. I recently made a painstaking survey of 1,028 ads (from 28 magazines) and an astonishing 71 percent offered no benefit.

It's all the more surprising when you consider that, according to research by Roper Starch Worldwide, half of the readers of women's magazines claim not to notice the average packaged-goods ad<sup>15</sup> (a phenomenon that I prefer to blame on the ads, not the readers).

Nevertheless, while your customer may claim to be oblivious to the wall of marketing white noise that assails them, they have a little radar secretly monitoring inbound messages. (Call out their name and you'll see.)

And although they may insist that they aren't influenced by television ads, or that they never read direct mail, I bet they'll still be able to talk knowledgeably about products they've never used, and will grudgingly admit that they're among the 72 percent who've ever responded to direct marketing.<sup>16</sup>

The fact is, we are all *accepting* of the marketing radiation that envelops us, and we tune in to it from time to time when we get a bleep from our radars.

In more academic terms, James F Engel puts it like this:

**"Attention can be defined as the allocation of processing capacity to the incoming stimulus. Because that capacity is a limited resource, consumers are very selective in how they allocate their attention.**

The reality of selective attention means that, while some stimuli will receive attention, others will be ignored. The marketer's job is to achieve the former."<sup>17</sup>

And that's why ads with benefits in their headlines are read by four times as many people as "non-benefit" ads. Location first puts your benefit in your customer's path. Then, as your customer meets your marketing, the benefit creates a fleeting moment of "stickiness" – for the customer a moment of serendipity. ("Oh! Just what I need.") They engage with your marketing just long enough for you to nip in and deal with navigation and ease. (Using, of course, wording that speaks their language.)

Profitable attention is created not by a nude or a loud noise, but – as every good salesperson knows – by a benefit.

### **Steps you can take**

#### **10 ways to improve your location**

Clearly you should strive to get the most favorable location for your message. Even if your marketing communication is a card in the local newsagent's window, you want it to be at eye level, just above the door handle. Why settle for less?

You want your leaflet dispenser next to the till. You want your door-drop alone on the mat. You want your press ad on the back cover of a magazine.

Starch found that an ad on the back cover of a magazine attracts 65 percent more readers than a middle-section position. The inside covers perform 30 percent better. But studies have found only minor differences between left- and right-hand pages, and front, middle, and end locations in the body of a publication.<sup>18</sup>

Research has shown there are numerous tactics you can employ to enhance your location dynamics. While these have a random effect (i.e. they are non-selective in terms of whom they attract), their purpose is obviously to increase the absolute number of "relevant" customers who meet your marketing.

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### *10 ways to improve your location*

- 1 Size
- 2 Color
- 3 Intensity
- 4 Contrast
- 5 Directionality
- 6 Movement
- 7 Isolation
- 8 Novelty
- 9 Celebrity
- 10 Conditioning

### **Size**

Larger ads attract more attention.<sup>19</sup> So do larger images within individual ads.<sup>20</sup> Equally, more shelf space in-store means more attention.<sup>21</sup>

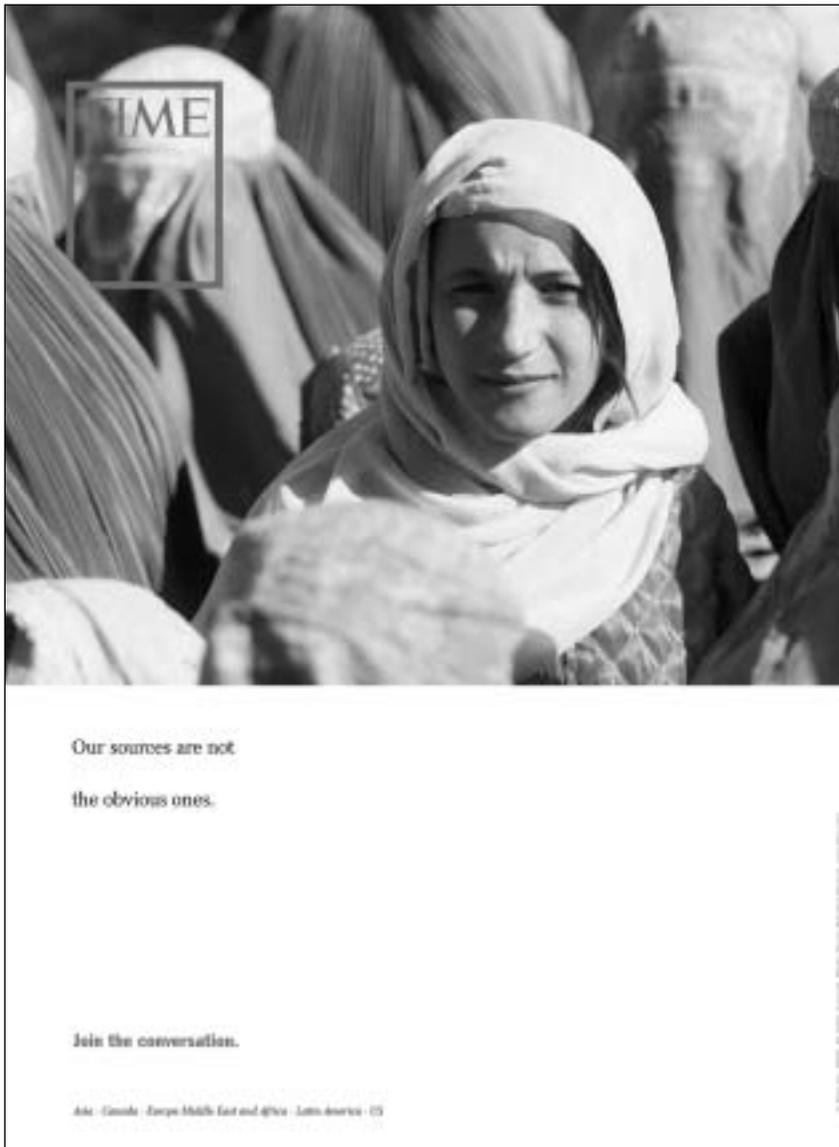
Starch found the relationship between ad size and readership to be directly proportional, but not linear. So if a half-page ad is read by 20 percent of readers of the publication, doubling it to a full-page size will attract a further 20 percent of the remaining 80 percent.<sup>22</sup>

### **Color**

The ability of a stimulus to attract attention can be sharply increased through the use of color.<sup>23</sup> In a study of black-and-white newspaper ads, the addition of just one color produced 41 percent more sales.<sup>24</sup>

Direct marketers have long known that color can influence response. Drayton Bird cites a 20 percent uplift achieved by changing the color of an envelope, and a 50 percent uplift by changing the background color of a mailing (although in this case it was thought to make the text easier to read). Equally, though, he cautions that in four cases out of five, the increased response that full color delivered did not offset the higher costs.<sup>25</sup>

Starch reported 85 percent greater readership for half-page color ads (compared to their black-and-white counterparts) and a figure of +50



*Figure 42* Starch found that ads with a large single image and a dominant focal center were more successful in attracting readers, as demonstrated by this ad reproduced by kind permission of TIME magazine, created by Fallon Worldwide. It also unerringly exploits the ancient principle known as the Golden Section or Mean, in which the graphic focus is located at a mathematically calculated point to where the eye is naturally and irresistibly drawn. (See the later discussion of isolation.)

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percent for full- and double-page ads. He found that color ads generated 45 percent more inquiries.<sup>26</sup>

If color *in general* works better, then what about specific colors? Physicists and biologists tell us we see red first, and this is also the received wisdom in direct marketing circles. George Smith reckons that for envelopes, red outpulls yellow, which outpulls gold, which outpulls black, which outpulls full color.<sup>27</sup> Next time you fly over the suburbs of a city, notice how the red cars stand out. Or flick through *Yellow Pages* for the same effect. If you want to attract your customer's eye to a certain point, red seems to help. (It can be as simple as a red underline.) But beware red overkill.

### **Intensity**

This basically means that loud sounds and bright colors attract attention. But I believe it also applies to message content. Ex-P&G man Charles Decker notes that most Procter & Gamble television ads open with a robust "Hey, you!"<sup>28</sup> He characterizes the opening of a commercial break as a battle for attention between the ad, the other channels, and the bathroom. By "jump-starting" the ad, the aim is to engage the viewer immediately. On a reverse note, I often suffer the frustration of daydreaming through an ad (particularly on radio) that I have wanted to hear for professional reasons, but find I have consciously tuned in only at the very end when the brand name is mentioned.

### **Contrast**

We're taught for fun at an early age to pick the "odd one out" (if, indeed, it's not an inherent hunter-gatherer trait designed to help us spot ripening fruits before some other creature nabs them) and tests have shown that people pay more attention to stimuli that contrast with their background.<sup>29</sup> Contrast is a particular speciality of the sales promotion agency. While designers strive for visual harmony, the SP guys will create a promotional flash with the sole aim of violating your packaging. In a typical supermarket, hundreds of thousands of facings clamor for the attention of your



*Figure 43* A good on-pack offer gets noticed by disrupting the usually harmonious design of the packaging. This dominant flash can be removed (“easy-peel”) if the product is intended as a gift. Reproduced by kind permission of Kraft Europe.

customer. If your on-pack offer doesn’t stand out from the crowd, you need to ask why.

In the design of press ads, Starch made a fascinating discovery that, for me, falls under this subheading of “contrast.” Quarter-page ads designed as a single column (i.e. a strip down one margin) attract 29 percent more readers than traditional quarter-grid-shaped ads. His conclusion was that the browsing reader’s eye sweeps across the top of each page, and so is more likely to cross an ad that has a footprint covering the entire height of the page.<sup>30</sup>

### **Directionality**

The eye tends to follow visual cues such as arrows, fingers pointing, or a person’s glance or demeanor.<sup>31</sup> I think the most important tip here is not to signpost somebody “out” of your ad. Bill Cather, an NLP practitioner, believes that ads are more effective at gaining and holding attention if the directional image (e.g. a side-on photo of a face) is placed on the left of the space, looking to the right.<sup>32</sup> This stems from the NLP theory that the layout I have described conveys an underlying sense (a “metaprogram”) of “moving toward,” a positive energy of achievement, of looking to the future.

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Figure 44 Small ad, big contrast. Against a controlled, mainly white background, this reversed-out ad by The Scotsman achieves a striking effect. Reproduced by kind permission of The Scotsman Publications Ltd.



*Figure 45* NLP teaches that right-facing images convey a more positive message. Reproduced by kind permission of Clarks.

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Take a look at your brand or company logo. Are you “moving toward” or “moving away”? Cather even suggests that when you present to a group you should stand on the left of the flipchart (as the audience sees you) to communicate moving toward. Once you’re convinced by this theory, it’s hard to believe anybody would set an image facing in a contrary direction to the text in an ad. It rather reminds me of the watchmakers’ protocol always to show the hands in a “smiling face,” ten-to-two position.

### **Movement**

Now literally to movement. As an ornithologist, the one thing I know that birds notice above all others is movement. You can wear an Arsenal strip and bright yellow wellingtons, but stand perfectly still and they’ll ignore you. Twitch, and they’re off. Observing from a car, you can wriggle about as much as you like – but break the “horizon,” and it’s bye-bye birdie. The same rules apply pretty much to fishing and hunting.

Given that it’s recently been declared we share 90 percent of our genes with the humble mouse, I think it’s fair to assume the “movement rule” applies to us humans too (i.e. if it moves, better look quick in case it’s coming to eat you – or maybe you can eat it). It’s a reflex that is almost impossible to resist – although, curiously, it has been largely resisted by the marketing industry, which remains in the stone age as regards what is probably the most powerful attention-getter going. (In one Californian retail study the use of movement in display generated nearly three times the sales of static display in food stores and nearly twice the sales in liquor stores.<sup>33</sup>)

### **Isolation**

This is the lateral thinker’s approach to standing out from the crowd. You remove the crowd. A simple example is where you pay for a full-page ad, even though you could communicate your message perfectly well in half or a quarter of the space. In fact, I think the technique is probably most valuable where you can only afford a half- or quarter-page ad (or smaller). By building plenty of space around your message, you enable it to stand out amid the melee.

Two free tickets  
if you sleep with us.

Go to sleep on a Club World Flat Bed and wake up with two Club Europe tickets. Just book full-fare business class and you can take someone special to Europe for free (all you pay is the tax). Visit your travel agent or call 0845 77 333 77.

BRITISH AIRWAYS 

Club Europe tickets are subject to taxes, fees, charges and security charges. This promotion is only available to Executive Club members registered in the countries listed in our Fares and Routes page. Full-fare Club World return flight (premium seats) between 6 February and 30 April 2003. Club World Flat Bed is available to 41 destinations, please check at time of booking. Terms and conditions apply. please visit [ba.com/clubworld](http://ba.com/clubworld)

*Figure 46 One way of standing out from the crowd is to remove the crowd. An effective technique that is much underused in smaller-sized press ads. Reproduced by kind permission of British Airways plc.*

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Clearly linked to this phenomenon is what Starch described as “the one most important characteristic of an ad in stopping readers.” And that characteristic is a *dominant focal center*.<sup>34</sup> Give your customer’s eye and brain an obvious starting point, so their mind can relax into the flow of your message.

Artists and photographers often place a point of focus in the “north-east” quadrant (i.e. the top-right section) as you look at a picture. This is based on the concept of the Golden Section or Mean, which you may remember from the *TIME* ad in Figure 42. It has been known at least since the time of Euclid (3rd century BC) and may be discovered in most works of art.<sup>35</sup>

To find the Golden Section in your ad, simply draw a horizontal line across at a height of 61.8 percent up the page, and then a vertical line down at a distance of 61.8 percent across the page. The lines intersect at the point of natural visual focus.

### **Novelty**

Wear a red nose and walk down the High Street and, most times of year, people will stare at you. Anything unexpected is capable of gaining and holding attention. Once more, this seems to be a part of human nature: The unusual can induce curiosity.

### **Celebrity**

The old chestnut. Do celebrities get attention? No question. Are they a good idea? Sometimes. (But probably mainly not.)

I’ll talk a bit more about the potential role of celebrities in Step 6, Desire. As far as attention is concerned there’s an obvious risk: The celebrity takes the limelight while your product withers in the shadows. This is a common occurrence.

In 1997, as part of a campaign for a brand of Scottish lager (surely a contradiction in terms?), we enlisted the help of former British Lions captain Gavin Hastings and quicksilver Rangers and Scotland striker Ally McCoist. They were dropped by helicopter at major Scottish superstores, where they made pre-advertised guest appearances. While they drew the

crowds and toiled admirably as brand ambassadors, it was soon apparent that their stardust was not rubbing off onto the cans of beer.

Nevertheless, the activity was successful for another reason. The trade – and by this I mean the managers and staff of superstores chosen for visits – *were* starstruck, ordered extraordinary quantities of stock at the expense of competitive brands, and built gigantic off-shelf displays that remained in place for weeks afterwards. (At this point you should be thinking *attention equals location*.)

A further pitfall is that your carefully chosen star can get in the press for the wrong reasons (and not necessarily of their own making). In December 2003 alone, brands as illustrious as Bacardi, Nike, and Sony found themselves having to review major campaigns and sponsorship deals due to adverse publicity surrounding their celebrity endorsers.

### **Conditioning**

Conditioning is a proven phenomenon. We get trained to respond by reflex to sounds, smells, sights, and other stimuli.

You must have noticed your own reaction to a ringing telephone in the background of a television drama or movie, or even during a radio interview. It's very distracting. Yet like movement, sound is underexploited as an attention-getting marketing tool – particularly in the retail environment.

One notable exception, where retailers do attempt to exploit conditioning aurally, is in the relentless playing of pop carols in the ever-lengthening run-up to Christmas. The theory goes that by awakening warm feelings in their customers, sales resistance will be overcome and shoppers will jostle all the harder for those must-have gifts.

### **Conditioning and sex appeal**

By all means consider the techniques listed above. Indeed, you could try the challenge of using all 10 of them in a single communication. What you must guard against, though, is “a stimulus that dominates viewers' attention, while leaving the remaining message ignored.”<sup>36</sup>

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*Figure 47* Classical conditioning is commonplace in fashions and fragrances: products which can justifiably use sexual imagery in their appeals. Reproduced by kind permission of Jones Bootmaker.

Marketers' efforts to capitalize on conditioning often take the form of sexual imagery. While this can be perfectly justified for some products, it's probably the most overused and abused shortcut to irrelevant attention in the communications business.

It's one thing to attract the random attention of a passer-by to whom you were never going to sell in the first place, but quite another to waste the profitable attention of a potential customer. It has been proved beyond all reasonable doubt that benefits are the key to effective marketing communications. If you block the route to the benefit, or at least divert your customer's mind elsewhere, your ad may be self-defeating.

"Safe Sex Dangerous Cheese." As you may recall, this was a campaign theme for Seriously Strong Cheddar. The Häagen-Dazs-like ads showed various couples cavorting and kissing. But in December 2002 the marketing press reported its replacement by a new campaign with "all-round family appeal" (a quote from the firm's joint managing director).<sup>37</sup>

It's food for thought. Compare the early sexually charged Häagen-Dazs ads and their cheesy lookalikes. While both grasp your mind in a similarly striking fashion, the marketer should question where they lead. For Häagen-Dazs, the imagery was perfectly consistent with an aspired-to consumption occasion (bit of a mouthful, sorry), and arguably was also an understandable metaphor for the pleasurable experience of eating luxury ice-cream. So for Häagen-Dazs it makes sense. For Seriously Strong Cheddar... well, there's a tenuous after-dinner connection, but it's much harder to see how this campaign exploited conditioning. Thus the drawback of the gratuitous use of sex appeal is that the communication stops dead in its tracks.

### *Seven ways to stimulate profitable attention*

- 1 Something good gained or received.
- 2 Use the picture to enhance the story.
- 3 Consider curiosity.
- 4 Make your ad newsworthy.
- 5 Quick and easy.
- 6 Sensory language.
- 7 Combat adaptation.

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### Something good gained or received

This subheading is *Chambers'* primary definition of the word "benefit." Next comes "advantage." Caples, as I mentioned earlier, preferred the term "self-interest." Semantics aside, a clearly stated benefit will have two related practical effects:

- ☆ It will connect with customers for whom your product or service is relevant.
- ☆ It will increase (by 400 percent) customer involvement in your marketing communication.

So how do you make sure that what you're proposing is a benefit? First, you might try this. Take a copy of a magazine that's well padded with ads, thumb through it, and write out the headlines.

With ease in mind, here's a selection from a recent edition of *Stuff* magazine:

- ☆ Picture perfect
- ☆ Talks a good picture
- ☆ Work smart, live smart
- ☆ Gimme
- ☆ Personal stuff
- ☆ Perfect compatibility
- ☆ Hot sound
- ☆ Upgrade your life

What do you think about these headlines? Spot any of Caples' magic ingredients? (Self-interest, news, curiosity, quick and easy.) Or are they just an assortment of clichés, hyperbole, and platitudes?

Put simply, a headline that contains a benefit tells your customer why they should buy your product. At a glance, it enables them to identify your offering as something relevant to their life. Like Dry Up Hay Fever.

So if you provide a really meaningful and distinctive benefit, put it in your headline. If your promotional offer is your strongest benefit, don't be shy — *put it in your headline*. Here's an example, again from an ad in *Stuff* magazine:

**“The big screen EPSON projectors now come with a free Xbox”**

Eureka! Two benefits *and* news, *and* it instantly navigates the customer. Plain and ordinary though the words are, of the 60 or so full-page ads in the magazine, this is the one I’d like to have written. Why? Let me return to the headline exercise.

Can you, by reading any of the headlines in the list, work out *what* the product might be and *why* you should buy it? I think you’ll agree that at best there are a couple of vague clues.

Then would you as a reader — as a customer — take the trouble to stop and work out the answers? Remember, you’re wading through 100-plus pages packed with hundreds of new products.

So how about your firm’s last ad? When it was finally approved, did your boss look at it in splendid undistracted isolation, or did you make her pick it out from scores of others while she was busy trying to do something else? It’s worth thinking about.

If your customer has to take on the task of asking *what* and *why*, then your ad or your communication will underperform. As a rule of thumb, it will operate at 20 percent effectiveness. That’s the difference between an ordinary and an extraordinary response.

An ad I know for sure was effective was a job ad for my own company. We mainly recruited graduates and trained them before they’d adopted someone else’s bad habits, but occasionally we needed a high-caliber go-getter with a few years under the belt. These were hard to find, and even harder to attract, especially to the dismal North. Rather than the standard feature-oriented approach, I wrote the ad to appeal to my own frustrations that I’d experienced as an employee. As you can see in Figure 48, the plagiarized headline inquired “desperately seeking promotion?” and the body copy told facts about the success of the agency and how every single member of staff had gained a promotion within the past year. We soon got our person. (And, in due course, our person got promoted.)

# desperately seeking promotion?

EXPERIENCED ACCOUNT HANDLERS  
**EDINBURGH**

In just 7 years Blue-Chip Marketing has grown from a tiny dot to become one of the UK's top 20 below-the-line agencies. And with more industry awards since 1995 than anyone else in the country, we've been a long-term choice for blue-chip brands like Andrex, Beek's, Kellogg's, Kleenex, McEwan's, Reebok and Royal & Sun Alliance.

The secret of our success lies in the quality and dedication of our team, and that's where you come in. Continued growth means we're looking for experienced account handlers to join our Edinburgh office.

Our working practices have been described by management consultants as 'A blueprint for the next century', and last year every single member of staff got promoted. So if it's freedom, stimulation and above all recognition that you're seeking, send your cv in the first instance to:

Fiona Laurie  
Associate Director  
Blue-Chip Marketing  
45 Frederick Street  
Edinburgh EH2 1EP



## Use the picture to enhance the story

I expect you've been thinking there's more to an ad (or any marketing communication, but especially an ad) than just the words. Quite right too. What about the picture?

The oft-misquoted F R Barnard said that a picture is worth 10,000 words.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, philosopher Bertrand Russell said, "Do not feel absolutely certain of anything." I'm with Russell, I think.

If a picture's worth 10,000 words, why don't we communicate with friends using quickdraw Rolf Harris-like sketches? Or read cartoon books instead of novels? Or watch television with the sound turned off?

Because pictures are not the medium of human conversation.

As eminent psycholinguist Steven Pinker has argued at length, we're programmed to communicate via language — via words spoken and heard.<sup>39</sup> And while mental images

*Figure 48 A recruitment ad headlined by an emotive benefit.*

might be the stuff of memory (see below), when it comes to selling the words have it.

That's not to say pictures aren't important. At this point I'm talking about attention. When I get to *desire* I hope to show a vital and unique role for pictures.

And they can do a fine job for attention too. Pictures can work with your words to create relevant — and therefore active — attention. For instance, take a look at the Garmin ad in Figure 49 overleaf. The body copy tells you why you want a GPS, and this ad could run reasonably well without any pictures at all. (In which case the headline would obviously need to elaborate on the product category and what it does.)

However, the inclusion of the two images — the product and the matchbook — in an instant brings the benefits to life. First and foremost is the size — the GPS is obviously tiny and the matchbook tells you that. At a secondary level is the direct association with simplicity and necessity, claims backed up by the body copy.

For me, the art direction in this ad is at least as important as the copywriting (good though the copy is). Together they are additive and make a whole greater than the sum of the parts. Here, I'd say the picture's well worth its weight in words.

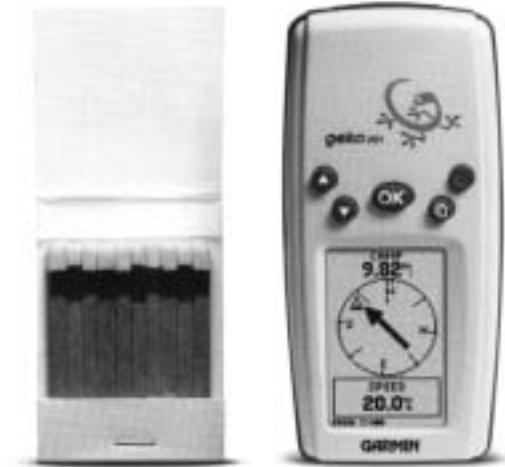
I think many ads of the no-headline genre get approved because they *look* cool and trendy and make the people working on them *feel* cool and trendy. Unfortunately, this isn't the best recipe for making ads that sell. Navigation gets neglected and benefits appear more by luck than judgment.

So an ad is designed as a fashion statement, at the expense of essential communication. It might *look* great, but the only role it performs is to contribute to the overall lifestyle feel of the magazine in which it appears. Cutting-edge chic makes for blunt communication.

But as the Garmin ad illustrates — and others I'll show you later — fashionability doesn't have to be abandoned. An ad can be perfectly stylish and still have a hard-working headline.

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small, simple, indispensable.



Geko. GPS from Garmin.

Before you strike out for that camping trip or just want to find your car at the stadium, here's one essential you can't afford to leave behind. Geko™—the cooeping, inexpensive GPS from Garmin. Mark your spot with one button press. Then slip Geko in your pocket and go. At just 3.1 ounces, you won't even know it's there until you need a little direction. Finding your way back is as simple as following the arrow.

Geko from Garmin. It's the hottest little GPS going. 

[www.garmin.com](http://www.garmin.com) #GEOG0000

GARMIN (Europe) Ltd., Unit 5, The Quadrangle, Alibey Park Industrial Estate, Ramsey, SO31 9DL, U.K.  
TEL +44 (0)1794 519944 FAX +44 (0)1794 519122

*Figure 49* How the right picture can help create relevant attention. The choice of a matchbook placed alongside the tiny GPS dramatizes the primary benefit. © 2003 Garmin Ltd. or its subsidiaries.

### Consider curiosity

Of course, what marketers are relying on with ads that don't make immediate sense is curiosity. That is fine in principle. Caples found curiosity to be the third-best means of creating an effective ad.

However, the risk you take when you appeal to your customer's curiosity is that they won't bother.

Why should they, when they've got a trillion other things to do? You might say they will "because they're interested" – but they can't be interested if you haven't navigated them in the first place. And navigation means giving the game away and so spoiling the "reveal," so you can't do that. Catch 22.

The Kenwood ad in Figure 50 I also found in *Stuff* magazine. I like this, it's art directed with good communication in mind, and would probably pass Ogilvy's test for an effective layout. Look at the U2-inspired headline:

**"Still haven't found what I am looking for"**

On its own, it doesn't make sense. No benefit, no self-interest, no news, no quick, easy way. Yet it's OK.

Of course, it's a little puzzle for you to solve. A quick glance around the ad (with no great strain on the eye muscles) and you soon get the idea. The Kenwood radio's so good you just want to keep on driving. (I think.)

It's a nice clean ad, with a simple appeal to curiosity. The reward for curiosity is a piece of useful "information" about the product; moreover, one that you have "discovered" yourself.<sup>40</sup> Here again, the headline and pictures work together to make a whole bigger than the sum of the parts.

So where's the risk in curiosity? Let's revisit the word *bother*: Will the customer bother?

If they're interested in radios and they notice the image of the radio or the logo at the bottom of the ad, they might. If they don't... I'm not so sure.

To reiterate a point I've been making at regular intervals, they're busy. They've only got so much processing capacity and, with a copy of *Stuff* magazine in their hands, they're probably experiencing stimulus overload.

To unravel the riddle in this ad, the customer has to switch their attention from the passive to the active mode. They have to read and comprehend the

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still haven't found  
what I am looking for

**KENWOOD**

TRANSFORMED BY KENWOOD  
Call 01635 250 425 or visit [www.kenwood-electronics.co.uk](http://www.kenwood-electronics.co.uk)

*Figure 50 An appeal to curiosity can create deeper involvement between ad and customer, but runs a greater risk of being passed by. Reproduced by kind permission of Kenwood Electronics.*

headline, relate it to the scene in the picture, and then resolve the conundrum by reference to the radio.

Having done this, they “get” the benefit. (Curiosity is just a curvy route to a benefit.)

You can see that, even in a simple ad like this, an appeal to curiosity builds a delay into the communication process. And a hurdle for the customer. So there is a risk.

Always remember that placement of an ad does not guarantee readership of an ad. Tucked innocuously in Caples’ *Tested Advertising Methods* is the almost throwaway remark:

**“For every curiosity headline that succeeds in getting results, a dozen will fail.”**

Engel put it another way. He called the customer a “cognitive miser.”<sup>41</sup> He makes this common-sense observation:

**“A reality of the marketplace is that many products are simply not important enough to warrant a significant investment of ‘cognitive resources’ i.e. mental time and effort. The customer does not take the trouble to find the *perfect* solution for all of his needs, but is forced to settle for the *acceptable*.”**

### **Make your ad newsworthy**

If you haven’t got something new to say, you might like to stop for a moment and consider why you are spending money on marketing communication. (I’m not saying you should advertise or promote *only* when you’ve got news to divulge, but it’s a useful reality check. It helps you say something meaningful.)

After self-interest, Caples found news to be the second most effective motivator. Ogilvy reported that ads with news in their headlines were recalled by 22 percent more people than those without.<sup>42</sup>

News, too, is a route to a benefit – but a much faster one than curiosity. It’s another way of appealing to your customer’s natural self-interest.

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*Figure 51 News: a route to a benefit, and one the marketer can make happen.*

And news is a handy category for the marketer because you can make it happen.

You can improve your product, create a new flavor or model, or offer a special deal for a limited period. You can link up with another product or service, you can piggyback someone else's news (like a big movie premiere), or you can invent an event of your own (like National Paper Clip Week). You can even launch a brand new product.

If you work in a market in which all products are basically similar, news could be your communication mainstay. Better, faster, cheaper. The power of news shows no sign of waning.

And it doesn't always have to be big news. Procter & Gamble's Tide detergent has been improved more than 70 times.<sup>43</sup> Many of these changes were no doubt small adjustments to the formulation and the packaging, but each meant P&G could take a "new improved" message to its customers.

For existing customers this can say “Look, we don’t take your custom for granted.” For former customers it provides a reason to consider the brand afresh. And in every market there’s a constant flow of new customers, perhaps setting up home for the first time, who will have few preconceptions and be open to suggestion.

But if news is a conduit to a benefit, you must make sure it’s a benefit that your customer hears. I refer you back to my two “you”s per “we” rule in Step 3, Wording. Your customer doesn’t want to know *you’ve* got a new fuel-injection system (feature), they want to know *they* can drive all week on a single tank (benefit).

### **Quick and easy**

Most of us would like to do things more quickly and more easily. Study for a degree. Learn a new language. Clean the loo. Get a loan. Cut the grass. Lose weight. Conjure up a six-pack. Write a book.

But what did Caples mean by quick and easy? Well – again – it’s really just another form of benefit. You get something faster and with less effort, perhaps something you previously thought was impossible. Here’s an example he gave of a quick-and-easy headline that proved very effective:

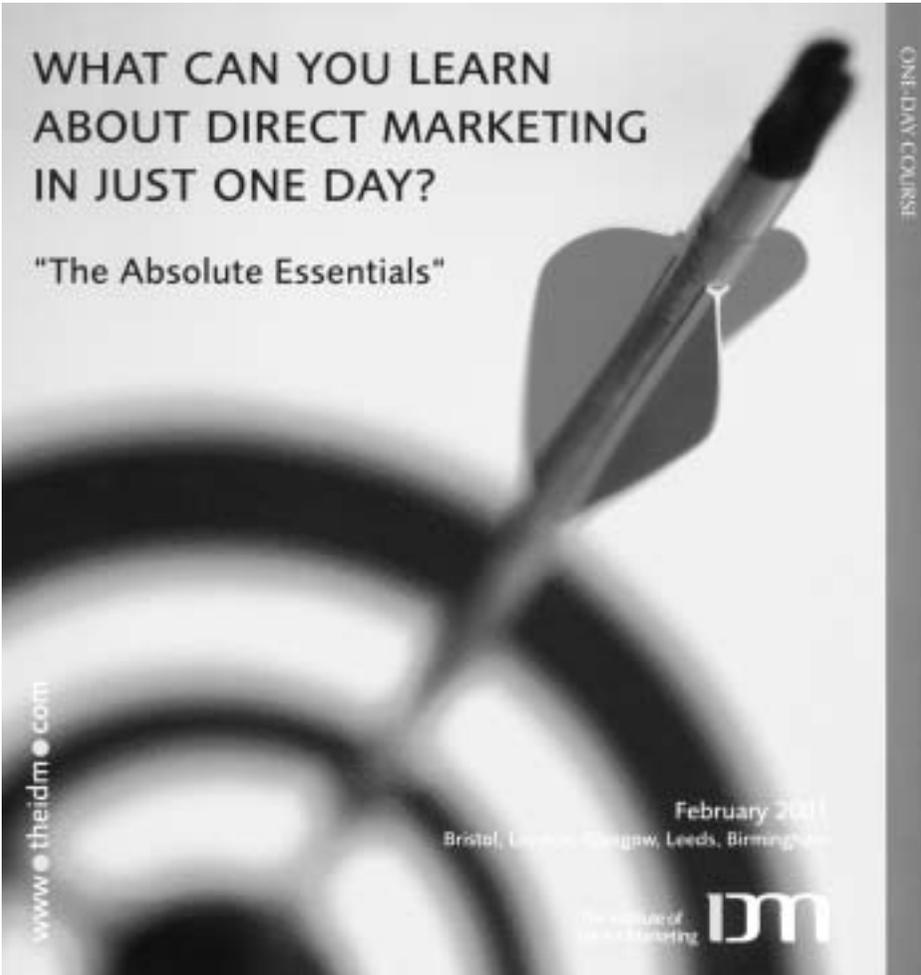
#### **“How I improved my memory in one evening”**

Quick and easy can be applied to any walk of life (or business). Recently at the Good Food Show I watched a team of craftily unassuming salespeople demonstrate at close quarters a cleaning product that, at a touch, magically restored charred oven trays on which a wire brush had no apparent impact. Suckers (me included) were disappearing with armfuls of the stuff.

The great thing about convenience is that it’s a synonym for price premium (or, to look at it another way, competitive advantage). Every marketer should be seeking this angle, yet in a survey I conducted of *Yellow Pages* ads, only 8 in 100 small businesses emphasize quick or easy in their messages.

This is remarkable. When you pick up *Yellow Pages* it’s usually because you want your troubles taken away, a claim many businesses could make.

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*Figure 52 Even marketers want a quick, easy way. Reproduced by kind permission of The Institute of Direct Marketing.*

### **Sensory language**

I think comedian Frank Carson has a point when he says, “It’s the way I tell ‘em.” While the *content* of a marketing message will always be more important than its *form*,<sup>44</sup> good content works even harder if said well. (I say, clumsily.)

But it’s not just me who thinks this. Advertising “wizard” Roy Hollister Williams states:

**“The secret of writing memorable ads is to use language that creates a vivid first mental image.”<sup>45</sup>**

He believes that an intrusive and intriguing first mental image will cause your customer to abandon the thought they had previously been thinking. Passive attention becomes active attention. Your customer is all eyes and ears.

What does Williams mean by “first mental image”? The idea here is twofold.

First, memories are stored in the form of mental images. Hence it’s much easier to remember someone’s name if, when you meet them, you create a picture. (Try it: Next time you’re introduced to a Peter, think of him in green tights, flying through the night sky.) It’s on this reservoir of images that your customer draws when your message evokes a need in their mind.

The technique was put to good effect during the heavily advertised launch of the new 118 directory inquiries numbers in the UK. The campaign, which focused on distinctive visual imagery (the twin “David Bedfords” in their 118 running vests), scored almost twice the recall of its main competitor, which majored on a rather mournful ditty and largely eschewed pictures.<sup>46</sup>

The second part of first mental image is sensory language. Writers of fiction know to let their reader see, hear, and feel the story. Sensory language engages the reader because it makes them create specific pictures, sounds, and feelings (i.e. mental images). Conversely, abstractions, like understand, think, education, put the reader in a trance.<sup>47</sup>

Ahem.

Research has found that readers exposed to a list of “concrete” words (like tree or dog) and abstract words (like necessary or usual) demonstrate greater retention of concrete words.<sup>48</sup> In the US, sales of a rust inhibitor called Thixo-Tex rose from \$2m to \$100m in four years following a change of name to Rusty Jones.<sup>49</sup>

Metaphors are an excellent way to use sensory language. As you’ll recall from schooldays, metaphors are literal images, in which the subject is

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described as if it really is the thing it merely resembles. Metaphors can conjure vivid images in the mind of the reader or listener. For many years Esso boasted it would “Put a tiger in your tank,” while Castrol GTX was

*Figure 53 The power of the metaphor. Why say calorie when you can say war? Reproduced by kind permission of The Ryvita Company Limited.*

described as “Liquid engineering.” However, I can’t think of a better example than the famous Ryvita ad, headlined simply “The Inch War.” Instantly it engages your mind: Why say calorie (who’s ever seen a calorie) when you can say war? It also demonstrates that sensory language need not mean highfalutin language.

### **Combat adaptation**

Psychologists have observed that people share a tendency to become “habituated to a stimulus.” Eventually they don’t even notice it. Traffic noise is a good example. (Or the pictures around your house – have you noticed them lately?) This phenomenon is known as adaptation.<sup>50</sup>

Marketing noise can suffer the same fate. Your customer is probably familiar with your product or service. You may find it hard to find something new to say about it. These are the perfect conditions for adaptation.

Whether your company runs big-budget television campaigns, or – like the vast majority of enterprises – employs more modest media, the war on adaptation is one you must fight. Show your ad too often and your customer will metaphorically switch off. (Don’t show it often enough, however, and it may not reach them.)

The rule here is to keep your marketing communications fresh. (This doesn’t mean you can’t be consistent.) Just don’t spend all your money on production if it means you have to keep using the same execution. And employ the 10 tips to improve your location.

### **Salesmanship not showmanship**

By now, I hope I’m beginning to convey the difference between showmanship and salesmanship. To my mind, and in my experience, it’s what in turn makes the difference between an ordinary and an extraordinary response: to your advertising, mailings, and any other form of marketing communication. Old AIDA trains marketers to use showmanship: It suggests you should jump in with size 12s to make the biggest possible splash. But NEW AIDA says this is not the best way to engage your customer: In practice it’s not how

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the effective salesperson operates, because it's not how a customer thinks.

This chapter also begins to show how a NEW AIDA approach brings out the best of old AIDA. By first thinking about navigation, ease, and wording, you can employ good salesmanship to get your customer sitting comfortably. Showmanship becomes superfluous. What matter now are benefits, and NEW AIDA enables you to focus on why your customer should buy, without unnecessary distraction.

### **ATTENTION — SEVEN TOP TIPS**

- 1 First think location.**
- 2 Maximize random attention.**
- 3 Put a benefit in your headline.**
- 4 Inject news and make it quick and easy.**
- 5 Employ sensory language.**
- 6 Make the picture enhance the benefit.**
- 7 Test for effectiveness.**

### **KEY QUESTION**

**“Will my customer meet my benefits?”**