

It's all about audience

It doesn't matter whether you're trying to convince local companies to support your charity run, sniffing cold-sufferers to sneeze into their sleeves or coffee aficionados to choose your particular brew. Creating an effective communication piece begins by understanding your audience.

Let's say you're marketing the latest tablet. How you promote it to Grand Theft Auto fans is going to be entirely different from the messaging you use for small business owners, even though it's the same machine. Stunning 3D graphics won't help entrepreneurs manage their cash flow, while point-of-sale applications will leave gamers yawning.

Just like in archery, you can't hit the bull's eye if you don't know where you're aiming. So before you write a single word of copy, ask yourself the following four questions:

Who is your audience?

Are you targeting WalMart bargain-hunters or Holt Renfrew regulars? BASE jumpers or lawn bowlers? Consider age, gender, geography, education, disposable income and any other details that make your audience distinct. The more specific a picture you can paint, the better.

What do they care about?

Get inside their heads. Think about what keeps them up at night, what their deepest values are, who they look up to and what they're trying to accomplish with their lives. Understand their motivations, desires, worries and fears.

What do they know — about you and about your product or cause?

Perhaps you're introducing a technology so new that consumers don't know they need it. Or you're raising money for a cause that doesn't make national headlines. Your audience may have misconceptions about what your organization does, or maybe they're more familiar with your competitor down the street. Identify any knowledge gaps you'll need to fill to make your pitch persuasive.

What language do they speak?

Sick means something entirely different to a 16-year-old skateboarder and a 60-year-old healthcare executive. Quadrature amplitude modulation may sound like gobbledygook to most Canadians, but it's Windex-clear to an electrical engineer. The words, grammar and cultural allusions you make should speak to your audience, not slam the door in their face.

Need help creating messages that hit home? Call or email us to discuss your next project.