



## Marketing Messages

### MARY CHARLESON

#### *For success stories, starting at the ground floor, ready your elevator pitch*

Society suffers from communications overload. From the moment we wake until our head hits the pillow again, we're inundated with messages and information. Much of it has to do with marketing and advertising, and only a fraction of what was originally communicated is retained. Our only defense is to keep it simple. We remember only what is of interest and easily understood. How then do you position your business and communicate to cut through the clutter? How do you become the fraction of information that is retained? You keep it simple. In communication, less is often more. This philosophy works well for business positioning and marketing efforts.

Do you have an "elevator pitch?" Suppose a person critical to the future success of your business stepped into the elevator with you one day. Fate having delivered you a few moments to position your business, what would you say? This is not unlike the fraction of time you have to position your business in the mind of the consumer. In one brief sentence you should be able to define what you do, how you're different from competitors, and why we should care. And if you define yourself by how you make a difference in your customers' lives and not by what you sell, you can create a powerful emotional connection with them.

Let's look at a few examples:

Quiznos is one of the fastest growing sandwich restaurants in North America. With over 1200 locations, they have opened numerous stores in the lower mainland in recent years. Their sub sandwiches are toasted on artisan breads using fresh ingredients and original sauces. The upscale sandwich is positioned for busy consumers looking for a fresh alternative to traditional fast food. The "toasted tastes better" advertising message positions them simply and directly against their primary competitor, Subway. Marketing messages tell customer what to expect, how Quiznos is different and most importantly, what's in it for them. It is not easy to enter a market as a latecomer in a category and then compete with industry leader Subway, but Quiznos has done a good job positioning their message in a simple manner.

Fido, the digital wireless service offered by Microcell Solutions, was launched in 1996. They revolutionized the wireless industry with a simple approach to pricing and contracts. They had one package price and no contract was required. In the face of complex rate plans and lengthy contracts offered by competitors, they positioned themselves as friendly and easy to understand. Consumers clearly understood what was in it for them. They have consistently reinforced this position with catchy advertising campaigns. City Fido is their latest product entry and in keeping with their positioning of simplicity. City Fido offers unlimited local calls and targets consumers who want to abandon their residential land line service. Aimed primarily at youth and singles, the ad shows a pile of discarded home phones. It conveys a clear and memorable message. I recently guest lectured for Capilano College's Arts and Entertainment Management Program. When I asked the class of 23 how many had only a cell phone and no home phone, 7 put up their hands. That's a whopping 30%. Anecdotal data to be sure, but an indication that the potential for growth in this category is there for the taking. Although Telus has now packaged a similar offering, they haven't succeeded in communicating the attributes and product positioning in the simple manner that Fido did.

The airline industry is a tough competitive environment, yet Westjet, a low-cost carrier is one of the most successful airlines in Canadian history. Their position is simple, yet it distinguishes them strongly against competitors. They offer low cost fares, and they deliver service with a genuine smile and sense of humour. All advertising and communications reinforces this position.

So the next time that elevator door opens, do you know what you're going to say? Better yet, don't wait for the elevator, your potential customers want to hear your pitch right now. Think like a customer. Tell them how you'll make a difference in their lives. Select that one specific concept to hang your hat on. Then make sure that your actions and all marketing and advertising reinforce this position. It's the only way to cut through the customer's wall of indifference. It can be that simple.

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