How to Write an Ad that Gets Results

by Ted Janusz

Do you need to write a promotional piece for your dental practice?

Begin this process by taking a look at an advertisement from your favorite publication. Really look at it. I know, your brain usually spots an ad and immediately thinks, “Oh, an ad!” and tells you to quickly flip the page so that you can continue reading the articles.

Sources of the information tell us that the average consumer gets inundated with between 1,500 and 5,000 advertising impressions per day. To help you understand how you can break through all of this clutter to get noticed with your message, please consider the following story.

Has this ever happened to you?

I was riding along in the car with my teenage son and started to say something I had vowed I would never say, “When I was your age . . .”

Stephen’s eyes rolled to the back of his head. You see, Stephen doesn’t particularly care to hear his old man’s reminiscences of the good old days…yet again, so soon.

Yet count the number of times a sales letter that you have received begins, “Our company was started by my great-grandfather back in 1905. We now have 10,000 installations and 25,000 satisfied clients . . .”

For a potential prospect, such a lead-in fails to grab and sustain attention. Potential prospects are arrested by, “What’s In It for Me (WII-FM).”

As a marketing consultant, I was recently asked by an accounting firm, after the fact, to review their new marketing materials. They handed me a professionally-designed, glossy folder that profiled each of their partners – where they had gone to school, degrees they had earned and achievements for which they had been recognized. The accounting firm was very proud of these slick, new – and expensive - materials.

Guess what? A prospective client doesn’t really care about the number of degrees conferred or awards won. Rather, it’s all about, “What can you do for me? How well do you understand my pains and my issues? What steps can you take to solve them?” That’s what prospects truly care about – What’s In It for Me. In an increasingly
competitive marketplace, companies able to demonstrate What's In It for Me win business.

My favorite four-step formula for writing result-producing marketing materials is:

1. **Identify the Problem** – What were the circumstances that caused the patient to initiate contact with you? By telling a story up front, the potential patient to begin to identify with you because they can see themselves in your story.

2. **Implement the Solution** – What was the remedy you proposed and implemented for the patient?

3. **Document the Results** – What were the quantifiable benefits the customer received as a result?

4. **Record the Testimonial** – Have the customer explain in their own words the ways in which their relationship with you helped them.

**Don’t buy an ad, instead write an article and place it in the ad.**

Advertising guru David Ogilvy once said:

“There is no law which says that advertisements have to look like advertisements. Roughly six times as many people read the average article as the average advertisement. Very few advertisements are read by more than one reader in 20. If you make them look like editorial pages, you will attract about 50 percent more readers.”

So turn your ad into a regular column in which you give advice to your readers. You don’t need to be an author. Simply include a typical question that you would likely get from a patient or prospect, and how you usually answer it. After you write each piece ask yourself, “Will my readers, who are my potential prospects, see something in this piece that directly relates to them?” (Always remember WII-FM.)

Better yet, approach your community newspaper and tell them that you would like to write a regular column for them. Readers can submit their questions on their dental health and you will respond. In that way, you can look like an expert among the community . . . free of charge.

**Why are there so many “bad ads”**?

Let’s get back to that advertisement you originally looked at when we began this article. You may ask yourself, “If, in order to be successful, an advertisement needs to contain a WII-FM, why did this company write this ad? After all, it doesn’t even mention their customer. Instead, the ad is all about them.”

Ah, but that’s exactly the point! Because the advertisement is all about them, the creators (and those who paid the bill to place the ad in the publication) indeed saw the WII-FM. Only they believed (erroneously) that their potential customer would look at the ad in the same way that they did.
But now you know the secret!