

Reaching the tip of the iceberg

Transitioning your business from printer to marketing services provider will lead you to the money, but the correct approach is very necessary, says Eliot Harper

"I'm in a large boardroom on a hot afternoon. The familiar scent of fuser oil wafts in through the air conditioning system. Across the table is a client, a printer who would like to start offering direct marketing campaigns to his customers. He's called me in to discuss a potential campaign.

"I've got an idea" he announces enthusiastically. "Oh yes?" I reply, nervously - not another one - I think quietly. "Yes, I've got a client who sells cars, lots of them. But they really need to sell more and they want us to run a mail piece promoting how popular their models are." Before I can open my mouth to ask a question, he continues, "I saw this great ad a while back and I thought I could use it". He whips out a sheet of paper and slides it across the table. My heart sinks. It's an image of a tortoise accidentally having sex with a toy car. "Funny, eh?" I'm not laughing. "I thought we could put this on a postcard and add some personalisation". Oh no. I cringe at the thought of this clichéd and blatantly plagiarised image landing through mailboxes. What's more distressing is the fact that he's completely missed the approach. And he's far from alone.

Many print providers are starting

to offer complimentary, value-added direct marketing services. Armed with digital printing equipment, personalisation software, some creative direction and an alternate sales approach, a print provider really can make the transition to a marketing service provider, but as my client is yet to understand, it's important to use the correct approach.

Think of a direct marketing campaign not as another print job, but as a floating iceberg. The only thing the consumer gets to see is the execution. The bigger stuff lies beneath the surface and the execution is the last thing to appear. To ensure that a campaign is effective, many different elements have to be considered and developed before you can start to execute the campaign, as a great creative idea alone won't make it successful. But before developing and executing a creative idea, the campaign strategy, often referred to as the brief, needs to be defined. It's not until this has been developed that an execution can be floated. While there isn't a definitive list of inclusions for a campaign strategy, and approaches and terminology vary, a creative brief is typically divided into a set of distinct elements. We'll identify and discuss each element below.

Business Idea

IT all starts with an idea. And ends with one. The business idea is the very driver for developing a campaign in the first place - and the purpose of the campaign is to solve the business idea. Without understanding what the business idea is, you can't build a campaign to support it. A business might need to launch a new product, generate brand awareness, acquire new customers or retain existing ones. Whatever the reason, the business idea establishes the purpose of the campaign and will typically stem from, and support, the company's business or marketing plan.

Product/Service

NEXT, you need to establish the name and type of product or service. It might be an individual product; a model, range or product series, or perhaps it's a service such as healthcare, education or a trade. Whatever the product or service, it's important to establish and define what it is exactly you're marketing

Target Audience

BEFORE you can start developing a campaign, you need to understand who you are talking to. The more you know about your target audience, the more you will understand who you are talking to and the more persuasive you will be able to make your marketing. You need to extract what information you can, and then decide how and if to use it. The type of audience information that you would use will differ for businesses and consumers, but at a minimum you should be looking at obtaining the following:

Consumers	Businesses
Age	Business type
Sex	Sales turnover
Income	Number of employees
Family Status	Number of branches

Once you understand who your audience is, you can create a message that will be relevant to them.

Objective

STEMMING from the business idea, the campaign objective identifies the one single problem that the campaign needs to solve. Whether the objective is to build market share, brand recognition, acquire new customers, retain existing ones, or something else, the campaign objective is to explicitly define the end-purpose of the campaign, while taking into consideration the product/service and target audience.

USP

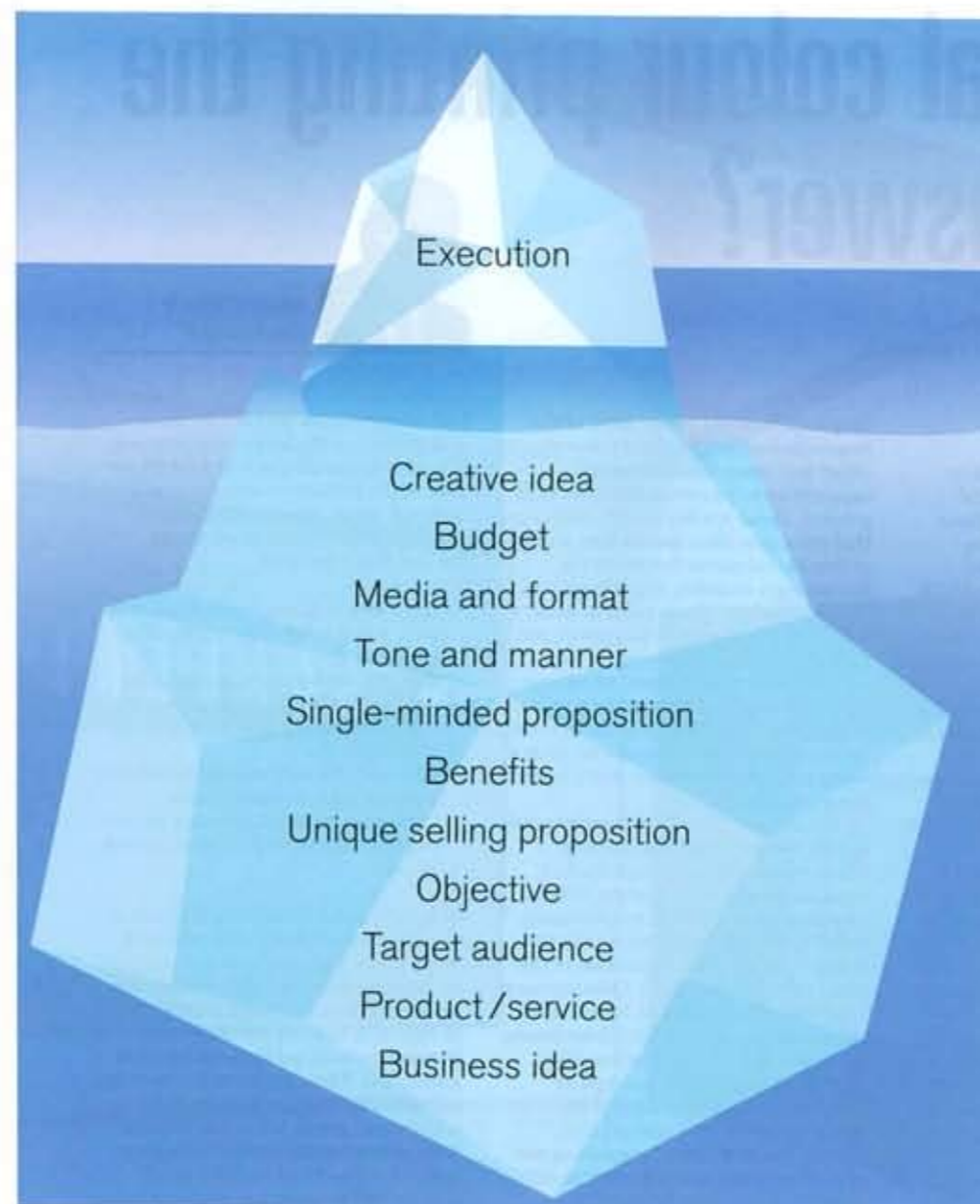
THE Unique Selling Proposition, or USP, emphasises what makes a product or service different from competitive alternatives. The USP should be exactly that; unique and selling. It needs to identify what the competition either cannot, or does not offer and more importantly, something that people want. Familiar USPs include Domino's Pizza: "Hot pizza delivered to your door in 30 minutes or less - or it's free" or M&M's: "The milk chocolate melts in your mouth, not in your hand". Once identified, the USP can be leveraged to deliver a compelling proposition in the campaign.

Benefits

BENEFITS explain the main value that the product or service provides to its customers. In the example of a car, benefits could include fuel efficiency, comfort or performance, while a service



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the media used as the response mechanism - the method that the audience will use to respond to the call-to-action. You might include a telephone number, a website URL, or even a personalised microsite complete with a unique URL. However, your choice of media for execution and response will ultimately depend on who you are talking to and possibly the type of product or service offered.

Budget

THE expression 'with money you can do anything' is true, particularly in marketing - but the reality is that there will always be a budget, which generally forms a percentage of the forecast campaign return. It's important to establish what the budget is before developing a concept, as the budget ultimately determines the scope of the campaign; from the cost per mail piece, the reach (mailing size) and the amount of creative effort that is applied to the campaign.

Creative idea

AS explained earlier, it all starts with an idea. And ends with one. Not until you've defined the business idea and detailed the campaign strategy, or brief, can you start developing the creative idea. All creative ideas come from the

campaign brief, as it forms the thinking behind the idea. A good approach for developing creative ideas is to work as part of a team. In the creative world two heads really are better than one. Ideas are rarely created in a vacuum, they usually emerge from refined ideas developed by a team. Coming up with a good idea is the most important skill in direct marketing, so get help.

Summary

WHILE a campaign brief may appear somewhat intimidating and often unnecessary, it's actually critical to the success of any campaign. Without a strategy, or brief, you can't develop a good idea as all creative ideas stem from the campaign brief. And no matter how good the design, illustration, creative effects, or use of media is, you can't save a bad idea. Or as someone once crudely put it, "you can't polish a turd."

may offer benefits around levels of service, including quality, speed of service and value-added services.

Single minded proposition

THE Single Minded Proposition is the key benefit that the product or service is proposing to the customer. While the product or service may offer multiple benefits, it's important to identify one single promise about the product or service. This is probably the single most important element in the creative brief, as it's generally used as the starting point for creative ideas.

Tone and manner

THE tone and manner sets the voice that will be used to communicate the campaign message. It might be humorous, serious, sophisticated, sarcastic or something else, but whatever the choice it needs to be an extension of the brand itself. For

example, Virgin's fun and often cheeky marketing tone wouldn't lend itself to the Qantas brand. Or the Financial Times intelligent and somewhat elitist tone probably wouldn't fit The Australian. The tone also needs to be used consistently throughout the execution, as varying the tone will cause confusion and could upset or damage the message.

Media and format

THE choice of media will depend on the audience that you're talking to. And it's not always appropriate to use print for every campaign. For example, you're speaking to an audience that uses and engages online media or relies on their mobile device for communication, it might be more appropriate and effective to execute an email or SMS campaign.

When choosing the media for the campaign execution or delivery, it's equally important to consider