



Steinberg On Creative

By Steven J. Steinberg

Good Creative Needs A Great Client Needs Analysis

Make Sure You're Getting The Information You Need To Create Effective Spots

My point of view regarding the perfect client needs analysis is very different from that of my colleagues in account services. Account executives need to form a relationship with prospects that is based on much more than their marketing needs. One template of a client needs analysis I once received, during my blissfully brief career in sales, actually had a space for the prospective client's birthday, wedding anniversary, kids' birthdays, hobbies, favorite TV show, and other personal data.

Whatever management requires of its sales minions in the way of data mining, let me share the most important information the AE staff needs to share with creative services.

WHAT DOES THE CLIENT MAKE OR DO?

On the surface, it almost seems too elemental to ask. But in this age of diversity and multitasking, it's important to list and prioritize what products and services the client offers to its consumers.

A lawyer, for example, might specialize in one or more types of legal services: family law, DUI, criminal law, bankruptcy, personal injury, etc. From a creative standpoint, it's important to know how to list and weight them in the spot.

An electronics store these days might sell computers, cellular phones and service plans, personal GPS devices, MP3 players, digital recorders, and other items. Again, it's important to list every product/service and how important each one is to sales volume.

The needs analysis for a restaurant must note if they also do catering, special events, or weddings. Do they offer delivery? Discounted meal hours? It's vital that every product and/or service your client wants to promote is specified to creative services.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Whether you call it the unique selling point (USP) or not, every business has a point of differentiation. In my years in both the agency world and broadcasting, this has been undoubtedly the most fundamentally difficult part of the equation to nail down.



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- Account services should tailor the client needs analysis to suit creative services as well.
- List and prioritize the products/services offered by the client.
- Find the client's unique selling point.
- Make sure to specify everything that must be included in the spot.

Because clients don't think like their customers, they spout platitudes when asked why a consumer should consider them and not their competition. You'll hear things like "service second to none," "friendly, knowledgeable staff," "unsurpassed selection," or the ever-popular "convenient location." But you can't let gobbledygook like that slide under your radar screen. It can get downright uncomfortable if you have to keep telling a client, "Well, true, but wouldn't your competition make the same claims?"

Recently, at a small electronics store in Central Maine, I went through this with a client who was almost on the verge of a breakdown when it became apparent to him that he had no USP. My firm belief is that people with entrepreneurial spirit don't spend all that time and effort, as well as risk, starting a business unless they think they're bringing something meaningfully different to the table. In this case, after much delving, my client told me that he not only fixes computers, all makes and models, but offers a free estimate. None of that "\$45 minimum labor, which will be applied to the actual repair costs," stuff I was used to. It was a true USP, and has brought him much business.

If you, as a creative services director, don't get a genuine USP in your client needs analysis, hold your AE's feet to the fire until you do.

WHAT'S GOTTA BE, GOTTA BE

Nothing screws up a perfectly crafted commercial, post production, than finding out from the client that something mandatory is missing. A website. A street locator. A product line. The number of mentions of a specific product for co-op purposes.

Every needs analysis must list anything and everything that has to be included in the commercial — because one of the sureties of radio scripting is that it's amazingly easy to see what's been left out, but just as difficult to cut something already in the spot to make room for the missing elements.

The computer geek coda of garbage in/garbage out applies just as well to ascertaining your clients' needs and then translating them into an effective radio commercial. The best way to keep your next spot from heading to the trash heap is to make sure all the needs are well understood before the first word is scripted. ☒

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