

Marketingheads

Specialists - Delivering Marketing Solutions

How to undertake a marketing and communications audit

Author: John Wakeling, Branding and Marketing Specialist, Strategist and Market Researcher, Marketingheads Australia.

Why is this important?

The primary reason for a marketing and communications audit is to improve your bottom line by ensuring your communication is on strategy consistently and is, therefore, more effective.

It is important to have clear brand communication and positioning messages so customers know what you do, what products and services are available, and how these can benefit them as customers.

Today, when your website is viewed, you have around 7 seconds to clearly communicate and obtain buy-in before the potential customer clicks through to another website.

Conducting a marketing and communications audit should identify communication elements that are on strategy and those that are not. The process is rational, analytical and business like.

What to do?

The audit needs to relate specifically to your business plan or marketing plan objectives and strategy. It's important that if you have an outside resource conduct this audit, that an insider's perspective should then be applied to the overall findings and recommendations. You may wish to also investigate what your customers' value from your products and services to ensure your strategies actually have resonance. Understanding your customers' challenges is a first step to customising solutions that are hard for low price suppliers to compete with. (But that's another subject for another day!)

Essentially there are three key areas to the audit:

- Consistency
- Quality
- Value evaluation

The audit should cover:

- Company image and identity
- Building, reception and vehicle signage
- Stationery
- Reports, Power Point Presentation templates



TELSTRA AUSTRALIAN
BUSINESS AWARDS
NOMINEE 2014



Marketingheads

Specialists - Delivering Marketing Solutions

- Email signatures
- Business directory listings
- LinkedIn and Facebook business profiles
- Newsletters
- Trade show exhibits
- Website
- Brochures, videos
- Product catalogues & Price lists
- Advertising
- Legal documents
- Media packs
- Technical literature

Criteria for rating consistency

Is the strategy or primary selling point the same on all pieces of marketing material?

Does the piece look as though it comes from the same organisation?

Are style and use of colours, type and paper consistent?

Does it perform a specific function in synch with other items?

Are trademarks and company logos, tagline, used correctly?

Do they comply with the company style guide?

Criteria for rating quality

Is the piece complimentary to the organisation/product it represents?

Is information communicated easily and persuasively?

Can you determine its objective and do you think it achieves it?

Could you improve upon the creativity?

Does the material comply with the company's overall strategy and business objectives?

Do your communications have typos and misspelling of words?

Conduct an overall evaluation

We use a form to do this so that we can identify which items are actually subtracting from the communications effectiveness. You could develop a form of your own.

We then provide a numerical rating or value for the items.

This shows the effectiveness of the items.

It's the consistency of this analysis that validates the result, despite it being a subjective review.

You are thus able to ascertain the items that are rated as excellent, those that are marginal and those where improvement is needed and those that perhaps reflect negatively on your business.



TELSTRA AUSTRALIAN
BUSINESS AWARDS
NOMINEE 2014



Marketingheads

Specialists - Delivering Marketing Solutions

Competitor Audit

Another aspect to this is where you can use the same criteria to evaluate your competitors' materials in the same way to ascertain what's working for them, particularly if they are known to be winning business over you.

Overall value

This communications audit allows for a rational, objective, fresh and non-partisan view so decisions can be made as to what needs improving and what should be continued to be used are relevant, rational and businesslike.

Ultimately you need to decide how you will go about improving your communication. Obtaining traction is often more than just clarity and consistency of message. You do need to get the message right first.

Present results

This is a presentation of the audit report and your findings and recommendations. It should rate and rank each communication piece for consistency, quality, communication excellence, marginal and/or needs improving and those that need to be discarded.

How do you improve your communication effectiveness?

From the information you have reported you can begin to develop a brief with clear guidelines and objectives around effective communication and what is to be consistently communicated. This is then used to develop communication and to assess new creative if needed.

How long does this take?

Once the form and rating system is developed this is a relatively straight forward project that can be completed in a few hours depending on the volume and scope of material to be audited. You also need to have the communication elements available plus your business plan, marketing plan and style guide as resources to form the values you will audit.

To do justice to this audit you do need to approach it in a professional manner and may wish to find an appropriate, trusted service provider, where their service capability align with your challenge to audit marketing and communication materials.

Source: John Wakeling, Branding and Marketing Specialist, Strategist and Market Researcher, Marketingheads Australia.

john.wakeling@marketingheads.com.au



TELSTRA AUSTRALIAN
BUSINESS AWARDS
NOMINEE 2014



Marketingheads

Specialists - Delivering Marketing Solutions

Related published articles

How to implement low cost marketing concepts to grow revenue

How to engage a marketing company

How to make the most of market research

Where to go for help

Marketingheads is a multi-award winning strategic marketing and market research company that develops and implements communication strategies and branding for companies. Their goal is to achieve exceptional results through the positive and powerful insights they obtain through their qualitative market research and the game changing strategies they recommend. They not only develop strategies and recommendations but also assist in the execution of the strategy, as this is what helps to achieve great results.

Marketingheads are very proud finalists in the NSW Business Chamber annual awards program for 2012 and 2013 for Excellence in Business Ethics and were recently nominated for a Telstra Australian Business Award 2014.

If you would like to know more about what Marketingheads can do for your business give them a call. +61 (02) 98693314. Visit www.marketingheads.com.au



TELSTRA AUSTRALIAN
BUSINESS AWARDS
NOMINEE 2014



Excellence in Business Ethics 2012 & 2013