

# Design your Communication.



Tips for Start-ups  
and Small Businesses.  
Put in a Nut Shell

by Markus Seger

# What is Design of Communication?

I guess I invented this expression. You won't find it in Wikipedia. And not in Google either, not in the sense I am using it.

Most of the people who are in the process of founding their own little company worry, at a certain point, about what they call "advertising" or "publicity". Can I do it myself? Should I find professional help? Do I need an agency? Couldn't I write the text myself and only take a graphic designer. Probably even that costs a lot? Not to mention the cost's for putting an ad in the papers.

Don't rush. Design your communication, as a picture first, in your head, but not in the literal sense. Define the outlines of the identity of your company, your product. Name it. Define what makes it unique, compared to what your competitors are offering. Go step by step. Set your objectives. Formulate the main points of your message. Only you can do it. You are the soul of it.

Here you are going to find some tips for your way ahead.

Wishing you luck  
and inspiration.

Markus Seger

## Find an Identity.

- The first questions are “who is ...?” and “what is ...?” - Easy? – Don’t kid yourself. It’s difficult. Say it in a very few words, as understandable as possible, to everybody.
- You defined the mission already, of your enterprise? That’s part of the identity. Put it in the shortest and snappiest form possible. Imagine telling these two first points to your grandmother, on the phone.
- How does it “feel”? What are the emotions that go along with it?
- Give it a name. Check in the Internet whether it’s not taken yet, by somebody else. Say it aloud. How does it sound? Tell your best friends. What’s their reaction? Imagine it as a sign along the road, or as a logo on your product.
- Check whether the name is still available as a domain name as well for the internet, maybe with a little trick, like adding “-something” to the name you want so much. Or change to .com, .be, .net, or whatsoever.
- Write everything down. Put it under your pillow. How does it sound the morning after?

## **Get acquainted to your Clients.**

- You think that everybody is going to jump for your product, your business? Who is “everybody”?
- Men? Women? Older ones? Younger ones? Where do they live and/or where do they work? What’s their social status? What language(es) do they speak?
- What are their interests? Where would they gather, physically or virtually, so you could reach them with your message in those places? That could be in certain clubs, certain shops, but in certain places in the internet as well.
- What are their needs and their problems, the ones that that you are going to solve with your product, your services?
- Now you have a counterpart for your communication. They are people, they have a heart as well as a brain. Keep that in mind.
- Imagine one of them and try to tell him, what your enterprise is and why he or she should jump for it.
- Better: Go to meet some of them. Speak with them. Get a feeling for the way they tick.

## What do you want them to do?

- Yes, you want them to buy your stuff. But first they have to want it, and from you and not from somebody else.
- So. before they do something, they have to feel like wanting to.
- How do you want them to feel, with your little company and with what you have to offer?
- And before they buy, what do you want them to do in order to get acquainted with your offer? Do they need information? A lot? Pictures? Sounds? Smells? Are you prepared to let them know and to get a feeling?
- Would they have to come to you? Would you go to them? Where would they find your products?

## Chose the right Message.

- How do you meet the needs (and sometimes problems) of your potential client? What makes your way of meeting those needs outstanding, compared to what your competitors have to offer?
- To answer these questions is to define your message.
- Now it is getting clear why it was important first to know your target group well. Those people's needs alone are the benchmark for your message.
- What your heart is full of, in your excitement about your own business, is not necessarily the same. You concentrate on the product, people care for what it does for them.
- Structure your message, when it gets too long. Set an USP (Unique Selling proposition) in the first place, as kind of a "Headline". Let it be as short and as precise as possible. But take care: Be sceptical if it sounds like a Slogan already. Does, what you say, really meet the needs of your clients? That is the most important. The slogans are for later, and maybe for a professional.
- Give a "Reason Why" in the second part. But keep this short as well.
- Then describe the "User Benefit"
- Don't forget the emotion that comes along with what you offer, if it is not already the User Benefit in itself. Even a bank gives you an emotion, of feeling safe, if it is a good one.

## What is your objective.

- Now we are narrowing down your aims to what can be achieved by communication alone.
- Be ambitious, but not too much. Not everything you communicate is going to be perceived, or maybe not the way you hope. Be prepared to lose a lot on the way to your goal. People are lousy readers, constantly distracted by too many messages of too many competing for their attention.
- With a mailing or a folder you won't have much more than 5% of those who get it to really "get the message". Even less with a little ad in the paper, but maybe from a bigger number.
- Say I want to reach so and so many in my target group at least.
- Say I want them to learn at least the core of the message which is...
- Imagine what you want them to do, when they got it.

## Chose your Media.

- Try to find out where your target group gets its information from, in your specific domain.
- You probably won't sell a perfume in a computer magazine. Chose a surrounding that fits your offer.
- Consider every possible way to reach your clientele. An e-mail, sent to the right people, can be much better than a brochure. If you have one you can still send it to those who order it, and have a first set of prospects with their names and addresses.
- Try anyway, to get response. Offer a first contact, or a sample, or a first evening in your salsa club for free. Get addresses, wherever possible.
- Go for the quality of your contacts and not so much for the number.
- And don't forget that repetition is the name of the game. Once is never enough. There must be a follow up, to be planned with the first step, already.
- Don't forget either, that the "word of mouth method" is as good as it is old. Even though they call it the "multiplication effect" today, it still works the same: You have one to tell to two others, and so on...

## Consider the Internet.

- The internet is a medium that contradicts some of the rules of classical media evaluation. Normally you would never chose a medium that covers the whole of the globe, to reach, lets say, the medical doctors of your town. In the Internet you can, because its reach costs you nothing.
- But there is a big “But”: You can have the most wonderful website in the web and nobody to ever visit it, because nobody knows about it, even with Google.
- So if you consider to have a website you have to make it known. A professional would make your website to be “search machine friendly”, but it still would take several weeks to make it to somewhere towards he top of the page ranking at Google.
- Communicate your web domain in every media you’re using. Starting with your business card.
- It takes a rather rare combination of talents to create one’s own website: technical knowledge, a talent for design and for writing, plus a general understanding of the mechanics of communication.
- Don’t ever try to find a web publisher or a web publisher through a search machine like Google. There are too many, and too many are just lousy. It’s rare, even amongst those “professionals” to find the combination of talents it takes for a good website.
- Check out websites from local companies in your field and in comparable ones. Go for those that are comparable in size and functionality to what you need for yourself. Pick out the one, two or three, you like most. Find out who made them. Often you find this information under a link called “impressum”. If not you call the owners of the websites to ask.

- Visit the websites of the web publishers or web designers you found by this method. Do you like their own homepages? Are they well made, in terms of communication for their own businesses? Or do they only fill your head with all the super complicated technical skills they master?
- I already mentioned web publishers and web designers. They can be considered as two different professions. The web designer, as his designation says, is responsible for the design. The Publisher makes the thing work technically and publishes it. Chose one who offers both skills, but prefer the one with the accent on design and communication. Technique is only the vehicle. What is going to be transported to your future clients is your communication. Keep in mind that here are an awful lot of W3-certified, and as such technically perfect websites, with practically no communicative value.
- Even though this chapter is the longest in this paper, it is far from complete. Do your own research in the internet, or read a book, if you want to know more. It's worth it. But keep in mind: What you want and what you need above anything else, is good quality in communication to make your business known. Technique, as I said, is only a vehicle.

## Establish a Budget.

- All of this costs. Partly money, or else your own time. Evaluate the latter as well. What could you do and achieve in that time?
- Calculate! – Either with your own working time or with money you have to pay for:
- Establishing a Communication Platform. You are just about to have done this one. It's worth 5 000 at least! Should you go back and try to answer all the questions in this paper, before you go on?
- Design: The design of your logo, the definition of your corporate design, colours, typography, use of pictures, stationary, individual designs of all the means you are going to print or to put in the internet.
- Text: Maybe you can write it yourself? Maybe that is a bad idea, or a good one? And what about other languages?
- Pre production: If you did a lot yourself, how is it going to be “translated” in print, or in a published website? There are technical barriers between what you can do, let's say in Microsoft Word, and what can be printed, or published as a website. This translation costs money. Or time to get acquainted with the skills to do it yourself.
- Production: You probably can't print more than a hundred or two of your folders yourself. But that could be enough to cover your needs. Consider it. Buy a new printer, if necessary. Fold them up yourself, if you have the time, and put them in their envelopes.
- Insertion: To insert an ad, you have to pay. You can't have a domain name without paying 20 francs, and no host for your website under 60 per year. But you don't pay anything additional for a lot of other, maybe more innovative ways to spread your message. – Think!

## Keep track.

- How lucky are those super sophisticated Swiss Watchmakers, who create a luxury brand, do some great design with great complications, hire some retired watch makers from the valleys of the Jura and, from that moment on, never have to bother to search for clients. They go once to the trade fair in Basel and then have to stop going there, because they can't possibly produce as much as they sell already.
- That's the kind of luck I wish to you.
- But please: Check, from time to time, whether this is your case.
- If not, keep going with your communicative efforts. Make those speak about you, who know you already. Contact your prospects regularly. Don't be shy.
- Learn from your mistakes and start anew, over and over again. You're never finished with communication.

## Contact me.

- You might have suspected it already: This paper too, is a piece of communication. Even though I didn't sit down to write it with the intention of selling you my services.
- But, if you need help, call me or send me an e-mail. We can have a meeting of an hour or two, the first one is free of charge. Already in this meeting I can guide you a little bit.
- One condition: Read the questions in this paper first, and write down the answers, before we meet.
- If you want I can offer you further help. But, let's talk about it first. You'll get a fair offer, to be compared with others.

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