

A quarterly newsletter for technology marketers

About Goldberg Communications

Goldberg Communications offers marketing writing and editing expertise to hi-tech companies.

It's a rare writer/editor who excels in her craft and knows technology. By outsourcing your marcom projects to Goldberg Communications, you gain:

- **High-Quality Writing.** Read this newsletter. Ask for samples.
- **In-Depth Understanding of Technology.** We've written about hardware and software technologies, including networking, DBMS, development tools, ERM software, and more.
- **Quick Turnaround.** Short product cycles leave little room for lead time. Call if you need something fast.
- **Proactive Service.** We drive your project forward to ensure that it meets your specifications by your deadline.

Marcom Strategies for Tough Times

In a weak economy, your marketing materials need to work smarter and harder.

Not long ago, a white-hot economy meant products practically sold themselves. Customers had jobs to do and large budgets to do them with.

Today, companies need to work harder and smarter to make the same sale.

As a marketing communications group, you need to support these sales efforts by demonstrating the unique value your organization's products and services provide in meeting customer challenges and in improving ROI.

Understand Your Customers
Any Marketing 101 textbook will tell you that the most basic

rule of marketing is to know who your customers are and what problems they're having that relate to your area of expertise. In the recent past, many marketers relied on market research from analysts to gain this understanding.

Today, marketers need to drill deeper. Marketers need to carefully research the unique needs of their customers, then use that information to develop a compelling value proposition that addresses these specific customer requirements. If your product serves multiple markets, research the needs of and create value propositions for each one. For instance, several of Goldberg Communications' customers target separate white papers and ROI sum-



maries describing their key products to specific markets, including the federal government, B2B, B2C, health care, and oil and gas.

Demonstrate Value

In a more forgiving economy, companies could get away with simply claiming value. Today, marketers need to demonstrate the value of their products. For example, it's no longer good

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The Long and Short of Marketing Copy

The debate rages. What's the best length for marketing copy?

An ongoing debate within marketing communications departments is how much marketing copy customers actually read. Art directors typically argue that customers want to see more white space. Copy writers push for more copy.

Who's right? It depends on the type of product you're trying to sell and the audience you're trying to sell to.

High Tech Products
In general, literature about

high-tech products for the business market, where buyers are often sophisticated and the products are complex, requires longer copy. Business buyers are always looking for ways to do their jobs better, increase profits, or advance their own career. If your copy describes how your product can accomplish these things, they will read it — *all of it*.

When buyers don't read marketing copy, it's often because they see it as "marketing fluff" — copy filled with superlatives and buzzwords that fails to state what the

product does, how it's different, and why a buyer should care.

For example, I recently attended a trade show for B2B enabling technologies. More often than not, after carefully examining all signs on the booth and any available brochures, I had to ask the booth attendant what the product did and why it was different from all the other identical sounding products on the show floor. I frequently encounter the same problem with web sites.

Perhaps vendors think they can fool customers into wanting

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What Clients Are Saying...

"Cheryl does a great job of working with our internal clients to help focus their messages and develop high-quality, on-target copy we need for data sheets, white papers, success stories and other materials—even as we adjust to meet the demands of a changing market."

Nathan Butler
Creative Services Director
BroadVision

"Cheryl is the best marketing communications writer I've worked with. She offers a rare combination of business savvy, writing talent, and customer relationship management skills. I especially like the fact that her writing is free of the marketing jargon that plagues most high-tech communications. Unlike most marketing copy that applies equally well to 20 other companies, her text specifically describes my company. When the project is finished, I'm satisfied with the process, the price, and the quality of the work."

Craig Kerr
Vice President of Marketing and Business Development
Netusability, Inc.

From the Editor: Surviving Changing Demand

What a difference a few months make. Last year, hi-tech companies were riding high. Budgets were fat. The living was easy. Now, slowing demand means customers' pocketbooks have snapped shut. Sales are skidding. Profits are plummeting.

We in marketing communications must, therefore, do our

jobs better and smarter. We need to demonstrate our products' value in as compelling a way as possible. That means proving value to customers in terms customers use to measure success in their industry. It also means tracking the success of every marketing program so we know which ones are working

and which aren't and can invest our resources wisely.

This newsletter offers tips for meeting the requirements of today's market. Best of all, by following these tips now, your marketing efforts will be that much stronger when the economy springs back—as it always does.

Writing for the Global Market

We've all heard stories of international marketing faux pas.

There was the time Chevrolet introduced the Chevy Nova in South America, not realizing that "no va" in Spanish means "doesn't go." Then there was the time PepsiCo rolled out the slogan "Pepsi Comes Alive" in Taiwan. Its Chinese translation? "Pepsi Brings Your Ancestors Back from the Grave."

Therefore, it's critical to write marketing communications materials that will translate correctly.

Be Literal. Your foreign contacts will translate your writing word for word, so don't use colloquial expressions. Be as literal as possible. For example,

if you say "We'll take a meeting," your contact may wonder what you will do with the meeting once you have it.

Be Brief. Make translation as easy as possible. Use short words, rather than longer synonyms—for example, "use" instead of "utilize"; "think of" rather than "conceptualize." Also, keep your writing concise by eliminating vague or unnecessary words.

Consider Culture. Different countries have different cultures, which can impact the way you write copy. For example, American copy writers frequently address their readers in the second person. But

the Japanese believe that writers should refer to the company. The following resources offer more information about the rules for other countries:

- *Internationally Yours* (Houghton Mifflin, 1994)
- *World Travel Guide* (Columbus Press Limited, London, updated annually)

Can the Comedy. Jokes do not translate well. When a joke depends on a play on words, who knows what you'll end up saying in the foreign language?

By writing materials with an understanding of foreign markets, you can make the task of global communications easier and reduce the likelihood of embarrassing mistakes. ■

Debating Copy Length

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to learn more about their product by making it seem as if the product does everything its competitors do. More likely they're fooling themselves. With today's tight budgets, customers need compelling and clearly stated reasons to buy. Vague copy won't cut it.

Different Strokes

The other factor when considering copy length is the audi-

If a piece targets executives, short copy is best. Executives are used to summaries of quantitative and qualitative benefits.

For pieces targeted at business line or IT managers, copy should be long enough to qualify prospects, get them interested by conveying key benefits, explain supporting features and benefits, describe selections and models, then tell readers what to do next—such as call a sales rep.

Because many people are involved in the sales cycle for business products, you may need to use one piece for multiple audiences. You can meet their varied needs by including informative subheads that make it easy to skim the copy and get the gist of the story.

So do prospects read long marketing copy? You bet—if it clearly identifies a problem, describes your offering, and demonstrates how your product solves the problem in a

Measure Results for Your Marketing Communications

Measure the ROI of marcom programs to gain buy in — and demonstrate success.

In a slowing economy, measuring ROI is essential for demonstrating the value of your company's products and services to your customers. It is also critical for marcom departments to track ROI to show management the benefit of their own services.

By measuring ROI of internal programs, you can determine which marcom programs are most effective. You can also better justify program expenditures to management.

Performing such ROI measurements requires you to understand your company's objectives, target your programs to support them, and track the success of your programs in terms that are meaningful to management.

What to Measure?

Before you can measure results, you need to know that you're measuring the right ones. In the past, organizations often measured things like page impressions for their web sites or click-through rates or "mindshare." Yet, high site traffic does not necessarily translate into success — or even survival.

Today, companies are increasingly focusing on achieving bottom line results for all their programs — results such as increases in revenues, customer satisfaction/retention, and overall profitability. Marketing communications departments must support these efforts.

There are a number of ways to determine your company's objectives. You might find them discussed in your

company's annual report, executives may have described them to the business press, or you might simply need to ask.

Next, develop a justification for your programs that carefully explains how they address company goals. Fill in all the gaps in logic to help upper management see how your programs will map to business goals. For example, if your company's objective is to increase market share in a particular industry, you may wish to demonstrate how your program will increase sales in that area. Pay careful attention to the tightness of your logic, the solidity of your cause and effect argument, and how close you come to the executive's hot button.

Tracking Results

Once your program is complete, you need to track actual results. For purposes of this article, we'll assume that you want to sales increases that result from your programs.

One way to do this is to use codes on ads and direct mail pieces. A code could be as simple as having customers call a certain 800 number with an extension number that is only printed on the direct mail piece or in the advertising. The company will know by the phone number that the call was the result of an ad in the *Wall Street Journal*. Companies might also instruct anyone answering customer inquiries to ask where the lead was coming from and report those results to marketing.

Next, grade the responses. Ask the telemarketers to determine whether each call was a sales lead or an inquiry. Finally, count the sales that the salespeople make from the sales leads. If you can count the

sales, you can track ROI.

How do you get your sales-people to cooperate? Hopefully, if you feed your sales people good leads by creating better marketing programs, they will cooperate and help you track results. That way, the salespeople will succeed if you succeed.

Gather the Figures

Now collect the following numbers:

- The average price per sale. You will use this figure to convert your sales numbers into sales volume.
- The total cost of the marketing program.
- Gross profit on sales.

Do the Math

Now you are ready to calculate ROI. ROI is the following:

Number of Sales x Average Price per Sale = Sales Volume

Sales Volume x Gross Profit Margin = Total Gross Profit

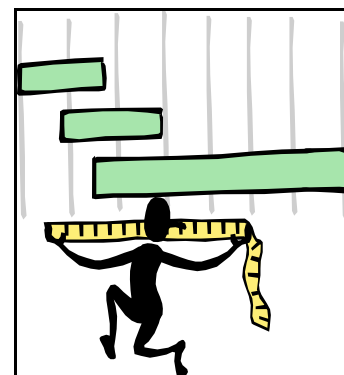
ROI = Total Gross Profit/ Total Cost of Your Marketing Program - 1

Also note that the break-even point is:

Total Cost/Gross Profit = Break-Even

If the final number is positive, you have a positive ROI. If it was negative, you had a negative ROI.

By developing marketing campaigns that support your company's overall objectives and measuring their results, you're more likely to create programs that measurably improve your company's bottom line results and help you and your firm successfully



Writing Clinic: Add Pizzazz to Your Prose

Want to entice customers to read your marketing materials? Punching up your prose can make all the difference. These tips can help:

1. Change verbs of being into verbs of doing.
Dull: I was at the branch office and was given a tour of our plant.
Better: I visited the branch office and toured our plant.
2. Write in concrete terms.
Vague: We discussed the proposal and reviewed the options.
Better: We analyzed the marketing proposal and evaluated possible differentiators for our Acme product.
3. Write precisely.
Imprecise: I established a new system for monitoring inventory.
Better: I set up a new supplies inventory system.
4. Express numbers in human terms.
Impersonal: There are 200,000 car accidents caused by drunk driving in this country each year.
Better: One in three accidents in our city involves a drunk driver.
5. Write in active voice.
Passive: It was agreed that the old software must be replaced.
Active: We agreed to replace the old software.

Marketing Communications in Tough Times

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enough to tell prospects that you raised traffic to their web site by X percent. You need to demonstrate concrete revenue or ROI improvement you expect your product to provide.

To maximize the effectiveness of your efforts, determine the ROI results most relevant to your target industry and demonstrate value according to those benchmarks. For example, one benefit of a billing application might be to reduce days sales outstanding (DSOs), which is a measure of the float in the billing cycle.

Remember to state how your results relate to the relevant standard. Simply declaring a 10 percent savings is meaningless unless it is described in the context of an alternative choice, such as an in-house solution or against your nearest competitor's solution.

By spelling out this value, you not only sell your products to IT, but you also help IT en-

hance its position with management. According to a report from the Giga Information Group, ("Measure Business Value Created by IT Spending to Fight Perceptions of Little Benefit," 6/2/00), few organizations are effective at calculating and communicating the benefits of their IT efforts. Doing so, however, can help IT organizations enhance their standing with business management, lead to better choices among potential IT initiatives, lead to better alignment of IT and business goals, and provide feedback so IT can improve itself over time.

By showing your IT customers how to calculate the ROI of using your products, you can, therefore, strengthen your relationship with them.

For more information on the major methodologies available for evaluating ROI, see "Value Made Visible," *CIO Magazine*, May 1, 2000 and "Measuring ROI in an E-Business economy,"

Itworld.com, April 26, 2001.

Ensure Credibility

Of course, some executives may be wary of numbers from vendors – so you need to gain their trust .

One way to establish your credibility when detailing the value of your solution is to account for all costs associated with it. For example, B2B solutions often require implementation costs – service, support, maintenance, and training – that can be fivefold the cost of the core offering. If your value model fails to address these requirements, it will not provide an accurate estimate of ROI.

You can also ask existing customers to speak for you. Customers can often provide detailed ROI numbers that prospects can then extrapolate to apply to their own situation. For products where it is difficult to quantify ROI, customers can spell out detailed qualitative results from the use of your sys-

tem in a far more credible way than you could yourself.

Detail Results

Once you've gathered all your documentation, explain your findings in-depth. Your marketing materials should include a carefully crafted description of the problem, how your company's products or services uniquely solve that problem, and the benefits of your company's offerings, along with all ROI calculations substantiating your value propositions.

Today's tough market requires companies to demonstrate the value of their products and services by providing a compelling business case, supported by solid research and analysis, bolstered by credible evidence in case studies, and presented in an in-depth fashion that customers can study and use to make the best purchase decision possible. ■

Services

<p>Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articles • Backgrounders • Brochures • Customer Stories • Data Sheets • Press Releases • Training CDs • Web Content • White Papers 	<p>Fees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hourly or by project • Call for a free estimate
<p>Editing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repurpose Existing Materials • Reorganize Content • Polish Text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hourly or by project • Call for a free estimate

Customers

Goldberg Communications' satisfied clients include Actuate, Adaptec, Adforce, Anderson Solone, Annuncio, Asera, Atomic Tangerine, BroadVision, Cadence, Ceon, Corio, eB2X, E.piphany, Everypath, Exodus, Inprise, Intraspact, Keynote, Lucent, Mercado, MindSteps, NEC Technologies, Oblix, ONE TOUCH, Oracle, PeopleSoft, PlaceWare, Ponte, Resonate, Siebel, Sterling Communications, Sun, Sybase, TAB, Troba, VeriSign, ViaNovus, Vitria, Zantaz.com, and Zone Labs.

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