

Tell the People What They Want

Creating a Sound Message

By Kirk Loudon

About the Author

Kirk Loudon is a partner at NextLevel Thinking, a marketing strategy firm that successfully blends emotion, education, and enablement into a marketing approach and framework for your organization that can be effectively communicated internally to your employees and externally to your current and potential customers.

Kirk is a veteran in the marketing and advertising business. He has been a creative force in the southwest market for over 18 years. He has worked in all areas of the business.

This is an example of a fictional story that is an amalgamation of a series of stories.

A blood center decided to create a television spot to help increase donations for their center...good idea right? Well it should have been. But it was not!

The spot was about a lovely couple. The husband had some type of illness and the wife would donate on his behalf. The announcer said that the wife had become a regular donor because of her husband.

So far so good, right? Here is where it went south.

The next line out of the announcer's mouth was "The husband is dead now but she still donates."...What?

That is what he said. So basically the message is "Give blood. It did not work for my family, but it might work for you." Don't you feel like jumping in your car to give blood right now? Well neither did I.

I am not blaming the blood center for trying. They had good intentions, but they really did not take into consideration what the donor, or potential donor, wants to hear.

I produced a similar spot where the wife lost her husband, but gave blood because of him. The approach was quite different. The spot was her talking about the importance of donating. In her words she said "If a donation can give you one more walk on the beach or one more kiss goodnight from a loved one, then what more could you ask for?"

Same story...different feeling. The idea here people, is to tap into the donor and make them feel like they can do something special. Make the donor feel empowered!

So how do you make a donor feel empowered? One word...emotion. Make them feel. What happens with most blood centers is that they get mired down in information overload, or miss the mark completely, with the wrong message. Like the dead guy in the first television spot.

Information overload is any spot that tries to tell you more than one thing. You can say other things in the spot, but the conversation needs to point to a singular message. Have a focal point. Gulf Coast Regional Blood Center has "Commit for Life." San Diego has "Make a Difference in Life." Austin Texas uses "Life is in Your Hands."

All of these not only get to the point of what the donor can do, but they have the unique position of saying, I do it to save lives. I know many organizations use "Give Blood Save Lives" but it is a bit over used and does it really speak to your specific donors?

Every market is a little different and the message needs to be developed in association with what your market is like. Some can be bolder than others. It depends on the personality of the marketplace. Some may seem softer if the audience just wants to be

asked nicely. The common thread through all sound messaging is “PUT THE ABILITY OF SAVING LIVES DIRECTLY ON THE DONOR.” The donor needs to feel needed, wanted, and rewarded. The reward being “I just saved a life.”

You can use recipients to deliver the message. This is a very effective way to tap the emotion we discussed earlier. Never feel that using guilt is a bad thing. If it moves the donor, then it is the right thing to do.

The last part of messaging is have the right words tied to the right imagery. So let’s ask a question... What would you like to see, the smiling face of a fellow donor with maybe the face of a life that you could have saved, or a tight shot of a huge needle sticking out of someone’s arm? Please say the smiling face!

The focus should be on what you want the donor to be thinking about. You do not want them to be thinking “Yikes that looks like it could hurt!” Take the procedure out of the equation and focus on the end results.

If you think this is off the mark as far as using emotion to reach people, just watch the ASPCA commercial with shots of sad animals while “In the arms of an angel” plays in the background.

Because of that spot I am looking to get a third dog! I guess it worked on me.