

SOMETHING TO SAY



Cold prospectors need something to say – and a reason to say it

It's not easy to sell to complete strangers. On a day-to-day basis there are few things as unsettling, and yet for the majority of agencies it's a vital function for growth. This piece is intended to provide some practical advice on making it as painless as possible. There are three issues to address: -

The Message

'We believe in the power of 'x' to transform your business'

We've observed that most agency offerings fall under one or more of the following propositional types. The more they mix, the more confused or diluted the messaging becomes and therefore less effective for the purposes of cut-through to cold prospects. They are: -

- *Niche* - a proposition tailored for a particular niche in the market – e.g. demographic or sector
- *Ethos* - a proposition based on a principle, attitude or set of beliefs
- *Structural* - a proposition based on how the offer is structurally delivered through the arrangement of account teams, divisions or method of interfacing with the client
- *Educating* - a proposition that educates, often via research-based insights and understanding
- *Process* – a process methodology
- *Multiple* - a mix of two or more of the above

The most effective messages feature a well-articulated, singular point from just one of the above categories. Consistently stating this point and ensuring it overarches all subsidiary messages allows for a reputation to be built around the fact that the agency brand stands for this point and does this better than anyone else. Living underneath this umbrella concept will no doubt be

a menu of niche offers, but these must amplify the context of the overall concept. It is often useful to display messaging architecture graphically so that staff can easily see the relationships between all of the offers being communicated.

Armed with clear and effective messaging built around the proposition(s), we now need to tailor its delivery to the individual prospect.

Relevancy

'We know the specifics of your business'

The stock, and so rather unimpressive, approach generally revolves around 'we've got great client experience in your sector' or something like that. However, more effective prospecting goes beyond this to use relevant business/market issues as levers to relate the agency offer to the target's agenda. It could be the regulatory climate, trading conditions, new technology, evolving demographics, competitor strategy; any of these might provide materials for viewpoints or opinion pieces on which to base initial contact.

A Reason

'Further to the article in the FT do you think 'x' will be a factor in how your organisation adapts to this issue?'

Prospects want to know you've taken a specific interest in them, that you're not trawling through a list. Building on the messaging and the relevancy considerations above, the last and most valuable component is information on the immediate issues the prospect is facing. So for something to say, nothing beats an informed approach based on current press reports. This tack enables more rapid engagement with prospects to uncover the real issues lurking beneath the headlines.

If you take on board the three points we've outlined here together, perhaps a cold call isn't as cold as you thought it was.