



## The Marketing Sin of Assumption.

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## Are You Committing the Marketing Sin of Assumption?

It's an ugly truth, but a truth nonetheless: Marketers are sinners. We're not talking lying or cheating or stealing or coveting here. We're talking about the sin of assumption. And many of us commit that sin on a regular basis, from assumptions about what to say to assumptions about how to say it.

### The Sin of Assumption

What is the sin of assumption? Assuming that visitors know why they're at your Web site, prospects know why they should read your brochure, recipients know why they should subscribe to your newsletter... basically, assuming that they care. They don't. So you can't. Sin, that is.

Whatever it is you're promoting, it's much more important to you as the marketer than it is to any prospect. So to communicate to that potential buyer, you must think like one.

Remember: They don't eat, breathe, sleep, and obsess over your widget, gadget, or webinar the way you do. They don't know anything about it.

As marketers, we work really hard to get people's attention, to be seen, heard, noticed in a crowded marketplace where our prospects suffer from an onslaught of marketing messages all day, every day. When we do get their attention, the worst thing we can do is assume. You know the old adage about the word "assume": It makes an "ass" out of "u" and "me"?

In this case, just you. Sorry.

### Examples of Sins

The sin of assumption is rampant among marketers, but these are some obvious examples:

- Assuming you can start selling your product or service right away without first setting the stage
- Assuming people will scroll down to see the important content on your homepage because you placed it "below the fold" so you could put that really cool graphic at the top
- Assuming people will know why they should stay at your homepage once they get there
- Assuming you don't need a targeted landing page for an email promotion or pay-per-click campaign



- Assuming it's OK to do the big "ask" rather than asking for a smaller yes first
- Assuming prospects won't mind getting your e-newsletter as a pdf attachment
- Assuming prospects will figure it out... whatever "it" is

### **A Classic and Pervasive Example**

Perhaps the most pervasive example of the sin of assumption is the email signup on a Web site.

Think about it: You're searching online, and you click through to a new Web site as part of your search. One of the first things you see is a box and the words "Sign up for our newsletter." You're supposed to just type in your email address, without ever being told why you should commit, or why you should agree to getting email communication from a company you've only just met.

This company assumes that you will hand over your email without knowing why or what benefit you'll get out of doing so. It's akin to asking you to buy something without telling you what it is, what it does, or what it costs. No, you're not handing over money, but you're handing over something just as valuable: your time.

### **How to Avoid Sinning**

Avoiding the sin of assumption is not hard. Just put yourself in your customer's shoes, state of mind, worldview, whatever it takes. Talk their talk. Talk to their concerns, not yours.

- ***Tell them why they should care right away***—If you sell mattresses, but all your prospects know is that they want to sleep better at night, don't talk about your mattresses first. That's assuming that they already know a mattress will fix their problem.
- ***Make it easy to get to the good stuff***—Put it right there front and centre, on your homepage, on your brochure, heck, even as a summary on the front page of your whitepaper. I once read a wonderful piece of advice on sales letters: Write your letter, then go back and remove the first paragraph because it's inevitably your "warm-up" paragraph, and gets in the way of getting to the point. That applies to so many pieces of marketing collateral. People are busy and would rather skip the warm-up the same way they skip Flash intros on a Web site.
- ***Remove any barriers***—Barriers cause friction and friction causes inertia and, no, I never took physics but I do know that when it comes to getting someone to part with their money... movement is good, friction is bad. If you assume they'll read the fine print, or get all the way to page 4, or even know why they should care, you're putting up barriers and making your prospect's task harder, not easier
- ***Deliver your message in a way that works for your audience***—Don't assume they'll be willing to slog through a 12-page booklet, dig for a single postcard in a pile of junk mail, or commit 30 minutes of their time for a webinar.





### **Clean Up Your Act**

When visitors land on your homepage or landing page, let them know right away why they are there and what they can expect to find or accomplish.

Instead of "Welcome to our Web site," it should be to the point: "Find rental properties here." Ditto for your print collateral: Make it clear why they should care, why they should pick up and scan the brochure.

Should the headline be a product name? Like "Presenting the XCB 300 series"? No. How about "Save 10% on your printing"? That tells me why I should care.

\* \* \*

If you as a marketer are assuming, you are turning people off. Their reaction will be to click the Back button, toss the brochure, delete the email... and your chance to start a dialog ends before it ever began.

Granted, the sin of assumption hasn't made the Vatican's list yet. But if you're a marketer, be a winner, not a sinner. Win your prospect's attention and maybe even their business because you took the time to determine what message and delivery would really work. As opposed to assuming... because even a trip to confessional won't undo the damage done.