

THE KNOW

Sausage
not the sizzle

Brought to you by
Thorne Widgery

How do you build your brand and your sales success on substance, not spin?

You'd be right to be sceptical or even 'roll-your-eyes-cynical' about the world of branding.

You'd be right because so much marketing money, time and effort gets wasted by too many businesses. Understandably the branding world is obsessed with marketing sizzle. But marketing sizzle just isn't enough.

Marketing sizzle – logo change, corporate colour change, website change and more – can all be for nothing if your core offer fails to appeal to your customers.

**So, how do you know if your core offer is strong enough?
How do you know you're spending your marketing
money, time and effort wisely?**



Top Tip

**Here's a proven
solution for you...**

To live up to your marketing sizzle make your product or service both relevant to your customers AND different to your competition.

**If you don't, all the
marketing sizzle in the
world won't help you.**

Here's why it doesn't work

At some point over the summer you'll hear the sizzle of sausages on the barbeque. The sizzle and the smell make your mouth water for the taste of sausages (apologies if you're a vegetarian, but this marketing metaphor is stronger than a tofu burger).

If the sausages taste good you'll go back for 'seconds' and you'll recommend others to try them too.

If the sausages don't taste as good as the promise of the sizzle, you won't go back for more. You'll avoid recommending them too. You might even suggest people give the sausages a miss!

**A question might be:
"Never mind the sizzle,
where's the sausage?"**

It follows that your product or service must live up to your marketing sizzle too. It might be stating the blindingly obvious, but rarely do businesses spend enough time, effort and money on making their products and services distinctive or relevant enough.

In a nutshell

Invest time, effort and money in developing your core offer before you invest it in marketing sizzle.

**Your marketing
sizzle just isn't
enough...**

Marketing 'sizzle' is the work you do to bring your offer to the attention of your customers. It could be Facebook adverts, email marketing, public relations, exhibitions or an iPhone app.

**Marketing sizzle gets all
the marketing attention.**

**Marketing sizzle gets all
the marketing money.**

**But marketing sizzle so
often just doesn't work.**

A small London interior designer shows the way...

This London interior designer is almost overrun with competitors on nearly every street.

She believes a new logo and new website will be the solution (sizzle).

But what use will a new logo be? Or a new website, a new brand colour, a new Facebook page or a new-improved twitter feed? These won't help her sell more stuff.

Yes, her marketing message will look better and sound better. Her marketing sizzle will be stronger. But her core interior design offer (the sausage) remains the same as every other competitor.

What if she could make her business stand out from all the other interior designers?

A simple first step...

Some simple customer research reveals two key issues for buyers of interior design services:

- 1 Home owners worry about interior designers imposing their views/ ideas, rather than helping them express their own ideas
- 2 The cost and time needed to use an interior designer is believed to be excessive

Our interior designer could use marketing sizzle to persuade customers not to worry about these two issues.

Or our interior designer could work on changing her offer so that it obviously, tangibly, visibly makes these two customer concerns disappear.

Work on your core offer...

Our interior designer tested the idea of 'interior design coaching'.

Half-day design sessions to inspire and guide people on how to tackle their interior design project or problem. Not something her competitors were doing.

Each coaching session had a fixed fee and a fixed time frame. Each coaching session was designed to be affordable and easy to say yes to, especially for people serious about decorating a room.

It was also a great way to get to know the interior designer, learn to trust her judgement and decide whether to get her involved.

...then the results show up

Some coaching clients went on to decorate their own room (some bought materials from our designer, some didn't). Others decided to ask our designer to take the project on for them.

Our interior designer went on to double her fee income. Fee income doubled not because of a better website or logo (sizzle).

Fee income doubled because she invested time, effort and energy in creating a stronger core offer. A core offer that was directly relevant to the needs and concerns of interior design buyers. This also helped her stand out from her competition.

Simple steps make all the difference...

Our interior design achieved insight by asking customers what bothered them about using an interior designer.

She then explored ideas that could improve her core offer.

She then tested her core offer to see if it would work. 100% more income suggests it definitely worked!

100%

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The Persil difference...

Persil, along with most other brands of washing powder, traditionally boasted about the severity of stains they could remove from clothes. They all spent a fortune telling us, too.

But David Arkwright, former global brand director for Unilever's laundry business instigated some research (like the interior designer).

"We spoke one-on-one with consumers the world over, by asking... "Why is that important?"

David and his team found an insight that crossed national borders.

"We began to find that there was indeed a deep connection available, via the deep insight that 'If you are not free to get dirty, you cannot experience life and grow'."

Then they explored ways of expressing their core offer – 'dirt is good' they...

"...identified painting as the first experience platform for the 'Dirt is good' ritual and instigated painting competitions from Pakistan to Brazil... Later, our story moved to new areas of brand ritual - most notably sport. The indelible connection between playing sport and getting dirty was formed."

Persil is now one of Unilever's biggest brands with global sales of more than \$3billion.

Success came because Persil created a core offer distinct from their competitors and one that resonated with their buyers too:

"Now, the narrative is that dirt equates to creativity; and parents aspire to have creative, free-thinking and playing kids, as opposed to those locked into pristine-clean conformity."



Dirt equates to creativity.

Time to disagree

"We are too busy doing what needs to be done every day and every week to start researching customer concerns."

You're right, research is anything but an urgent job.

And whilst you're happy with your business results, why bother?

But if the return on investment you get from your marketing dwindles, or if the results of your business frustrate you, you should rethink your business or product's core offer. Start with questions.

How much time and effort is required to ask a question or two, the next time you're with a customer?

Why not keep it simple just like the interior designer did and seek some insight from customers or prospects about their thoughts, feelings and experiences of working with you and your competitors?

"It's easy to talk about 'customer relevance' and 'distinctiveness' but isn't every business looking for the same?"

Yes, you can argue that customer relevance and competitor distinctiveness is the holy grail of marketing. And everyone is after it.

However, most businesses are busy obsessing about the sizzle and not the sausage. They're mostly focused on their website style or their iPhone app or their advertising or their next exhibition.

Your job is to improve your core offer. Improve your core offer so that it rings true with you and your people and of course rings true with your customers too.

"It can't be as simple as asking customers about their concerns can it?"

Asking well-crafted questions helped the interior designer and helped Persil. Both were able to achieve insight into what might work well with their customers and gain a competitive edge.

The interior designer asked some easy, simple questions:

- 1 'What is it that worries or concerns you about working with an interior designer?'
- 2 'What would a designer have to do for you to use them on your next room project?'
- 3 'What has stopped you using an interior designer in the past?'

You can do the same. You too can identify a competitive advantage by asking smart questions of your customers.

Creating your own questions that relate to your business, your product and your service can uncover your customer issues. In solving these issues, you'll find the power of a strong distinctive core offer.

Tell me more...

David J.Taylor runs a branding business called Brand Gym (www.thebrandgym.com) David's approach is all about practical workouts to help you grow your business.

"This is not about buzzwords and bull**. It's about helping making your business more effective at SMS (selling more stuff)."**

– David J.Taylor, author of 'Never mind the sizzle... Where's the sausage?'

It's David's practical, no nonsense approach to brand building that we like, which is why we have no hesitation in recommending his book. It's packed full of practical tips, tricks and tools that reveal how to cut through the bull and buzzwords of branding. It's crammed with great examples and stories to inspire you too.

You can contact David directly via david@thebrandgym.com



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Support

Supporting tools for this edition of The Know are available on businessbitesize.com/thorne_widgey

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Four in The Know tips for you...

When your marketing activity no longer delivers the results you want, or you're about to commit more time, money and effort in new marketing, it pays to consider WTS - 'Where's The Sausage?'

Too often we get consumed by improving our marketing sizzle. This then acts as a distraction from resolving the specific concerns or frustrations of our customers.

Here are four In The Know tips so you can put WTS to work for your business and sell more stuff:

- 1** Create a list of well-crafted questions you can ask your customers or prospects about their 'concerns'
- 2** Ask a selection of customers/prospects the one or two questions you think will work best
- 3** Summarise what you learn from the answers
- 4** Build a core offer that meets the concerns you discover and test how well customers respond to it

Ultimate argument:

"How will I know I have a strong enough core offer for me and my business?"

Only when you ask customers and prospects questions about their frustrations, difficulties and concerns will you know if you're onto something.

But rather than just marketing what you've got, it pays to go looking for a stronger core offer.

STOP focusing only on the marketing sizzle of promoting what you do for customers.

START seeking a stronger, more relevant and distinctive core offer for your products and services.

Your next steps:

A core message that answers or resolves the concerns, difficulties and frustrations of your customers can make your marketing work better.

Why invest in marketing sizzle if your core message isn't strong enough?

Start by asking your customers for their experiences

- What stops customers buying more of what you offer?
- What would you have to do, for customers to use your service more often?

The answers to these questions or other well-crafted questions for your business, should influence your core message.

'Never mind the sizzle, where's the sausage?' helps you focus on your core message...

Make your core offer stronger and you'll...

- Make your business more relevant to your customers
- Make your offer distinctive from your competition
- Increase the success of your marketing sizzle too

1 Seek Insight

Ask your customers and other stakeholders; get close to your customers' experience – look back at what made you succeed in your early years and investigate what other non-competing companies do well with your customer audience.

2 Generate Ideas

From these insights, generate a variety of ideas that will help you make your core offer more relevant and more distinctive.

3 Explore Possibilities

When you have a stronger core offer idea, it's time to explore how you can use it. Make time to test your ideas to see if they work with your customers.

4 Take Action

With a strong, relevant and distinctive core offer worked out, it's time to roll it out. You want your core offer to be consistent across your business.



Ensure your core offer is consistent.



Test your ideas to see if they work.