



By Richard D. Czerniawski

## **SAY WHAT YOU MEAN AND MEAN WHAT YOU SAY**

When developing the strategic messaging for your business or brand, it is essential to say what you mean and mean what you say. You might say, "certainly." But few marketers do it.

I'm referring to the Creative Brief, which, unfortunately, is, generally speaking, anything but brief! Specifically, I'm reeling against the type and number of unessential elements that one might find in the marketer's Creative Brief.

When it comes down to it, many elements in Creative Briefs are not essential. Instead of enlightening the agency's creative team and briefing the client on where to focus, they obfuscate the message and/or fail to establish single-minded direction.

I've written about The Essential Creative Brief on many occasions. You can find a series of articles on this topic here: <http://bdn-intl.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Developing-a-More-Productive-Creative-Brief.pdf>

Okay, so what's next? How about the Brand Communications (or Messaging or Copy) Strategy? It's the center of the plate in "The Essential Creative Brief" and should be, for that matter, any Creative Brief. It contains the following elements: Target Customer Profile, Communication Behavior Objective, Key Thought, and, finally, Reason(s)-To-Believe.

The Key Thought is what you must put in your prospective customer's head to trigger the behavior you seek from her/him. It doesn't matter whether your prospective target customer is a consumer, health care professional, CFO, whatever! Nor does it matter which sector we are marketing to or where in the world we are marketing.

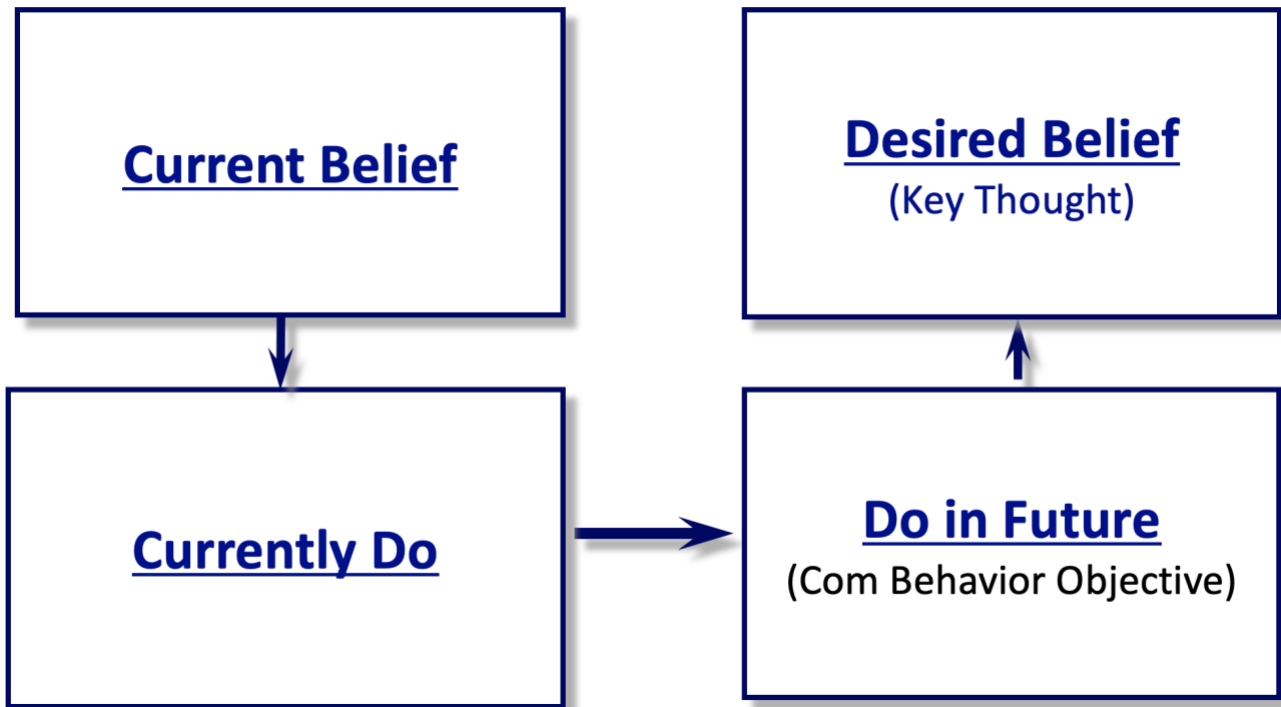
We need to discover the Key Thought to motivate the behavior, which, in turn, registers the sale. It's that simple!

At Brand Development Network International, we have used and counseled clients that there are three ways to get to the Key Thought. The first is to address those Target Customer dissatisfactions that your brand can satisfy. This is relatively easy.

The second is to capitalize on a "legitimate and productive" customer insight. While many senior managers insist on this approach, this is rather difficult for the vast majority of marketers and their

organizations. They confuse "unsights" with insights. It results in GIGO—Garbage In, Garbage Out.

The third way, which we encourage marketers to use is The Box Plan shown here:



It works this way:

First, identify the Target Customer you are addressing with your messaging.

Second, ferret out her/his current thinking, which explains step 3, their behavior.

Third, list the behavior you need to change (what or how are they using a competitor or your brand?).

Fourth, identify the Target Customer Behavior you seek and need to grow your brand. Make it SMART!

Fifth, solve for the Key Thought—what you must put into her/his head to achieve your Target Customer Communication Behavior Objective.

Now, many of our clients use The Box Plan. They like it and find it effective in focusing all concerned on the one thing they must communicate to achieve the Communication Behavior Objective. However, this is a BIG "HOWEVER," there are those that muck it up, going from single-minded to multi-focal.

Specifically, they add other elements to The Box Plan or their version of a Creative Brief that conflict with the Key Thought. They add "Proposition," or "Focus of Sale," or "Key Customer Takeaway," or "Brand Promise," etc. Excuse me for saying this, but "this is dumb!"

The Key Thought is your "Proposition," "Focus of Sale," "Key Customer Takeaway," and Brand Promise. Adding any of these to The Box Plan or your Creative Brief will wreck-havoc. Neither

agency nor client will have a focus as to what needs to be communicated to the Target Customer to win their business by stimulating the Communication Behavior Objective.

So, if you want to provide strategically appropriate, single-minded messaging and improve the likelihood that you will generate high-impact messaging, then:

1. Adopt The Essential Creative Brief; and
2. If you use The Box Plan, don't add anything else to it! Say what you mean and mean what you say.

Two final thoughts: 1) Should you choose to use The Box Plan, you don't have to label that last box "Key Thought." Call it whatever you like or whatever label your organization and agency are comfortable with using. Just make sure that whatever you put in that box will lead to achieving the Communication Behavior Objective. 2) The agency's job is not to pick up the strategic language you use but to translate it into compelling customer language. That's not your job.

**“NINETY-NINE PERCENT OF ADVERTISING DOESN'T SELL MUCH OF ANYTHING.”** David Ogilvy

*Is your advertising among the ninety-nine percent?* Read Chapter 9, Brand Communications that Suck, in **AVOIDING CRITICAL MARKETING ERRORS: How to Go from Dumb to Smart Marketing**. It will identify those critical errors and, importantly, point the way to developing advertising in the Top 1%. Learn more here: <http://bdn-intl.com/avoiding-critical-marketing-errors>

Peace and best wishes,

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