



# Market Leader or Cliché?

Communicate Differentiation at Every Opportunity

*ingenuity*  
MARKETING GROUP

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Terms like “excellent service” and “trust” and “value” have lost their meaning after years of cliché marketing and branding efforts.

With 60-80% of research happening before your prospective customers reach out to you, you need to stand out in all your marketing efforts. How do you go beyond what prospective customers assume is true of all quality technology companies?



Often people think of “brand” as a logo or a tagline, but it’s really the entire customer experience – and is often evoked by a collection of images and ideas. Your differentiators are your brand and they need to include your company’s values and why customers need you.

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*\$183 billion—or 34%—of Apple’s overall \$623 billion value is ascribed to the intangible contribution of “brand” to its valuation.*

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Talk to current and prospective customers. Ask:

- If you’ve worked with other companies, how are we different?
- Why do you stay with us?
- What could make you choose another company?
- What problems do you have that, if we solved it, would have you choose us in a heartbeat?
- If you were recommending us to a friend, what would you say?

Listen for commonalities and cross-reference these with your internal values. Err on the side of your customers’ language.

When you have a few key themes that stand out in terms of your customers, prospects and internal culture, you’re not done! The next step is to put these in language that appeals to your audiences ...



## Worksheet: Emotional Brand Words

Below are pairs of words that are not exact opposites but convey different emotional meanings. Circle the ones that stand out to you and have others inside the company do the same. This will help you narrow in on the emotional aspects of your brand. Then give the words you've selected to your interviewers and have them listen for similarities and differences.

Optimistic / Realistic  
 Friendly / Confident  
 Excitement / Serenity  
 Wise / Creative  
 Strong / Peaceful  
 Balanced / Enthusiastic  
 Surprising / Dependable  
 Inspiring / Reliable  
 Down-to-earth / Vibrant  
 Easy-going / Cheerful  
 Innovative / Comfortable  
 Trendy / Traditional  
 Smart / Compassionate  
 Genuine / Driven  
 Established / Futuristic  
 Professional / Casual  
 Playful / Serious  
 Accessible / High-end  
 Effortless / Precise  
 Adventurous / Geeky  
 Passionate / Elegant  
 Protective / Courageous  
 Flexible / Formal

You can go through more than one iteration with these words, adding words that come up in customer and prospect interviews.

These words are not meant to go verbatim into your brand messages (unless you fall in love with one). They create the tone of your messages.

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*“IBM’s CMO Insights Study, Stepping Up to the Challenge, states, “Enterprises with a deep understanding of their customers are 60% more likely to be financial outperformers.”*

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Prepare messages for your target audiences. You have a limited number of distinct audiences, usually two to five.

If you have not done customers interviews yet, you need to do them or hire an outside firm to do them!

“ ... we found that buyers would open up to us, revealing the trials, traumas, and triumphs of decisions that, had they gone awry, would have resulted in huge losses for their companies or personal reputations. **We were amazed that the people we talked to didn’t want the interview to end, and that when we finally concluded they often thanked us profusely, as if we had done them a favor.**” – Adele Ravella, *Buyer Personas*

You’re listening not only for what makes you different but for the exact language your customers use to describe these differences. You may find that the same emotional ideal, for example “smart,” is expressed differently by small business compared to large corporations.

### 3) Problem-Solve For Your Audience

*“Have you noticed that sometimes you can glance at a site ... and instantly know that it will not be helpful? ... It’s not a coincidence when it feels like a company’s marketing message and content was created especially for you. It means a marketer somewhere did his or her job well.”*

- David Meerman Scott, author of *The New Rules of Marketing & PR*

You solve problems by:

- Answering their questions
- Getting them the information they need to make a decision about working with you

Too often companies talk all about their products or services too early in the buying cycle and then make their websites too complex to navigate when a customer is ready to buy.

Use search engine optimization tools to find out what kinds of questions your audiences are asking. You can use Adwords (<https://adwords.google.com/KeywordPlanner>) to find out what people are searching for, which helps you see topics you can write about to provide help to your audiences.

Save all Search terms (3) 1 - 3 of 3		
Keyword	▲ Competition	Local Monthly Searches ?
<input type="checkbox"/> cash flow small business ▾	High	1,300
<input type="checkbox"/> small business finance ▾	High	9,900
<input type="checkbox"/> small business accounting ▾	High	40,500

  

Save all Keyword ideas (100) 1 - 50 of 100		
Keyword	▲ Competition	Local Monthly Searches ?
<input type="checkbox"/> indirect cash flow ▾	Low	14,800
<input type="checkbox"/> cash flow from operations ▾	Low	14,800
<input type="checkbox"/> cash conversion cycle ▾	Low	8,100
<input type="checkbox"/> cash flow reporting ▾	Low	2,400
<input type="checkbox"/> cashflows ▾	Low	90,500
<input type="checkbox"/> net cash flow ▾	Low	27,100
<input type="checkbox"/> operating cash flow ▾	Low	74,000
<input type="checkbox"/> cash flow definition ▾	Low	8,100
<input type="checkbox"/> definition of cash flow ▾	Low	8,100
<input type="checkbox"/> cash equivalent ▾	Low	9,900
<input type="checkbox"/> project cash flow ▾	Low	18,100

If you’re as helpful and authoritative as you can be to your online visitors, you will also be doing well for search engine optimization. You can also use the phrases you found online and the questions you’ve discovered in your print materials.

Your voice is not:

- In French ... “we, we, we”
- Highly formal
- Abstract
- Overly wordy
- Full of jargon and buzzwords



Go through your content online and in print and take out all of these. You'll find a checklist in this section to help you.

Here are some examples of the kind of content you want to remove or radically change:

“Since 1972, [name] has been a trusted advisor and premier provider of specialized technology and consulting solutions.”

“We provide strategic, outside the box solutions through our thought-leading, visionary gurus.”

“High-quality services with a personal touch ... Our professionals are capable of providing these services to a variety of industries and are experts in their fields.”

### Remove the junk works checklist:

#### Everybody says:

- Trusted Advisor/Trust
- Excellence
- Service
- Value / add value
- Quality
- Big enough to X, small enough to Y
- People not numbers / more than numbers / etc.
- Long-term relationships

#### Avoid buzzwords:

- Leading/Leader
- Innovative/Innovation
- Solution
- Out of the box
- Unique
- Effective
- Best
- Top
- Great

From strangers to visitors to prospects to customers, people have different needs at different stages in their relationship with your company.

Think about the questions they have when they're just starting to look compared to when they're choosing you from a very small pool of others.

### Match offers to buying stages

- Early: Guides and articles
- Middle: E-books, email sign-ups
- Sales-ready: Call us today for a free assessment

### According to HubSpot, these are some of the most high value formats in order of highest performing for lead generation:

- E-books or guides
- Templates or presentations
- Research and reports (ex: State of \_\_\_\_\_)
- Whitepapers
- Kits (multiple offers packaged together)
- Live webinars
- On-demand videos
- Blog (including offers in the nav or sidebar)
- Blog posts (if there is a CTA in the post)

### Not all of your content has to be high value (and therefore time-consuming to create); don't forget:

- Tip sheets/checklists
- Infographics
- Short videos
- Fun visual content such as memes and cartoons
- Slideshows
- Podcasts

## 6) Use client quotes and stories

Customer quotes can be a great way to talk about your services in a straightforward way. When doing interviews or hiring a company to do them, have the interviewer ask the customer if they'd be willing to give a testimonial. Let them know they'll have a chance to approve their testimonial.

Consider using a combination of short, emotional quotes and longer stories.



*A survey of B2B buyers conducted by DemandGen Report found that 82 percent of senior executives said that content was a significant driver of their buying decisions.*

Use tools that allow you to track how your content is being consumed and shared.

**Track:**

1. Consumption
2. Sharing
3. Lead generation
4. Sales

Set up Google searches to see how people are talking about your company and about the topics you're interested in.

When you see which topics get the most shares, which web pages have the highest time on page, which resources are being downloaded the most – create more content on those topics.

Keep talking to prospects and clients offline. Often you'll get ideas for new content from these conversations.

Make sure everyone involved in business development knows what content is available to them and who to tell if they come across a great idea for a new content piece.



1. Review cycles are too long and involve too many people so that content is released when it's no longer relevant.
2. Subject matter experts try to create their own content and get bogged down rather than relying on content experts.
3. Marketing releases great content and business development isn't paying attention and leveraging it.
4. Business development personnel fail to tell marketing the kinds of content they really need.



Consistency helps you cut through the noise. Make sure your company is aligned about your brand promises in the following places:

- Spoken use
- Your website
- Social media
- Advertising
- Speaking
- Articles
- Tradeshows & conferences

Appoint one or two key people in your company to monitor the consistency of your brand across all of your channels.



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