



Search

[Home](#) >> [Courses](#) >> [Content](#) >> Crafting The Message

Courses

- > [Content](#)
- > [Delivery](#)
- > [Visual Aids](#)
- > [Tutorials](#)
- > [Archive](#)
- > [Contributors](#)

Good Content - Dead on Arrival

By Jim Endicott, Owner/Manager of Distinction Communication



The brochure hit my desktop at an opportune time. Being a small business owner, I always get a little steamed about the cost of health insurance coverage for myself and team members. Every year the premiums seem to soar well beyond the CPI, so this particular mailing caught me at a good time. The cover page simply said, "STOP. Take 5 Minutes and Save Big \$\$." Ok, I'm into that so I continued to read on. "Freedom to choose any doctor" was the next claim. I liked that idea too. I'm no fan of going through some HMO's catalog and having to choose between a doctor in the next county or a local who might be able to `squeeze me in' in July. "Plan Pays 100%" was the next claim. "24-hour worldwide coverage on or off the job". The third and forth pages went on to provide some pretty attractive rates but I had already decided I wasn't going to bite on this one. Why? Packaging and perception.

The content said all the right things. It pushed nearly every button I have about health insurance coverage but something was very wrong about this offer. The delivery mechanism was a blue, tri-fold photocopied flyer. The fonts were sometimes big and horsey. Other times they were small and nearly illegible while font type and style seem to change almost at will. Large fat underlines were used to draw my attention to "important" information and to top it all off, cute clipart art was sprinkled around the piece like confetti. Let's see, I'm suppose to write thousands of dollars in healthcare checks to a company that looks like it's being run out of someone's garage? Seems ridiculous doesn't it but every day in America presenters expect no less, in fact, even more when they use second-rate PowerPoint presentations to communicate their critical business messages. So, what's wrong with this picture? Everything.

I'm sure the person who sent me the flyer was working on a small budget. A three or four-color brochure was simply out of the question so they used the software (and talent) that was most handy. It was easy. It was quick. And most importantly, it was cheap. (Sound familiar?) I'm sure someone will pick up the phone and call as a result of this flyer but the fish that will bite on these types of solicitations will be small at best and sometimes not even "keepers". The bigger deals will always somehow elude this healthcare broker. You see, the perceptions we create with our communication tools determine the playing field where we will compete. It's simply the way the world works and presenters will find it increasingly difficult to close the bigger opportunities without a serious refinement of their presentation processes. All is not hopeless however. If you want to step up the quality of your presentations, here are some keys to better content and imagery to help you land the larger opportunities.

1. **Look at your presentations through your audience's eyes**

This does not come very naturally for many but step back and apply some objectivity. Will the overall caliber of the message and content appeal to a company larger than your own? To compete at the next level, you need to understand the types of communication tools that are used to sell and communicate at that level. Their mailboxes and emails are peppered with companies vying for their attention. Go to those target companies and look at the quality of their own brochures and catalogs. Look at their annual reports if they are a publicly held company. What do you see? This will clearly help you gauge the level of the competitive playing field you aspire to. You will rarely if ever get an opportunity to play there unless you elevate the caliber of communication to their level and that starts with your presentations - message, graphics and delivery all working in concert to create the right impressions.

2. **Consistency and continuity are critical**

One of the largest flags we have to substandard marketing or creative elements is the designer's attention to ensuring basic design rules are followed. That means that there is a consistent and appropriate look no matter how many people contributed to the effort. Standardize the use of font types, styles, sizes, capitalization and graphical treatments. Need a benchmark for your creative effort? You need not look any further than the brochure in the racks in the lobbies of those who will be in attendance at your presentation. I guarantee you won't find a mish mash of styles treatments and graphics. If you can, create a presentation template specifically with your company in mind. Use a clean logo and sanctioned corporate colors and imagery. Templates don't make good presentations, people do. Although you may be tempted to use "fun" clipart, don't do it.

Some of you may be thinking this is an apples and oranges comparison but good layout and design is good layout and design no matter what medium you choose. The propensity to relegate presentations to orphan child status in business communications is responsible for millions of dollars in lost opportunities every year. How much can you afford to give up?

I wonder if the person with the blue flyer had spent even a thousand dollars on design and printing, how much more dramatic would the response have been? How many larger companies would have responded to the great offer? (They might have even got a call out of me.) Although I'm a relatively small company, I constantly compete and create opportunities to work with some of the most prestigious and fastest growing companies in America. Sometimes they're Fortune 500 class and other times they're much smaller, but they all have something in common. They believed that the quality of the presentation tools I use to communicate important information about my business is a reflection of the caliber of the work I would bring to bear on their behalf. It's a simple correlation but an important one. What are your presentations telling your customers about you?

Learn more about [Jim Endicott and Distinction Communication](#) in our Contributors section.

[Back](#)