

Native Advertising and other tall, tempting tales

 By Chris Moerdyk: @chrismoerdyk

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One of the most successful creative strategies ever conceived by the global marketing industry involves breathtakingly enticing buzzwords more often than not describing something that's been around for ages but making it sound as though it was not only invented yesterday but a new, improved, magic elixir to sickly sales and bilious brands.

The latest buzzword is "Native Advertising" but it seems the global ad industry has been tripped up this time round because there is now a huge amount of confusion about what it actually means. Well, put it this way, the bloke who was credited with inventing the term was not aware of the fact that he invented anything but very quickly decided to capitalise on his lucky break and started evangelising the concept.

Contrived confusion

I won't go into detail about Native Advertising here but you can read all about the confusion in an excellent article written by Todd Wasserman on Mashable.com <http://mashable.com/2012/09/25/native-advertising/>.

The point I want to make though, is that the days of being able to impress people with novel jargon, are waning.

Mainly because the people who make big marketing and advertising decisions nowadays - and by decisions I mean how much money to plough into budgets, are boards of directors - accountants, CEO's, COO's and financial directors.

Gone are the days when techno/financially inclined members of boards just poured another cup of coffee and chomped into a brand muffin when the marketing director was presenting his annual budget, because they didn't really understand what he was saying and just hoped like hell that the money he was spending was actually doing something.

Today, however, budgets have become so big that the number crunchers want to know precisely how marketing budgets are being invested and more importantly what return on investment they can expect.

The measure of marketing

And more and more of them are finding out that when a marketing director comes up with the old line about advertising not really being able to be measured, he is talking absolute crap and that measurement is not only possible but essential.

Interestingly enough though, it would be churlish of me to put too much blame for the invention of new buzzwords on the advertising industry. Chatting to the CEO of an agency last week, I was told that quite often it is the relatively unskilled

brand manager on client-side who reads up all about new-fangled notions on some whacko website or other and then gets so carried away and obsessed that the agency has no option but to join in.

Some years ago I chatted to Professor Roger Sinclair, then head of the faculty of marketing at Wits and now one of the world's leading brand valuers, about the option of translating marketing-speak into boardroom-speak with the sole purpose of ensuring that accountants, lawyers and technical directors would all understand what marketing was all about.

Speaking in tongues

For the past 10 years we have both claimed to be too busy to attempt such an undertaking, but the fact remains that it is becoming increasingly necessary. Not the translation but rather the ability to speak to non-marketing directors in a language they understand.

I have found that when one uses boardroom speak rather than marketing buzzwords, financial directors particularly, very quickly grasp the concept of marketing as being something that does not involve magic but rather a process of measurement, checks and balances to reduce the investment risk and determine an accurate return on funds employed.

There was a time that the marketing industry and particularly its advertising component, expected the rest of the world to get used to speaking their language or just trust them. Nowadays its precisely the other way round.

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Apart from being a corporate marketing analyst, advisor and media commentator, Chris Moerdyk is a former chairman of Bizcommunity. He was head of strategic planning and public affairs for BMW South Africa and spent 16 years in the creative and client service departments of ad agencies, ending up as resident director of Lindsay Smithers-FCB in KwaZulu-Natal. Email Chris on moerdyk@gmail.com and follow him on Twitter at [@chrismoerdyk](https://twitter.com/chrismoerdyk).

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