

Recruitment advertising is not doing the job



By [Robert Reddick](#)

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Most employers are not getting the quality they deserve from their recruitment advertising these days.

Take a new look at mainstream advertising in the print media for products and services like insurance, baked beans, houses, holidays, clothing, cars, cell phones, furniture, toothpaste, etc.

Yes, they are extremely focused.

Employing either a hard or a soft-sell approach, they are aimed directly at the target audience in an all-out effort to persuade both existing and potential customers to get out there and buy whatever it is they're selling.

Yes, they talk directly to you, the all-important customer, clearly and concisely explaining what is so special about their particular product or service, thus giving you a really good reason for parting with your hard-earned cash.

Now take a new, really close look at the current crop of recruitment advertisements in the print media. Note how the vast majority of them, large or small, look like nothing more than bulletin boards, unfriendly shopping lists or, at very best, vacancy announcements. Announcements that, in order to flag down the target audience, often employ in-house (ie: unfamiliar), inaccurate, vague or ambiguous job titles and headlines. These are sometimes followed by subheadings including pointless puns, empty promises and other 'padding' like totally irrelevant but expensive pictures, fancy graphic devices, etc.

Worse is the fact that the same applies even more to adverts appearing in the social media and online.

An advert's primary objective is to...

Somewhere along the line, then, a lot of major employers and their ad agencies have, in an effort to minimise costs, conveniently forgotten that the primary objective of an advertisement is to actually *sell* something to somebody - just like mainstream advertising does!

Here the only difference is that it takes a whole lot more to persuade someone to change their very way of life than their brand of toothpaste!

Too many of today's job adverts, if they concentrate on anything positive at all, focus on pushing the so-called employer brand instead of meeting - or even acknowledging - the hopes, desires and aspirations of the audiences they are designed

to target.

I call it a 'so-called employer brand' because the one being promoted by a given employer is less likely to accurately describe the reality of its work environment and more likely to be little more than the 'perception' of its marketing and public relations departments. As a consequence, it will have little or no bearing whatsoever on the needs of the all-important high potential, high performance target audience being sought!

Work harder - and improve the quality

Today's recruitment advertising, therefore, has just got to work a whole lot harder.

Again, like their mainstream cousins, they must seriously *sell* what they have to offer the target audience with real promises such as raw challenge, ground-breaking projects, high job fulfilment, improved remuneration, positive career prospects, a better working and/or living environment, an outstanding benefits package, opportunities for overseas travel, career-enhancing training or whatever.

Promises that *must* be substantiated by hard facts right there and then in the advert!

It's high time the announcement-style job advert or vacancy bulletin was committed to File 13. South Africa's recruitment advertising must go back to its roots in the mid-1970s when the applicant reaching for whatever dream it was s/he was reaching for was given first place, while the employer promising to help them reach that dream came in second.

It's high time the quality and style of English copy in those adverts was drastically improved, because most of what I see today looks like it was written and approved by people whose first language certainly isn't English.

It's high time job advertising started behaving like its bigger cousin again - if not in terms of spend, size and quantity - then in terms of quality above all else.

Sadly, right now I can count the number of 'specialist' recruitment advertising agencies putting quality first only too easily on just one hand.

ABOUT ROBERT REDDICK

Robert Reddick, an independent recruitment communications consultant with over 40 years experience of the industry gained both here and in the UK, was the co-founder of South Africa's first full-service recruitment ad agency, the genesis of what is today JSE-listed Adcorp.
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