

To be or not to be...

 By [Jan Sleet](#)

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...taken seriously? That is the question. It should be easier than ever to get your brand message 'out there' as the Internet, blogs, social media and the like, become more accessible.

Once the realm of the young, switched-on crowd and nerds/geeks, even the most staid companies have begun to realise the potential marketing opportunities.

Cover the basics

Big bucks are lavished on interactive websites, lavish campaigns using QR codes, Facebook pages and Twitter feeds. Companies spend fortunes designing expensive packaging, locations and consumer experiences for their products.

But how come so many forget the basics? How can you expect to be taken seriously when you launch a website with simple spelling mistakes? What about a 'news' feed that contradicts your website's front page? A slogan or brand catchphrase that doesn't make any sense?

Stop! The old adage 'Back to basics' is what's needed now.

Use a proofreading service to make sure you have covered the basics:

- correct spellings
- correct grammar
- correct language

Targeting your audience

In a country like South Africa with our multitude of languages, what passes as 'ok' colloquially is often not acceptable when written. Your website is visible around the world. And many companies are targeting overseas customers.

Is the style of your writing in keeping with the rest of your brand? A casual style, peppered with 'slang' may be right for a young, hip brand, but not for companies appealing to the luxury market or the older generation.

Is your message consistent?

A visit to my local supermarket this weekend proves my point. Numerous spelling mistakes made labels farcical. A poster on

the wall declared that they are "inspired to get it right". Do I believe their claim? Do I notice their in-store promotions? Do I feel inspired to return?

From third world to first world

A friend commented that I was taking it all too seriously and that I must remember, "This is Africa, after all".

We are paying the same (if not higher prices) as First World countries for our groceries, books, the Internet and telecommunications. If we need, and are paying for these things, then shoddy products, service and image cannot be acceptable. If South Africa wants to do business with the rest of the world and be taken seriously, it is time to lose the 'Third World' excuse.

Yes, we are a developing country but it's time for South Africans to help themselves - take business seriously and the rest of the world will listen.

ABOUT JAN SLEET

Owner at Sleet Consultancy - Marketing Solutions. Jan worked for blue chip companies in the UK for 15 years including British Airways, HSBC and BASF, and has a wide variety of experience in finance, customer relations and marketing. She has been in South Africa since 2006 working on consumer interaction enhancement primarily within the wine industry.

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