

Adams Jette

marketing + communications

Compelling ideas. Remarkable results.

28

Hints and How-tos

Guaranteed to Improve Your Marketing

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Introduction

At Adams Jette, we are constantly thinking about marketing and how we can help our clients get more people to buy—or buy in—to whatever it is they are selling. And often, in an effort to make that information available to our clients, that thinking turns into writing. Sometimes these articles show up on our website, sometimes in our newsletters and sometimes in national magazines or newsletters.

To better serve you, our client—and if you're not yet our client, you should be!—we have collected the articles and put them all in one place.

BE WARNED: At Adams Jette, we are not bound by convention. Why? Because convention doesn't always work!

Here's one small example. Say you have a product or service of broad interest. For our example, we will say it's a home-decorating service. Just about everyone has a home so you've got a pretty wide target market, right? Wrong! Some people, depending on their income, buying habits, the neighbourhood they live in and many other variables, are much better targets than others.

In this example, some agencies would recommend blanket—and very expensive—newspaper advertising. Their logic? Almost everyone has a home and, therefore, could use some help decorating it. We would prefer to identify those who are *most likely to purchase your service* and then go after them in a highly targeted and highly focused manner. Why would you market to anyone else?

Here is another example. Unlike some agencies, we believe marketing is about much more than selling and transactions. Marketing happens every time you have contact with a client. It's your website and letterhead, it's about how you answer the telephone, it's about how you follow up the sale—or not. Marketing is about every interaction the client has with you—even if it isn't face to face. To explain... When someone passes along your business card, that's marketing. If someone drives by your business and sees your beautiful—or not so beautiful—store front, that's marketing. When you send an invoice, that marketing.

Whether you work in the private, public or non-profit sector, these articles are for you. If yours is a commercial business, you will find ideas that can help you increase revenues. If you work in the public sector, these ideas can help you sell your programs, ideas or vision. If you are in the non-profit sector, you will see how these principles can help you increase participation in your programs, attract new donors or members and appear more attractive to potential funders.

Read on and enjoy. And, if you'd like a hand getting more people to buy—or buy into—whatever you are selling, give us a call at **613-235-5445**. We'd be glad to help

Is your website preventing sales?

In a sense, the Internet has gone full circle over the past 40 years. (Yes, 40 years! A global network called the “Internet” was born in the 70s but smaller, similarly intentioned networks such as ARPANET had been around for a decade before that.)

Back then, researchers used the networks for very specific purposes. While I’m sure it was fun, it was hardly a playground. It was for very serious work.

Then, it went public. Millions of people found themselves online and we were introduced to flashing smiley faces and home-grown websites, some of which were—and, maybe, still are—pretty, well, unusual. People had fun experimenting and “surfing” just for the entertainment value.

While it can still offer its share of entertainment (think www.youtube.com), for businesses—and, specifically for a business’s clients—it has become a tool with a very specific purpose: getting information.

Research tells us that when potential clients visit your website, they are not looking for entertainment, wild and wacky graphics or great gobs of information about your corporate history. They want straight facts about you, your products and what you can do for them. They want information and plain language.

And they want it now.

Are you helping them achieve their goals?

Take a good, hard look at your website. Are visitors able to find information quickly and easily or is your site filled with fluff and stuff about you that they don’t care about? Does it give them clear choices or do they struggle to even find the contact information?

Presumably, your products and services help meet your customers’ needs. Your website should, too.

It's who you know

Ironically, while we spin our wheels trying to sell our services with letters and telephone calls to people who've never heard of us, a huge source of work is right under our noses.

I'm talking about *referrals*.

How many times have you heard "it's not what you know, it's who you know"? It has achieved cliché status for one very good reason: it's true.

Just as it's important to market to your current customers, there is, perhaps, no better source of revenue than through a system of referrals.

Do you have a referral plan in place?

“Our marketing isn’t creative enough!”

“Our website is just not creative enough,” lamented a new client recently. “It’s stale and lacks spark,” she said. “Can you help us?”

While creativity is a relatively important aspect of all marketing collateral, in and of itself, creativity is highly overrated. Jay Conrad Levinson, the author of *Guerrilla Marketing*, says “creativity should be measured solely by how well it contributes to your overall profitability.”

In other words, dancing apes in sequined briefs won’t much matter if you don’t also give your audience a real reason to buy.

Think about a creative commercial you’ve seen recently. How about the fire-breathing hamburger eaters or the guy in the elevator with the cell phone? How about the one in which the guy makes out with the female police officer? All memorable. All creative.

But let me ask you this: What specific product were they advertising? I’m betting that like me, you came up blank on at least two of them.

Yes, creativity is important and, at Adams Jette, we pour it into everything we do. But it’s not nearly as important as giving your customers a reason to buy. And that means that your website, your advertising and all of your corporate collateral should spell out benefits as clearly as possible and include a nice, strong call to action. Then, not only will people know what you’re selling, they might even buy it.

Now *that’s* creative.

Eat your way to success

“You must spend a fortune buying clients’ lunch,” a multiple-lunch client said the other day over, well, lunch.

Yes, we do. But there is a very good reason.

No, this is not another “customer is king” column. Nor am I advocating bribing clients into throwing work your way. (But on the other hand...)

What this is about is keeping your business top-of-mind by keeping your clients top-of-mind. And—as we’ve said before—it’s a lot cheaper to keep a client than find a new one.

Customer-relationship management (CRM) is very important and every company, big or small, should have a system in place in some form or another. (In fact, you can now buy computer applications that will automatically keep in touch with your customers. I’d rather do that personally, thank you very much.) But the reality is, for whatever reason, most don’t have a CRM program or any kind.

Even if your program isn’t formal, however, there are some things you can do to stay in touch with those who already know you and like your work.

Here are a couple of ideas.

Be a donor. Stay in touch after the sale by offering clients information they can use. We buy a lot of magazines, often for the sole purpose of forwarding clippings. Similarly, we search the Internet regularly for material that is of interest to our clients.

Be a recipient. Go to clients when they have solid information you can use. This tells them that you value their opinions. I would advise against doing this simply for the sake of doing it—nobody likes to be patronized. But if you truly need the information, go for it.

Be a teacher. We attach a simple, one- or two-sentence QuikTip to every email message we send to clients. They are short, usable tips that are designed to make our customers better communicators. We also offer free marketing advice on our website and through this booklet. Clients want to know that you are honest in your attempt to help.

Say thank you. We send flowers, notes and gifts to clients—a lot. And they are all sent with an honest feeling of caring. A small bouquet of flowers, a book or a helpful gift costs next to nothing but speaks volumes about your thoughtfulness. Sometimes, just a hand-written note can make a world of difference.

Remember, the success of your business is not about marketing and sales. It’s about the relationship you have with your clients. And what they like for lunch.

Keep your eyes on the prize

Perhaps the most pervasive problem today for organizations big and small can be summed up in one simple phrase: *a lack of focus*. And it happens in three distinct areas.

1. **The market.** Ask the local florist, realtor, hardware-store owner or government program manager to name their target market. “Everyone,” is what you’d likely hear from them.

No, it’s not. Tighten the focus on your market and you will win more new customers and sell more to existing customers.

2. **The message.** Why should I buy from you over and above all other choices, including doing nothing? Tighten the focus to get more people to buy—or buy in.

3. **The method.** How are you delivering the message? Newspaper ads where only a small percentage of readers may actually be potential customers? Expensive television placements? Through search-engine optimization? Are they working for you? Focus your advertising dollars on those things you know hit the market in a measurable way.

With everything in focus, how can you miss?

Checklist for success

With the right attitude, a little common sense and a whole lot of hard work, you can do anything—including achieving extraordinary success with your business. Here is the Adams Jette Marketing + Communications 10-point **Checklist for Success**.

- 1. Be ethical and well-meaning.** Anything else may—and we stress *may*—provide short-term success but will be guaranteed to deliver long-term disaster.
- 2. Know your business.** You have to be educating yourself constantly. Strive to become an unparalleled resource in your line of work.
- 3. Know what you're selling.** Remember, the client is not necessarily buying what you are selling. You may be selling a beautiful car with leather seats, 350 horsepower and every gadget currently technically possible. But those are just features. What the buyer wants is something that will make him look good and feel great.
- 4. Offer value.** In his book *The New Client: How Customers Shape Business in the Information Age*, author Paul Hoffert states that “making a profit is frequently a matter of differentiating a product from those of a competitor so that clients cannot compare them based on price alone.” Offer more than just good products and services. Offer value.
- 5. Sell constantly.** Always be on the lookout for opportunities. Tell people—everyone you meet—what you do. Work it into the conversation. But do it tactfully. You are an interesting person with interesting ideas. People will want to know more. But be careful—don't be a boor.
- 6. Show confidence.** Just *having* confidence isn't enough. *Show it*. Not in some show-off kind of way. But in a purposeful, focused, non-alienating kind of way. Your confidence will inspire confidence in others.
- 7. Understand that image is reality.** Like it or not, what people see is what they believe to be the truth. Invest in professional design for your business cards, letterhead and website. Hire professionals to design your offices and record your voice-mail greeting.
- 8. Learn to manage your workload.** There are four categories of work. Things you like and are good at. Things you don't like but are good at. Things you like but aren't good at and things you neither like nor are good at. Do everything that falls into the first category. Avoid—or at least delegate—everything else.
- 9. Show your appreciation.** Don't forget to say thank you.
- 10. CAUTION!** When you start to taste real success, don't allow yourself to chase the money. Continue to provide real value. And don't ease up on the selling.

It's because you are special

Are you good at what you do? Of course!

Are your products, services or programs the best? Absolutely!

Is that why people buy from you?

Not on your life.

They buy what you are selling because you are special. They are buying—or buying in—because you are offering something nobody else offers. Maybe it's convenience or a better price. Perhaps it's better service. Or a unique program. Maybe it's good old-fashioned value for money.

That “something special” is called your *unique sales proposition*, or USP. It defines how your offering is different (read: better) from what they can get somewhere else. It's the one thing that makes them choose you over and above all other choices, including doing nothing. And, whether your target markets know it or not, they are always looking for it.

Do you know your USP?

And once you know it, do you tell people about it? You should. In fact, it should be one of the cornerstones of your entire marketing and communications strategy.

Stop cold-calling!

With just one simple phrase, you can make even the most battle-scarred marketers among us feel like trembling tyros.

You don't even have to hear the phrase or say it out loud. Just seeing the words on the printed page can do it for some. Here, see if you know what I mean:

Cold call.

Now take a deep breath. You'll be fine.

If you have never stood hovering over the telephone, wondering what you're going to say if you don't get voice mail, you're a rare bird. Here's our advice if you want to avoid that knot in your stomach:

Never make a cold call.

Sure, some people can barge right in (metaphorically speaking, of course), grab the potential client by the scruff of the neck (this, too) and walk out with the sale 10 minutes later. These are the same people who throw off their clothes (well, most of them anyway), run down the deck of the pool—or the beach or the riverbank—and dive head-first into cold water.

I would suggest avoiding the cold call—and the cold water—at all costs. Think of the anxiety and sweaty palms, the dismal success record, the disinterested voice at the other end of the line.

OK. Time to explain.

Do we contact people who have never heard of us? Yes. Do we try to get work out of them? Yes. But by the time we make contact, the water is considerably warmer. And the best heater—next to a referral—is a well-crafted letter.

A letter always says the right thing and never gets sweaty palms. It can make you look as good as you've ever looked without spending a cent on designer duds. It allows you, in a non-threatening atmosphere, to show the prospective client how you can help.

But isn't unsolicited mail just junk mail?

Absolutely not. Junk mail is either a great offer sent to the wrong person or the wrong offer sent to the right person. If you can perfect the pitch and pass it to the proper person, you can turn a potential prospect into a patron. (We hope that is easier to understand than it is to say.)

If you are tightly focused on your market and the message is clear, concise and speaks directly—and only—to benefits, you may never get sweaty palms again.

Here's an easy way to stimulate sales

If, like most people, you put cold calling in the same category with drinking sour milk, I have some good news for you. Increasing sales can be as easy as reaching into your filing cabinet and pulling out that folder labeled "Invoices."

There are no easier sales than to those who've already done business with you. They know you, they know your work and, presumably, they've been happy with you. And, as any good marketer will tell you, it's far cheaper to keep a customer than to find a new one.

So, before sowing new seeds, look over the field you've already planted to ensure that you are getting the maximum yield from your current crop.

Success: It's all in your head

Have you ever wondered what separates the high-income earners from the rest of the world? Why some people can make well into six figures while others struggle to make the rent? Whether it's editing, selling cars or transplanting hearts, why are some people seemingly able to do so well so easily while others toil endlessly just to stay afloat?

I believe part of the answer—a big part—is, well, kind of like...you know, confidence. The ability to say, if only to yourself, “not only can I do this job, but I can do it at least as well, if not better, than anyone else!”

I would like to introduce you to two business writers I know: Maralissa and Joel (OK, you caught me; the names have been changed to protect the timid).

Maralissa comes from a rather poor family; she struggled to put herself through high school before graduating from a community college journalism program. During her largely self-educating journey to become a wildly successful freelance writer, she learned a lot, not the least of which was how much success could be achieved on guts alone.

Joel, on the other hand, had it all: not only did he have a supportive family and a post-graduate degree, but he was also as smart as a whip. About the only thing he had in common with Maralissa was a desire to be a writer. Unfortunately...

So, why was Maralissa able to outpace Joel so significantly?

Was she better educated? Clearly not. Was she smarter? Not in anything but, perhaps, a street-smart manner. Did she have better contacts? Maybe eventually, but that almost certainly wasn't a reason early on.

She had confidence. She knew that with hard work and enough research—which, of course, meant admitting that she needed to know more—she could do anything.

But having confidence wasn't enough. Her confidence showed. Not in some show-off kind of way. But in a purposeful, focused, non-alienating kind of way. And that inspired others' confidence in her. At *that* led to success.

Did Maralissa read all the right business magazines and marketing books? You bet she did. Did she join associations that would allow her to rub pencils with people who could help her improve her skills? Absolutely. Was her bedside table stacked with language books instead of the latest bestsellers? She admits it was. And it all helped.

But ask her the real reason she has done well and she will tell you in one word: *confidence*. She truly does believe she can do anything. And from that, we can all learn.

One of your best marketing tools is FREE!

Every time someone reads one of your email messages, you have their undivided attention. Are you taking advantage of this unique opportunity to market your business?

Right after your name, company and telephone number, why not use your email signature to state the benefits of your offering, upsell your client or pitch the latest free offering from your website?

Remember, though: keep it short, on message and benefit-driven. Every contact is an opportunity to move your reader closer to a sale. Don't miss out!

Connecting with the client

Small talk. Don't you just love it?

Most people would say, "Not really. Truth is, I'm just not very good at it."

Although many people would say that they don't like it—or worse—life would be pretty boring without it. And business wins would be considerably fewer.

How did you get to know your most recently acquired friend? Certainly not by jumping right into the reason for his recent divorce or by talking about her crazy uncle who has this thing for leopard prints and high-heeled shoes. It all starts with small talk, that innocent chatter that allows us to connect.

Connecting with *clients* is exactly the same—and just as important.

Two equally talented salespeople who offer identical benefits can meet the same potential client but only one comes away with a sale.

Why?

There are many reasons, of course, but here is one of the main ones: because only one of the salespeople connected with the potential client.

The next obvious question: How do you make that connection?

To figure it out, begin by asking yourself: What do other people do that will help you to connect with them? Lots of things. Perhaps they mention something they have in common with you. Perhaps they show an interest in you or what you do. Maybe they say something nice about you.

These are all things that help you to connect with people, some of whom go on to be friends, some of whom go on to be clients and some of whom go on to be both.

If you have something in common with a potential client, mention it. Show an interest in them as both a client and a person.

The next time you visit a potential client's office, instead of starting the conversation by talking about business, your rates or the scope of work, begin by making a connection.

Ask about those pictures on the shelf that show your potential client sailing in the Bahamas. Or, make a comment that you, too, play golf. (This assumes that there is some indication that this person does, in fact, play golf. Otherwise, this will be a really silly comment.) Say something nice about the person. Take an interest in her as a person instead of as a potential pay cheque. Be more than courteous—be friendly.

But be sincere. If you cannot do this without absolute sincerity, don't do it at all. It will come off sounding fake, at best, and patronizing, at worst. Either way, you will be seen as shallow and not worth spending time with or money on.

And you don't have to save this stuff for the first visit to a potential new client. Do it with every contact with a client. Take notes if you must to remind you that this client has two kids in grade school or that client is a classic-car buff.

And here are two unexpected side benefits: First, the more you know about a person, the more comfortable you—and he—will be. And when you are comfortable, your confidence will soar.

Second, the more you know about your client as a person, chances are, the more you will enjoy the work.

Remember, people won't have an interest in you for long if you don't have an interest in them. And the more you connect, the stronger—and the longer—the relationship.

Looking good!

Your reputation is critical to your success—everybody knows that. But are you sabotaging your reputation inadvertently because of errors on your website or in your brochures, annual reports or other public documents?

Everything you do influences what people think about your brand, company or organization—and you. If they are going to be influenced, why not make sure it is influence that works for you?

Despite our very best efforts, we all make mistakes. However, you'd be wise to acknowledge that appearance matters and take steps to ensure a great presentation. After all, you wouldn't head out for work wearing a shirt you had slept in, would you?

It's especially difficult to see our own mistakes, so it's always a good idea to have your material proofread by a fresh pair of eyes. Better yet, have it written by a professional or at least have it edited for grammar, diction, style, spelling, clarity and, more than anything, understandability.

And enjoy the competitive edge that comes with looking your very best.

Falling in love with clients

The way some people track clients down, chew them up and spit them out, you'd think their motto was: "Clients, they're not just for breakfast anymore."

It isn't a stretch to say that at Adams Jette, clients are very much like friends.

We often know how many kids they have, where they live and the kinds of cars they drive. We know who loves their job (and who doesn't), who is in a rock band and who likes to let loose in the By Ward Market on weekends.

You don't have to delve into clients' personal lives to improve customer service, but you do have to care about them—and you have to care honestly.

Just like you care about your friends.

You have to be honest all the time and help when you can. You have to look out for them, respect them, treat them courteously and only make promises to them you can keep. (If they ask to borrow your clothes, though, it may be time to re-evaluate the relationship.)

If you treat clients more like friends, what's in it for you?

For one thing, your life is a lot simpler. It's a lot easier to keep a friend than it is to find a new one. Just like clients.

When you treat clients like friends, other funny things start to happen:

- When you do make an error, you're forgiven.
- When you do disagree, you can work it out without threatening your relationship.
- When they let you down, it's not the end of the world.

Remember: CLIENTS ARE YOUR FRIENDS. (In fact, clients can be better than your friends. Like friends, good clients can bring joy to your day. But unlike friends, clients also bring MONEY!)

We're kidding, of course—well, sort of.

In this business, you have to fall in love with the right things. Don't fall in love with your services, your product, your abilities or your company. Fall in love with your clients. And if you treat clients like the friends they should be, you'll enjoy more success than you ever thought possible.

Get more people to buy—or buy in

We are all selling something. No matter what your field, sector or industry, you are a salesperson. So, what are *you* selling?

It's easy to identify if you sell computers, consulting services, automobiles or lumber. But what if you are a public servant or you work for a non-profit agency? Are you selling, too?

Of course you are!

In fact, for you to be successful, you have to sell like crazy.

Government: Perhaps you are “selling” the idea of a new government program or trying to convince people of the benefits of your department’s services. That’s selling.

Non-profit: Maybe you are trying to “sell” people on the idea of donating to your cause, visiting your website or improving their lifestyles. That’s selling, too.

The mistake some people make—in the public and private sectors—is that they talk too much about what they do instead of what benefits they offer. No matter your field of endeavour, always think in terms of selling the benefits of your work and you will enjoy much greater success!

Keep your head down and follow through

In golf, you keep your head down, keep your forward arm straight and follow through in a smooth but decisive manner. That's good advice for marketers, too. Well, except for the arm thing.

Here's the situation: You've pitched the client and have been asked for a quote. You've determined the scope of work, researched their needs and put together what you believe to be a winning proposal. Then, it's into an envelope or into an email message and off to the client (the proposal, not you).

Then, days later...nothing.

At first, you start to worry that you've lost the job because your quote was too high. Then you think, "No, I deserve to be paid what I'm worth," so you resign yourself to the fact that if you've lost it, it's just as well. At the same time, you can't help but remember the enthusiasm the client showed before you left her office. Now what?

You have two options. The first is to call her—but that's always a bit risky, isn't it? You don't want to annoy her. Besides, didn't she say that she'd "be in touch"? The other option is to let it go. After all, you've done your part and now the rest is up to her, right?

To me, letting this client go would be the equivalent of cutting your fishing line the minute you get a bite. *Calling her is absolutely essential.*

This is a client who already knows you and is familiar with what you do. As well—and this is very important—she has already shown an interest in having you work for her. Now you just have to convince her that you can solve her problems better than anyone else (even if your proposal has already done that).

Every client and every situation is different, of course, but letting just a few days pass before you give her a call is usually enough. The client hasn't called for one of two reasons: Either she hasn't made a decision or she's given the gig to someone else. Either way, give her a call.

If she hasn't made a decision yet, ask questions such as, "Is there anything else you need to know or anything else I could explain? Have I outlined the scope of work clearly?" You can also use this as a chance to give her another reason to hire you. ("Oh, and did I mention that I can turn this project around on a dime?")

If she's given the job to someone else, use it as a chance to learn. Was your price too high? Too low? (You never know.) Did you lack experience in a particular area? The more you learn, the better chance you'll have next time.

Remember: Keep your head down and follow through. You may not win every game, but with solid practice, you can get a lot longer and straighter off the tee.

Get your emails read

The subject line of an email has one purpose: to get that message opened. If you are writing to a friend or business colleague who knows you, that's not a big task. They recognize the subject matter or your name, and they open the email. All very simple.

If you are conducting an email campaign or even writing to a new sales lead, however, getting that message opened may not be so easy. In fact, the subject line may be the only thing that stands between you and reaching your target.

If you want to get your email messages opened, your subject line must be short (30–40 characters is best) but strong, benefit-driven and specific.

And don't rush writing it. Write a few different subject lines after you've written the message. And then test, test, test. When emailing to sales leads, test your best subject line against a new one. Or, test your best against the same, but slightly tweaked, subject line. The difference in response may surprise you.

But whatever you do, give the subject line the care and attention it deserves.

Making history repeat itself

For today's in-office exercise, class, we are going to start by pushing ourselves back about 12 inches from our desks. Now, plant your feet firmly on the floor in front of you and sit up straight, arms hanging beside you, fingers pointed toward the floor.

Now, I want you to slowly bend to the right until your right hand is about six inches from the floor. Feel the stretch through the small of your back on the left side? Not too much, now.

Okay, still with your fingers just off the floor, lean forward slowly—your right hand will naturally swing forward, as well. As it does, it will come into contact with the bottom-drawer handle. I want you to grasp that handle firmly and slowly lean back. Inevitably, the drawer will begin to open. As it does, locate a dusty old file called “Invoices.”

Once you've found it, grab it, throw it on the desk and get ready to make some money!

If you are like most businesspeople, your client list today is markedly different from your client list two years ago. Did the clients move on because they were not happy? Of course not. They didn't move on at all. You did. You did your work, sent the bill and promptly forgot about them.

Big mistake.

These are people who already know and trust what you do, who already like your work and who have already proven that they are willing to pay you for it. There is no better potential client! Getting work from former clients does not involve a gut-wrenching cold call, a nerve-racking sales pitch or a direct-mail letter that caused you to sweat blood.

Have you ever given to charity only to notice that your mailbox suddenly fills up with requests? The coincidence, to quote fiction writer David Brin, seems too perfect to ignore. These mailings come from people in companies or organizations that understand your importance to them. They understand that if you've given once, you've already been sold on their product, service or mission. By repeatedly mailing to you, they are just tapping into that predisposition.

A follow-up program—go ahead, make it formal—can provide not only a good source of work, but also some good referrals. Don't be afraid to ask current and former clients if there is anyone else they know who might need your services. (If a referral pays off, don't forget to make a thank-you call—yet another reason to remind them who you are.)

Finding one new client can cost hundreds of dollars. Maintaining current clients can be as easy as a simple telephone call (or, at the very least, an email) that begins: “It's been awhile—I just wanted to say hello and remind you how easy I can make your life...”

Next time you want to scare up some “new” business, dig up a few names from those old invoices. Just because they have already been paid doesn't mean they should stop paying off.

A good letter informs, a great letter *sells*

Regular readers of these articles (yes, I'm talking to you, Mom) are already familiar with our advice about cold-calling: Don't do it.

That's not to say that you shouldn't call on new prospects, but just that you should warm them up with a well-crafted letter before making that telephone call.

But what goes into the letter? Here are a few things to consider:

1. **Always focus on benefits.** While reading the letter, the reader will be thinking, "What's in it for me?" You'd better have an answer.
2. **Write to one person.** You are not addressing an audience. You are talking to the one person reading the letter. It's hard to be personal when you're writing to a Madam or Sir. And being personal is the key to success.
3. **Did we mention benefits?** What you do is a feature of your service. What your service does for your clients is a benefit.
4. **Hit a home run on the very first pitch.** Grab their attention with the single biggest reason for them to buy. Too often, we find that big idea about five paragraphs down. If you don't get them right away, you can bet you won't have them when you say, "Call now," at the end of the letter. (You *do* have a strong call to action, right?)
5. **Be relevant and be specific.** What is it—specifically—that makes your service so great? And why should your reader even care? If it will save them 37 percent or \$50, don't just say it will save them money, say it will save them 37 percent or fifty bucks!
6. **Do not write to inform or to raise awareness.** Write to *sell*. Make it friendly, personal, readable—but make every word sell. If that letter isn't generating income, it's costing you money. And who needs that?
7. **Write the letter in a way that would make you buy whatever it is you are selling.** Would you put out cold, hard cash for it? If not, don't expect your potential clients too, either.
8. **Use an active voice.** Be confident. Passivity is not for marketers.
9. **Write until you are done.** Clients often want to restrict letters to one or two pages. "Nobody will read them if they are longer," they insist.

They are wrong.

People will read as long as they have a reason to read. If you have six pages of

benefits, then write for six pages. But not a sentence or a word longer.

10. **Never end a page with a period.** Split the sentence, split the paragraph—people need closure, so give them a reason to keep turning the page.
11. **Use variety in your writing.** Longer (not loooooong) sentences, short sentences, varied punctuation—as with good food, presentation and variety matter.
12. **Write as if to a friend.** Indent paragraphs, use a common font, avoid jargon—all those little things that make it easier to read. You can be stiff and “business-like” if you want, but you do it at your peril.
13. **There is a place for cute and clever—your letter is not that place.** Remember, your goal is to sell your services, not impress them with your wit.
14. **Be clear.** Your reader may love your story but it will be wasted on them if you don't tell them what to do next. Call now. Order now. Write a letter to your member of parliament now. *Tell them.*
15. **Always, always, always include a postscript (P.S.).** Believe it or not, a P.S. is among the first things to be read. Why not use it to restate the key benefit of your offer?

Are you turning away business without realizing it?

Take a few minutes sometime in the very near future to look at your business in the mirror. What is staring back at you? A highly successful firm? A just-scraping-by business? Think about how you look to clients and, more importantly, *potential* clients. Think less about the positive things and more about the negative things.

Then fix them.

If you don't, business may walk up to your door—it may even reach for the doorbell—but it won't want to come in.

How is your letterhead? Good? Great.

How about your business cards, brochures and website? Any room for improvement? How is your telephone approach? Your thank-you letters? Cast a critical gaze over all of it.

Let me tell you a short story that prompted this advice.

Because we write direct-response advertising, we are on all the right lists. And, as a result, we receive lots of mail about, well, mail.

Recently, I received a brochure—more of a booklet, really—that impressed me. “These people get it,” I remember thinking to myself. The company was selling a way for me to enjoy the cost benefits of mass mailing combined with the sales results of one-to-one marketing.

Off I went in search of the company's website. Because one of the services it offers is graphic design, I expected a top-notch site. Instead, I saw a site that looked like it had been designed by committee.

It was total and utter cheeseball.

To begin, the resolution of the logo was horrible. Worse, the overall design was amateurish, at best. The title page began “Our service offerings,” a title that was encased in a key-lined, baby-blue box. Pink gradated boxes down the left-hand side housed the links, one of which was to “variable imaging,” one of their prime offerings. (Huh?)

The same link featured tacky animated clip art, circa 1995, showing three mechanical—and mesmerizing—gears turning.

This was a prime example of how a poorly managed image can ruin potential business.

I would bet—not much, mind you—that this company can produce what it promises: cost-effective, one-to-one marketing that gets results. It proved that in the mail. When I visited the

“store,” however, the confidence I had in this company—confidence that had me ready to buy—was shattered.

It’s a shame, really. Especially in light of the fact that the company doesn’t even know I’ve been turned off.

I know what you’re thinking. “Image is so shallow.” But whether we like it or not, the truth is, what people—or potential clients—see is what they believe to be the truth.

For some potential clients, your website or your business card may be the only salesperson they ever see.

What is that salesperson saying about you? That you make do with perforated cards from Staples? That you cut corners by doing the design—such as it is—yourself? Or that you care about presenting yourself in the best possible light—just like you’ll care about presenting them in the best possible light?

Even if the potential client doesn’t realize it, they may be judging you based on a piece of paper that is 3.5 inches wide and 2 inches tall.

I would suggest hiring the very best designer you can afford so when the business card speaks—or the website speaks, or the letterhead speaks, or the brochure speaks—it speaks with authority.

What have you learned today?

So, you've been in business for while, now. You have a respectable number of clients and the income is, well, coming in a little more regularly than before. In fact, you might even be what some people would call "busy."

Have you taken any time lately to build on those skills that are bringing you success?

I'm talking about your client-relation, marketing, or organization skills, your time-management skills and all of the other skills you need to be successful. Are you at the top of your game?

Not that I have any doubts about your abilities, of course, but let's face it, how many of us can do *all* of that exceedingly well? I'm going to suggest none of us.

WARNING: INCOMING OBVIOUS STATEMENT...

If you want to increase your income, get better at what you do.

This may sound obvious, but I can tell you that anecdotal evidence suggests that many of us rarely take the time—or spend the money—to improve the skills that will make us better business people.

When was the last time you took a course on bookkeeping, computers, time management or marketing? Even the worst marketing book has one or two good ideas.

Why not take a look at improving other critical skills that will make you more efficient, more knowledgeable, more confident and a better earner?

Spend 20 or 30 bucks and pick up a copy of the latest book on client relations or marketing.

How about attending a seminar on further developing your confidence? Or, you could attend a seminar on further developing your confidence. Oh, did I mention that already? (In my opinion, the three skills you need to be successful in this, or any other, business are confidence, confidence and confidence—but not necessarily in that order.)

These are investments in your business—and investments in you—that are no less important than investing in updated software or computers. And, like all good investments, they will pay off.

Why not make a promise to yourself (not one that is hard to keep like "I will quit eating chocolate"), one that will make you a better businessperson? Here's one for you: "By the end of the year, I will have done three things that improve skills other than those related to my product or service."

The way I see it, this will accomplish two things: your income will improve and you can have all the chocolate you want.

Improve your communications through the buddy system

Without a doubt, you cannot be a good marketer if you are not a good communicator. The two go together like Paris Hilton and a stiff martini. And part of any communications arsenal is an ability to write well.

While we would like you to hire us to write everything so you don't have to worry about it, we know that no matter how much work you gave us, you would still have to write budgets, memos, email messages and a thousand other things. *You must be a good writer.*

To improve your skills, you have to read all the right books and take all the right workshops, of course. But why waste time walking into walls teaching yourself when you can take a full-day seminar and save yourself the grief? Look at it this way: what you spend on the seminar, you probably save in medical bills. But even with that, things such as typos, grammar errors and the like will still slip through the cracks. What can you do to stop that?

Get a buddy.

And we're not talking about a let's-get-a-beer-after-work type of buddy. We are talking about someone who, like you, is interested in good communications.

At Adams Jette, everything gets peer-reviewed before it goes out the door. And this is more than a proofread. We look for issues of grammar, diction and style. We looked for clarity, consistency, quality of writing and that all-important element that we call "understandability."

As professionals, we certainly have an advantage, but no matter who you are, you can take your writing up several notches just by getting someone else to look it over. Does what you wrote make sense? Is it choppy? Are there any obvious errors? Your "buddy" will likely point them out to you.

You'll be surprised not so much at how much you don't know (although that might surprise you, too), but at how much you simply missed. And you'll also be surprised, if you're someone else's buddy, how much you can teach others—even those you thought might be better writers than you.

You have to be prepared to accept the criticism in the light that it's offered, of course, but the things you learn from your colleagues will be with you for life. And when you are producing excellent prose, you'll also be producing excellent marketing.

Ask and ye shall receive

Would you like a simple suggestion that can make you thousands—perhaps tens of thousands—of dollars?

Let me start by asking a question. How do you spend your workday? Like most of us, you probably spend about half your time working (give or take) and the other half looking for work.

Now let me ask you this: How exactly do you look for work? (Sitting by the telephone doesn't count because technically, that's listening for work.)

Again, like most of us, you probably bug your current clients for more work (you do that, right?). And you probably attend all the networking events you can. (Be careful here. Choose only events where you can find good prospects. Too many networking events are full of the same kinds of people, all trying to sell, sell, sell not buy, buy, buy.) You may send out a surfeit—ooh, surfeit—of letters or marketing brochures. The brave among you may even pick up the telephone to make shake-in-your-boots cold calls. (Brrr!)

Almost without exception, these are what hockey enthusiasts would call low-percentage shots. Like trying to score from the corner. The chances of burying the puck are slim at best. Unless, of course, you've been blessed with a name like Crosby.

What you need is a *high*-percentage shot.

Ironically, while we spin our wheels with letters and telephone calls to people who've never heard of us, a huge source of work is right under our noses.

I'm talking about referrals. People who know people you know. (You read that last sentence twice, maybe three times, didn't you? I had to read it several more than that to make sure it was right.)

How many times have you heard "it's not what you know, it's who you know"? It has achieved cliché status for one very good reason: because it's true.

We often talk about mining that all-important source for jobs: people who have hired you in the past. Assuming you've done good work for them in the past, those are pretty easy sales.

But if you expand that thinking a bit, it's easy to see that this source of work offers much more than just a second and third job from this client. Chances are, this person knows others who are also in a position to hire you.

But how do you approach this current client to find out if they know anyone else who might benefit from your services? Try asking this: "Do you know anyone else who might benefit from my services?"

It's that easy.

Almost inevitably, you get one or two names. You often get more. (Don't forget to ask them if you can use their name when you call.)

The best way to warm up a cold call is to start by dropping a name. What better name to drop than that of someone your prospective client knows and trusts?

"Good morning, Susan. It's Ralph Williams calling from Super Duper Sales and Service. I was just talking to your friend, Joe Schmo, and he suggested I give you a call. Do you have a minute?"

Even if Susan doesn't have time right now, you will almost certainly be able to lock down a better time to call. After all, they don't know how well you know Joe Schmo and they certainly don't want to offend him by dismissing you out of hand.

Say you've got 10 clients and each one gives you two names. That's 20 people who will more than likely listen at least for a minute or two while you bombard them with the benefits of hiring you. If your conversion rate—that's where you turn them from lookers to bookers—is 25 percent, that's four more jobs (or "clients for life" as I like to call them) that you didn't have yesterday.

How much is that one client worth over a year (or a career)? Hundreds? Thousands? Tens of thousands? And it all started with one simple question: "Do you know anyone else who might benefit from my services?"

You've never looked so good!

Is your sales team saying good things about you?

What do you mean, you don't have a sales team? Of course you do! You have several members of the team in your wallet, a few more stuffed into your printer (ooh, that would be comfortable) and perhaps a pile of them sitting on your bookshelf. And, there is another member of the team out there on the Internet for all the world to see.

I'm talking, of course, about your marketing material—your business cards, your letterhead and envelopes, your brochures and your website. Your corporate look. You.

Let me ask again: Is your sales team saying good things about you?

Even if it goes unsaid by those who see them, your stationery and corporate collateral speak volumes about who you are, how you operate, your commitment to quality, your level of professionalism and your attention to detail. They can give you instant credibility—or not. Regardless of your personal beliefs, appearance matters. (Don't believe me? Try showing up at a client's office with your underwear on the outside.)

Some people design cards themselves and have them printed professionally; others have them designed professionally and print the cards on their own laser or ink-jet printers. Others do it all themselves while a fourth group farms the whole affair out to professionals.

My advice? Produce the very best material you can afford. Even if your marketing budget is tighter than the age rings on old-growth lumber, spend the green to spruce up your image (yeah, that one took awhile).

It's never been easier to design websites. Or, produce business cards—it's fast, cheap and you print only what you need. But that, I'm afraid, is the problem. Just because it *can* be done doesn't mean it *should* be done.

Your website or business card may be the only connection the potential client has to you. It has to knock him dead—or at least knock him in the general direction of the telephone.

As tempting—or as fun—as it might be to throw a website on the Internet, design a new logo or layout your own brochure, unless you are qualified to do it, these are jobs best left to professionals. While you might save a few bucks now, you may be risking thousands of dollars in sales later.

I'm in sales, how about you?

What do you do for a living?

If you said something that referred to your products or services, you are only half right. Although you might choke saying it, you are, perhaps more than anything, a salesperson. If you aren't selling, you probably aren't doing much of anything else.

When do you sell? When you are pitching a new client? When you are attending a networking event? When you are in line at the grocery store? When you are introducing yourself to your new neighbour? When you are talking to the bank-loan officer about renewing your mortgage?

I'm going to suggest that you don't need to be selling in some of these situations. You need to be selling in all of these situations.

You need to be selling constantly.

By selling constantly, I don't mean that you have to go to every possible "networking event" where there are warm—or at least moving—bodies. (In fact, I tend to avoid formal networking events because despite the name, I don't find that they are very conducive to getting new business. The reason is that, like me, everyone else is there to sell, sell, sell, not buy, buy, buy.)

And I don't mean that you have to bore everyone you meet with the details of your business. While what you do may be very interesting to some people, a sales-pitch barrage will have them running for the hills.

But you do have to be sensitive to new opportunities.

During casual conversations with new acquaintances, two things will come up: the weather and our respective jobs. "I'm a marketing guy," is my simple response. (If it's not asked, I find a way to work it in, oh, so casually.)

The very next question, of course, is: "What do you market?" Within about twenty seconds, I've told them what I do and how my job is to make my clients look brilliant so they can sell more.

"Really," they often say—after all, who doesn't want to sell more? "Can I have your card?"

"Oh, OK," I say half—but only half—reluctantly. "I'll take your card and give you one of mine."

Then, we move on quickly to more general topics such as classic cars, the hottest new restaurants in town or how our dependence on fossil fuels in a market-driven society won't end anytime soon.

Then you say good bye. Now what?

Here is what often happens: we have a new lead and, sometimes for no other reason than a lack of confidence, we never look at it again. Or, when we do, we think, “yeah, I really ought to write that guy a note.”

Why don't we do it? Why do we just let it slide until it's far too late?

It usually gets blamed on a lack of time.

But a lack of time is no excuse. Neither is a lack of confidence or a (perceived) lack of something to say.

Just grab your keyboard or telephone by the scruff of the neck and begin.

“It was nice to meet you the other night,” is a good start. “As promised, I thought I should follow up while the conversation was still fresh in my mind. You said there might be an opportunity for you to increase sales by improving your Web presence. I think you are right and I would like to help. Do you have 15 minutes or so in the next few days? I would love to come by, learn a little more about what you do and show you how I think I can help you tune up your website.”

Now all you have to do is set a date.

There are lots of opportunities out there. Often, it's right under your nose—you just have to learn how to recognize it.

What I learned about success from a seven-year-old

One day not that long ago, my seven-year-old daughter, Melanie Rose, brought home an assignment from school. She had to choose at least one of six simple machines, make it and then present it to the class explaining how the machine makes work easier.

An ambitious young girl, she wasn't satisfied making one simple machine. Her plans included a desk model that incorporated all six.

Now I think she's a pretty smart (OK, pretty and smart) little girl but I'd be fibbing if I said I wasn't a little concerned about her presentation. That's a lot of information for a young mind to remember and present.

But off she went, drawing up her plans and putting together her production. She (with a little help from Dad) wrapped a story around two Little Tykes people who had to travel to the top of MRJ Lookout Hill. They went through the gate (lever) to board the elevator that was held in its parking spot by a wedge before it was pulled up the hill (inclined plane) by a car (wheel and axle) and a rope with a pulley. The pulley was held in place by a screw.

She must have gone through that presentation for Mommy and Daddy 20 or more times before she had to do it in front of the class. She was committed to getting that story down pat.

And she did.

When it came time to tell her story, she aced it. She was confident in herself and, as a result, she met with great success.

Then I started thinking about the process that led to her success. As it turns out, it is exactly the same process anyone can use to achieve success in their own lives:

Preparation → Confidence → Success

So how do you prepare to achieve even greater success in your own business? Start with these two things:

First, list all the benefits you offer. If you are a marketer, you may list these: you can help your client look good; you can help her sell more; you can take that marketing assignment off her desk, giving her time to do her real job of managing her business; you can give her peace of mind knowing that it will be done right—and whatever other benefits you offer.

All those benefits give people a reason to buy your product or service. But there is one more thing. Why should they buy from you?

You must determine that one reason people should choose you over and above every other

choice, including doing nothing. That's called your *unique selling proposition* (USP) and that's what will make people buy from you.

Then read the list, but especially the USP, many, many, many times. Commit it to memory. Recite it on the way to the office, the hockey game and the kids' dance classes. Get it in your head in a way that you've never had anything in your head before. Know it backwards.

Now, list all the questions your clients could possibly ask—especially the tough ones: Why are you so expensive? How are you better than the next guy? List every objection and every possible query that could ever come up.

Then take the time to write out your answers until you are satisfied that your case is solid. ("You're right, I'm not the cheapest guy in town. But I bring incredible value to the table including..." "We are a better choice for your firm because we don't market to people to inform them or raise awareness. *We market to sell. We help you move more product.*")

When you have these things down pat, you will walk into a client's office with the kind of confidence you can't buy. From there, success isn't just likely, it's inevitable.

It's because you are special

Today, we are going to talk about money—specifically, how you can make more of it. But first, a question and a little audience participation. Why do people buy your products or services or buy into your programs in the first place?

Raise your hand if you think it's because they like your product, service or program.

OK, that's pretty well most of you. Now, how many of you think it's because you have something special to offer? Not quite as many. (I was kidding about the hand thing—put it down, this is an article!)

Well, here's what we think: those special little things you bring to the table are the *only* reasons people hire you. You may not know it and your client may not even realize it, but you were hired because of your—prepare all stations for incoming marketing term!—*unique selling proposition*, or USP.

Any marketing book will tell you that you need a USP, but what they don't tell you is that even if you haven't articulated one, people won't hire you until they see at least one they like. Maybe it was your reputation. Or your prices. Or your expertise. Or your money-back guarantee. Maybe they just like you. Whatever it is, that is why they are hiring you.

If you are going to be chosen because of your USPs, why make people work to find them? Get them out front! Wear them on your sleeve (OK, your letterhead and quote forms). Mention them every chance you get!

For example, we have three USPs. First, a no-risk guarantee for all writing services. If we fail to deliver the writing product they expect, clients don't pay. Very simple. This takes away the biggest obstacle the buyer faces: risk.

Second, we are not just marketers. We are safety/pressure valves. We take those nasty but critical marketing assignments off their desks allowing them to increase sales (or products and services) or participation (in programs) while giving them more time to do their real jobs of managing their businesses.

Third, we genuinely like our clients and we demonstrate that by letting them know that we want to help; that once they turn a project over to us, they don't have to spend another moment worrying about it—it will get done and done well.

So, what's your USP? Why should I buy from you over and above every other choice, including doing nothing?

What's a brand?

Which of the following has an impact on what people think about your company, department or organization:

- a) your advertising
- b) the quality of your products, services or programs
- c) your website, brochures and stationery
- d) the way you answer your telephone
- e) all of the above

There is only one answer: all of the above.

If you are gruff when you answer the telephone or if you have cluttered advertising, they will form an opinion. If you have shoddy products—or great ones—they will form an opinion. And that opinion is your brand.

In other words, your brand is what your clients say it is. Good? Bad? Indifferent? *They decide.*

People are going to have an opinion. Your role is to do everything you can to influence it.

Are you instilling confidence? Are you showing them you excel at what you do and that they are wise to choose you? Do you provide value? Are you standing out from the crowd?

You *do* have a brand. But how that brand is perceived is up to you.

ABOUT US

How it Began

Adams Jette Marketing + Communications began its journey in June 1995 as Tristan Creative, a company of writers, founded by writer, broadcaster and veteran communications expert, Ron Jette.

After running a highly successful freelance-writing business for over a decade, he was having lunch one day with his client and friend, Brenda Adams, herself a veteran marketing professional with an enviable record of achievement in the communications business. As they chatted over Thai food, suddenly, like a bolt of lightning, Ron stood up and said, perhaps even a little too loudly, “excuse me...may I have another beer, please?”

“Certainly, sir,” came the reply. Ron sat down and continued chatting. That having nothing to do with the story, we shall continue...

During the main course—pad Thai and curry chicken, if the rumours are true—the idea was born. Together, Adams and Jette could bring the same level of customer care to a new agency that their clients had been enjoying for years, but with a wider and more comprehensive array of marketing and communication services.

“But what would we call the company?” asked Brenda.

“Good question,” replied Ron. “It has to be simple, it has to reflect our values and give clients a sense that they are dealing with real professionals who look beyond the superficial for answers. It has to tell potential clients, in a word or two, the benefits we offer and how we differentiate ourselves—and it has to roll around on the tongue like a good port,” he continued.

“Or we could just call it Adams Jette,” Brenda offered.

“Good idea,” Jette said enthusiastically. “It’s done, then. Adams Jette it is.”

And off they went.

What We Do

Some people think that because we are in the marketing and communications business, like others in this business, we sell writing and design. While those may be our products, what we really sell is an ability for you to *achieve greater success*.

While other writers may search for a witty phrase, our writers search for a witty phrase that *moves people to action*.

While other graphic designers turn out striking, attention-getting creative, our designers come

up with striking, attention-getting designs that *persuade people to buy—or buy in*.

While others are telling people about you and your product or service, we are telling them *what your product or service can do for them*. Because *that's* what interests them. And *that's* what gets them excited about doing business with you.

So no matter what you are selling—and *you are selling something*—we can help you sell more of it, faster and with less trouble.

So why use our services? Well, for starters, here are...

The Top Five Benefits of Working with Adams Jette

1. Writing that sells

Most marketing companies want to tell your customers about *you*. We want to tell your customers what's in it for *them*. That's what will make them get on board with your product, service or program. We offer text that is inspiring and helps you *moves people to action*.

2. Up-front pricing

No hourly rates, no author's alterations, no surprises. *E v e r*. Each quote includes a final price so you know, in advance, *e x a c t l y* what you get and what it will cost.

3. Quality

Everything is peer-reviewed, polished and checked for quality, understandability and, more than anything else, its ability to sell before it goes out the door.

4. 24/7 Availability

You will get the cellular telephone number of your account executive and the cellular and home telephone numbers of the owners. When you are working, so are we.

5. Experience

Need a website? An annual report? A speech? Direct mail? Our talented and experienced team can deliver exactly what you need.

And if that's not enough, these benefits are pretty unique, too:

6. Knowledge

Our culture of lifelong learning enables us to bring you the very latest in everything from sales approaches and marketing knowledge to design and message delivery.

7. Understanding

Our broad range of experience has given us the ability to climb the learning curve quickly and confidently.

8. Simplicity

Our single point of contact and our formally adopted first-call resolution policy ensure that getting answers is fast and easy.

9. Capacity

Because we have a host of suppliers who help our in-house talent meet the most excruciating deadlines, we can get it done. *N o w.*

CONTACT US

Now you know the thinking behind our work. And you know our objective, too: to *move people to action*.

If you'd like us to help you increase revenues or participation in your programs, contact us NOW!

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