

HOW THE SCORE TEST SHARPENS B2B BRAND MESSAGING

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This article originally appeared
on chiefmarketer.com

Building a brand message – B2B marketing teams know that, unless you’re a massively popular sports equipment manufacturer in Oregon, it’s never as easy as “just do it.”

Your message is the quick and clear articulation of the 30-page manifesto that defines your company’s purpose, your differentiators, your benefits to your industry and the world as a whole. It must stay true to your voice, while resonating with your audience. After all, you only have a few seconds to capture someone’s attention with your tagline, and then only slightly longer for your elevator pitch.



Whether you’re a young company trying to make your mark, or an established company trying to revamp your message, it’s helpful to have benchmarks to validate your message against. That’s why our team developed the **SCORE** test – five measurements to understand how well your message reaches your audiences, and how likely it is to keep them engaged.

SURPRISING

Attention spans are far too short these days for a message to be anything but loud. That doesn't mean your tagline needs to verge on innuendo (unless your target audience appreciates the edginess). It does mean you must understand what messages are floating around the marketplace, and how you can apply your voice differently. You'll only earn someone's attention by offering them a fresh story.

CONTEXTUAL

Just as sales has its funnel, so does messaging – this is an especially important consideration for B2B marketers. Stay too high-level across your messaging, and you risk forfeiting benefits that would catch the eye of someone with deep, technical industry experience. But get too far in the weeds within an elevator pitch and/or boilerplate, and you risk turning off more general, widespread buyers. The latter want to hear more about the business benefits (and usually sign the checks), while the first prefers nitty-gritty details.

Your complete messaging guide should have language that speaks to each of these audiences, and segments into industries as it goes deeper.

Ask yourself:

- Is our elevator pitch strong enough to grab a prospect’s attention in 30 seconds?
- Is our message clear enough to stick in a prospect’s mind a day later?
- Does our tagline strike the right balance between creative and informative?

Ask yourself:

- Will our tagline explain our business value to prospects in just a few clear words?
- Does our core elevator pitch make our company's benefits clear while avoiding industry-specific language?
- Have we developed thorough enough messaging for sales collateral across our target industries to drive conversations after the initial interaction?

ORIGINAL

We often think of taglines as our smallest unit of messaging, but there's a layer deeper, one our audiences don't necessarily see but should feel: the concept. It's the one or two words that summarize your messaging. For example, car manufacturer BMW owns the tagline “The Ultimate Driving Machine,” but its concept is “performance.” The idea flows throughout their ads and commercials. You should start any messaging development by researching your competitors, understanding their owned concept and selecting one that differentiates your brand.

REALISTIC

A killer message gets your customers in the door, but the product and support turn them into true believers. That’s why it’s important your message is an accurate reflection of the customer experience. As you develop your message, let the research be the guide – specifically, the data you gather from interviewing customers as you’re investigating concepts, and again after you’ve drafted the elevator pitch. They can point out language they don’t believe fits their experience and let them tell you whether they believe you can live up to it. Remember, your executive team is probably too close to the product to adequately evaluate the message’s effectiveness. You need outside validation.

ENDURING

Your brand’s goals will evolve, and messages won’t last forever – but the goal should be for your tagline’s/elevator pitch’s relevancy to be measured in years, and your concept should stick around even longer. The first few months of a new message are key to determining whether it will endure, so it’s important you put significant resources behind launching it, both internally and externally. You should also keep an eye on competitor messaging – at least on a yearly basis – to ensure they aren’t trying to steal your concept.

Ask yourself:

- Have we defined a concept (we’re the “future-forward” or the “simplicity” company) and does all brand messaging reflect that perception?
- Do our tagline and elevator pitch clearly highlight competitive differentiators?
- Is there any way our messaging and branding could be mistaken for another company, even if it’s in a completely different industry?

Ask yourself:

- Does our message underpromise OR overpromise our capabilities?
- Have we stress-tested our messaging with customers to ensure they believe it and agree with it? Have we effectively implemented their feedback across our elevator pitch, boilerplate and supporting messages?
- Do we have the data and proof points needed to back up the promises we make with our message?

Ask yourself:

- Do we re-evaluate our messaging each year to ensure it’s aligned with our positioning?
- Do we roll out fresh messaging the same way we would a new product – with a video, sales collateral, employee town hall/webinar, etc.? How can we strengthen our launch process?
- Have we appointed messaging “evangelists” to ensure each department understands how the message relates to them and their role in the business?

DOES YOUR MESSAGE SCORE?

The SCORE test can help you decide where your message is strong and where it could use some support. You might need to review your competitors, re-evaluate your differentiators, or even tap your customers to ensure your language still matches up with how they see your brand. But when your message is surprising, contextual, original, realistic and enduring, it'll have the power to draw customers in and close the sale.

YOUR CORPORATE MESSAGE SHOULD BE

SURPRISING

grabs attention, catchy, provocative even

CONTEXTUAL

tells you what industry it's about, unless that's clear from the company name

ORIGINAL

differentiated, unique, ownable

REAL

true, provable, authentic

ENDURING

lasting

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**WHERE
MARKETING
GENERATES REVENUE**

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