

The Magnificent

Seven ideas that will change the way
you think about running your business



Simply Great Copy Ltd

copywriting for all business communications



Contents

Introduction and what's this got to do with copywriting?

- 1** Employ the best – expect the best
- 2** Pay your way before time
- 3** Do what you know well
- 4** Work don't play
- 5** Customers all want the same whatever you sell
- 6** Over deliver and become valuable
- 7** Managing Perceptions –
The multiplier effect for all your marketing activity



Introduction

Over the past 25 years, I have had the privilege of working with many people, some of which have been outstanding. Most have not, most have been very average.

Average used to be enough, it used to be all you had to be, but those days have long gone. Being average is now no longer an option. Not on the shop floor - not in middle management - and certainly not in leadership roles.

I have also, over my business career, been in a position on a number of occasions of leading and creating the market. I introduced self storage into the UK, can remember when mobile phones were bigger than bricks and cost just less than £2000, and was enthralled by the internet when all we had was a CompuServe string of numbers.

Over the past 25 years, I must have dealt with over 500 individual businesses, as a marketing consultant, advertising executive, internal communications specialists, investor, and owner. Over those years I have picked up a

number of ideas and ways of doing things that worked well individually but together can help sustain any business. None of these ideas will take your breath away, but by doing just one or two of them, I know that any business will really benefit.

In the following pages there are 7 ideas or concepts. I like to call them “The Magnificent 7”. I have seen them all work and change circumstances for the better. One or two of them may be the opposite of what you do now; I hope the explanation I put forward will be enough for you to change.

In order to tempt you to read to the end, I'd like you to think about the fact that three of the most successful people I have ever worked for taught me all of these ideas and concepts included in this report. They were all multimillionaires, loved by their staff, courted by banks, incredibly gifted and balanced people, and a joy to work with. I urge you to take some time out and consider what they have taught me and what they can teach you.



What's this got to do with copywriting and marketing?

You might have expected an e-book that gave insight and pithy tricks of the trade when it comes to producing copy.

Well in my experience the only people who have a genuine interest in these things are other copywriters – and I seldom work for them.

These 7 concepts or ideas are designed to be of value. Just picking up one idea from this report could change the way you operate, and make a significant contribution to your individual and business success.

These ideas and concepts and extensive commercial experience enable me to add value and facilitate change. Helping businesses of all sizes to:-

- Change direction.
- Develop new products or services.
- Find new markets.
- Build new brands.
- Develop existing brands.

- Launch new companies.
- Prepare companies for sale.
- Help change the culture of organisations.
- Develop effective public relations plans.
- Create sales promotion campaigns.
- Create effective relationships throughout the supply chain.

All of the above and many other specific activities I've written for all boil down to two fundamental necessities for every business:-

- Creating and developing sustainable profit through a variety of income streams.
- Creating and maintaining competitive advantage.



1

Employ the best - expect the best

Regardless of the size of business you are running, you may need to employ staff at various levels. When I was in a position for the first time of having to employ staff, the question of budget was at the top of my list. I was very concerned that I employed the very best person for the lowest possible remuneration package. I was working for probably one of the most influential men I have ever worked for then or now, and he taught me something which has made given me more success than all the other ideas that I have included in this short report.

To employ the best you have to pay not just the going rate but significantly above the going rate. On average I would suggest that you work out what the average market salary is for the job you have in mind and add 25%. Even as we move into difficult economic times I would suggest this is still the case. If you pay on average 25% above the going rate you will get the very best staff, and I have found that for every pound I have paid over the market rate the return to the business has been worth every penny.

If you're running a business where your product or service is high margin and low to medium volume why would you want to employ low grade staff? Why would you want just an average accountant or marketing executive? As an example, when I was running part of an advertising agency we had to employ account handlers who also had to be business development specialists. The impact on the business was absolutely critical and when we started to increase the overall remuneration package to well above the norm, the quality of applicants improved

significantly, client retention improved, and agency profitability improved dramatically.

If we had employed staff that were happy to work for an average salary, the business would have failed because one of our competitors would have employed those excellent business development executives, and we would have lost clients and been unable to compete for new ones.

If you don't win competitive business, one of the reasons is that your front line interface with your clients is less able, less motivated, and probably less intelligent than most of your competition. As this recession deepens those businesses that are prepared to allocate resources to improve the interaction with prospects and clients will survive and prosper – any other decision will have serious consequences, especially when growth returns.

So now is the time to think radical thoughts. If you were able to pay your key members of staff 20% more right now which ones would you keep on your books? If the answer is none of them, then you have a problem, because you know that you have average or below average staff. I suspect that one or two of your staff would be worth paying the extra 20% - in my experience now is the time to make sure that if you can, you should engage with them in a positive way, pay them more, expect more of them, or else they will move. If on the other hand, you have staff that you think are not worth the additional salary to keep them, now's the time to think about getting rid of them. Let your competitors suffer. If you can't move them on, change your approach to them and see if you can unlock hidden potential. Look for value.



When you pay above the odds and you get the very best staff, you can confidently expect the best to happen. I have seen this time and time again. Many years ago as part of a boardroom development programme that I was running, I recommended increases in Directors remuneration packages of up to 50%. Within months the whole dynamic of the business had changed. Whereas before board members had been less than interested in the business, now that they were receiving large compensation packages, their focus and energy became apparent, and the result was significant growth and success; which resulted in the business more than doubling in size.

If you are unable to pay above the odds, then look again at your business model, and work on the assumption that your

competitors are probably more successful than you are because they have the best people. Take a long look at the way your business is structured and be very honest with yourself. Many small businesses never grow because the owners cannot get their head around the fact that in order to grow, they may have to pay staff more than they currently earn out of the business.

I have learnt that you are better off using high quality freelancers to develop your business than use average or below average full-time employees. Take a serious look at outsourcing as a way to free up time and costs.

As customers become more sophisticated in their buying habits, employing the very best staff and having the best compensation package is going to be a key requisite for success.



2

Pay your way before time

Cash flow and management of cash flow within a business is a key competence that can make or break any size of company. One of the old fashioned or traditional approaches to cash flow management was to hang to cash within the business for as long as possible - essentially getting free credit from suppliers.

In some industries the ability to take call after call from desperate suppliers and squeeze the life out of them was regarded as a management skill. Those days for some are still here and there are stories every day in the press of companies that have gone to the wall because money they were owed has been deliberately withheld.

Companies which employ cash flow management techniques like this do not understand the damage they do to their company and individual reputations. In fact, in some cases they just don't care and if they are reading this will dismiss what I'm about to suggest as a joke.

When I was building the first self storage businesses in the UK in the early eighties, cash was tight. The shadow directors and investors, monitored cash and cash flow very carefully. One of the problems I was faced with was **the insistence that bills were paid five working days before they were due.** On more than one occasion I was instructed to drive to a supplier to hand over the cheque so that the five day rule was met.

I failed to understand why this was important until the economy changed. Prices were rising and it was only when our suppliers decided to change their prices did I understand how important it was to have a reputation of being an outstanding customer. One of our most important suppliers advised us that prices were to be increased by just under 10% I was instructed to meet with them and ask them to consider reviewing the situation in light of the fact that we were continuing to grow and we had an excellent payment record. I never made it to the meeting because the sales director phoned me to apologise for sending out the standard 10% increase in prices letter and to assure me that because of our excellent and consistent record on payment not only would he not increase our costs by 10%, but he was able to reduce our costs by an additional 5% as our bills were settled significantly faster than others.

When we needed to find new suppliers as our requirements changed they would ask for bank references, take credit references, and we would offer them the opportunity of talking with some of our existing suppliers. Once I got used to playing this game I was able to negotiate discounts on the basis that we have a track record of paying bills before they were due and were very straight and easy to deal with. Our reputation quickly grew, and our costs were always below others.

I have instigated this process in every business I have started, managed or have been invited to provide advice to.



I have also had this idea rejected many times by business owners who still consider screwing suppliers as perfectly legitimate. As we move into very complicated economic times and the impact of electronic payments take hold, the opportunity to maintain and create a different type of relationship with suppliers is on hand. Those companies who sit on suppliers' money will find their negotiating ability severely limited. It is now time for you to consider the advantages of

making the settlement of bills part of your marketing and communications process.

The reality is that you have to pay bills - for the sake of a few days you can either have a reputation that adds value to your business, or you can join the band of old fashioned businesses that pay more in the medium term, have a damaged reputation and are personally vilified by the local business community.



3

Do what you know well

The impact of the web for businesses has still to be fully understood. But one of the major shifts is that consumers now have all the aces. Gone are the days when salespeople had all the information and could use it to wrong foot, confuse and in some cases con prospects. The fact is that every aspect of your business can be fully investigated before you even get into a prospective customer's office.

There are still those who think that with a nice brochure, a half decent website and a bit of confidence they can charge clients for work that they have absolutely no idea how to do. Many mean spirited small service industries suffer from this and frankly it's no different from a dodgy builder or plumber attempting to do a job, taking the money and running away.

To be successful, whether as a line manager, board director, or small business owner my advice is to **do what you do well and if that means changes to what your business does then that is something you have to consider.** I have worked with many businesses that privately acknowledge they have not got a clue what they are doing. They charge for work that they just hope will do. When confronted by clients who suspect they are not getting value for money they often get aggressive and bully the client for being "too demanding."

It is clear to me, and it is increasingly clear to customers, that no one is a "Jack of all trades." The ability of prospects to evaluate the service before committing to purchase, understand what they need, and crucially know what good looks like, will mean that many so called full service providers will fail, because they just can't do it all.

Take an honest look at your business and work out what you really know about and what you blatantly know nothing about. The moment you focus on what you are profoundly competent in, you will legitimise what you are offering and give you a confidence that will delight prospects and clients.

It's time to recognise the advantages of specialisation. Gone are the days when a generalist was seen as having an advantage. If you can be known as a specialist in one or two areas that are highly attractive to customers, then you are on the right track. But you have to be able to deliver, because customers now have all the information they need to make a judgment.

Every customer has a particular buying cycle. That buying cycle determines when interest becomes a search for information and then a review of options and then finally a commitment to purchase.

The moment a prospect makes the decision to purchase they will be looking for that product or service and the internet will guide them to it.

The truth is that nobody nowadays seeks out a business that provides everything; just on the off chance they might have a solution to a problem. Customers now have the option to seek out the specialist especially when they have made the decision to purchase.

This is why it is essential that your business must do what it knows something about. Do what you do well, make it into a niche that you can promote and when customers are ready to buy they will seek you out.



4

Work don't play

Two of my most high-profile jobs were working for our Americans cousins. Now it's possible to have many views on Americans and having dealt with Americans from the East and the West Coast on a commercial basis, I've seen the good and the bad. I have also worked in rural America and have travelled extensively in America and Canada. One of the things I learnt from one of the most successful entrepreneurs I had the privilege of spending time with, and who was from the East Coast, was that **when you're at work - work**. He was well into his sixties when we worked together and his productivity was quite incredible.

He showed me that during the working day it was possible to cover an awful lot of ground. One of his main concerns about developing a business in the UK was the European mindset that mixed work and play. I soon learnt that I could clear my desk of work about half the time it took me in previously.

If you find yourself procrastinating about decisions, constantly writing out lists of things to do, or just sitting there confused and unable to do the next job, moaning about stress - then I suggest to you that the situation can be radically changed when you stop mixing work and play.

It takes time but when you focus on the task at hand and get it done, and can do this repeatedly throughout the day, after a few days you'll see just how much time you have wasted in the past.

Getting a coffee, popping in on a colleague, making personal calls, checking the news on the internet, is all a waste of working time.

The other advantage of actually working during the working day is that makes playtime so much better. When all the work has been done, there is nothing left but to have fun and relax. It may well be that others within your organisation don't know how to work either - that's a real problem, but that's all part of working and not playing.

The blurring of work time and playtime is a significant problem for small businesses. I do not have all the answers to this but I do know that if you are able to focus on the task at hand and separate out work time and playtime, your individual productivity will go through the roof.

I don't think techniques really work when it comes to this issue. I think what really works is being brutally honest about your attitude to your business or your job. That American entrepreneur was able to work so effectively that he easily ran three businesses at the same time.

What I thought originally was an incredible amount of work he expected me to deal with each day soon became immensely achievable. No techniques, no special tricks, no hiding away in a quiet office, it was just a state of mind.

Try it. Try going to work over the next two months with an attitude that differentiates between work and play. Acknowledge to yourself when you are sat there in front of your PC screen watching the news, that this is playtime and what you have actually done is either rob your boss, or just simply wasted time which could have been spent developing your business.

It really is all about being honest with yourself, stop rationalising, and start working.



5

Customers all want the same whatever you are selling

It doesn't matter what product or service you provide, customers always want the same thing.

It's got nothing to do with price, it's got nothing to do with availability, and in fact it's got nothing to do with the product or service that you are providing.

Customers all want the same thing, they want a solution to the problem they have or think they have.

This was one of the things I learnt in the early days of the internet. The reason why it was so difficult to get people to buy in to use the service was that nobody had a problem. It was only when the early adopters began to achieve some clear competitive advantage, and this caused a problem for their competitors, that the internet really took off as a business tool.

This is a key piece of learning and one which thankfully I learnt very early on in my business career. I was shown that by describing various problems that my prospective customers either had or thought they had, and by showing them a solution, I made more sales.

It certainly was an improvement on simply bashing on about features and benefits.

This approach works whether it's a small or large value sale. If you can identify what the problem is for the customer and get them appreciate you have a solution, then they buy and you can stop selling.

This is where education marketing is such a powerful communications approach, and one that I use in the majority of my work.

In a world where increasingly customers are refusing to be sold to because they know they can buy 24/7, your business must present itself as a problem solver rather than a simplistic product or service provider relying on mass e-mailers, networking and cold calling.

One of the ways in which this can be achieved is through the use of case studies as part of your marketing and communications collateral. Case studies are a wonderful way of telling a story that prospective clients can identify with and see how your solution can address their own situation. In some cases they can highlight problems that have previously gone unnoticed.

A well written case study that describes the problem and the search for a solution, and then the joy and finding that solution with a particular company makes for riveting reading.

Take time out to write down what it is your product or service does and then work out what problem it solves.

If your advertising and marketing communications messages are still banging on about features and benefits then you're missing a major opportunity.



6

Over deliver and become valuable

So here we are in an environment of economic uncertainty and the question is who is going to survive. It is my opinion, that it is those individuals and businesses that become valuable to their customers that will continue to flourish and develop.

One of the best ways to do this is to have an understanding of how you or your business is perceived by your customers or clients, and to nurture that perception.

It is not enough just to do the task at hand, and then invoice the customer. Doing enough is not enough anymore, because others do more and are constantly raising customer expectations. Just giving “good value”, more money service or product offer is not going to be enough anymore.

Now the old fashioned mindset of doing more for less is something which causes great distress. The problem here is that significant number of low quality business owners still operate on the basis of short changing customers and delight in ripping them off, rather than providing customers with outstanding customer service.

Thankfully as this recession bites even harder these organizations will crumble and disappear. The main reason is that there are many many new companies who go the extra mile at every level of the organisation and make customers feel really special.

The moment your customer needs you and wants to work with you to develop new opportunities is the moment you have actually succeeded and have become valuable.

It is not enough just to fulfill an order at the right time at the right price, it is not enough to do just

enough, this is the time we have to go the extra mile to provide that extra service - do something extra within the cost model that ensures your customers really recognise you as a valued supplier.

This can easily be achieved by building in flexibility into the cost structure. I recommend that within the pricing structure a small percentage is included that enables your business to go the extra mile without having to be constantly concerned about the cost implications.

I recommend that this small percentage is then used on a regular basis in such away that the customer feels that they are special, and that you really value their business.

Having in the past used this technique with clients pricing strategy, it was possible on a regular basis to provide senior sales staff with the ability to allocate cash to a particular clients specific interests. This was highly regulated but worked exceptionally well. Clients would during a business relationship identify charitable interests that were important to them, and it was then possible to show support throughout the year. The beauty of this pricing strategy was that these amounts were built in from the outset. The joy was that the pricing strategy included this so in effect the clients were getting back something that was built into the price structure anyway.

The effect was to reinforce the relationship and change the perception of the supplier – they had become valued partners.

This is just one example of how you should consider ways of becoming more than just a supplier; and shows how the correct pricing structure can help deliver to the customer more than just the service or product they are paying for.



7

Managing Perceptions – The multiplier effect for all your marketing activity

After over 25 years of working with numerous clients in many different market sectors including the legal sector, I've had the opportunity to observe why some companies are consistently better than others. Sometimes it's down to budget, sometimes it's just luck and a good judgment call on the day, but I know one factor that always always differentiates great companies from just good companies.

Great businesses are ones that embrace marketing at every level of the organization and are led by a senior management team that fully appreciate the power of creating and managing perceptions.

Here's a simple example based on a real client that I am working with at the moment. A mid-sized practice going through a non conflict management buy-out (MBO) - until the owner decided at the last minute to change the deal and demand more cash up front and shorten the earn out period.

My role at the time was to create marketing strategy for the new organization, but I was faced with clients that were angry, bitter, and distracted. My advice was to get them to realise that all the staff were looking to the new team for more than just new marketing ideas and a change of management.

They had to understand that the perception they created at this difficult time would make or break the deal and define their new position as owners once the deal was completed. I made it clear that if the new team understood the power of managing perceptions not only would the problem of the change in the deal be reduced, but critically the whole organization would continue and be confident.

Doing this meant starting with how the new team came into the office. No long faces as they got out of the car and walked into the reception area.

Confident posture and smiling faces – time with reception staff and lots of visibility throughout the organization. When approached and asked how the MBO was going the same response – all was well and going forward. There were many times when that new team was under the most extraordinary personal pressure, but they managed the internal perceptions and the MBO was completed.

In your own practice, if your marketing messages say one thing but your own leadership style say another, then at best you are wasting money, but in my view you are destroying your business.

How the senior team is perceived has a powerful “multiplier” effect on all your marketing activity.

All your employees must see and experience the same values that you promise to your clients.

How can you be confident that your employees will deliver outstanding customer service, if you manage them with threats, sanctions and fear?

The answer in my experience is that many owners and senior managers just don't care, because they see marketing as all external. They smile for the press and say the right things to the right people, then go back and create dissonance within their organizations. They wonder why their staff churn is high, and customer satisfaction levels are not consistent, they spend more on marketing than others in their industry, and they make less profit.

So, the next time you get out of the car and scowl your way into the office, ignore the reception and junior staff, sit at your big desk and shout at people, whilst smiling at your biggest client – think about how you are perceived within your company. I guarantee if you don't manage your internal and external perceptions so that they mirror each other – you are building inertia and reducing confidence within your business, making you less competitive, and reducing your ROI on everything you spend on marketing.



So what are you going to do now you know about The Magnificent 7?

“Action may
not always
bring happiness,
but there is
no happiness
without action”

Benjamin Disraeli

So you’ve read a little and have been amused, irritated, confused, or perhaps bored.

May I suggest you consider the following:-

- You can carry on paying low wages and wondering why your business is failing and you lose more customers than you gain, or you check out why you should be paying more and expecting more than the best.
- You can carry on chiseling suppliers by paying them later and later, and then wonder why your reputation stinks, and you never get the best prices or service.
- Now is the time to focus on what you know you are really good at, and not try to compete where you have little or no skills
- You can come into your place of work and do nothing of value. You can sit at your desk with your fancy title and car parking space, and just waste time. Or you can get down to work and start to achieve something.

- Why should you learn new sales and marketing communications skills – you were top of the sales tree and knew all about features and benefits – you were the best then and still are – or are you?
- You can be proud that you always short change your clients and screw them at every opportunity – why would any business do any different? Though some do, and they are more successful.
- And finally, who the hell wants a long term relationship with their customers. Get in, get out, take the money that’s the way to do it. Or is it?

If you run your business to this creed then you are in the last chance saloon and sinking fast. All I can say is bon voyage. If on the other hand you can grasp just a little of what is included in these pages then I can assure you of every success.



Simply Great Copy Ltd

copywriting for all business communications

www.simplygreatcopy.com

Designed by: **Brandaj**
design.co.uk

This document is designed to get you thinking, it is not specific advice but ideas and observations that are expressed to challenge and provoke. The ideas developed in 'The Magnificent 7' are general and as such cannot be taken to have any guarantee of outcome. If you wish to develop any of the ideas for your own business then have fun; and if you want any help then just get in touch. Simply Great Copy takes no liability for any actions that may arise from reading this document, and that includes you getting cross and or being even more successful than you are at the moment!



Simply Great Copy Ltd

copywriting for all business communications

www.simplygreatcopy.com

Designed by: **Brandall**
design.co.uk