

Alternatives
to the
obvious



PAGE 2

<< What CMS
do you use?

SIDE B

A headline is
a promise: why
you should
keep it!

OTHER SIDE

Issuing an
RFP?: Prioritize
planning

GORDERLY QUARTERLY

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gordongroup MARKETING + COMMUNICATIONS

SINCE 1987

MARKETING STRATEGY

Tried, tested, and true: How direct marketing can help create new revenue streams



Direct marketing is sometimes thought of as a thing of the past—a dated tactic pushed aside in favour of social media and more in-your-face marketing that we tend to see today. At gordongroup, we disagree. In fact, we consistently achieve success for our clients using this time-honoured marketing tactic, especially for clients in the non-profit sector. It's a highly personalized, back-to-basics marketing approach that leverages a strategic combination of personality, scripting, targeted emails—and the good old-fashioned telephone—to create an effective person-to-person interaction that delivers results every time.

Organizations in the non-profit, association, and government sectors have mandates to identify, reach out, inform, and engage their target audiences in order to get them to make some sort of “commitment”—to renew a membership, make a donation, provide funding, sponsor or pay for an event, register in a program, submit a proposal, and the list goes on. The funding from these engagements is required in order to subsidize their core operations and achieve their goals. But unlike private businesses, non-profits and associations typically don't have a dedicated sales team that focuses on sourcing, selling, and securing a revenue-

generating commitment, yet those revenue streams are essential to the stability and sustainability of the organization. This is where outsourcing Direct Marketing to a team of professionals can make the difference. From administering member or donor fundraising campaigns to securing annual dues or donations, soliciting sponsorship dollars for special events to creating new revenue streams through a sound contract publishing model, outsourcing can fill a critical niche and get the job done.

One effective tool gordongroup uses to create non-dues revenue—and drive

value for both members and their association—is through the publication of a print and/or digital Association Directory. These directories are excellent resources for showcasing an industry sector, profiling an association and its members, and are excellent as give-aways at meetings, conferences, international trade missions and other such venues.

Our custom publishing model pays for itself and creates much-needed revenue through the profit sharing of sales driven by our highly-specialized Direct Marketing team—without the risk and upfront investment traditionally needed to design such a high-production value publication. Effective Direct Marketing teams can expertly reach and engage audiences, frame the conversation, and close the “commitment.” Event guides are another custom publishing tool that gordongroup offers, and that uses the same business and revenue-generating model.

On the public sector side of the house, Canada has hundreds of agencies, crown corporations, and departments at all levels of government—many of which have specific mandates to reach out and support specific businesses, sectors of the economy, non-profit organizations, and even individuals. Here again, outsourcing a Direct Marketing initiative can make the difference in program uptake, and help administrators reach their performance targets. Rather than take the “if we build it they will come” approach, Direct Marketing actively sources and engages target audiences in order to secure program applicants, participants, and their “commitment,” such as a proposal or a registration.

To explore how gordongroup can leverage Direct Marketing to generate revenue or garner that “commitment” for your organization, please contact Melanie at 613-234-8468 x 225 or at mwilliams@gordongroup.com.

QUOTE OF THE QUARTER

Content precedes design.
Design in the absence of
content is not design,
it's decoration.

Jeffrey Zeldman



TIPS 101

INCREASE YOUR CLICK THROUGH RATE (CTR) ON TWITTER



Tweeting is easy—that's why people and organizations love doing it. Sending a tweet that gets noticed, however, is a little more difficult. Creating clickable tweets with a high CTR will help you engage with your followers and spread your message further.

One of the best ways to increase your CTR is by including a link. Link clicks account for 92% of all user interaction with tweets. Consider these other five tips to get started:

1 Use Clear Language

Your followers are quickly scanning their feeds, not carefully reading each tweet. Capture their attention by using language that is simple, clear, and direct.

2 Use Verbs

Verbs are more interesting than nouns. Studies have shown that seeing or listening to a verb causes the body's motor system to react. It's no surprise, then, that tweets with verbs improve CTR. Think of verbs such as *learn*, *see*, or *click*, which suggest an action.

3 Include Images

Pictures tell stories and add context to your tweets, making them more interesting. Use images whenever you can. People will be drawn to them and your CTR will improve as a result.

4 Use Hashtags (#Marketing)

They'll help your tweet be seen by more people. Just be careful not to use too many. Studies show you should use only one or two hashtags to get the best results.

5 Ask for Action

A call to action is as important to twitter as it is for any successful marketing campaign. Be sure to ask people to do something on the page where you are directing them.

Competition in the Twitter world is fierce. Do all you can to make some noise and get those clicks!

WHAT WOULD gordon DO?

Q I've heard a lot about why all PDFs should be made accessible. Is it important?

A Accessible PDFs are important because accessibility means ensuring people with disabilities can read your content. If your documents aren't available to them, you could be missing out on new clients and skilled employees. What's more, accessible PDFs are soon to be the law in Ontario. The new regulations will apply to most communications by the start of 2017, but could apply sooner.

You'll want to be sure your PDF works well with screen reading software and screen magnifying technology. This usually requires inserting tags into your PDFs. The tags don't change the look of your product, but are used to help screen reading software navigate easily through the document.

Ensuring everyone has the ability to read your message is vital. Make your documents assessible ASAP. It will earn you the thanks of the people who couldn't otherwise read them, and give you the edge over less progressive companies.

 **If you have a question for gordon**
please send it to rnettleton@gordongroup.com



COMMUNICATIONS

The importance of connecting live: Sales bedrocks in a digital age

Many of us had the sales bedrocks explained to us by a grandparent or successful “uncle”—the importance of a first impression, a firm handshake, confident eye contact and tone of voice, a smile and a brisk walk that let people know business is good and time is money. In short, if you were lucky, someone taught you how to sell yourself in person, build a solid reputation and develop meaningful business relationships.

I was taught that “people buy from people,” so the advice was to sell yourself, then your products or services. As I think about my iPhone apps that allow me to



text, Tweet, Follow, Facebook message or LinkedIn, I can't help but wonder if the growing convenience of connecting electronically might be affecting the will and determination of marketers to speak with clients live.

Today you can reach potential clients, submit proposals, make presentations and promote products and services without ever having seen or spoken to your potential client(s) *in real time*. In fact, a recent article suggested that, in an era when text messaging has become all-pervasive, people are increasingly perceiving phone calls—even from people they know—to be unnecessary and unwelcome. Such observations beg several questions: is live interaction with clients really that important today? Are the sales bedrocks still applicable? Do people still buy from people? My answer is a resounding ‘Yes!’ to all of the above.

So, what are the benefits to live interactions?

- You can *hear* your clients explain their organization's needs and goals. While you can get a sense of these things from the company website, emails or news bulletins,

hearing it live gives you more of a sense of the company's culture. And you'll get a better understanding of the company's weaknesses and challenges, which are not likely to be online. All this information will be incredibly important when crafting solutions.

- You can convey a better sense of your own organization's history, identity and vision.
- If your competitors rely on their well-developed websites and electronic portfolios, your live presentations can be *the* competitive edge that lands you business.
- You can put the sales bedrocks to work: shake hands firmly, smile, and make eye contact. People buy from people they know, like and respect, and they will buy from you time and time again if you can build and cultivate strong professional relationships.

Electronic communications can be excellent tools for maintaining relationships and keeping clients up to date about your organization's offerings; but when it comes to developing new clients, nothing is more important than live interaction. When you win that precious time to communicate live, the sales bedrocks will help you make the most of it.

CMS: ALTERNATIVES TO THE OBVIOUS



In the web development community, it seems that “building a website” has become synonymous with Wordpress. This is especially true when talking to small- to mid-sized business owners. While Wordpress is an excellent CMS platform with all of the community support you could ever want, other options do exist and should be given proper consideration.

The largest competitor in the CMS landscape is Drupal, which is noted for how well it scales with various website sizes. Drupal was released in 2001 and has been growing ever since. This open source platform allows much more back end management than Wordpress through the use of modules, blocks, and views. Put simply, Drupal gives you a robust set of features that can be tweaked until they suit your needs. Obviously some sites don't need this robustness, in which case Wordpress may be a more attractive route.

I would be remiss if I talked about small- to mid-sized business web presence without mentioning e-commerce. While e-commerce on Wordpress is doable, a

noteworthy alternative exists. Shopify is an Ottawa-based company that has grown exponentially in the last few years. Its e-commerce system comes with features such as inventory management, payment options, and a comprehensive coding language to help you customize your theme. These features, in addition to their dedicated support team, make Shopify a bright spot not only in the Ottawa web industry, but in the web industry as a whole.

While considering a new website, organizations and businesses should do a bit of research and find the CMS best suited to their needs. Wordpress may be a tried and tested platform that has earned its place in the market, but alternatives exist which are certainly worth looking at.

KING OF CONTENT

A short guide to building a better hook for your reader

Do you want to know what gets people excited to read your writing? It's the same thing that keeps you turning the pages of the latest thriller until you discover the murderer. It's also the reason “10 Ugly Insects” will inevitably get way more click-through than “Pictures of Bugs.” It all comes down to creating headlines or titles that make a strong promise to the reader—a weak promise just won't do.

Be consistent: Never leave a promise hanging. Delivering on every promise you make builds trust that you can carry onto future projects. This is why established authors can make careers writing novels. They have a following that trusts them to deliver every time.

Use numbers: When in doubt, make a list. A numbered list is one of the easiest things to deliver on. If your headline reads “10 ways to make strong promises (and how to keep them!),” that's a strong promise. The reader sees it and prepares to receive your 10 tips. As long as you can deliver all 10, you're golden. We see this happening all over the Internet, but this simple strong promise has a lot of power to deliver information—especially dry stuff that's hard to package any other way.

Think small: Don't confuse a strong promise with a large promise. If you try to drag readers too far on one hook they will lose interest before the big reveal. If you use a series of little promises to catch the reader's attention you can build momentum that urges them through every word. As an added bonus, whenever you deliver on a promise, you build trust and make your next promise stronger.

Go read your introductory paragraph, or your headline, or whatever you're using to grab the reader's attention. See if you can use it to answer these three questions:

- What promise have I made to the reader?
- What reason have I given the reader to trust I can deliver on my promise?
- How will I deliver on my promise to the reader?

If you come up with a confident answer to all three questions, chances are you've got a strong promise. Readers believe a strong promise will be delivered the moment they read it. They trust the author. How the author builds that trust depends on the style, message, and purpose of the piece. That said, there are some general tricks that work in almost any medium:

I promise...

FROM GORDONGROUP'S BLOG | By Robert Chitty

Issuing an RFP: Make planning a priority

As an agency that specializes in building brands for clients, we generally encounter three different client scenarios: clients that begin the process of brand development without a plan; clients that recognize they need a plan, but require guidance; and clients that have already completed a plan and are itching to get started. In each of these scenarios, clients may choose to issue a request for proposal (RFP) to solicit the branding expertise of a reputable agency.

If your organization is looking to engage an agency to support your brand development or market outreach efforts, consider making the planning process a priority when pulling together your RFP:

Know what your vision and requirements are for design

We all know that great design drives innovation, but it has also become a loose term for what is considered to be the general flow of noise that is ubiquitous in people's lives today. In an RFP, knowing what is meant by “design” is crucial, and supports the bidding process inasmuch as it ensures there is alignment between what is expected and what is ultimately provided.

Is your request for design a simple one-off design project to fit into a larger pre-existing campaign? Or are you looking for an agency to design a visual campaign for you; an agency that understands design literacy and the integral role of design as a construct embedded within your organization's culture? Being clear in these expectations will help ensure that the submissions you receive are consistent with what is requested and the price is accurately reflective of that need.

Will you provide compensation for creative concepts?

When submitting a bid, sometimes agencies are requested to submit original ideas or creative concepts. In our



experience, providing an original idea or validating current trends or an organization's strengths or weakness serves as clear indicators of how much passion exists for a project. If an agency is able to demonstrate their passion, clear talent and enthusiasm at the proposal stage, imagine the final product after you award them with the contract. And certainly, these original ideas can appear as a bonus to the client, especially when compared against other bidders that simply template their offer and bring little knowledge of the client's DNA or assessment of the organization's present and future state.

However, requesting designs at the RFP stage comes at a cost of time and resources that doesn't always result in a winning contract, meaning those agency's take a hit to their bottom line each time. In some situations, clients who request ideas or concepts may opt to offer a small budget to make it worth delivering some conceptual thinking, but this is rarely the case. This cash outlay—offered in the RFP stages of an engagement—is a decent and ethical practice that would inspire greater willingness for bidders to provide high quality original concepts that would enhance the final proposal by way of adding context and demonstrating value for dollars. It's something to consider, especially if you're seeking high quality bids.

Are the key players or decision makers in agreement?

Since an organization is complex and comprised of many factors—not limited to a wide range of personalities, leadership styles, governance rituals, experts in various disciplines and politics—investing in the communications and marketing expertise of an external agency ultimately must be supported from all of the key players and decision makers who are involved in the final approval process.

The person in charge at the beginning must have the support of those across the organization and demonstrate an acute ability to balance the range of issues that emerge in order to get the job done, all the while avoiding costly delays, alterations and internal conflicts, and making sure that each precious dollar goes directly towards creating a highly tuned campaign that has impact.

As you can see, there is a lot more to drafting and issuing an RFP than just writing it. Communicating your vision and expectations to prospective bidders as accurately and clearly as possible can save you a lot of time, stress, and ultimately, money.

gordongROUP

Contact us at any time to discuss how we can help you achieve your business goals.

T 613.234.8468
334 CHURCHILL AVENUE NORTH
OTTAWA, ON K1Z 5B9
GORDONGROUP.COM

twitter.com/gordon_group
facebook.com/gordongroup