

10 Steps to Creative Clarity

Build a Brilliant Brief
Crack a Creative Concept
Create Great Content

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CREATIVE CLARITY

WITH THANKS TO

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Anything that's still crap in here is all down to me.





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CREATIVE CLARITY


BRANDS • PARTNERS • LEADERS

WHO IS IT FOR?

STEP 1.

If you say it's for everyone, you're in trouble. There is no such group as everyone any more. There probably never was. You can only categorise people by their tribe.





These tribes are hundreds, thousands or even millions of individuals from anywhere and everywhere. They are wildly diverse people who happen to like the same niche, activities, products, services, brands, hobbies, music, movies or ideas.

Each of these tribes is purely circumstantial and occupational; none of them requires precisely the same information as another tribe in your audience.

None of them will engage with your content or respond to your call to action in the same way.

Propelling Questions

Should you deliver different information, inspiration and expectations to each group?

Is there a unique angle, emphasis or tone you can use with these disparate groups?

Do you need to communicate the same message to all of them at the same time?

Is it worth testing some of your answers to the above questions with some representatives from these groups before you move to full-on creative?




WHAT DO YOU WANT TO SAY?

CREATIVE CLARITY STEP 2.

This should be fairly straightforward, right?
Not so much...





You want to communicate a novel way of doing things.
You need to share a piece of information about some
HR update or policy review.

You want to launch a new product, invite feedback,
introduce an innovative piece of training, a fresh
marketing initiative, sales drive, or encourage some
critical culture change.

No piece of communication is one-dimensional. There is
always a subtext. A layer of meaning behind the
message. Recognise it and make it intentional.

When you know the subtext, you have a better chance
of framing your communication. You buy yourself a
potential theme and a way to align to some higher
purpose or meta-strategy.

Propelling Questions

What is the underlying issue you need to address?

Are you trying to develop a relationship you haven't
attempted before?

Are you responding to an issue that has negatively
affected productivity or efficiency?

Is there some corporate imperative or business strategy
you need people to support?

Is what you're saying a cause for celebration
or deliberation?

To get more significant response and engagement, look
at the subtext of what you want to say, and fold that
layer of deeper meaning into the messaging.

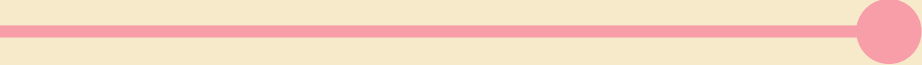


WHAT DO YOU WANT THEM TO DO?

CREATIVE CLARITY STEP 3.

There are many reasons for communicating with people within your organisation, or outside customers and clients. Not all are transactional, but all should have some underlying expectation on your part.





There's no point calling for behavioural change without reasons or incentives. Identify the exact response you want and make sure your comm reflects that need.

If your communication is just information, expect only increased awareness at best.

Do not expect increased understanding, appreciation, or any attitudinal or behavioural change.

Propelling Questions

If you want your audience to buy a product or service, have you made it easy by providing a buying link?

If you want an audience to buy into an idea and act accordingly, have you presented a clear call to action?

Can you add a response incentive – a simple question with a yes/no button linked to a lucky draw with an inexpensive prize?

If you are looking for attitudinal or behavioural change, make sure the communication is not the first you are sending out. Seed the psychological landscape to harvest measurable impact.




WHAT'S IN IT FOR THEM?

CREATIVE CLARITY STEP 4.

The notion that people will respond to any message or communication simply because you want them to, is deeply flawed.





As in fiction, so in life – nobody does anything for nothing. If there is no personal benefit to a feature, the feature holds no attraction. It is inert. Meaningless.

You have to bake "What's In It For Me" into any communication. It can be something profound, useful, personal, or merely enjoyable.

When you are empathetic to your audience, it is easier to come up with a decent WIIFM offering.

Propelling Questions

Are you helping a person keep their job, do their job better, or make their job easier?

Can you promise improved performance or productivity could lead to increased remuneration, promotion or some other incentive, recognition or rewards?

Are you offering authentic evidence to support the promised benefit and opening up the opportunity for genuine feedback?

If there is no financial, physical or psychological benefit to the recipient of your communication, at least fall back on aesthetics or entertainment.




WHY SHOULD THEY BELIEVE YOU?

CREATIVE CLARITY STEP 5.

Honesty is the basis of any meaningful, effective and engaging communication. If you are not being honest, you might enjoy some short-term results, but you will always lose out in the long-run.





You will lose the trust of your audience. They will treat everything you communicate afterwards with skepticism at best or discard it as deceit at worst.

Being honest is not about "spinning" the truth or being "economical" with it.

Propelling Questions

Are you over-promising a benefit, or underestimating a cost in money, time or effort required?

Do you need to tackle a credibility issue, or is your audience receptive to your messaging?

Could you establish credentials or build belief through authentic endorsements by respected individuals, or positive testimonials from influencers?

Even if you are communicating a vision of a brighter future that should appeal to everyone, you will need to add empirical support to soothe the skeptics in your audience.

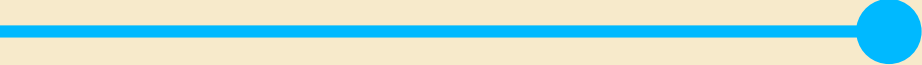


ARE YOU USING THE RIGHT MEDIUM?

CREATIVE CLARITY STEP 6.

It's tempting to think of every brief or concept as the cure-all for every challenge you face.





Whatever communication you are working on is not the only chance you have to tackle every issue you need to address.

By cramming information that does not align to the imperative, you weaken impact, dilute meaning, confuse the messaging, limit response, hamper engagement and defuse action.

The biggest victim of this is the corporate video. A video can die on the screen and kill any engagement when stuffed with information better suited to a live presentation or brochure.

Propelling Questions

What do you want your audience to do after engaging with the communication?

Are you trying to use an emotive medium to convey a rational message?

How can you separate what you need to say into a content media mix that can say it best?

Are you throwing everything into one communication and hoping for the best?




WHAT'S DIFFERENT THIS TIME?

CREATIVE CLARITY STEP 7.

So, you're having another awards gala. Launching a new version of an existing product. Reintroducing the corporate values. Reaffirming the business strategy. Reminding people about the codes of conduct. Or putting together any kind of communication that you have produced many times before.

Big sigh? Not necessarily!





People in business have talked for generations about the pace of change and how to keep up with it.

This change, these evolutions and revolutions, the disruptions and developments that touch every aspect of life can work for you when you are creating any kind of 'another' communication.

You can use all the changes that have happened over any year, month, or even a week to give a fresh angle or a new context to whatever it is you need to say (again).

The best creatives deal with the same brief repeatedly, and they always find fresh angles or new directions to make every communication solution unique.

Propelling Questions

Can this year's annual awards gala theme draw on some significant local, regional, international or corporate development?

What exactly inspired that tweak to the old product or service?

When and where have the corporate values been tested recently?

What shifting realities have impacted the business strategy and how?




WHAT'S THE ZEITGEIST?

CREATIVE CLARITY STEP 8.

Every communication has a context within the organisation, but also exists in relation to the outside world. "Zeitgeist" is this bigger picture influence.





At the time of writing, Covid-19 is dominating the consciousness of the planet.

But linked to the pandemic are other layers of meaning such as emotional suffering, social anxiety, fake news, criminalisation of personal habits, remote working, corporate agility, the pivoting of skills and resources.

Propelling Questions

What elements of the zeitgeist might influence your communication right now?

What is the biggest, most influential TV series, or movie, or other cultural event?

What are the topics of conversation around the real or virtual watercooler?




CAN YOU USE A METAPHOR OR STORY?

CREATIVE CLARITY STEP 9.

There is a lot of talk about corporate “storytelling” as a device for communications, but is it right every single time?





The potential of appropriately crafted storytelling is too enormous to go into here, but it is worth considering some of its elements for creating briefs and creative solutions.

An audience engaged in a story is more receptive than one hearing facts, for sure.

A story is a gift. It gives you the possibility to come at issues in a roundabout way – with themes that are universal and engaging.

It also allows your audience to view their reality in ways that provide fresh perspectives.

Propelling Questions

Could you apply a metaphor to your communication?

Is there some parallel reality that could carry your messages?

Could you build on or extend an existing story that relates to your issue?

What story genre does your communication most closely resemble?

Is there a fable that could frame your message?

If not, what makes it a story?




THE ONE THING YOU WANT THEM TO DO?

CREATIVE CLARITY STEP 10.

Sure, it would be great if everybody remembered everything you said, but just in case it's good to have a single-minded objective.





With any communication, people take out one, maybe two, possibly three things, max. You want to make sure they take out what you intended to put in.

You don't want your audience to interpret what they think you were trying to say. You need to be crystal clear about your fundamental point, and up to two supporting points.

Once you decide on that critical point, you can support it with evidence that lends credibility.

Then theme it, frame it, coach it, or set it in a meaningful context, with creative that is memorable, in a medium that suits the message.

Propelling Question

What is that one single most important thing you need your audience to think, feel, know or do?




CAN I ASK SOMETHING OF YOU?

AFTERWORD

Please drop me a line and let me know if any of this was useful.





I will appreciate any feedback, cherish positive reviews on social media, and view briefs as precious opportunities.

Propelling Questions

What were the weakest parts that I need to rework?

What else would you like to see changed or reworked?

What issues or obstacles do you deal with that I left out?

Thanks!

Nick





**“If it's not clear,
it's not creative.”**

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