

## The Funny Side of Marketing

Have you heard the one about humor in print marketing? It's more effective than you might think. Humor is one of the best ways to differentiate your product or service, making your message memorable and increasing your visibility.

Information alone is not enough to sell your product. Otherwise everything would be communicated in black-and-white text. We live in a colorful, high-definition world with constant clutter, so your message has to engage customers for them to hear it. Humor is a powerful relationship-marketing tool that helps you stand out. However, unless you balance it with the right amount of information, your prospects will remember the gag and forget the product.

Use humor properly and you will transform your business-as-usual communications without turning your message into a joke.

> **Keep humor in its place.** Your product or service should be front and center. Use humor to get the customer to stick around long enough to hear your message. It should enhance your communication, not overwhelm it.

> **Funny is subjective.** There is no objective measure for what makes good or bad marketing humor. In general, it should be amusing, relevant and in good taste. It doesn't have to appeal

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## ARE YOU TOP OF MIND?

Quick! Name a soft drink. Chances are you thought of Coke or Pepsi. These beverage giants have spent millions in advertising with the goal of being at the top of your mind. You can repeat this exercise in any product category—tennis racquets, carpet cleaners or ballpoint pens, for example. If someone asked your customers to name a company in your product category, would you be top of mind?

Top-of-mind-awareness, or TOMA, is a traditional measure of marketing effectiveness. Brands with a high level of unaided recall have a distinct competitive advantage. You will be the first—and maybe only—source your prospect thinks of when it's time to purchase. TOMA strongly correlates to brand preference, which correlates to increased market share. Low TOMA might be the result of misdirected marketing. Perhaps your message had little exposure to your target population as a result of poor media selection, or weak messaging simply didn't capture their attention.

### Ways to achieve and maintain TOMA

> **Find your unique selling proposition.**

Consider what makes your company special, whether it's price, product availability, location, quality or speed, so you can clearly articulate it to your prospects. This exercise is more difficult for businesses selling in a crowded product category so consider creating your own niche. 7UP conceived the "Uncola" label so they no longer would have to compete head-to-head with the colas. Once you've created solid positioning language, stick with it even if you get tired of it. 7-UP used the Uncola line for three decades!

> **Be consistent in design.** Make sure everything from your Web site to your customer literature to your stationery has a similar look and feel. Use templates to ensure that your image is constant.

> **Proactively send messages into the market.** It is the frequency of customers

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## Coming Events

January 29-31  
**DAKOTA NATION  
 WINTER FESTIVAL**  
 Keystone Centre

February 4-6  
**LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR'S  
 WINTER FESTIVAL**  
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February 11-14 & 18-21  
**MAPLE LEAF VICTORIA INN  
 TOURNAMENT OF  
 CHAMPIONS**  
 Keystone Centre & Sportsplex

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 event listings.

## Are you top of mind?

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hearing your company's name, product or service that will make them take action and buy from you. While a one-time advertising blitz can get your message out quickly to a large number of prospects, you will build credibility and stay in customers' thoughts with a series of timely communications. There are a number of print solutions that can help you achieve your goals.

> **Use multiple communication tools.** Each marketing element should support the one that came before. Direct mail is particularly effective in reinforcing a personal bond between your company and your customer. Send a customized letter giving your best prospects

the inside track on a new product or an upcoming promotion. Follow up with a postcard or brochure when the product is available or the promotion launches, then send a note of thanks when the client makes a purchase.

> **Timing is everything.** You must strategically plan repeated communications so customers perceive you as a provider of useful information rather than an intrusive pest. This requires both organization and dedication.

Gaining top-of-mind-awareness should be a top goal of your marketing efforts. Never before have consumers had so many choices. They need your help to know where to look and what to believe. TOMA will help customers notice you in a noisy marketplace, increasing customer retention and response rates.

## The funny side of marketing

*continued from other side*

to the lowest common denominator or be over-the-top to work. Think about the type of comedy your target audience might find funny. Slapstick or sophisticated? Laugh-out-loud or subtly clever?

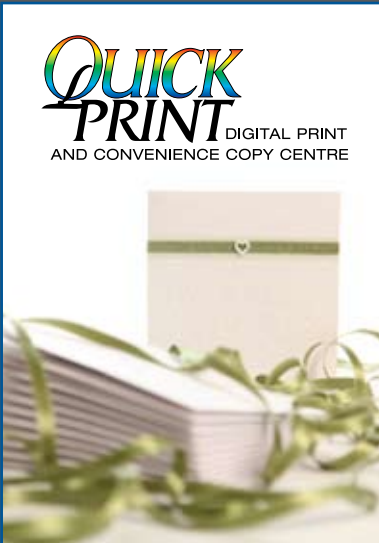
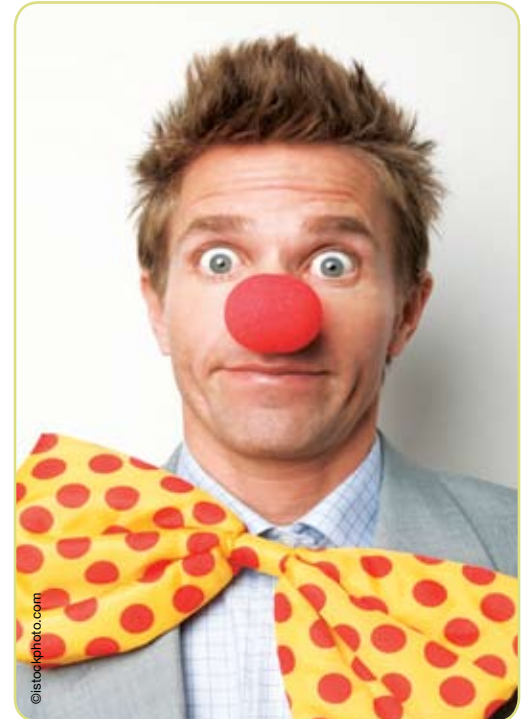
> **Print can be funny, too.** Typically we think of funny marketing in the context of commercials or social media, but apply humor to your print communications and you will not only grab your customers' attention but also help them recall your message. The biggest laugh might come from how punctuation paces a sentence or how a graphic makes the reader do a double take. The smallest detail can bring the biggest laughs.

> **Don't take aim at your target customers.** The joke is always funnier if it is on someone else. Carefully craft your message so that your stakeholders feel like you are on their side. Use comedy well and you will tickle your customer's funny bone. Use it poorly and you can offend that same customer.

> **Remove the color.** Keep the colorful fonts and graphics in your printed pieces, but take out the off-color jokes and innuendo. The basic rules of marketing still apply. Test your message for potentially dangerous material to avoid alienating your audience.

> **Follow cross-cultural rules, even at home.** Humor often requires the audience

to have a specific bit of knowledge to understand it. If you send direct mail internationally you understand that differences in culture and language will impact the way readers receive your piece. But cultural gaps can exist anywhere there is diversity. Be wary of colloquialisms and variations in the meaning of words, even in different geographic areas of your own country.



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