

## THE POWER OF POSITIVE MARKETING

Do you remember Eeyore from the *Winnie the Pooh* stories? Eeyore was the “gloom and doom” or negative voice in most situations. He said things like, “We’re never going to make it.”

Negativity can be emotionally draining and often deters people from the task at hand. It’s harder to be persuaded or moved to action by a negative message. A positive message evokes enthusiasm and carries its own energy. Think of *The Little Engine That Could* saying, “I think I can. I think I can.”

In this Discussion Paper, we’ll discuss the importance of taking a positive approach to your direct marketing efforts. And we’ll give you tips on how the language and images you use can help build your brand and shape your customers’ perceptions of your company and your products and services.

*Enthusiasm is contagious.*

Enthusiasm shows your passion and inspires action in others. You can tell when a sales representative truly believes in the product or service she is promoting. She is excited about it and can be very persuasive.

People are more likely to listen to an enthusiastic person or message. It’s easy for marketers to become complacent about what they do. Marketers become so familiar with their own products and services, they can forget what is exciting and great about them. Take some time and write down the exciting, unique, and beneficial aspects of your product or service from your customer’s perspective. Think about the ways that your company improves customers’ lives. It may inspire you to look at your products or services in a new light.

*“Wherever you go, go with all your heart.”*

-Confucius

*Take the positive approach.*

It’s important to focus on the strengths of your product or service rather than weaknesses. You may be higher priced than the competition. Rather than saying, “We may not be the lowest cost, but we use better quality parts.” Simply accentuate the positive. “Our product uses only the highest quality parts.”

Since a product typically serves a specific purpose, it usually has weaknesses as well as strengths. You can even make strengths out of your weaknesses. For instance, a mouthwash may have an unpleasant taste, but it’s that strong taste that makes your customers feel that it’s fighting germs.

Be wary of making direct comparisons to the competition, especially if you use the actual company or product name. By demeaning your competition, you may actually create negative feelings for you own products and services. In addition, your customers or prospects may remember and buy your competitor’s brand instead of yours!

## *Get to the point quickly.*

With TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, email, and cell phones, consumers are exposed to more advertising and marketing messages than ever before. You only have a few seconds to get your message across before people move on to something else. If you start with the negative — or the problem, you may lose your customers before they hear the solution. By focusing on the positive and getting right to the benefits and what you can do for customers or prospects, you can speed up your message and increase the chances that they will respond.

## *Say it like you mean it.*

Negative language stops communication. Positive language encourages an open dialogue. You may have noticed that when you are in a meeting and a coworker phrases something in a negative manner, it brings the flow of ideas to a halt. However, positive wording is more open ended and allows others to build on and expand ideas. Here are some examples of phrases you might hear around the office. Note how the negative wording ends a conversation abruptly while the more positive response opens up communication.

Negative: "That's not how we do it."

Positive: "Here's what we do."

Negative: "I don't like that idea."

Positive: "How about..." or "What if we..."

Negative: "That won't work."

Positive: "Here's something that might work."

An important aspect of your marketing materials is the copy. The language you use sets the tone of your direct marketing efforts and helps position your company and your brand image in the minds of customers and prospects. Positive language will enable you to control or frame your communications. Using upbeat, declarative language and power words creates an image in the minds of your readers.

Compare the impact of these negative sentences and their more positive counterparts.

Negative: Don't delay. Supplies are limited.

Positive: Please hurry! Order now to reserve your limited-edition copy.

Negative: Don't hesitate to call me.

Positive: Feel free to call me, I'm happy to talk with you.

Negative: You can't live without our widget.

Positive: Make life easier with our amazing widget.

For more details about conducting successful meetings, especially when brainstorming for creative ideas, check out our "Effective Brainstorming Techniques" Discussion Paper. Simply go to [www.allegrolink.com](http://www.allegrolink.com), choose Allegro Publications, and click on Discussion Paper Archives.

Call Allegro at **630.495.1600** for expert answers.

Words to avoid are negative words and phrases, such as don't, can't, shouldn't, wouldn't, no, never, and not. In addition, it's stronger to state the positive benefits of a product or service rather than accentuate the negative problem that it solves.

**Here are a few examples:**

**Problem focus:** What if something happened to you? Could your family survive without your income?

**Benefit focus:** **Enjoy greater peace of mind, knowing that your family will be financially secure.**

**Problem focus:** You could outlive your retirement.

**Benefit focus:** **You can take steps now to help create a steady income throughout your retirement.**

**Problem focus:** Frustrated with dull, dingy clothes?

**Benefit focus:** **Get your whites whiter!**

Image-based words will put an image in people's minds. It's more than something you see, you can even hear it and taste it. Think of some of the powerful world figures throughout history. They were also some of the most motivating speakers. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill was one of these charismatic leaders. Consider one of his famous lines, "I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears, and sweat." While phrased a bit negatively, it definitely conjures up vivid imagery.

Also keep in mind that many words have more than one meaning. You may have words and phrases you use in your industry that could have a negative connotation for your customers or prospects. For instance, as marketers we use words like marketing "campaigns" and "targeting" our audience. Both of these words have more aggressive meanings. We can replace them with more positive words, such as marketing "programs" and "focusing on" our audience.

*"DID is a word of achievement  
WON'T is a word of retreat  
MIGHT is a word of bereavement  
CAN'T is a word of defeat  
OUGHT is a word of duty  
TRY is a word each hour  
WILL is a word of beauty  
CAN is a word of power"*

-Anonymous Author

**Use Positive Words**

Be sure to use positive words to help keep the tone of your marketing materials upbeat, warm, and engaging. Here are some power words and phrases:

- pleasure
- grateful
- appreciate
- happy
- enjoy
- gain
- like
- satisfied
- inspire
- delighted
- glad
- sincere
- honor
- enhance
- welcome
- admire
- help
- generous

*Show the good stuff.*

You've probably heard the phrase, "A picture is worth a thousand words." The images that marketers use may be even more powerful than the words and phrases.

Everything you do portrays the image of your company. From your business cards, letterhead, and brochures to your direct mail packages, Web site, and TV commercials, you create an image in a consumer's mind. How do your customers and prospects see you?

Just as the words you use create an image, the actual photography or graphic elements you incorporate in your marketing materials have an immediate impact on your audience. An impression is formed in an instant.

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Once again, a positive image can be more effective than a negative one. Showing the benefit or results of your product or service can be more powerful than showing the problem. Consumers like to see people they can relate to who are happy, healthy, and enjoying life. While showing the negative problem can be more dramatic or humorous, you also run the risk of the negative image sticking in consumers' minds rather than the positive attributes of your product or service.

## *A positive approach for not-for-profits.*

Not-for-profit organizations must walk an especially fine line between focusing on their fundraising needs versus focusing on the organization's accomplishments. In the past, not-for-profits highlighted the need they were working to fulfill. For instance, the need might be ending hunger or poverty, disaster relief, protecting the environment, or curing a disease, such as cancer or Alzheimer's. Today's consumers are much more aware of the needs of people, communities, and the environment around the world. In fact, people may feel bombarded with bad news.

Rather than focus on what still needs to be done for your cause, it may be more compelling to focus on what you have done and plan to do. The positive impact you are making can be inspiring. For instance, if your goal is to end hunger, you can highlight how many people you feed every day. To illustrate this positively, you could show pictures of those being fed because of generous donations rather than showing images of starving people.

## *Putting a positive spin on life.*

As direct marketers, we live for getting a response. Throughout this discussion paper we've described ways to stimulate response using positive messages. But here's an interesting side benefit. Some of our clients mail millions and millions of pieces per year. Others have millions of impressions in their electronic communications. As all of these customers and prospects read the messages we communicate, there is an impact on each of those people. So one of the by-products of using positive messaging is that we increase the number of positive thoughts out there in the world. It's a little deep, but we like it.

## *Allegro can help.*

Positive language and images, grounded in truth, lend credibility to marketing materials and strengthen your overall message. At Allegro we believe in accentuating the positive. We actively seek employees with a positive attitude and outlook on life. We promote positive, open communication within our office. We look for companies that offer products and service that add value to their customers. And we enjoy working with companies who take a positive approach to their own marketing programs.

We can help you create powerful direct marketing materials that use positive language and images to connect with customers and prospects. Please give us a call — we'd love to talk with you!

**Call Allegro at 630.495.1600 for expert answers to your direct marketing questions.**



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