



MARKETING MATTERS



How to Make Your Messages Memorable

[By Isabelle Albanese]

What makes a memorable TV commercial, product design, or marketing campaign? Why do you listen to certain politicians or business leaders, and glaze over at the very mention of others? Why is it that you dread opening certain senders' emails, but open others as soon as they land in your inbox?

It's all about messaging. When a piece of communication is to the point, relevant, worthwhile, and compelling, it moves you — the listener or reader — to action.

Moving people is not magic — it's all about effective communication. Anyone can achieve effective communication by using a simple tool that has an uncanny ability to pinpoint why any message works or doesn't work, and how to improve it. It's called the 4Cs Model, which stands for Comprehension, Connection, Credibility, and Contagiousness.

The 4Cs Model was originally developed as an assessment tool for evaluating the impact of advertising and marketing materials. Brands such as Dunkin' Donuts, Suave Shampoo, and Breyers Ice Cream used the 4Cs Model to develop marketing campaigns that really spoke to people and built an emotional connection with their consumers.

The good news is that you don't have to be an expert writer or advertising genius to accomplish messaging mastery. The beauty of the 4Cs Model is that it's easy to understand and simple to apply to every piece of communication you produce at work — be it a résumé, an email, newsletter article, marketing piece, PowerPoint, or blog.

When you get into the habit of applying the 4Cs to *every* type of communication you generate, managers, coworkers, clients, and customers will take notice.

The 4Cs Model At-a-Glance

The 4Cs model is a useful tool for objectively evaluating the effectiveness of many forms of communication — what's working, what isn't working, and why. The 4Cs can assess marketing communication, as well as business communication, political communication, entertainment, and plain old everyday person-to-person communication, from email and blogging to relationship talk.

The First C: Comprehension. Does the audience get the message, the main idea, the point? What does the message instantly communicate? Can the audience play the message back? This confirms that they "get it" and the first "C" is working. The following are three tips for better comprehension.

1. Make the message clear and sharp.
2. Repetition helps. Tell them what you're going to tell them; next, tell them; and then tell them what you told them.
3. Keep it simple — don't go too deep.

The Second C: Connection. Making a connection with a communicated idea or message means not only that the audience "gets it," but that it resonates with them, has meaning and significance for them, and usually triggers an irrational or emotional response — frustration, excitement, anger, passion, joy, happiness, sadness, etc. When connection is there, it will spark new behaviors and actions.

The Third C: Credibility. The audience needs to believe *who* is saying it (the brand or messenger's voice), *what* is being said, and *how* it is being said. Otherwise, any connection begins to break down — immediately. Credibility is the critical C, because the audience may completely understand a communicator's message and even connect with it on an emotional level, then promptly turn around and say that coming from this particular source — company, political candidate, supervisor, whatever — they aren't buying it.

The Fourth C: Contagiousness. In communications, contagiousness is a good thing. You want your audience to "catch the message," run with it, and spread it around. Think of the last time you saw a TV ad that was so funny or clever that you discussed it with your friends, found yourself reenacting it, or repeated the slogan or catch phrase in conversations. That's contagiousness. To be contagious, a message has to be energetic, new, different, and memorable. It should also evoke a vivid emotional response, have "talk" potential, motivate the target to do something, and elicit a demonstrable reaction.

Practice 4C-ing and it will become second nature to you. Try this: Apply the 4Cs to a commercial or a news story you see or hear today on TV or the radio. Did you instantly get it? Did it evoke an emotional response? Was it or the messenger believable? Did you feel like the message "stuck" and made



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you want to react in some way? Or try 4Cing some of the emails you receive today. You'll quickly see why messages work and don't work. Seeing communications through a 4Cs lens will make you more aware of your own communication and messaging challenges.

Once you start "4C-ing" messages — yours and other people's — it will become a habit. You'll become adept at reading something as simple as a memo and understanding why it

got you so riled up and eager to take action, or why you quickly tossed it into the "circular file." The more you think about and apply the 4Cs to your *own* messages, the more effective you'll become at everything you do.

About the Author

Isabelle Albanese is a leading marketing consultant for Fortune 500 companies, and the author of *The 4Cs of Truth in*

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