

Mark Shaw

Copywriting

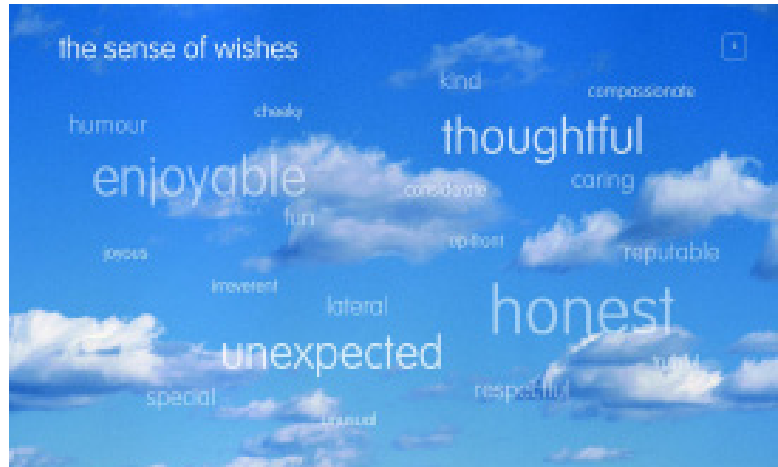
*Successful writing for design,
advertising, and marketing*

Second Edition

Writing for retailing and products

Large-scale retailing is fast-paced and furious. Time is of the essence and new promotions can be required every week, in multiple forms. Clear, positive interaction with the shopper is the key to success, and this requires strict control and careful management of customer messages. The challenge is knowing who you are writing for and what their mindset is—essentially they are looking for something and you are making it easier for them to find it. In this environment people vote with their feet—all you have to do is keep them on your side. Every retailer has a personality, brand characteristics, and product lines, so if your writing reflects these you'll be creating maximum customer interest. Products are the lifeblood of retailing and good product copy is essential—get this right and you'll be boosting the success of the product and the store.

This tone-of-voice guide for Wishes, part of UK Cancer Research, is fresh, appealing, and easy to understand, and best of all it doesn't just say what the copy style is, it demonstrates it in the process.



What is retailing about?

Like any other business, retailing is about making profits, in this case by selling products to customers who visit your premises or website. The more you sell, the bigger your profit. Whatever retail format is used, the retailer wants the customer to come back as often as possible. The better the relationship created with the customer, the more products the retailer will sell. Every relationship thrives on good communications, and your objective as copywriter is to present the core messages in a way that fosters strong customer rapport.

Products play an active role in the communications chain by attracting the customer's eye and promoting their benefits in the most appealing way.

The hierarchy of retail communication

Dividing the mass of retail briefs into categories or types is a good way to break down the task of writing and to profile the customer accurately at every step.

The categories are:



Turning a passive fascia into active advertising, this innovative approach presents compelling messages to the external customers as well as flagging up the brand cues.



Your messages should help create a sense of place

Retailing is a simple process. Stores invite the public onto the premises and serve their needs as well as they possibly can. It's a fundamental relationship. The problem is that the customers are free to go wherever they like. Retailers don't expect 100 percent market share, but they do need regular and repeat custom. While many struggle and fail, the retailer who understands the marketplace in detail and depth, and works hard to give customers exactly what they want, in the way they like it best—whether it's bargain deals or luxury goods—will succeed.

“In the 1960s, if you introduced a new product to America, 90 percent of the people who viewed it for the first time believed in the corporate promise. Then 40 years later if you performed the same exercise less than 10 percent of the public believed it was true. The fracturing of trust is based on the fact that the consumer has been let down.”

Howard Schultz,
founder of Starbucks

Retail design is highly sophisticated, bursting with graphic displays, marketing promotions, and eye-catching products—all carrying messages as part of the mission to “delight the customer” and “exceed expectations.” Most retailers use some form of copy to attract more people into their store, to sell more of certain items, and to encourage them to spend more than they were planning to. Satisfied shoppers will be inclined to return to the places they like and make repeat purchases. If you're writing retail copy your objective is to help create a strong sense of place, of belonging, comfort, and familiarity that the shopper will recognize, enjoy, and feel at home with.

Whether within a local or specialist store run by a friendly shopkeeper or for chains of larger stores, messages that guide or inform the customer and show the retailer's personality greatly enhance the service provided by sales assistants. Shoppers don't always want direct assistance, but will absorb the written messages posted around them as they browse, and will get to know the retailer and the products better. This helps to build a strong relationship with the customers—it's your role to pitch the message to them in the right tone of voice.

It's not just about each message, it's the in-store “clutter” too

Writing individual customer messages, from promotional offers to in-store advertisements, from directional signage to customer service promises, is not too difficult in itself. These could be identifying different parts of the store (men's, children's, outdoor, bargains, etc.), highlighting where to pay, or explaining a price offer next to a product line. These messages usually require short, plain, and simple copy (the sort that you feel anyone could write, but that actually requires a great deal of effort to perfect).

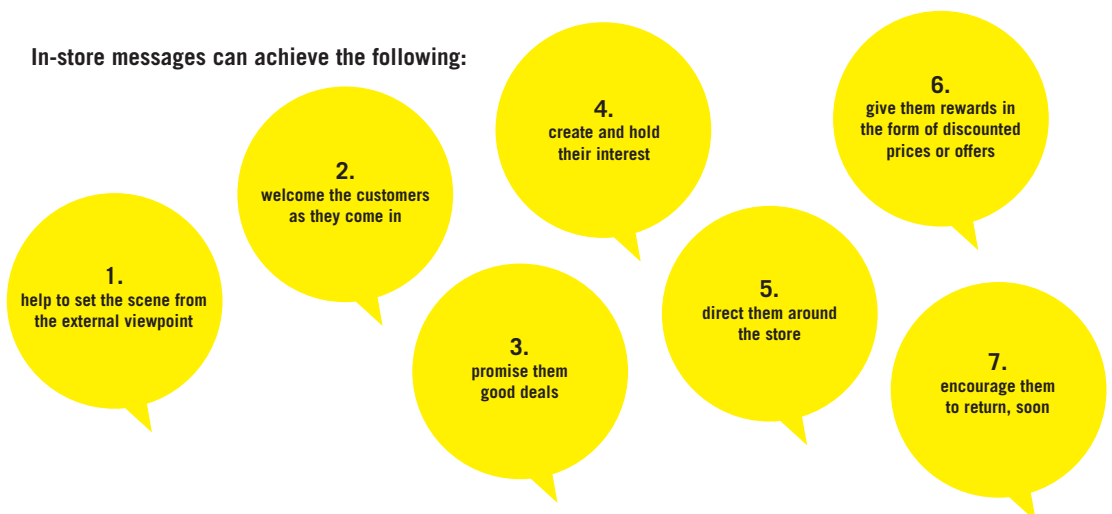
This type of writing is all about the best use of one or two words. For example, is there a better way to say “3 for 2”? Should the message be “Buy two get one free!” or “Three for the price of two!” or “Save 33% when you buy three!” and how do we explain the rule that it’s the lowest-priced item that is the free one? Is there a better way of saying “Cheapest item free”? Do customers now know what **BOGOF** (buy one get one free) means, and can we just slap BOGOF next to a product line? Not only are these surprisingly knotty problems to tackle, but a lot of senior people, all with ideas of their own, will have to sign off the copy. This is less about creative writing, and more about the best—and most appropriate—use of language. Your role is to control the language used to ensure that it remains on-brand and is also as succinct and clear as possible. You would probably recommend “3 for 2 (cheapest item is free),” sacrificing your urge to create something wonderful and unique to the cause of impact and maximum take-up.

After all of the sweat and tears that can go into creating and signing off a new promotional line, you can be caught out by the “clutter” of in-store customer messages. Visit a branch of any major retailer and you could find promotions from last month still on display, next to this month’s. You could find homemade promotions displayed next to your national campaign (store managers like to do it their way), bits of other promotions mixed in with yours, or bits taken off (store staff can do a lot with the bits of display material they receive from head office). You may also find supplier-funded promotions clashing with all of this, confused even more by the directional signage. In a sea of cardboard, most messages will become soggy and drown.

These issues are all to do with proper and efficient store management, together with central control of the messages being created. The way in which the head office and stores communicate with each other is also a vital component. All of this is out of your hands. As the writer, all you can do is try to be aware of this bigger picture at all times, and to ensure that while the individual promotions may fight for space, they do not clash with or compete against each other.

Many supermarkets and warehouse-style retailers work to a system or hierarchy (in the form of a basic grid or table that categorizes customer messages into three or four types and prescribes how each will be written) that arranges their messages into clear levels and categories, with strict rules that have to be maintained. This is sometimes referred to as a **brand matrix**. This is very restricting, and can be extremely frustrating for you, because your writing will come out looking the same as everyone else’s and you will have no room to think laterally. However, it does ensure that the overall effect of the myriad messages will not overpower the customer.

In-store messages can achieve the following:



Typical in-store retail promotions

Free samples

You can't expect people to take a chance with a new product, so let them try it out. In-store tastings, or free samples to take home, are very effective ways to launch a product. Your writing for these promotions should be evocative and exciting.

Vouchers & gift certificates

A good reward mechanism for customers, these bring them back for a repeat visit, and they may tell their friends too. Promote these on the range of choice a voucher offers—"you get exactly what you're looking for"—and encourage the customer to think about the possibilities they present.

Themed campaigns

These usually have a charitable theme, such as raising money for a worthy cause linked to the retailer's marketplace. Don't milk it, just present the facts and benefits under a strong headline.

Store card

Regular customers love their store cards, but only if they know exactly how they work and how to get the best from them. Explain all of this by processing the details and cutting them down into a very short checklist.

In-store events

These usually take place when the store is closed, and can be extremely profitable if the best customers are invited. Celebrities (chefs, hairdressers, etc.) are a big pull, but so is the chance to preview new lines or get extra discounts. Give this the big sell.

BOGOF & discounts

Buy one get one free, two for one, three for two, percentage savings—they all give the customer a reward that will help build loyalty and repeat business. Keep your copy simple, make sure the offer is clear, and don't clash with other deals.

Introduce a friend

This is an effective way of expanding a customer base without changing your customer profile. Make sure the reward for the customer who introduces a friend is appealing and use a peer-to-peer voice; don't talk down to the customer.

Loyalty promotions

You can't get real loyalty—this is only shopping—but you can encourage repeat visits by offering a reward for buying more of a specific item. Keep your copy short and to the point, but present the benefits clearly and strongly.

Supplier-funded

These are jointly branded offers with a key supplier. You'll need to strike a balance between the tone of voice of the retail client and the supplier's brand, so it is best to write in a clear and straightforward tone of voice.

Bargains

Everyone loves a bargain, so make the most of end-of-line promotions or discounted lines by shouting about them. You can go to town on the "last chance to get these prices" or "hurry, when they've gone they've gone" angle, but always stay on-brand.

Advice & insight

Top tips from an expert (in-house or external—possibly you) are very popular with customers. This gives them the ideas and confidence to continue shopping. Lists can be compiled using your own research if necessary.

“My love of writing came to me at college by chance.”

**TOO MUCH DRAMA
IN YOUR LIFE?
SELL IT
FOR SOME COMEDY.**

HALF
PRICE
BOOKS
RECORDS
MAGAZINES

LET GO.

**MOVING INTO A
NEW AGE?
SELL THE MUSIC
YOU'VE OUTGROWN.**

HALF
PRICE
BOOKS
RECORDS
MAGAZINES

LET GO.

Interview: Meredith Mathews, Half Price Books

Meredith is the in-house copywriter at Half Price Books, based in Dallas, Texas, the largest second-hand book dealer in the US. She won the Retail Advertising Conference award in 2007 from the Retail Advertising and Marketing Association for her retail merchandising campaign, which is based around strategically located signs featuring carefully targeted messages relating to the products on their shelves.

I work mainly as a copywriter, but look after some design elements, such as the way messages are set out and the colors we use for signage. The creative side of copywriting drew me to advertising after university. I found so much in it: the business angle, the graphic design element, the need to write in an artful way, but in a different form to pure poetry.

I do write personally; I like to explore core words and their definitions. I always wanted to know where words come from and like the process of copywriting. Some find it painful, but for me it is a free-flowing experience. When I'm looking at a brief I usually find a phrase, word, or idea pops into my head. I prefer typing because I can write faster and keep up with my thoughts more easily. I am constantly editing copy for Half Price Books, and I write a lot of it too. At every reread I edit the copy to make it as concise as possible. The concept might come out quite quickly, but the best lines are crafted in the editing process.

Half Price Books is our retail business, and Texas Bookman is our wholesale business. Writing for Texas Bookman requires a shift in style into business-to-business language. The copy still draws on the same emotions and techniques, but takes a gearshift in terms of the brand personality. We are experimenting with the voice to make it different from Half Price Books.

Our "Love, cherish and let go" campaign was very exciting. Half Price Books buys as well as sells second-hand books, but found the majority of customers weren't selling books back. The brief was to get them to start selling too. During the campaign—featuring lines such as "Already been where no man has gone before? Sell your sci-fi books."—the guys in the stores were overwhelmed. People who had never sold back before were bringing boxes and boxes. The operations end of the business was delighted with the response!

I worked on the campaign with a senior art director, who also works in-house. We spent time

in stores observing our customers' behavior—we observed where they went when they came into the store, which is why messages are right on the shelf next to their books. This research gave us this new information, which led to the creation of the new campaign.

With retail signage, customers do not look above eye-level. All of our messages were positioned at eye-level, and we made each one specific to the genre, with lines such as "Is the suspense killing you? Sell us your thrillers." and "All better now? Sell us your self-help books." The campaign tagline was "Let go."

We ensured that the campaign featured pure copy by setting each on a single-color background without any imagery. It was a tough job to convince the creative director not to include any imagery or photographs—these things usually feature a photoshoot of people with books. We used four colors only, and we found that it was most successful when positioned at eye-level and when the copy just spoke a simple message.

We presented just the one creative idea to the marketing team. There was some resistance because it was a new approach not to use imagery, and was felt to be less of a hard sell, because the message was "sell us your books." We argued that we have to give the customer credit that they'll understand.

Another award-winning campaign was our "Banned Books Awareness" promotion. The lines used were deeper than the boss thought customers could grasp, but everyone liked them. They felt rewarded when they read lines such as "Banned Books Week. Celebrate the freedom to read with one of these hot books." and "Side Effects of Reading Banned Books may include laughing, crying, questioning, anger, gratitude, and learning."

My advice to young writers is to listen to your own voice even when working for a client—it may have been the spark that got you the job in the first place.

Interview: Dan Germain, Innocent Drinks

Dan used to be an English teacher, and always enjoyed writing. He was always a “bit of a show-off” and found writing to be a good way of expressing himself. He joined his friends, the three founders of Innocent Drinks, as their fourth employee and has been looking after the tone of voice and copywriting for this fresh and exciting brand ever since. The messages on their packs have been a key part of their success, so what exactly is Dan up to and how does he do it?

I tend to work a lot with Richard, my creative partner and one of the three founders. We're old friends, so we're good at talking and having ideas. We share the same ideals, ethics, and beliefs, and the copy we write is natural and honest, like a conversation you might have with your friends or your mom. I just write it as I say it or think it. And I try to question the accepted way of doing things. In every bit of our business, from copywriting to how we make the drinks, we've been told “you can't do this” from the voices of experience. And we've usually found that there is another, more innocent way.

Before we settled on “Innocent” the company was called “Fast Tractor.” Labels exist to prove this, though they're locked in a cupboard. We liked Fast Tractor because it suggested freshness (to us at least). We also considered “Naked” and “Nude,” but at the time they were all just words. We didn't really have a clue about building a brand. But things have changed. These days we use the word “innocent” as an adjective, asking ourselves “is this innocent?” when judging our work, words, behavior—everything really.

I now have a wider role as Head of Creative. We have our own internal agency, which I help to run, though I also work with external agencies when the need arises. When we work with agencies we try to work collaboratively—we have a really clear idea of how we want to look and feel, and I think/hope that agency creatives like working with people who have that clarity. I've learned loads from working with agencies—I've worked with some of the best creatives that there are, and have pinched loads of tips on how to get to the best work.

Policing and editing our copy is an instinctive process. I can give general guidelines and tips but it is really difficult to define. If you held a gun to my head, I would say that the Innocent voice is natural, honest, and engaging. We once spent a whole day analyzing our tone only to come up

with nothing much that we couldn't have decided in five minutes.

Our tone of voice is simply the result of us being a group of friends trying to make each other laugh, which is still my aim. I can't write for everyone in our audience, old and young, north and south. So I don't try to. I'd end up with something less than average if I tried to please everyone.

I don't like the word “consumer.” It suggests a predictable group of people who will jump if the advert tells them to jump. I like being an individual and my behavior can be unpredictable, and I guess that goes for most other people out there. People see through “clever” attempts to change their behavior, so I would rather present information in a simple, clear way and let people make up their own minds.

Lots of packaging is over-designed in my opinion. Every pack on the shelf shouts at you, especially in our bit of the market, with pictures of fruit and messages telling you to have your five [servings of fruit and vegetables] a day. We try to politely sit there and behave ourselves, and in the beginning being the quiet one got us noticed. Ultimately, we let our drinks do the talking and make sure our labels are calm and polite, and then when you flip the product over you get a nice surprise. But no pack, however well designed, can mask a bad product, and so we know that 95 percent of the success of our business lives and dies by the quality of our ingredients and recipes.

We try to have a conversation with our drinkers. That means it's a two-way thing. People e-mail us or call the banana phone—we get hundreds of calls/e-mails every week, quite often from people who are just up for a chat. The first e-mails that came through, which were from the first few passionate drinkers, helped us to form the voice. These people love the stuff and we made friends, which helped us to find out all about



Innocent Smoothies contain only the purest and freshest fruit. No concentrates, preservatives, or additives of any kind. And they're made and delivered daily. Now that's out of the way I'm using the rest of this space for a personal message: Brian, if you're reading this, do you want to come to the zoo next Thursday? My boss is on a training thing, so it's all cool. They've opened the new penguin bit and apparently one of the pandas is expecting. I've taped this wing mirror to a stick so you don't have to stand on a box or wear those tall shoes or anything. Call me.

Buddha—now there was a nice chap. Never said a bad word about anyone, and always kept his stereo at a respectable volume so as not to disturb the neighbors. Even had his life saved by some yoghurt once—after losing consciousness whilst fasting, a lady brought him back from death by feeding him some. We find that our thickies bring us back to consciousness at around 11am, just when we need a bit of sustenance to help us through till lunchtime, but please don't let us dictate when you should drink them. Choose your own path. Om.

"I just write it as I say it or think it."

Ingredients 2 pressed apples, 17 crushed cherries (20%), 3 washed bananas, 4 crushed strawberries (16%) and some freshly squeezed orange juice.	Nutritional info (per 100ml) Energy 207kJ (49kcal) Protein 0.6g Carbohydrate 12.6g Fat less than 0.1g Vitamin C 45mg (71% RDA per 100ml)
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 **YOUR RECOMMENDED DAILY INTAKE OF FRUIT**
NEVER, EVER, EVER FROM CONCENTRATE

AN INNOCENT SMOOTHIE IS A BLEND OF CRUSHED FRUIT, PURE AND FRESH JUICES AND NOTHING ELSE

 038862439101

OVER 170% RDA OF NATURAL VITAMIN C

Look after your smoothie. Keep refrigerated 0-5°C before and after opening. Once opened consume within 2 days. For use-by date see cap. Gently pasteurised, like milk. Shake it up baby.

250ml e 0605 6

the perfect smoothie for summer, season of flip flops, freckles and rained off barbecues

innocent
smoothie for summer
cherries and strawberries

Splitting is quite rude, but it seems that splitting cherry stones is OK. And Rick 'The Pallet Gun' Krause is the king of stone splitting. Rick is the Pele/John McEnroe/Big Daddy of the cherry stone splitting world, and improved the world record over a period of years until in 1993 he reached 22.12m at the Michigan Cherry Pit Spit. These days, some young interloper has managed to increase the record to 29.19m, no doubt with the help of yoga and a few carb diet. But Pallet Gun is still the man in our eyes.

An innocent promise
We promise that anything innocent will always taste good and do you good. We promise that we'll never use concentrates, preservatives, stabilisers, or any weird stuff in our drinks. And if we do you can tell our mums.

Pop round to Fruit Towers, 3 Goldhawk Estate, London W6 0BA, e-mail hello@innocentdrinks.com, call the helpline phone on 020 8400 3193 (UK) or 01 264 4160 (Eire). And join the family at www.innocentdrinks.com/family.

This bottle is made from 100% recycled plastic. We're working on the rest.

TMA - the food

the people who drank our drinks, and why they drank them. I used to sit there and e-mail them all day long. Those were the days.

These days it's not just me writing the copy. We have a small group of people writing copy for our packaging—a few people at Innocent plus a motley crew of people I've met along the way who just fancied having a go. We write a brief and then everyone goes off and writes a few labels every few months. It's good to include an external voice or two. Keeps things interesting. We change the copy on our packs four times a year. We generate over two hundred individual messages every year, so we hope that you always get a new one whenever you pick up one of our drinks.

The reality of what we do is so much more important than image. We're creating a reality, and it is easier and more effective to write the way we do because then we don't have to make anything up.

And it's this fact that I often return to. We have a solid, well-run, copper-bottomed business, and that allows us to write what we fancy on the packs, on the Web, or wherever

our words appear. If we delivered late, made dodgy recipes, or if they just tasted rubbish, the silly chat on our packaging would become plain annoying.

Support the customer's journey

It's the retailer's job to lay out the store with clear sections, logical product grouping, and attractive displays. As part of the creative team it is your role to attract interest so that the shopper doesn't miss the rewarding offers, promotions, or brand propositions. Your touchstone is brevity and control—every display must be eye-catching and easy to understand. Above all, create a strong sense of atmosphere, interest and ideas by making sure that every message is consistently in the same tone of voice, reinforcing the retailer's core brand values.

As a customer, being bombarded by sales messages when all you want to do is find a product can be enough to make you walk out of a store before you even begin to shop. Every shopper will have similar specific requirements: they want to locate what they're looking for, be presented with a choice of similar brands and products, pay for their choice without any hassle, and leave feeling satisfied. This complete process (from entering to leaving the store) is usually called the **customer journey**, and the messages that guide and support this journey are essential components of good retailing.

Visit any leading supermarket or large-scale retailer and look carefully at their brand icons, **taglines**, and price ticketing—you'll see they are using a **value-pricing system** of one form or another. It will be based on a matrix that separates the core customer messages into a clear hierarchy, organized so that they're not vying for attention with each other and so that the customer picks up distinct directional, brand, product, and promotional messages at the right time on the journey through the store.

Smaller retailers can adopt a similar approach, often more easily, as they don't have to use every element, and they will have greater flexibility and less formality. If you let products sit quietly on the shelf you are relying on the customer to discover them. Use posters or shelf messages to point out key items and their benefits and you're likely to attract impulse purchases. Go for the "wow" factor—try to give the customer a reason to purchase. A good approach is to preprint blank tickets, posters, and signage so that your messages can be overprinted and put up in-store quickly and cheaply, enabling the store to operate short-term promotions and display very topical, specific, and timely messages.

Key elements in a value-pricing system

All retailers take their own approach to communicating quality, value, and service. Many focus on low prices, and most value-pricing systems will incorporate the following elements:

1. Value icon

a logo or graphic device that represents the store's everyday competitive prices.

2. Brand tagline

a memorable sign-off line that encapsulates the store's everyday value for money.

3. Value pricing

a fixed-format price system featuring a graphic device, consistent color and some basic supporting copy.

4. Offer pricing

an alternative version of the value price-point tickets that highlights a short-term offer.

5. Special offer

a further alternative version that shouts out about an exceptional customer offer.

The style and tone of voice you use must represent the client's brand accurately and be concise, clear, and easy to understand. If a retail brand is youthful, wacky, cutting-edge, cool, or funky you have a license to write your copy accordingly, but don't lose sight of the function of your messages. If it's well respected, established, and sophisticated your voice must reflect this. If it takes time for customers to work out the meaning of your message they probably won't bother, so cut your copy down to the bone, use as few words as possible, and be prepared to sacrifice your juicy creative lines for straightforward guidance if necessary. For example, if you're tempted to write "This delicious, aromatic Blue Mountain coffee is supplied to us exclusively and we grind the beans freshly on the premises for you. It's Fairtrade approved and we keep the prices as low as possible. Try a cup for free before you buy your supplies for home!" consider this as an alternative: "Freshly ground, exclusive Blue Mountain Fairtrade coffee. Enjoy a free cup now when you buy 1lb!" This is a reduction from 46 to 16 words!

Understanding the customer journey

"If you do build a great experience, customers tell each other about that. Word of mouth is very powerful."

Jeff Bezos

Your customer's journey in, around, and out of the premises actually begins outside the store, with the enticing advertising and external messages you use to attract attention and draw in passing shoppers. A lot of effort and attention goes into the design of store window displays, but despite this many customers don't pay much attention to the detail they contain. They are either driving or walking past, while others will be heading into the store anyway. Either way, passersby do not have much time to stop and absorb complicated messages. Use short, punchy words, and as few as possible, remembering to reflect the brand's personality at all times.

The key elements in guiding the customer journey



External signage and window displays
giving a reason to come inside

**High-level
hanging signs**

locating departments
and sections

**Mid-level
hanging signs**

flagging up
promotions
and offers

**Shelf-edge
messages**


flagging up
product benefits
and offers

Store doorways and entrances

welcome and basic directions

- Customer Journey 1
Window displays
- The store window is, in effect, a billboard advertisement and you should approach the copy in the same way as any other external advertisement: keep it short and make it compelling (by flagging up a single, overriding benefit). The sales points you are making must be clear from across the road, at a single glance. Boil the messages down to their ultimate essence—all you need to do is entice people into the store to find out more.
- Customer Journey 2
Store entrance
- Depending on the layout of the store it makes sense to take the opportunity to display a welcome or brand message at the entrance to the store. This can be a good way to give visitors a sense of the brand that sets the scene for their overall experience in the store. Consider putting up a “goodbye and thanks, see you soon” message here too, facing the customers as they leave—politeness is always well received.
- Customer Journey 3
Directional signage
- Once people are inside the store they will need direction to product areas. Card signs hanging from the ceiling are an excellent method for flagging up these sections, although they are not particularly efficient ways of running promotions: customers rarely—if ever—look above head height once they know where they are in the store. It’s best to focus your efforts on the shelf-edge, eye-level, and end-of-aisle messages—otherwise, you could waste a lot of time on messages that will literally go over everyone’s heads.
- Customer Journey 4
Hanging signs
- Large retailers often operate two levels of hanging cards: high- and mid-level. High-level hanging cards are best for identifying the sections of the store, and it’s best to simply flag up a single word, or perhaps two. Mid-level hanging signage is good for messages linked to seasonal promotions (Mother’s Day, Valentine’s Day, Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas, skiing season, summer season, and so on) or other promotional marketing messages, as they can be seen from a distance and can lead customers over. The high-level signage requires very basic copy, simply to name the sections, so resist the temptation to use them for creative concepts as this can undermine the clarity of the directional messages.
- Customer Journey 5
Eye-level merchandising
- The next stage of the customer journey that concerns you as the copywriter is at eye level, and has to clearly identify the products and their prices, and support this with relevant details of any offers or specific product benefits. It makes sense to use a consistent format for layout, colors, and copy, so that your customer can find the relevant information as quickly and easily as possible.
- Customer Journey 6
On shelf
- Extreme simplicity and clarity are key at the shelf edge. If your client operates a defined value-pricing system this will give you a format for the price tickets that should allow every price to be displayed boldly and clearly. Consider including a few short “bullet points,” highlighting the distinguishing features and core benefits offered by each item. This will help to generate interest by enabling comparisons and encouraging customers to try new products and more expensive brands.
- Customer Journey 7
Easy purchasing
- Once customers have found what they are looking for, and have browsed the store and seen the promotions, they need to pay and leave. It is essential that the location of the cash registers and exits are very clearly signposted from all locations within the store. You don’t want to lose the sale at the last minute because the customer has become frustrated.

BRAEBURN
 One of the best for eating out of hand. Fine grain for eating, cooking, and baking.



One of the best for eating out of hand. Fine grain for eating, cooking, and baking.

CAMEO
 Some crisp, some tart and spicy. Some delicious! Makes a nice change to fresh. Also very good when used in food.




A natural choice for salads and fresh fruit. Also very good when used in food.

GINGER GOLD
 The earliest ripening apple. Crisp, sweet, slightly tart.



Very close to bromine, making it an interesting choice for salads, garnish and one other: fresh-cut apple pie. Baked with fat.

EMPIRE
 Very tartness and juicy. It is one between McIntosh and Red. It is one between Braeburn and Fuji.



A wonderful choice for combination. Also makes a great for everything.

FUJI
 Fuji apple: crisp, juicy and slightly sweet with a beautiful, crisp texture. Better than other sweet apples.



Makes the perfect mix when baked. Great for salads and sandwiches. Also good for food.

GALA
 Sweet, crisp, juicy and slightly tart with a beautiful, crisp texture. Better than other sweet apples.



Supports the health and beauty and also out of hand. Perfect for food.

GOLDEN DELICIOUS
 Mild, sweet and tart. It is one of the best for eating, cooking, and baking.




Recent something. Good for eating, salads, soups and eating out of hand. The apple of choice of the Railway Institute of America.

GRANNY SMITH
 Very tart. Makes good and spicy. It is one of the best for eating, cooking, and baking.



Excellent addition with cooking. Also makes a nice change to fresh. Also very good when used in food.

HONEY CRISP
 Mild, sweet and tart. It is one of the best for eating, cooking, and baking.




Good for salads, garnish and eating. Excellent choice for food.

IDA RED
 Usually tart, highly flavored and sweet. It is one of the best for eating, cooking, and baking.




Feeling with them as well as good. Excellent choice for food. Also very good when used in food.

MACOUN
 Mild, sweet and tart. It is one of the best for eating, cooking, and baking.




Good for salads and eating. Excellent choice for food. Also very good when used in food.

LADY APPLES
 Large and juicy. Can range from very sweet to very tart.



Excellent for eating, cooking, and baking. Also very good when used in food.

MCINTOSH
 Sweet, tart and spicy. It is one of the best for eating, cooking, and baking.




Excellent choice for food. Also very good when used in food.

MUTSU
 Large, juicy, sweet and tart. It is one of the best for eating, cooking, and baking.



Good for salads and eating. Excellent choice for food. Also very good when used in food.

PAULA RED
 Very tart, spicy and sweet. It is one of the best for eating, cooking, and baking.



Excellent choice for food. Also very good when used in food.

PINK LADY
 Crisp, tart, juicy and spicy. It is one of the best for eating, cooking, and baking.



Excellent choice for food. Also very good when used in food.

RED DELICIOUS
 Mild, sweet and tart. It is one of the best for eating, cooking, and baking.



Good for salads and eating. Excellent choice for food. Also very good when used in food.

ROME
 Mild, sweet and tart. It is one of the best for eating, cooking, and baking.



Excellent choice for food. Also very good when used in food.

JONA GOLD

Uniquely honey-tart, crisp & juicy with spicy fragrance and firm texture.



Excellent for baking and pies. Also good in salads and for sauce. Sauté slices in butter with cinnamon—no sugar needed! One of the best for eating out of hand. Freezes well.

CORTLAND

Crisp and sweet with only a hint of tartness. Tender, fine-grained and snow-white inside.



Resists browning making it the very best salad apple, but also ideal for kebabs and garnishes. A great all-purpose apple that stays firm when baked.

Customers don't always know how to shop a line, or how to differentiate one product from another, and Fairacre Farms have taken a simple and extremely effective approach to explaining theirs. The results are practical, and because of this they are highly compelling too.

It's always great to find someone having fun with their copy, and Loseley know that ice cream is not such a serious business, so why not create some exotic characters and tell some far-fetched stories? It certainly makes them stand out from the competition.



My husband sailed for Madagascar today. Normally I would count the days until his return. For he brings me the most exotic delicacies. Then I discovered Loseley use the finest Madagascan bourbon vanilla in their deliciously creamy ice cream. Strangely, I now miss my husband rather less.



It is true that I am a most accomplished swordsman. But when I truly want to impress, I present Loseley for dessert (though my cook always maintains it is his own creation). The roasted hazelnuts, demerara sugar, and rich caramel sauce never fail to melt the ladies' hearts.

“Next to doing the right thing, the most important thing is to let people know you are doing the right thing.”

John D. Rockefeller

You are unlikely to have any control over the number of supplier promotions in the store. These are often written, designed, and produced by the product supplier and are part of the deals made between retailers and manufacturers. Sometimes they come to you in the form of a brief, and you should endeavor to ensure that the same guidelines apply to these as to your client’s other customer messages.

In-store posters should be big and bold, and they may require little more than an evocative image and a brand identity. The posters created by Fairacre Farms to promote their apples through educating their customers about the specific benefits of different varieties are perfect examples of clear and powerful communications. They contain a clear, benefit-led message and are warm and enticing (page 117).

End-of-shelf displays—which are highly effective sales points—must have a few basic communications elements and be light on copy. An emotive headline and concise qualifying line will be all that’s needed to support the graphics and steer the customer to the products being highlighted.

What are the products saying to your customer?

So much effort has been put into attracting the customer to the products on the shelves, but what about the products themselves? Whether the product line is the retailer’s **house brand** or is a stand-alone **proprietary brand**, your pack copy has to clearly show what the brand is, highlight the product name, explain the benefits it offers, and conform to a number of statutory requirements, including lengthy ingredient (sometimes called **INCI**) lists. These elements may seem very straightforward initially, but can be surprisingly complex, as they will have to be applied across many items in the line.

On any product, space for copy is severely limited, and the requirements (generic brand message, product details, benefits, full ingredients list, and legal disclaimers) often take up the lion’s share, even before you’ve had the chance to think about a creative line. It is vital to work with the designers and artworkers to establish the copy area for each specific product, and to calculate the precise word count. This will save you a lot of time and will help you to manage the expectations of your client from the start.

There are distinct differences between the role of copy on the front and back of the pack. The copy on the front of the pack—especially the brand and product names and descriptors—is an advertisement; it has to catch the eye and encourage people to put the product into their baskets. There is rarely time for customers to read your back-of-pack copy in a busy store—it is intended to be read back at home, when they are relaxed and unhurried. Your back-of-pack copy should provide detail and evidence that reassures customers that they have made a good purchase, and create enough motivation or incentive to ensure that they will replace it from the same product line.

“No matter what your product is, you are ultimately in the education business. Your customers need to be constantly educated about the many advantages of doing business with you, trained to use your products more effectively, and taught how to make never-ending improvement in their lives.”

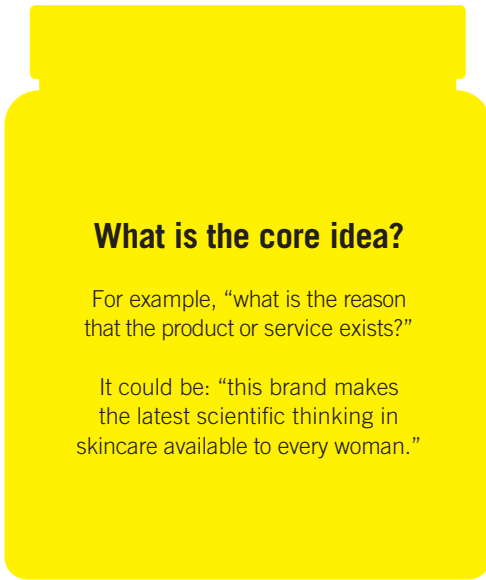
Robert G. Allen

Get the tone of voice right

If you are writing the copy for an extensive product line it makes sense to define the tone of voice for yourself, for the people approving the copy (the marketing team, business owner, or senior client), and for any other writers and the rest of the design team. This doesn’t need to be sophisticated or cleverly designed. A few carefully prepared pages of paper will be sufficient. The tone-of-voice guide on page 18 is a good example of the approach you can take. As with any copy, keep it as short as possible. A few evocative sentences, set in large type, can be a good way to present the tone of voice.

The core elements of a brand matrix

Parameters such as these present an experienced writer with a clear guide when selecting language, phrases, words, and expressions to evoke the essence of the brand.



Your tone-of-voice guide has to have some structure, some thinking behind it that makes sense to everyone who will be involved with it. Most follow the direction given by a brand matrix, a chart showing a profile of the brand, which aims to identify and explain its core elements. If a brand structure or matrix has not been provided by the lead creative agency or the client’s marketing team, you should consider creating your own to use as a rough guide for your copy.

You need a global awareness when naming a product

Naming a product is a similar process to naming a brand (a product could also be a brand in itself). The key difference is that a company brand is designed to convey the values in the corporation consistently over many years, and therefore it needs to be solid and reliable and not a victim to fashion trends. However a product brand can take more of an advertising approach, and aim for high impact or standout, and if this is fashionable for a while it can always be updated when trends change.

With such a huge variety of product brand names on the shelves, and new ones coming into the fray all the time, of equal importance to creative brainstorming is the lack of availability of names when it comes to trademarks. You have to search your early ideas thoroughly—and don’t present a proposed new product brand name unless you are confident that there’s no reason to believe it has been registered already.

“The point to remember about selling things is that, as well as creating atmosphere and excitement around your products, you’ve got to know what you’re selling.”

Stuart Wilde

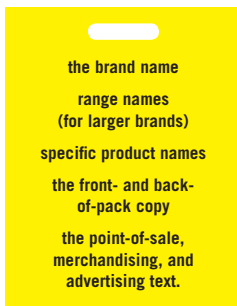


Work out what your product is associated with and consider the different categories of names that you could select from.

Categories of names:

- Arbitrary** (Sun Microsystems)
- Classical** (Ajax cleaning products)
- Acronym** (DKNY)
- Editing** (Travelex)
- Description** (Head and Shoulders)
- Alliteration** (Automobile Association)
- Family** (Ferrari)
- Heritage** (Broad Stripe Butchers)

Launching a new product brand requires you to create:



Consider the hierarchy of information that you are creating. You may well be dealing with the parent brand name, the product brand itself, product name, and a possible product description. Let one of these dominate.

Product brands are highly competitive and you have to create a name that helps yours stand out among the clutter. The best names are very memorable and sound good as well as look good. It should all add up to a good feeling about the name; if not, you'll have an uphill battle trying to gain awareness of it after it's launched.

 <p>GOLD DIGGER <i>shimmer</i></p>	<p>NUMEROLOGY: $128=1+2+8=11=1+1=2$ Sensitivity & balance. The diplomat.</p> <p>COLOR SUITE: Earthy Low Notes. The power of earth & connection.</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Pride. Grab your rewards. The brazen are due.</p> <p>▼</p> <p>Wear it and don't apologize. You are a legend already.</p>
 <p>KISS THE COOK <i>creme</i></p>	<p>NUMEROLOGY: $118=1+1+8=10=1+0=1$ Independence & ambition. The hero.</p> <p>COLOR SUITE: Earthy Low Notes. The power of earth & connection.</p>	<p>1</p> <p>Move the bed into the kitchen. You are cooking on all burners.</p> <p>▼</p> <p>Contentment. Some like it hot.</p>
 <p>SALT OF THE EARTH <i>shimmer</i></p>	<p>NUMEROLOGY: $133=1+3+3=7$ Versatility & adventure. The trail blazer.</p> <p>COLOR SUITE: Earthy Low Notes. The power of earth & connection.</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Truth. Spend time with those you trust. You are goodness itself.</p> <p>▼</p> <p>Peel away the layers. Get real. Play unplugged.</p>
 <p>CAN YOU DIG IT? <i>shimmer</i></p>	<p>NUMEROLOGY: $127=1+2+7=10=1+0=1$ Independence & ambition. The hero.</p> <p>COLOR SUITE: Earthy Low Notes. The power of earth & connection.</p>	<p>1</p> <p>Excavation. Invite the unconvinced. Get down & dirty. Camp out.</p> <p>▼</p> <p>Stay below ground. Darkness is where it's at.</p>
 <p>DEATH BY CHOCOLATE <i>creme</i></p>	<p>NUMEROLOGY: $126=1+2+6=9$ Compassion & giving. The humanitarian.</p> <p>COLOR SUITE: Earthy Low Notes. The power of earth & connection.</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Decadence. Definitely order dessert. Let someone else pick up the check.</p> <p>▼</p> <p>Stop worrying about consequences. You're worth it.</p>

Spa Ritual uses a copy system comprised of a few different elements that appear consistently on all packs, so that the customer becomes familiar with the way the information is communicated, and feels connected with the brand.



Exercise: getting to grips with store communications

The aim of this exercise is to develop your skills in working to a hierarchy of messaging. Choose an existing retailer, or create a profile of an imaginary one, and see if you can break down their brand and messages into the following categories:

Value pricing

1. What will their overall value message be?
2. How will this be expressed as a tagline?
3. What will everyday price tickets say?
4. How will discounts be communicated?

Customer journey

1. Which messages are the most suitable for store windows?
2. What language will you use to guide customers around the store?
3. How will you express core product promotions?
4. What messages would you put on the shelf edges?



Exercise: creating a new product brand

The objective of this exercise is to create a new brand name for a product line, product names for individual items, and copy for both front and back of pack.

Create a short brief for a new product. It could be a lawnmower or a shampoo, a chicken pie or a computer. Include the main benefit, target audience, and point of difference.

1. Brainstorm lists of possible names for the main brand.
2. Shortlist and segregate these by type.
3. Choose an option to develop.
4. Create product names that fit in with the new brand (4 or 5 items).
5. For each item, write engaging and short copy for the front of pack.
6. Write some more detailed copy for the back of pack.

Keep a close eye on your word counts, ensuring they are the same for each item, and that they will fit on the product (easy for lawnmowers, difficult for lipsticks).



Round-up

Present the core messages in a way that fosters strong rapport with the customer.

Create a strong sense of place, of belonging, comfort, and familiarity.

Your role is to attract interest so that the shopper doesn't miss the rewarding offers, promotions, or brand propositions.

The messages that guide and support the customer journey are essential components of good retailing.

Go for the "wow" factor, try to give the customer a reason to purchase.

Be prepared to sacrifice your juicy creative lines for straightforward guidance if necessary.

Work with the designers and artworkers to find out what the copy area is for each specific product, and calculate the precise word count.

There are distinct differences between the role of copy on the front and back of the pack.

If you are writing the copy for an extensive product range, define the tone of voice.

The availability of new brand names is sparse, so you must check your proposals for trademark availability before you show them to the client.

Good design can transform a plain word into a strong brand, but it is best to start with a word that already has impact and resonance on its own.

Be prepared to fight your corner to a certain extent. The best way to do this is to explain all of the parameters and restrictions within which you are working.

Case Study: Method Home Products

Eric Ryan is the founder of Method Home Products, a \$100 million turnover home-products business that uses interesting messages and a strong and clear tone of voice to communicate its sometimes radical viewpoints. Method's attitude is communicated powerfully through effective use of copy, and this is one of the core factors behind its outstanding success. Here Eric tells us how the brand was created, and how it uses language to gain competitive advantage.



Eternal optimist:
Some people never wake up on the wrong side of the bed. Life through rose colored glasses. Must be nice. Soothing + always skin friendly. Naturally derived.



Go getter:
On a mission? Jump start your day with a little sweet mint motivation. And remember, the one with the most toys at the end wins. Invigorating + always skin friendly. Naturally derived.



Escape artist:
Let go. Whatever it is, it can surely wait until tomorrow. Playing hooky ... it's good for the soul. Relaxing + always skin friendly. Naturally derived.

The Objective:

explaining how our brand is different in every sense

Method had to be a challenging brand, a challenger brand. It had to do things differently to stand out from the competition in a crowded marketplace, and had to make customers think differently about the home products they use. Most consumers are on autopilot when they shop. We used our voice, messages, and language to challenge the status quo.

I'm a strategic planner, not a writer. I'm a terrible writer, but can tell good writing when I see it. I write copy briefs from a strategic point of view, giving as much content as I can. My skill is in creating the big idea that the creatives can develop and bring to life.

Maintaining our tone of voice across our product range is a challenge. We have products in all areas, from candles to detergent. The objective is to achieve consistency with the messages and information on every product, but to be honest we can't get there. We strike a balance between doing the best writing possible for each product, and representing the brand voice accurately and clearly. We know we don't need the copy to look the same, or read the same, on every product, it just has to feel the same.

Merchandising and the way we display and market products in-store is a very important part of our business. We try to utilize every touch point for the customer, giving them clear messages to ensure they understand our environmental credentials. We have a small budget for marketing, and the copy we use has to work very hard for us.

The Approach:

speaking our mind and standing for our beliefs

Our personality, which is about questioning and being rebellious, comes from us and the attitude that formed the business in the first place.

The name Method came from my original brief. I'm from a branding background, and I wanted a "jumping off" word to say we get the job done, with less force. Our inspiration was the word "technique," as by using better techniques we can reduce the need to use strong detergents or chemicals that harm our environment. Adam, in our team, suggested "method" and we all agreed it was a good fit.

The voice of Method was developed by our advertising agency, Crispin Porter, with two aims: it had to be fun (in a category not associated with fun) and had to be both provocative and likable.

Our agencies (Shire and TBWA), together with our freelance writers, look after all copywriting for us;

we now have an in-house writer too. We're trying to find our "Dan" [Dan Germain, Innocent, pages 110–12], someone who can instinctively control our tone of voice and push it forward without losing core values.

Where we can, we like to have fun with product names and be more creative. Creating a combustible cleaning cloth from corn, we called the range Omop to make it sound distinctive. We're following the lead of companies like Apple who make product icons that become part of our culture. Whatever you do, you can't overcomplicate things. It's about keeping it simple to make it stand out and be memorable.

The basic structure to our pack copy is that it must be a single sentence. In Canada rules state we have to include extra information, and have it in French too. It's a real challenge to be simple: there's a constant trade-off between the messages and the necessary detail. We have to keep trying to strike the right balance; we haven't found the solution yet.

We often find at the end of a long brainstorm that many, sometimes most, of the words we want for products are already registered as trademarks, sometimes decades ago. I'm always amazed at how many are gone. Our open and flexible approach to product copy means we can have lots of choices in product names. Checking for availability is a long and expensive part of the process, and we have an in-house legal team who specialize in this for us.

It is easier to get the copy right on every touch point if writers are in-house. It is such a difficult job if you are not based in the business, if you don't understand the categories and context for each one.

The Result:

customers know what we offer them, and they love it

We make sure we're never boring, and we're always experimenting and reinventing how we talk about our products and their benefits. We're always looking for fresh approaches and new ideas. For example, we learned shopping bags were being banned in San Francisco; we created a promotion so customers receive a free reusable shopping bag if they spend \$20 with us. The funky bag has "plastic bag rehab" written in big hippy lettering—they've been a hit.

We make statements explaining who we are and what we stand for. They range from "we think perfect is boring, and weirdness is next to godliness" to "we also believe in making products safe for every surface, especially earth's." We make our attitude felt on the widest possible scale and are not afraid of thinking big. We've recently launched a "Detox Seattle" campaign, and even published a book about our attitude and thinking—it's called *Squeaky Green*.

Case Study: Pret A Manger

Pret A Manger is one of the UK's retail success stories. Selling a wide range of the freshest sandwiches and lunchtime foods, the company prefers to use innovative customer communications rather than slick advertising and PR. Everything in a Pret store carries a message, from the coffee cups to the napkins, from the packaging to the posters on the walls. This creates a strong and unique personality, so what was their original approach, and how do they do it?

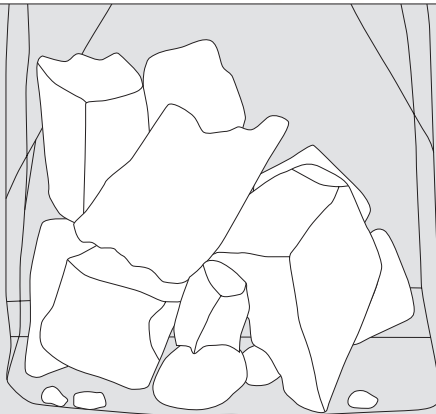
We spent months dipping, dunking and tasting until we found the perfect recipe for yoghurt, chocolatey nuts (hard life, eh?).

Almonds, brazils, hazelnuts, macadamias, pecans, pistachios ... we think this little bag rocks!

YOGHURT & NUT...
ROCKS!

A little bag full of white chocolate and yoghurt coated nuts.

★ PRET A MANGER ★



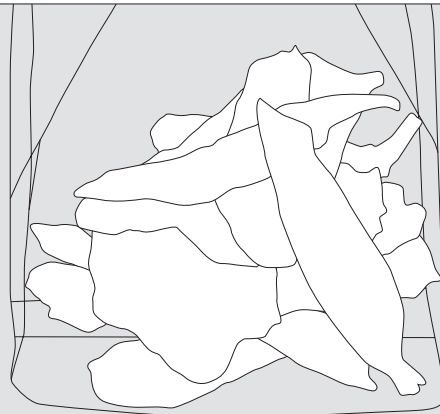
The goodies in this little bag are packed full of good stuff. Mangos are a fantastic source of vitamin C and they taste amazing.

We buy Fairtrade mango which guarantees fair prices for the farmers. We think this makes them taste even sweeter!

**MANGO
SLICES**

A little bag full of delicious dried mango slices.

★ PRET A MANGO ★



The Objective:

reflecting the attitude that makes the company so dynamic

The messages mirror the culture that pervades every aspect of Pret's business. It is a relaxed and informal working environment, built on the individual qualities of everyone who works there, and the internal communications are as quirky as the customer messages.

Pret doesn't have a press or PR office and only uses an external creative agency to help manage the huge workload of writing. The stimulating and informative messages that adorn every Pret item are written and managed by three people internally: the company's founder, commercial director, and head of communications, and even they don't follow a rule book.

The Pret tone of voice is based on the personality and ideas of the founder, Julian Metcalfe. It bursts with life, but is never preaching or bragging, and is definitely not "corporate" or "spin." Nothing deviates from the message about Pret's natural food, which is always "just made." Julian himself never uses the word "copy"—to him it's just messages, and every message is designed to make you feel good about Pret.

The Approach:

keeping the copy as fresh as the sandwiches

There is an instinctive approach to creativity and freshness, and an openness that many others could learn from. They have published all of their recipes so that customers can make Pret sandwiches themselves, and they have made public their commitment to not air-freight their ingredients, except in the case of an emergency (or where fresh basil leaves are concerned).

The writers say it is difficult to explain what is on- and off-brand when writing for Pret, but they all know what works and what doesn't—they each have a highly attuned eye for language, both their own and that of the competitors. If a competitor could say it, Pret won't. Yet a style of copy that works for a Pret soup board won't work for a Pret coffee board, simply because they are completely different messages.

The closest they get to an explanation is that their language "has charm, wit, and humility, but is never preaching," and that, while it is fun, "it is a wry smile not a belly laugh." They have also described it as "flippancy, underpinned by serious

knowledge." For example, their "Eat with your head" campaign promotes ten very sensible points about healthy eating.

By maintaining such a simple and straightforward process to writing messages, the team at Pret is able to keep a consistent feel with all of the copy. When trying to come up with a phrase to describe chemicals used by competitors, the team settled on "frankenstein food," while one of Pret's coffees has "a velvety foam—gives a jolt in the arm." They also go to great lengths to include their ingredients in plain English, and where they can't avoid jargon they explain what the ingredient is for: "soya lecithin—to stop glooping."

They operate plans and processes—coffee cups are reprinted three times a year, and posters refreshed five times a year—but the rule of thumb is that nothing is sacred. You'll find interesting messages at the bottom of invoices, on training materials, on screen designs, and on the wall at head office (where they keep a swear box for anyone referring to stores outside of London as "out of London"). The way they communicate to their customers and staff is incredibly important to Pret, and every piece of communication comes through the writing team for approval.

It's not as easy as it looks, though. They return many times to each piece of copy, and quality control themselves by reading and critiquing each other's copy. It took six months to write their 16-page brochure, but it is this painstaking attention to detail that makes the Pret A Manger tone of voice so light, tasty, and enjoyable.

The Result:

communications that build relationships with their customers

The copy at Pret builds long-term customer relationships because it is targeted and engaging, but they are clear that the most compelling thing about Pret is the food. Just like the food, the copy has to be turned around quickly so that the messages are always fresh and, where possible, relevant. Critics say the customer is bombarded with emotional overload, but they miss the point. The customer reads what he or she wants and, rather than being overloaded, is given a choice of positive messages to enjoy at will.



This *ugly brown napkin* is made from 100% recycled stock (some white napkins are bleached which can result in environmentally damaging toxic waste). If Pret staff get all serviette-ish and hand you huge bunches of napkins (which you don't need or want) please give them the evil eye.

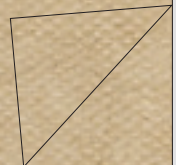
Waste not want not.

Chefs at work

'Just made' with preservative-free,
fresh, natural ingredients.



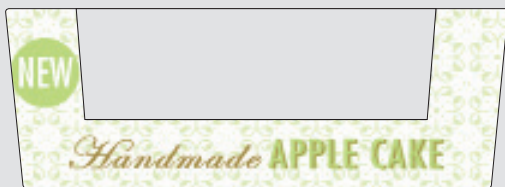
100% recycled



Ian (Head of Crisps) was convinced he could make ours taste even better. (We didn't see him for months.)

He's feeling rather smug now, as we have to agree—they really do taste very, very good.

Pret crisps are good because we chop and change the variety of potato throughout the year. This costs more but results in a better crunch and taste.



When you bake a cake at home, you take it out of the oven and cool it on a rack. Then you eat a large slice (as a reward) and keep the rest in a flowery cake tin, like your Grandma used to!

Think of the nasty wrapper as the cake tin. It's the only way we can keep the cake moist and delicious. As is often the case, the beauty is on the inside.