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OR a pair of readers from LOOK OPTIC
(*Brands We Love*, page 10)



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AND A LETTER FROM ...

Welcome to the latest issue of *ONE:ONE*, where we delve into the vibrant world of design, marketing, and technology.

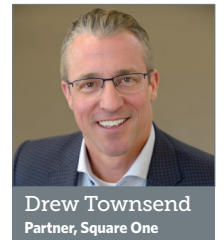
In this edition, we kick things off by exploring the intricate process of crafting the perfect corporate color palettes. With insights from industry experts, we present dos and don'ts crucial for designers navigating the complex terrain of brand representation across diverse media platforms. Plus, don't miss your chance to win a coveted 2024 Pantone Formula Guide, featuring an array of 2,390 colors, including 224 brand-new shades!

Our cover story shines a spotlight on the revolutionary role of AI in enhancing organic search and SEO strategies. Through an in-depth interview with a seasoned expert, we uncover invaluable insights and actionable tips to stay ahead in this dynamic landscape.

Delving deeper, we ponder the profound question: "What are you really selling?" By shifting our focus from product features to consumer benefits, we unravel the key to impactful sales and marketing messaging that resonates with audiences.

Last but not least, our Brands We Love segment showcases LOOK OPTIC, a trailblazing company renowned for its stylish eyewear and unwavering commitment to philanthropy and sustainability.

With a diverse array of compelling stories, this issue promises to inspire, educate, and ignite your passion for innovation. Enjoy the read!



Drew Townsend
Partner, Square One



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CREATIVE »



CREATING A Brand Color Palette

Humans can see up to 10 million distinct colors. Choosing the colors for a brand palette, then, is no easy feat. They have to play nicely together, of course, as well as work across a range of media, from packaging to email. And above all, they have to communicate the personality and values of the brand.

In short, creating the ideal brand palette, which will appear in everything from logos to landing pages, entails much more than choosing a few favorite

hues. Below, we offer you some of the most important dos and don'ts.

Do know thy brand.

In the world of package delivery, UPS dates back to the days of the Model T. The brown and gold that are the UPS palette's primary colors speak to the brand's reliability and long-standing reign over the sector. Founded in 1973, FedEx is a relative upstart. Its bolder palette, with purple and orange as the

primary hues, mark it as energetic, with a fresh approach. If you were unaware of the companies, you probably wouldn't guess simply by their palettes that they were rivals. But you would sense, even if just subliminally, which was the heritage brand and which was the challenger.

The UPS and FedEx palettes show why a brand's history, positioning, and unique selling proposition are foundational in deciding the colors that will help communicate its identity. A

Try these AI-driven color palette generators to help create unique color schemes for your brand, website, or graphic.

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www.colormind.io

Huemint:
www.huemint.com

more recent example is sustainable groceries brand Hive. To emphasize its organic and ethical qualities, as well as to speak to its beginnings selling honey, nut butters, and similar pantry items, creative strategist Rob van Wyen opted for a brand palette of warm, found-in-nature yellow, green, brown, and tan.

Part of understanding a brand includes knowing its audience. A company that wants to communicate fun to young, male consumers might

require a different palette than one aiming to communicate a similar vibe to an older, female audience.

Do understand color psychology.

Certain colors are almost universal in the feelings they evoke. Blue, for instance, is a calming hue in virtually all cultures. Red, on the other hand, is universally stimulating (due in part to its having the longest wavelength of all the colors visible to humans, which has a physiological effect). When determining your palette, as well as which will be your main colors and your secondary ones, you need to keep this in mind. Here's a quick cheat sheet:



→ **BLUE** — in addition to representing serenity (it has been shown to lower heart rates), calls to mind authenticity and loyalty (“true blue”). More people around the world choose it as their favorite than any other color, so it’s also a safe choice.



→ **RED** — in comparison, can be polarizing. It’s associated with love, energy, and passion, but also with danger and anger.



→ **YELLOW** — is another color that can give off contradictory messages. Exposure to it can boost levels of the neurotransmitter serotonin, which in turn can increase happiness. But too much yellow, or too bright a shade, can induce stress.



→ **GREEN** — unsurprisingly, evokes nature, along with feelings of satisfaction and contentment.



→ **ORANGE** — also unsurprisingly, is associated with sunshine and joy.



→ **PURPLE** — has long been associated with royalty, wealth, and luxury.

The tone and intensity of the color can generate additional associations. A soft, peachy orange, for instance, is comforting and inviting, while a citrus orange is energizing and even disruptive. ▶



Don't overlook color symbolism.

Regardless of any underlying physiological effect, colors often have different meanings in different cultures. Because red is considered lucky in India, McDonald's leans heavier into the color there than it does in other markets. In fact, the Swedish McDonald's website barely showcases red at all, opting for green instead to suggest eco-friendliness.

Don't include too many colors.

Incorporating too many colors dilutes the messaging and defeats the purpose of having a brand palette. Two or three main or primary colors and another two to four secondary and tertiary hues should suffice. If your brand is a more traditional one, consider a tighter palette; if it's more playful or unconventional, or if the inclusion of a range of colors has a historical relevance, you can go a bit broader.

You'll want the palette to encompass at least a few neutrals, and the colors should vary in tone—in other words, don't go for all brights or all pastels. Even if the brand personality is one of softness and comfort, you need at least one darker color for contrast and legibility, if nothing else.

Do ensure the colors work for both print and digital.

It's less a matter of being "digital first" or "print first" and more of making certain that your print CMYK colors translate into digital RGB colors, and vice versa. Even if the brand is currently digital only, with no packaging or even stationery to contend with, you can't assume that will always be the case.

RGB color tones tend to be brighter than CMYK tones; a yellow that sings on-screen can shout in print. Such visual discrepancies aren't the only thing to consider regarding your digital palette. You have to ensure that when used online, your colors comply with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). Among other things, this means that there's enough contrast for readability even by those with a sight disability such as color blindness. Certain colors in and of themselves might be fine, but when used together—with one for type atop another as background, say—they might not be easily readable. You should also avoid extremes such as pure black and pure white, which can strain some viewers' eyes. Fortunately, numerous tools exist so that you can test your palette for WCAG compliance.

Do check for consistency across media and devices.

Even once you're confident that your RGB and CMYK palettes match and that your digital palette is WCAG compliant, you need to consider the multitude of scenarios in which the colors will be viewed. Some designers find that colors look much brighter on Apple devices than on other digital screens; print specialists have long known that a paper's stock and finish sometimes dramatically alter a color's brightness or muddiness.

It's less a matter of being "digital first" or "print first" and more of making certain that your print CMYK colors translate into digital RGB colors, and vice versa.

Then there's the fact that color calibrations differ among individuals' computers. And don't forget that many people use dark mode on their devices, which with some applications, such as email, might automatically change everything that's white into black. While you have no way of adjusting for every color calibration out there, you can do your best to be certain that your brand palette is adaptable to dark mode and communicates your message to an acceptable degree regardless of the user's device.

Do consider zigging where others zag.

Certain colors are all but ubiquitous within market categories. Among convenience store brands, for instance, Buc-ee's, HyVee, Kwik Trip, QuikTrip, Sheetz, and Wawa play up a red tone similar to that of stop signs. Obviously, these businesses would want to use an attention-getting color synonymous with stopping to encourage drivers to stop by for their gasoline and snacks. It also helps that because these are largely regional brands, they don't all appear in all the same markets.

COOL FINDS »

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Nonetheless, while it may be tempting to replicate the color palette of a business you admire, don't. Besides the moral implications of copying, doing so will hurt your brand's ability to stand out and communicate what it represents.

Taco Bell is unique among fast-food brands in using purple—two purples, in fact—as a default color. Perhaps because purple foods are few and far between, the color hasn't been taken up by the restaurant sector. But by relying on dark and light purple in its branding, Taco Bell makes it apparent that it's not like the other fast-food chains.

Don't blindly follow trends.

Following color trends—and other visual trends, for that matter—won't help you stand out from the crowd. What's more, using the buzziest colors in your palette will date it, just as avocado green and harvest gold appliances date a kitchen to the late 1960s/early 1970s. While palettes are often tweaked over time (FedEx's purple and orange, for instance, were once bluer and redder in tone), a brand doesn't want to have to change its palette frequently. For one thing, doing so undermines the credibility and messaging of the brand, suggesting that it doesn't know what it wants to stand for. For another, not only is the process of modifying the palette expensive, but so is replacing a brand's assets, from signage to social media logos to business cards. The cost of replacing avocado kitchen appliances pales in comparison! ■

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A man with glasses and a checkered blazer is looking at a smartphone. The background is a blurred office or library setting.

The Impact of AI on Organic Search and SEO

By Tim Sweeney

High-performing organic search results are a game changer for businesses large and small, and AI is rapidly evolving the SEO game. An expert explains what you need to know to stay current.

Brian Dempsey doesn't mince words when asked if we are at a crossroads concerning the impact that artificial intelligence (AI) will have on marketing.

"In the marketing world, those who don't embrace AI as part of their overall process are going to be eclipsed by companies who incorporate automation into their service offering," Dempsey says. "Part of this is because of the speed to market that AI enables and also the ability to provide more services with a smaller team."

Dempsey has worked in digital marketing for 27 years. Bright Tribe, the Atlanta-based web design and digital marketing agency he founded, offers search engine optimization (SEO) review and management, ChatGPT advice for marketing efforts, website design, and social media marketing. The company focuses on empowering small businesses, and Dempsey knows firsthand what AI can

do for such companies . . . because Bright Tribe is one. Regardless of how big or small your business is, the need to have your organic search and SEO efforts buttoned up has never been more important, and Dempsey is particularly focused on how new AI tools can help companies excel in this area.

A REFRESH ON ORGANIC SEARCH AND SEO

In case, among all the recent talk about AI, you might have forgotten why marketing “basics” such as organic search are still vital to your business, let’s start with a reminder: research says that 53 percent of website traffic comes from organic searches, and SEO company Moz says that up to 92 percent of that traffic goes to results on the first page. That means if you’re not investing in SEO, you’re throwing away most of your online opportunities to be discovered. Dempsey adds that mobile searches make up more than half of global website traffic, meaning that being visible on mobile—where the search engine results page layout is even more condensed—is crucial.

“Focusing on SEO isn’t just beneficial; it’s imperative for any business that wants to thrive in the modern marketplace,” Dempsey says. “Without it, businesses miss out on a critical avenue for growth.”

The game has changed considerably in the nearly three decades since Dempsey began working in digital marketing, and that means the way we approach organic search has evolved as well. He points to the layout of Google’s search engine results page as just one example. Gone are the days of ads being in yellow boxes with basic blue links for organic results just below them. Today, your search results are a mix of ads, the Google Maps 3-Pack, and snippets. That’s before you even get to organic listings. For your business, this means that showing up organically now

requires a strategy that allows you to appear in multiple areas. Dempsey uses the example of a land excavation company he recently worked with, for whom getting into the Google 3-Pack was a game changer.


“It wasn’t just about being found in organic listings; it was about maximizing visibility in every part of the page,” he says. “We achieved this by optimizing their Google My Business profile, strategically gathering reviews, and building local content to boost their organic local SEO.”

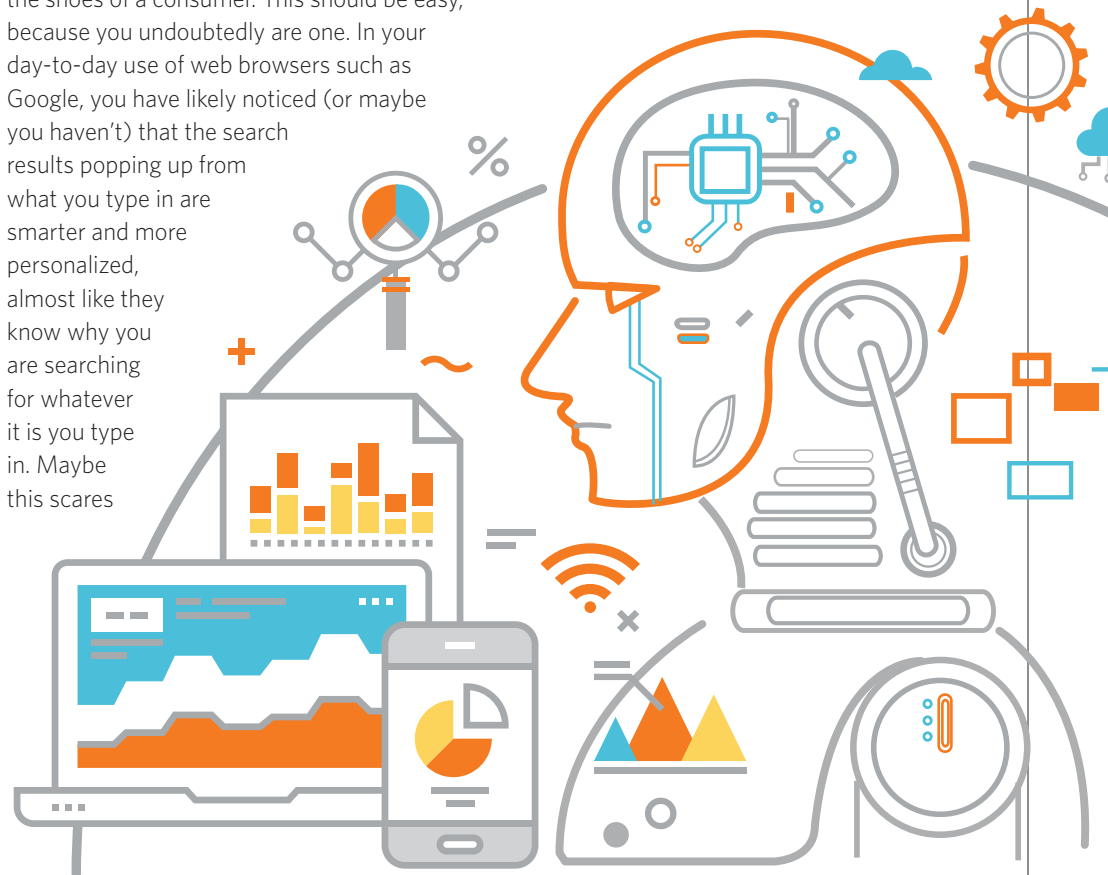
THINKING LIKE A CONSUMER

So where does AI come into play in all this organic search/SEO results talk? To understand it better, try putting yourself in the shoes of a consumer. This should be easy, because you undoubtedly are one. In your day-to-day use of web browsers such as Google, you have likely noticed (or maybe you haven’t) that the search results popping up from what you type in are smarter and more personalized, almost like they know why you are searching for whatever it is you type in. Maybe this scares

you, or maybe it just helps you find what you are looking for more quickly. Either way, you have AI-based search to thank (or blame). Dempsey says that AI-based search is revolutionizing our access to information by making it more conversational and context aware. For consumers searching for goods or services online, this manifests itself in how we interact with our search engines.

“It’s like having an informed conversation rather than throwing keywords into a search engine,” Dempsey explains. “AI search tools understand the intent behind our questions and can pull from known information to provide more personalized answers.”

He points to a recent personal experience in which he was searching for information 



on a medical question. To get the answer, Dempsey bypassed Google and instead used ChatGPT, the chatbot started by OpenAI in late 2022. ChatGPT didn't just spit out links for Dempsey to sift through—it also engaged him in a dialogue, improving the quality of the information he received.

"It even suggested angles I hadn't considered, enhancing my understanding of the topic," Dempsey says. "This experience underscores the transformative potential of AI search for us as consumers and as marketers. It's a stark reminder that we need to think like our audience. AI doesn't just answer our questions; it often knows what we need before we fully articulate it. That's the future we're stepping into, where AI shapes the search landscape by being interactive, intuitive, and insightful."

That's because AI-powered search engines know not just what we are looking for, but also why we are looking for it and even the context behind our searches. They can even use our past search behavior to predict what information will be most helpful to us moving forward. In this way, AI's impact on search tools is refining how these platforms understand and anticipate customer behavior and preferences. Dempsey uses the example of a customer who frequently searches for eco-friendly products. An AI-powered search tool could learn from this and prioritize content that highlights sustainability in that person's queries.

"Even if a user doesn't search for 'eco-friendly floor-cleaning products' and simply enters 'best floor-cleaning products,' because of their past behavior looking for sustainable products, eco-friendly products could be prioritized in search results for them," he says. "As marketers, understanding this shift enables us to create content that resonates more deeply with our audience's values and interests, improving our visibility in search results and enhancing user engagement. In essence, AI is bridging the gap between the vast amount of content available online and the specific needs of individual users, making

it essential for marketers to leverage these insights to craft more effective, user-centric campaigns and content."

THINKING LIKE A MARKETER

To varying degrees, all of us have been told how AI will change our lives by taking away our jobs or creating robots that will rule the world. AI in the context of organic search and SEO is slightly less dramatic. It's a suite of tools and capabilities that can change the game, but not always in the manner you might expect. When it comes to creating content, many companies have used AI to quickly produce generic content from generic prompts, but Dempsey says that prioritizing quantity over quality—or word count over the value being delivered in the content—is a mistake. A lesson to heed: generic content created by AI without a customized touch won't perform well from an SEO standpoint.

"This approach reminds me of the content marketing boom, where the volume of content became the focus, leading to a deluge of generic, low-quality, unoriginal content online," Dempsey explains. "When Google caught on, they refined their algorithm to prioritize quality, well-researched content, leveraging criteria like experience, expertise, authoritativeness, and trustworthiness (EEAT)."

Make no mistake: AI is now very good at creating content that sounds like it was created by a human. A 2023 study published in the journal *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics* asked 72 linguistics experts to differentiate between AI-generated content and human writing; the group could only

identify AI-created content 39 percent of the time. So, is your job in jeopardy if you are feeding your family by creating content (such as copy) designed to perform well in organic search and bringing ROI to the brand you work for? Dempsey says not exactly. The difference, at least for now, is that AI lacks that unique human touch—the ability to incorporate personal stories, anecdotes, trust factors, and appropriate third-party links that resonate with readers and meet Google's criteria for ranking content and, therefore, deliver long-term SEO results.

"Renowned entrepreneur Neil Patel and his team did a five-month study that showed that human-generated content significantly outperformed AI-generated content on the same topic, and the primary difference was the lack of EEAT factors in AI content," Dempsey says. "This speaks to the ongoing need for real human copywriters and editors and why they should embrace the use of AI. It's a tool, but to be truly effective for search, it requires a thoughtful human to polish it."

The same holds true for choosing SEO keywords to help your organic search results. While AI can suggest keywords, Dempsey believes it does not replace the insights from SEO tools that provide real-time data crucial for decision-making. He sees AI as a tool, not a replacement for the nuanced work of SEO professionals.

"It's our job to blend AI's efficiency with the irreplaceable human elements of creativity and strategic insight to create content that not only ranks, but also resonates with users," he says.

At Bright Tribe, Dempsey and his team use AI to help brainstorm ideas and outlines, evaluate authority sites, and see what competitors are up to—even in the drafting of content. When it comes to brainstorming, Dempsey says that AI delivers a never-ending well of ideas that he and his team would never dream up on their own. The content that is created from that process, however, does not deliver great SEO results unless it's fine-tuned to the brand's unique voice, value proposition, and specific insights. The "really cool part" of



what experts such as Dempsey and his team can do lies in the creation of custom GPTs for individual clients. For nearly 18 years, Bright Tribe has been writing content for most of its clients—a tedious, time-consuming, and expensive process. Now, with CustomGPT, they have been able to streamline their own internal content creation and empower clients by developing custom GPTs so they can generate their own tailored content efficiently. It's a win-win for agency and client that saves time and money. It also keeps everything in line with the client's unique brand voice.

"This isn't your off-the-shelf AI and generic ChatGPT prompts; it's customized to deeply understand a client's brand, their voice, their services, and their audience," Dempsey explains. "It's like giving our clients their own, brand-specific AI that knows exactly how to speak to their customers. This way, we're not just guessing what works. We're using AI to ensure we're hitting the right notes every time. It's a game changer for us and our clients."

These capabilities of AI—its ability to quickly create content for us, its improved understanding of natural language, and its ability to use past search history to understand why we are searching for things—add up to organic search and SEO being not merely about keyword recognition anymore, but about genuinely understanding what people are looking for and providing that in a clear, useful manner.

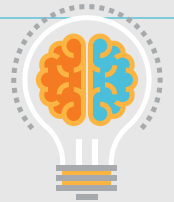
"What AI is particularly good at is providing us with a wider lens through which to view a topic," Dempsey explains. "It helps us dive deeper and think broader, and ultimately, it helps us to understand the hearts and minds of our ideal clients. By doing so, we can create content that strikes a chord emotionally and resonates on a more personal level. This approach not only elevates our SEO footprint by covering more ground but also drives organic traffic more effectively because it aligns so well with what our audience is seeking. When used creatively, it can significantly enhance the reach and impact of our digital content." ■



Getting Started

Brian Dempsey's

5 Easy Steps to Generate SEO Results Using AI



"Want to get started using AI to improve organic search results? This is exactly what we do when we create content."

- 1. Understand your audience and your brand:** It's crucial to deeply understand both your audience and your brand. You can use ChatGPT to help by asking it to ask you questions about your business and your target customers. This interactive process helps unearth key insights about whom you are serving and what sets your brand apart. Then, use ChatGPT to summarize this information, creating a clear profile of your customer and brand identity to guide your content creation.
- 2. Set up custom instructions:** Custom instructions in ChatGPT allow you to tailor the AI's output to your specific needs. This includes setting the tone and style and incorporating the audience and brand insights you've gathered. To do this, click your name in the bottom left corner and go to Instructions to input these customizations. Here, you can add the detailed summary about your audience and brand from step one, ensuring every piece of content ChatGPT generates is aligned with your marketing strategy.
- 3. Don't generate in one go—iterate:** Instead of generating your content in a single attempt, use ChatGPT to create initial drafts or outlines first. This approach allows for refinement and ensures the content remains focused and highly relevant to your audience.
- 4. Optimize broadly:** With your audience and brand in mind, use AI to explore and create content around a wide array of topics related to your offerings. This not only enhances your SEO but also appeals to a broader audience base, improving your online visibility. Your goal with SEO is to write real content, for real users, that provides real value. If you create generic content that mimics everyone else's content, it won't perform well.
- 5. Don't forget the human touch:** While AIs such as ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini provide a solid foundation, it's crucial to infuse the content with human elements. Add personal insights and stories, and ensure the content meets the EEAT criteria: experience, expertise, authoritativeness, and trustworthiness. These are essential for creating genuine connections with your audience and boosting your credibility in search results.

Brands We Love



LOOK OPTIC

Andrew Leary refused to accept the truth. Despite struggling for months to read without relying on his phone's light, he hesitated to admit he needed glasses. Finally succumbing, he purchased his first pair of prescription glasses, albeit reluctantly due to their cost. Initially pleased with his new appearance, Leary soon realized the inconvenience of wearing glasses daily and wearing the same pair. As he searched for new frames, he discovered his vision only required reading glasses, yet he was disappointed by the limited choices and poor-quality craftsmanship available.

"I saw an opportunity to provide consumers with the highest-quality readers available, in classic styles and colors for every occasion, and priced to collect [more than one pair]," Leary says.

The idea for LOOK OPTIC was born.

That was in 2015. The company launched in 2017, and now LOOK OPTIC makes quality readers from 100 percent recycled materials and says its mission is to ensure wearing readers is a fun, fashionable, and fearless experience—whenever you need to read the fine print. The home page of LOOKOPTIC.com explains it like this: "You should never have to surrender your

style for a moment of clarity. Because confidence looks good on everyone."

When he founded the company, Leary was still the CEO of Ipsos SMX (Social Media Exchange). LOOK OPTIC was intended as a side hustle for him and his business partner, Jonathan Saven. However, in 2021, Leary joined LOOK OPTIC full-time. Since then, the company has sold more than 400,000 pairs of glasses and seen double-digit growth year over year. In addition to its stylish readers, LOOK OPTIC sells progressives and blue-light readers for all that screen time we log. They even offer tinted sun readers and a few additional accessories. The company boasts about the style of its products, and Leary claims landing on this point of difference was not just blind luck, if you'll pardon the pun.

"Having worked for Ipsos, one of the largest market research firms in the world, we did a good amount of research prior to launch," Leary explains. "We found that the current reading glass options were not very stylish and made consumers feel old. To this end, after releasing our initial collection, we started to focus on oversized silhouettes that were not traditionally found in or did not look like readers. Price testing also helped us arrive at our \$68 price point."

Still, the brand's success cannot only be attributed to recognizing an unnoticed need. For starters, the product is made to last. The wire-core temples allow LOOK OPTIC readers to be adjusted without heat, the prescription-quality lenses are scratch resistant, and the frames overall are 50 percent lighter than acetate frames. LOOK OPTIC also offers a 90-day trial and a one-year guarantee on all its glasses, along with free shipping. This customer-first attitude is one reason why consumer reviews on the website are almost always ultra-positive; Leary knows that such online reviews can make or break a direct-to-consumer brand.

"For this reason, we believe there is nothing more important than delivering a great product and top-notch support," he says. "And we have always invested heavily in these areas, which was not always easy as we were trying to get to breakeven."

Leary's wide-ranging career prior to LOOK OPTIC included time spent building online communities for innovative brands such as Apple, Nike, and Coca-Cola; it's no accident that doing so has played an integral role in his own brand's success. He says the most important lesson he learned in this area is to be a good listener.

"Before raising money and joining LOOK OPTIC full-time, I was the only customer service rep for three years, and probably not a great one," he explains. "But this experience helped us define our positioning. Specifically, 90 percent of our customer reviews reference comfort, so we saw this as an opportunity to use comfort as a clear point of differentiation in a crowded market and to use the quote 'The World's Most Comfortable Readers' as a tagline."

Marketing-wise, the brand's tone of voice is like their readers—sophisticated, yet fun. LOOK OPTIC's Instagram relies heavily on images of people wearing their products, of course, but it also features some playful posts that align with the brand's pillars of Fun, Fashionable, and Responsible. The brand's tagline—"Fear Not the Fine Print"—was developed by Yard NYC. The agency was briefed by Leary and the LOOK OPTIC team, using Barneys New York (circa 1990) as inspiration.

"Fun and fashionable, never taking ourselves too seriously," Leary says. "When I think of Barneys in the '90s, I see a man in a tux with pink socks or Linda Evangelista kissing a monkey. We believe having fun is at the heart of being truly fashionable. The third pillar used to be Affordable; however, as we moved into 100 percent recycled frames, we updated this to Responsible."

Identifying—and operating by—those three brand pillars may not always make life easy for a business, but it certainly does simplify selecting brand ambassadors who will align with your values. In its short

history, LOOK OPTIC has collaborated with the likes of tennis legend Venus Williams and actor/model Carolyn Murphy. Leary says these choices were made because both had a previous interest in LOOK OPTIC, and that authenticity is nonnegotiable for the brand. LOOK OPTIC was featured on Williams's website as one of her favorites before the brand and the tennis star ever became "doubles partners." Likewise, Leary says the company initially inquired about Murphy due to her interest in sustainability (a shared value).

"When her agent responded with a photo of Carolyn wearing our LIAM frames in black, this led to the development of a new style with her," he says.

The company does not pay influencers to post about their brand or products. The goal is to partner with people who already wear and like LOOK OPTIC glasses so that they create content and share their own personal experiences about wearing the company's products.

"Luckily, as we have grown, we have more and more creators interested in sharing their stories," Leary says.

LOOK OPTIC's success with what they refer to as an "Opti-Mistic" attitude continues to make the brand desirable for creators—and consumers too. The company says that more than four million frames end up in landfills each year, which is the reason LOOK OPTIC uses 100 percent recycled materials in its products and a circular production model. The company has partnered with recycling leader TerraCycle and encourages consumers

to send their old frames back to be recycled. LOOK OPTIC also partners with the Lions Club to refurbish unwanted frames and distribute them to those in need. Consumers can get 25 percent off their next frames by donating or recycling old frames.

The "Opti-Mistic" approach to business does not end there. LOOK OPTIC also contributes a percentage of every sale to a philanthropic organization called charity: water, whose goal is to bring clean water to every human on the planet. The founder of the organization is a longtime friend of Leary's and was an early advisor who helped the LOOK OPTIC team create a sustainable company.

"When we started LOOK, we made the decision to give a percentage of every sale to charity: water," Leary says. "Over 780 million people go without clean water every day and contaminated water is the number one cause of preventable blindness worldwide. What I love most about charity: water is that 100 percent of all donations go to actual water projects so donors can see their contributions' real, tangible, and life-altering impact. Private donors fund operating costs so donors can rest assured that every penny they contribute will change people's lives."

Leary says it's difficult to tell what kind of return on investment there is for maintaining a responsible business, but he doesn't seem to care.

"For us, it's in our DNA," he says, "and we hope that we can not only raise awareness but encourage other brands to act responsibly as well." ■

WIN A Pair of LOOK OPTIC Readers and SEE the difference for yourself!

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What Are You REALLY Selling?

By Sherry Chiger

It's crucial to inquire, "What are we truly offering?" Neglecting this question can limit your sales pitch or marketing messages to merely the tangible product or service.

Frequently, individuals aren't seeking the product or service itself. Instead, they're drawn to the benefits or returns derived from it.

By delving deeper than the product alone and understanding what people genuinely desire, you'll find the answer to "What are we really selling?"

During the depths of the Great Depression, Revlon founder Charles Revson described cosmetics as "hope in a jar." His awareness that he was selling not a commodity but something less tangible helped him grow his business into an empire.

That "something less tangible" could be a longing for positive change (which hope is, at its core). Or it could be an emotion: joy, comfort, pride. Or it could be both. You could tap into an emotion while satisfying the prospective customer with a solution to a problem. Adopting this mindset will bolster your business, just as it did for Charles Revson.

Solving for X

Most people are dissatisfied with at least some aspect of their life. It can be something as major as the state of their marriage or as minor as having to repeatedly get up from their desk to refill their water bottle. One marketing approach is to zero in on this aspect, view it as a problem, and offer a solution. "If you think about it, even the most basic widgets are solving a problem for somebody somewhere," says creative and content strategist Kelly Lack, whose clients have included Fenty Beauty and Williams-Sonoma. "And if you can effectively position your widget, now it's a solution. Not just a widget."

For some products and services, identifying the problem might seem easy. Jim Keenan (better known by the mononym Keenan), President/CEO of consultancy A Sales Guy Inc., cites rice as an example: “Why does the person want the rice? Do they want the rice for a wedding, to make a curry, to feed the poor? Everything behind that why drives that decision.” If you believe a common problem among your audience is that rice is too sticky, you’d want to market fluffy, nonsticky rice. Then again, your audience might have a problem finding rice that is sticky enough, in which case you’d want to market glutinous rice.

You can’t assume that because you prefer nonsticky rice, your audience does too. “A lot of times marketers don’t do sufficient research,” says Bart Sichel, President of marketing and corporate strategy consultancy bps Captura. “All these marketers think they don’t need to do research or focus groups. In 99.9 percent of cases, you do.”

Sichel believes you should perform both qualitative and quantitative research to best determine the problems your audience wants your product to solve. “Qualitative surfaces the ideas,” he explains. “Quantitative helps tabulate the direction and the degree.”

Focus groups and one-on-one interviews fall under qualitative research. When leading this sort of research, it’s particularly important that your biases and assumptions don’t come through. Opt for open-ended questions: “Can you describe your ideal widget?” rather than “Do you prefer large or small widgets?” With the latter, there’s the assumption that size is the most important factor in

choosing a widget, that the group or interview participants have a distinct size preference, and that they all define *large* and *small* the same. The former question might reveal that respondents don’t care about the size of their widgets nearly as much as they do about the shape, the color, how easily they can be cleaned, or a host of other factors you might never have considered. From there you can probe deeper with more open-ended questions such as “Can you walk me through how you use your widget?” This type of question “could lead to a need you might not have even thought of,” Sichel says. “That’s what leads to breakthroughs rather than modest change increments.”

Once you’ve gleaned enough insights into your target market’s needs, you can proceed with the quantitative research. This might include questionnaires in which you ask a statistically relevant number of people whether the problems that came up in your qualitative research are indeed problems for them and, if so, how much of a problem and for what percentage and sector of the audience.

Keenan suggests using the results of your research to create what he calls a “problem

identification chart” with three columns. The first column lists the problems that your product or service aims to solve; the second is the impact for the potential customers if the problems aren’t solved; the third is what is causing each problem. “You’re not finding out what they need but instead where they are,” he says. Lack agrees: “We’re trying to meet the customer where they’re at, which means letting the consumer mindset lead your every mood.”

Of course, the qualitative and quantitative research combined will also help you better understand your target audience—or more likely, audiences. You’re apt to find that an ideal frozen dinner for parents of young children, say, looks rather different from the ideal frozen dinner for childless consumers, while empty nesters on a budget might have no desire for frozen dinners at all. ▶



That's why, in addition to knowing an audience's pain points, you need to have at least some demographic and psychographic information about them. "If you understand your audience, the communities they're part of, the culture they identify with, the artists they look to, the food they enjoy, those insights are a solid jumping-off point for all the marketing you'll do to make your product or your brand relevant and desirable to them," Lack says. "You'll know what kind of UX or graphic design they're likely to respond to. You'll know where to advertise because you'll have an idea of where they're hanging out—both digitally and in real life. You'll know what press to target because you know what they're reading. You'll know what influencers to develop partnerships with—people with whom they likely feel familiarity or connection."

Once you understand the problems each sector of your audience is trying to solve with your product or service, you can move on to identifying and marketing the solutions. "It's not about pushing your product," Keenan insists. "It's about making a recommendation to solve a problem."

And how does one effectively make a recommendation? By telling a story.

"It's the solution that's the answer," Sichel says, "and because it's a solution, not a product, that's where the emotion in the storytelling comes in." And it's the storytelling that shows your target market why your offering, not that of your competitors, is the solution to their problem—and why your audience should change their behavior by purchasing your product or service.

Sweet Emotion

Maybe you don't want to position your brand or offering as a solution. Or perhaps the problem it's solving

is too apparent or too mundane: a supermarket, for instance, is solving the problem of consumers' lack of food in the house. That's why supermarket chain Publix sells groceries by selling happiness. "Where shopping is a pleasure" is the brand's slogan, which it reinforces by ensuring its stores are well lit, well stocked, and well staffed with genuinely friendly workers. Beyond that, its advertisements focus less on the food and more on the people enjoying being together at an occasion that is made even more joyful by the inclusion of food. The product is secondary to the emotion.

"The best way to get someone to change their behavior is through emotion," says Tim Ito, Cofounder/Principal of digital marketing agency Marketing Nice Guys. The emotions he finds most effective to tap into, particularly for smaller businesses, are love, hate, fear/anxiety, and ambition ("what somebody wants to be"). Similarly, a long-held tenet among copywriters is that the seven most effective emotional drivers are fear, greed, anger, guilt, flattery, exclusivity, and salvation.

In the case of the negative emotions, you're selling not them, but rather what Ito terms "the antidote." By addressing prospective customers' fear of driving children in an unsafe vehicle, for example, Volvo sells security. By speaking to the anger many women feel about the unreal beauty expectations set by media, Dove's Real Beauty campaign is selling empowerment, inclusivity, and self-esteem.

Keep in mind that this approach needs to be holistic; it's not a one-and-done problem-solution case study. Publix's heartwarming commercials and inviting slogan wouldn't be effective if its stores were shabby and its staff rude. "Brand building for a long-term

relationship with your customer should always be the goal," Lack says. "And with every relationship—even the one between your brand and your customer—there has to be trust, consistency, and some emotional investment. So you need to keep showing up for your customer, as much as they are for you."

Lack cites e-tailer Zappos, where she was formerly Director of Content and Partnerships, as an example. "Zappos is all in on excellent customer service.

Similarly, a long-held tenet among copywriters is that the seven most effective emotional drivers are fear, greed, anger, guilt, flattery, exclusivity, and salvation.

They literally wrote the book on it. They call themselves a customer-service company that just happens to sell shoes and clothes." And by selling exceptional service first and apparel and footwear second, Zappos sets itself apart from the myriad other purveyors of shoes and clothing while retaining a loyal customer base.

Which brings us to what is arguably the most important aspect of selling your offering and brand as something more than what it appears to be. "You need to understand where you are," Ito says. "If it's not authentic, you're not going to be able to project it." ■

WHAT THEY'RE REALLY SELLING:



LOOK OPTIC

What they seem to sell:

Readers

What they're really selling:

Choices and affordability

A Few Real-Life Examples

How they sell it: "Owning one pair of readers was like owning one pair of shoes and having to wear them every day," said LOOK OPTIC founder Andrew Leary. So, he set out to provide consumers with the highest-quality readers available, in classic styles and colors for every occasion, priced so you can own multiple pairs. Check out our Brands We Love story on page 10 for more details.



GODIVA

What they seem to sell:

Chocolate

What they're really selling:

A well-deserved premium indulgence

How they sell it: When Godiva closed its stand-alone boutiques throughout North America to focus on selling its chocolate via the web and mass retailers, it still wanted to differentiate itself as a luxury choice. So it opted to appeal to its target audience's need for what chief marketing officer John Galloway called "a little bright spot in their day" with advertising that referenced "celebrations, every day or night." Godiva also reinforces the brand's exclusivity with copy emphasizing "magnificent artistry" that describes not only the chocolate, but their beautiful gold packaging as well.



CRAYOLA

What they seem to sell:

Craft supplies

What they're really selling:

Creativity and self-expression

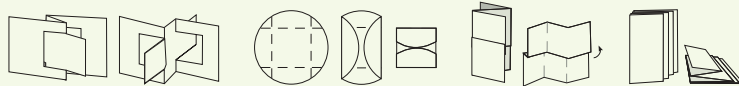
How they sell it: You can't buy crayons or any of Crayola's other products on its website—its product pages instead direct you to the sites of various retailers. But what you can get on its site are lesson plans, coloring pages, and craft ideas, establishing the brand as a purveyor of inspiration and fun. Crayola backs this up with its annual Creativity Week program, during which it provides even more free resources for educators and parents worldwide, not only from Crayola but also from partners such as publishers HarperCollins and Penguin Random House. Expanding on this, in 2023 the brand launched Crayola Studios to produce films, series, and other entertainment for children. "With the establishment of Crayola Studios, we seek to inspire and nurture the next generation and help them develop lifelong creative mindsets," Executive Vice President of Marketing Victoria Lozano said during a presentation in Cannes. "I believe Crayola's unique perspective and its long-standing mission and values present an exciting opportunity for the industry as it searches for and develops stand-out new entertainment content with creative self-expression at its heart."

THAT'S FOLD-TASTIC »



Trish Witkowski specializes in creative solutions and engagement strategies for direct mail and marketing. She

is also the curator of the world's most exciting collection of folded print and direct mail samples, sharing the best of her collection on her popular e-video series, *60-Second Super-Cool Fold of the Week*. Check out our three super-cool folds below, and request the dielines directly from us!



fold
factory
.com

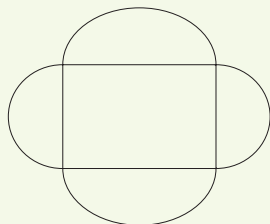
RECTANGULAR PETAL FOLD



The Rectangular Petal Fold offers the same physical characteristics of the classic square-format Petal fold—in a

mail-friendly, rectangular proportion. Curved panels create a flowerlike reveal, with the ability to hold rectangular or shaped inserts. This format is commonly embellished with a custom seal or belly band as a finishing touch.

This format is 13.25" by 11" unfolded and finishes to 7.75" by 5.1875". This piece can self-mail, but it will need a glue strip to keep it closed or, if you add a tab, extra postage will be required for hand-sorting. This piece can also mail in an envelope.



Scan this code with your mobile device to watch it unfold!

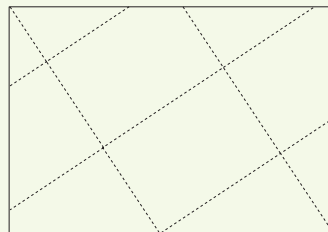
TWO-WAY ANGLED GATE WRAP



The Two-Way Angled Gate Wrap is a statement format that uses angled folds to create a dynamic opening

effect and presentation. At nearly 30" x 20" opened, this exciting, oversized wrap offers lots of real estate for bold graphics.

This format is 28.3" by 19.775" unfolded and finishes to a 12.625" by 9" format. This format is not self-mailing, so if you intend to mail this format, it will require an envelope or poly bag.



Scan this code with your mobile device to watch it unfold!

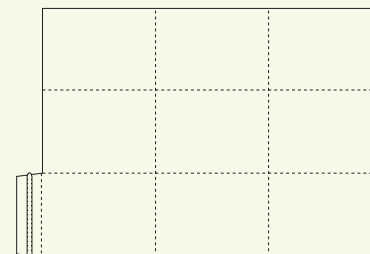
POSTER MAILER WITH ZIP-STRIP



The Poster Mailer with Zip-Strip features a large-format trifold-into-trifold poster fold that is sealed with a flap and a

zip-strip. The result is a compact piece that is fun to open, with a huge poster reveal.

This format is 19.25" by 28" unfolded and finishes to an 8.75" by 6.5" rectangular format. The zip-strip must be glued to seal the piece closed. This format is self-mailing as a USPS machinable flat.



Scan this code with your mobile device to watch it unfold!



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4 Marketing Trends to Watch:

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1 Employees Becoming Essential Influencers.

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2 Influencer Marketing's Changing Landscape.

Brands are finding better engagement and believability by using **nano-** and **micro-**influencers rather than **macro-**influencers. The rates are better too!

Influencer Rates (according to a report by Influencer Marketing Hub):

- **Nano-influencers**
[1,000 to 10,000 followers]
charge anywhere between \$5 and \$25 for a TikTok post
- **Micro-influencers**
[10,000 to 50,000 followers]
charge \$25 to \$125
- **Macro-influencers**
[500,000 to 1 million followers]
quote between \$1,250 and \$2,500 for a TikTok post

3 More User-Generated Content, Please.

The continued use of user-generated video content is stronger than ever. Why does it work? Because potential customers are more likely to trust it over high-production videos from the brand pushing the product or service. User-generated videos carry a level of authenticity that really resonates with audiences.

4 Newsletters Are Making a Comeback!

Digital marketing publishers are looking to diversify their content distribution in 2024. Top asset types used by digital marketers this year include:

Video - 41.2%

Podcasts - 41.2%

**The Top Diversified Activity:
Newsletters - 47.1%!**

(Search Engine Land report)

