



The Cram Quarterly

News and notes for educational communicators

Spring 2006

FEATURE

Real-world marketing lessons

Look around. You'll find small and big moments in life that can teach important lessons about human behavior—why we think, respond and react as we do. We can improve our marketing efforts by observing these everyday life lessons. We're pleased to include "Real-world marketing lessons" as a regular feature in *The Cram Quarterly*.

Reality TV The never-ending procession of television shows like "Survivor," "Cops," and "The Apprentice" proves our appetite for watching real people in real—and increasingly uncomfortable—situations is far from sated. We clearly enjoy seeing ordinary people in unstaged, unscripted situations. So what does this mean to college communicators?

Browse through a few school websites or viewbooks. See or read anything you believe is real? How about those student quotes that sound artificial beside photos that look staged. Is it possible that everyone in those schools is either wildly happy or thoughtfully absorbed in study?

The lesson: too much un-reality raises suspicions, and detracts from the intended message. The people to whom you communicate want words and photos that sound and look real. If you give them more reality, they will pay closer attention to your messages.

Ross Perot as U.S. presidential candidate Who could have imagined a Texas businessman, inexperienced in politics, could garner almost 19% of the popular vote, making him the most successful third-party presidential candidate since Theodore Roosevelt in the 1912 election? You know what helped him? Visual aids. Appearing frequently on national television, Perot presented his platform using business-like (read: non-political-like) charts and graphs combined with simple and convincing explanations.

The lesson: visuals help people understand what you're saying, and might even convince them to side with you.

Pink Jeep Tours When Don Pratt, founder of Pink Jeep Tours, painted his jeep a bright pink to gain attention for his fledgling tour company he had no idea the impact of that simple decision. His company has grown from a single jeep to a fleet of hundreds of spotlessly maintained off-the-road vehicles. The color is memorable, playful, and stands out for all to notice on the road. At the end of each day, upon returning to the warehouse, each vehicle is scrupulously detailed by company guides and the fleet administrator. No other Southwest tour company can say the same thing.

The lesson: find a way to stand out in a crowd and make it a big deal.

Apple Store If you have an Apple Store in your local shopping mall, you may have noticed that it hums with activity while other stores around it seem deserted. What's the buzz?

The clean, futuristically spare showrooms are inviting spaces that showcase beautifully designed products. There is a lot of “white space” in the show room layout—open areas that surround and enhance product display cases. Use of color is minimal and neutral, which helps the product colors stand out.

The lesson: create an experience that mirrors the quality of the product, and they will come. (Of course, it doesn't hurt that Apple products are only available in Apple Stores or online.)

The heavy price of over-confidence Lindsey Jacobellis taught us a tough lesson when she grabbed her snowboard while mid-flight on the way to the finish line at the recent Olympics, well ahead of her competitors.

The lesson: As she returned to earth and tumbled off the side of the trail, she taught us that over-confidence can result in making poor decisions, and that leadership is a combination of skill, accomplishment, and humility.

–GCF staff

FEATURE

Guaranteeing consistent visual identity use, from the top down and all around

So, your logo was redesigned and your entire marketing team knows how and when to use it. You're all set, right? Wrong. After expending all the time and effort required for the research phase, the approval process, the design, the redesign, not to mention the expense, you dare not take a chance that the new identity is not properly implemented.

After all, your new logo is your visual identity, a tool to help express your mission, goals, and differences across a full spectrum of communications. Its proper implementation is critical to a coherent public image.

The complete manual

To ensure proper use of the new identity you'll need to issue a standards manual. Be sure pertinent parts of the manual, such as downloadable logo artwork, are available online. Rule #1: Make it simple and easy to understand.

Official sanction from on high If the highest possible official, usually the dean or president, writes the introduction, the new identity will have an authoritative stamp of approval positioning it for the widest acceptance.

Telling right from wrong The manual should include several sections detailing the correct, and incorrect, ways to use the new identity. Start by explaining the meaning behind the new logo design, including perhaps why it was designed and its connection to the institution now.

Details, details Go into great detail about size, color, and arrangement of the design elements. Speaking of color, provide swatches for all accepted colors and their use on both coated and uncoated paper, as well as online. You may want to include specifics of exceptions, which might be to promote special events that have their own color schemes.

When to use the seal. When to use the logo. A description of your seal and its use within the new identity should be included, even if it is not part of the new identity design. There is often confusion about the use of the official seal, and the standards manual will help you set up the guidelines so those distinctions are no longer blurred.

Official fonts Explain which font families are acceptable. Remember, some fonts which work splendidly on paper might not work as well online, so be prepared to recommend alternative, acceptable fonts for use on your website.

Paper stock In this section, you have the opportunity to specify the brand and style of paper for everyday correspondence and special occasion purposes, such as invitations or thank-you letters.

Stationery items Correspondence creators need to know exactly how to position copy on letterhead, envelopes, and business cards. In this section, include the positioning not only for the logo, but also for the address block and any subordinate nomenclature such as names of divisions or departments.

Here's your opportunity to discuss copy consistency, such as how phone numbers are written and preferred abbreviations for telephone and fax. The more examples, the better. Include sample letterhead, envelopes, business cards, mailing labels, etc. demonstrating the standards.

Assorted applications You'll want to specify how to use your graphic identity in brochures, booklets, catalogs, self-mailers, posters, flyers, and advertisements. And, like before, including visual examples of what you're talking about helps greatly.

Changing times, changing ways

The printed and bound standards manual may soon be replaced by an online counterpart that delivers the same information to the users of your choice. Many colleges already have access to downloadable logos on their websites. The advantage is that guidelines are more widely available to the users of your choice, thus decreasing the chance of misuse.

–*Domenica Genovese*

NOTEWORTHY

Finding your place in the blogosphere

More and more colleges and universities across the nation are capitalizing on the student blog phenomenon. Innovative and appealing, a student blog is in essence a firsthand account of the life of a college student. Current student bloggers may discuss how tasty the chicken sandwiches are at the dining hall or which professors present the most interesting lectures. Prospective students may like what they hear about student life before even stepping foot on campus.

Student blogs can augment recruiting efforts. For example, Colgate University blogger, Marguerite Burkham, received an e-mail from a prospective student in India asking for advice on the application process. Burkham answered the questions and urged the prospective student to apply, which she did.

Ben Jones, communications manager for the admissions office at MIT, believes blogs personalize a school and are in fact helping dismiss the stereotype that MIT is “a bunch of nerds.” If you don't believe him, click and go from [here](#).

School administrators may be uncomfortable at first with allowing complete freedom of speech for student bloggers and feel the need to establish allowable topics. But a student blog should look and sound different from the rest of the institution's website, yet positively support its brand.

To learn a great deal more about blogs, click [here](#).

–*Brenda Foster and Patrick Kraft*

COOL TOOLS

Podcasts: revolution outside the classroom

Podcasts—pre-recorded audio or video files that you can replay at your chosen time and place—are sweeping across college campuses. Although podcasting is enthusiastically growing in popularity, it is too soon to say what impact it will have on student performance.

Pros and cons

The technology allows students to review lectures before an exam or paper is due, or to listen to lectures missed because of illness or momentary schedule conflict. When faculty members listen to their own lectures via podcasts, they recognize improvement opportunities and make changes resulting in fresher, more interesting lectures.

Additionally, podcasts can improve communication between faculty and off-campus students, who both listen to audio recordings on a computer directly from a posting on your website or downloaded to a portable device such as an iPod. Hence, the name podcast.

Through Purdue University's podcast service, BoilerCast, students are able to access and replay lectures of any credit course. This service is available in over 70 classrooms on the West Lafayette, Indiana campus. For example, "we use podcasts in our first year lab modules to help students make the connections between what they've covered and what they will cover in lab," says Michael Gay, manager of Purdue's Broadcast Networks & Services for Information Technology.

Drexel University plans to give free iPods to approximately 30 incoming first-year students next fall. "Seeking creative ways to use technology is an integral part of our mission," says Daniel W. Hanson, director of marketing and recruitment for the School of Education, which will use information from students using their iPods to determine the educational viability of podcasts.

Some see a downside to podcasts in the educational environment and worry that allowing podcasts encourages students to skip classes. Others are concerned about losing touch with students when using podcasts for purposes in which face-to-face interaction would be better, such as for first-year orientation.

From our perspective as communicators for education, we are concerned about the breakdown of “real experience.” A recorded lecture may have a place, but cannot replace the dynamic of person-to-person exchange that you can only get in a real live classroom.

For further thoughts on the podcast debate please click [here](#).

–*Brenda Foster and Elena Walter*

Getting rubbed the wrong way

Have you ever noticed a problem with the appearance of the letters that were sent out with your search brochure? Sometimes those letters have an unsightly, ghosted mirror-image overprinting the text. You may have assumed the ink wasn't completely dry and some of it rubbed off when the mailhouse stuffed the envelope. Not so. This phenomenon—officially known as Postal Rub—has nothing to do with wet ink.

Postal Rub happens when a printed piece of paper is folded, stuffed in an envelope, and sent through the high-pressure drive wheels of the Post Office's automated canceling equipment. All paper printed by digital toner based copiers are susceptible.

There is no quick-fix for Postal Rub, but you can design your mailings to minimize the problem:

- Fold the letter with text on the outside, thus forcing the rub onto the inside of the envelope where no one will see it. You might also consider using a larger mailing envelope so the letter is not folded.
- Set your laser copier to print at a lighter toner density.
- Use a smoother letter stock. Smoother paper is less susceptible. Try sending yourself some test letters on various stocks to see which produces the least amount of rub.

–*Katie Pugh*

JOIN US

... in Seattle

Brenda Foster will review ways to conduct a meaningful website usability study. A volunteer from the session will navigate an attendee website. Procedures and findings will be discussed by the group.

CASE Design Institute

May 10-12, 2006

Seattle, WA

... in Austin

Brenda Foster will present findings from GCF's six-year college website survey, "100 Best Websites Revisited: What Six Years Have Taught Us."

CASE Institute for Integrated Marketing

May 22-23, 2006

Austin, TX

... in Baltimore

Brenda Foster and Katie Pugh will be speaking at the third annual eduWeb Conference. Check our website for more details as they become available.

eduWeb Conference

July 30-August 2, 2006

Baltimore, MD

F E E D B A C K

Do you have comments, questions, or story ideas that you'd like us to cover in an upcoming issue of *The Cram Quarterly*?

If so, send an email to brenda@gcfonline.com or give Brenda a call at 410-467-4672.

S U B S C R I B E

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