



Don't Talk to Frank

If you've watched TV recently, you must have seen the anti-drug campaign "Talk to Frank".

Now for anyone over the age of thirty, the campaign looks sensible and well meaning as it addresses the serious dilemma confronting teenagers, the **peer pressure** about taking drugs.

Very commendable, except I was talking to some quite ordinary teenagers about what the message "Talk to Frank" meant to them and without exception they associated "Talk to Frank" with Frank Gallagher, the "chemically challenged" star of the long running TV programme Shameless!

Frank is a one man, walking (not always), chemical, imbibing sponge, but not in a good way.

Now I can say with some certainty that Frank Gallagher is not the sort of role model for anything you can think of, so this probably wasn't the connection the anti-drug campaign was attempting to achieve.

No matter how noble the intentions it (most importantly) **didn't ignite the intended response** from its target audience. In fact the associations were all about Mr Gallagher and spawned a lengthy discussion among the group about his various, degenerate antics. These they could recall almost word for word.

But being a little careless over word choice can have alarming outcomes.

The American Journal of Public Health found that when teenagers in the USA were presented with similar adverts as Talk to Frank, the more teenagers who saw the adverts, the more they came to believe that that's what teenagers were supposed to do – take drugs - because most of their peers obviously did!

So **getting the message right is more than just a catchy phrase**. It's about seeing how people will interpret your words from more than just the obvious angle. Remember, your business message has to work equally well for customers, prospects and suspects.

Choosing the right words is about the emotional identification that they generate. Barack Obama's presidential campaign centred round word combinations involving "destiny, empower, bright, overcome, undo" and see where that got him! The words chimed with the electorates' belief that things could only get better ...err I've heard that somewhere before!

The words you use demonstrate the value of the offer you wish to present and determine the action your readers will take. With print, the words you use can convey considerable emotion; with audio you can add enthusiasm and emphasis contained in the way you speak; but video takes all of these to a new level

because people like to deal with people and video is the medium that comes nearest to “being in the same room talking to someone”.

But using video simply because the technology exists isn't going to do your message any favours.

Your words should be simple and direct. They should state the benefit immediately almost like its hot news. They can be provocative or commanding (do this now); or appeal to the how-to-do method or be really useful. Above all make sure you come across as honest, trustworthy and authentic.

Writing your marketing message is one of the most important steps you can make to turn on the widest possible audience to the benefits of your product or service. And it takes time to get it just right.

So, don't talk to Frank, Talk to Gerry!

To create a message that works with your audience, call me on **0800 86 202 86** or email

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