STEP 1 — NAVIGATION

Help your customer see what to do or think about

When I was younger and shyer than I am now, I went on a trip to New York. While I was there, I intended to buy a pair of Leica binoculars, as I'd heard they were much cheaper than in the UK. I walked into an optical equipment store on Fifth Avenue, but the staff were surly and seemed too busy to speak to me. This was a surprise, as I'd heard all about excellent American service. After five minutes hanging around being ignored, I left. In the next shop, the same thing happened. And the next. I gave up and never did get my Leicas.

A few years later I recounted the tale to a colleague, a seasoned New York shopper. He just laughed at me and said, no wonder — you need to grab a shop assistant, put your face in theirs and say forcefully: "Hey buddy, I wanna buy a pair of Leicas — what's the deal?" I hadn't known what to do, so I'd gone away.

The tear-off reply card

In 1989, while I worked for the agency Clarke-Hooper, I developed a mailing for a division of the utility company that is now known as ScottishPower.[1] My idea was to make this look like a Christmas card and it was intended to get small, independent retailers to contact the organization with a view to buying heating equipment for their shops. Not an easy task (confessed our client).

I figured out how I wanted the message to fit together and "scamped" a draft for my designer, Colin, so he could make me a mock-up to show to the client. Colin wasn't at his desk that day, and I was due to be away the next, so I had to leave my scrawls for him to interpret as best he could. But to make sure he understood that I wanted a tear-off reply card attached to

the side of the main Christmas card, I wrote "tear-off reply card" with a red marker and circled it with an arrow. (The finished version is shown in Figure 1.)

Figure 1 *A section of the ScottishPower mailing showing the prominent "tear-off reply card" message — a quick and clear indication to your customer of what is expected of them. Reproduced by kind permission of ScottishPower plc.*

As you can see, when I returned I found that Colin had taken me rather literally. There on the mock-up were emblazoned the words "tear-off reply card" surrounded by a big red arrow! It wasn't particularly pretty... but actually I liked it.

So did the client. And so did the recipients. Against a breakeven sales target we achieved a 300 percent response — pleasing for us, as we were being paid in part by results.

And the lesson? I wasn't sure at the time, but I had a feeling about it and kept a copy of the mailing safe in my archive. Some years later, when it

came to writing the Blue-Chip training module, it was this mailing that helped me to realize just what was wrong with the old AIDA.

> **The main reason the ScottishPower Christmas card mailing worked so well was because you could see *instantly* what to do.**

What happens when you know what to do? Answer: You relax. What happens when you *can't* work out what to do? Answer: You panic (or at least become frustrated and impatient). If you can, you flee (like I did in New York). If it's a mailing, you probably bin it. If it's an ad, you turn the page or switch the channel.

So while AIDA might be the process your customer theoretically has to go through in order to respond to your communication, it isn't how their mind works in practice. As a marketer, you must first show them what to do — help them to *navigate*. If your customer is remotely interested in your product, they'll want to know *first* what's expected of them.

Your customer is busy

The single most important reason you should think navigation is because your customer has *already* got enough to do. You're unlikely to find them loitering by their front door waiting for so-called junk mail to drop through the letterbox. Nor doubling their concentration when the commercials are screened during their favorite television program. Nor at their desk meticulously perusing the ads in trade journals (unless they're looking for a new job, perhaps).

There's one monthly magazine I subscribe to that regularly contains 60 full-page ads for financial products.[2] I reckon the average ad takes two minutes to read. Yet I rarely seem to have a couple of minutes spare to read the editorial, let alone the couple of hours it would require to digest all the ads.

Just how long is the typical customer going to hang around trying to work out what's going on in an ad? Answer: not long. If you're lucky, the time it takes them to turn the page. You'd think that this point would be

obvious, but — as you can see in Figure 2 — while some advertisers make this their first priority, others barely give it a second thought.

Invariably, when your customer meets your marketing, they're busy and distracted. So it's vital to show them what you expect of them. Until they know that, they can't relax and concentrate on the benefits of your product, service, or offer. The bare minimum for this is at least to announce your subject, as Scottish Widows sensibly does in the example I have shown.

Figure 2 *Two of over 60 ads placed in a single edition of a consumer money magazine. (The ad with the chameleon is a mock-up based on a real example.) Compare their speed of navigation against the time it takes a busy customer to turn the page. Pensions ad reproduced by kind permission of Scottish Widows.*

In Blue-Chip we used what we called the "two-second test" to make sure we dealt with this issue. (Will the customer understand within two seconds?) In fact "one-mississippi, two-mississippi" is probably a little generous, going by the rate I've watched many people browse magazines (and supermarket shelves), but it's a good stock principle on which to judge effective navigation.

Good manners

One of the first things a salesman is taught to do when he goes in to make a presentation to a panel of customers is to ask the audience how long they've got. Then he tells them what he's going to tell them. (He doesn't give away his exciting "reveal," but he orientates them within a framework so that they know what to think about and what is expected of them.) It's exactly the same principle in printed marketing communication.

> **The pivotal question your customer asks is not "What's in it for me?" but actually "What's this about?" They also want to know "How much time and effort do I have to invest here? And where am I going?"**

NEW AIDA thinking is a simple piece of good salesmanship. By forcing yourself to think this way you will get a better result than if you *start* by asking "How will I get their attention?" or "What will I say to make them want my product?" (These are perfectly valid questions, but not the ones you should ask yourself *first* as you sit down to design your ad or mailing.)

For direct marketing in particular, this point cannot be overstated. It's make or break. If your customer has to spend more than a few seconds trying to work out what to do and what they're supposed to be sending off for, your response rate will suffer badly.

In Figure 3 overleaf is an example from the consumer magazine *Which?.* With no prevarication, the navigation task is tackled head on. Right away, your customer can see and understand what is expected of them. They know that this is *Which?* talking, what the magazine wants from them (to subscribe), what it's all about (cars), and what they'll get in return (the chance to win a valuable prize).

An important characteristic of many successful mailings is that this approach is then carried across all of the separate components. So whichever piece the recipient chooses to study first — the letter, the brochure, the order form, even the reply envelope — there is a potted navigation message ready and waiting.

Figure 3 *A recruitment flyer. It comes straight to the point in telling customers what to do and what to think about. Reproduced by kind permission of* Which?.

Navigation before attention

Twelve years after accidentally using the prominent "tear-off reply card" message for ScottishPower, I intentionally employed the same technique in a mailing for Warburtons (Figure 4), a brand that has made a dramatic impact on the UK bread market.[3] This mailing was aimed at independent grocers, an audience notoriously difficult to get a good response from. If you've ever done one-to-one sales calls to these guys, you'll know what I mean — they're either serving customers or stacking shelves (and when they're not in their shops they're down at the cash and carry).

Yet we got a 28 percent response (almost four times the target figure of 7.5 percent). Again, I put this down to the simple fact that busy store managers could see at a glance what was required of them.

Playing devil's advocate, you could say: "But surely you had to get their attention first, otherwise they would never have opened the mailing?"

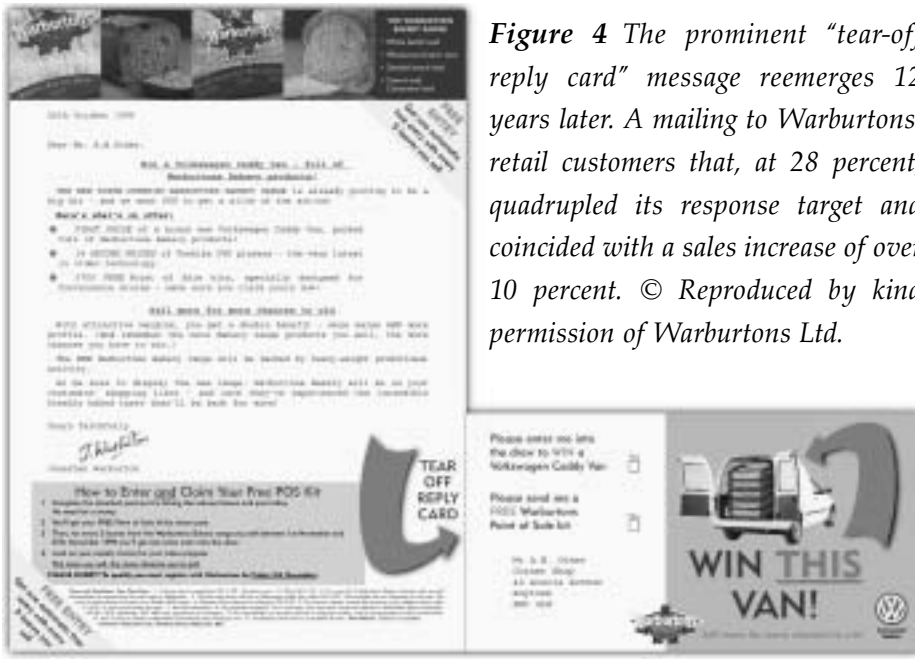

Figure 4 *The prominent "tear-off reply card" message reemerges 12 years later. A mailing to Warburtons' retail customers that, at 28 percent, quadrupled its response target and coincided with a sales increase of over 10 percent. © Reproduced by kind permission of Warburtons Ltd.*

True — technically we did command their attention (unless they opened the mailing while distracted or daydreaming). But think about this: If you can target with 100 percent certainty customers who buy a lot of your product already (and it's one of the most important items they sell to *their* customers), how hard is it going to be to get their attention?

Not difficult, I'd say. Warburtons' "vanmen" call on their customers every day of the week. Their address list is enviably up to date. Reaching the right hands is not the issue.

What *is* the issue (and I repeat) is this: When you're designing your communication, just for a short while suspend all thought of attention. Start with what you want your customer to do. Confirmed time and again by results is my experience that marketing sells better if you make it your priority to orientate your customer. First think navigation.

Navigation in advertising

It's tempting to think of "advertising" as a big-budget television campaign. In fact, television is the province of only a tiny minority of advertisers. The

vast majority of ads are made for the print medium. It has been estimated that at least 1,000 press ads are produced for every television commercial filmed.[4] And media expenditure for press is more than double that for television.[5]

So whatever your job or the scale of your business, you probably place print ads of some sort — in trade journals, *Yellow Pages*, or perhaps in your local newspaper. And navigation can play a key role in effective advertising.

Of course, many ads (print or otherwise) are *direct-response* ads like those for financial services shown in Figure 2. For me, they fall into exactly the same category as direct mail. Unequivocally, you should show and tell the reader what to do. Indeed, I'd argue that it is *even more* critical for a direct-response advertisement: Compared to a mailing there's far less scope to use the format — the physical components — to help you communicate what to do. (I'll talk in more detail about format in Step 2, Ease.)

Conventional advertising

It's relatively easy to see the importance of navigation in relation to direct marketing. Direct marketing very obviously traverses the whole of old AIDA. By its very definition, it expects the customer to do something.

In ordinary advertising, however, the role of navigation might at first seem more obscure. If your customer doesn't actually have to do anything other than register your message, where's the need for navigation? Surely the job of these ads is merely to get attention, create interest, and perhaps build desire. When it's time to shop in your category, your customer already wants your brand. Simple.

Or not. How often have you discussed "great" ads with friends and yet been *unable* to recall what they were for? During 2003 a television campaign for a car manufacturer attracted much publicity. The ad featured components from the car gently knocking together in a domino effect, an idea reportedly inspired by the "Mousetrap" game. The brand of car, and the point of the ad, were revealed at the end of an absorbing two minutes' watching.

But today can you remember the brand? Can you remember what the ad wanted you to know about the car? (Like why you should buy one?)

"Ah, but it doesn't work like that... it's subliminal... subconscious... much more subtle" (say the experts).

The king is in the altogether (I say).

> **Where it isn't appropriate to tell your customer what to do, begin instead by telling them what to *think about*. It really amounts to the same thing.**

Even if an ad is just one small part of the longest-term, slowest-burning campaign ever conceived, written, and produced, surely there is a point in conditioning your customer's mind to the message that's coming their way? Yet in ads like the one I have described, it seems to me that navigation never even got started. And I reckon that one of the world's most successful communication organizations would agree with me.

Problem hair?

Some members of the creative fraternity deride what might be called the rational Procter & Gamble approach to advertising. But at least P&G begins its ads by telling you what to think about. And why leave it to chance?

I don't imagine P&G would ever expect you to sit through two minutes' showmanship to find out why you're paying attention. Why would you listen to someone trying to sell you something you might not want, when you could be making a cup of tea or having a much-needed comfort break? Most P&G ads inform you of your problem and the solution the company offers within 8 seconds.[6]

I repeat: Why leave it to chance? In Step 5 I'll talk about the importance of selling to customers who are *already interested* in buying from us. Isn't it common sense to give them a clue about whom and what we represent? Showmanship is but a poor shadow of salesmanship.

Think tabloid

Do people drive you mad when they won't come to the point? They have some news but they won't tell you upfront. While they hold stage as storyteller, you're screaming inside your head" "Just tell me where we're going!" (If they were an ad, you would have turned the page long ago.)

As someone who has trained myself to be impatient with communications, I love tabloid newspapers. They tell you what to think.

By this I don't mean what *opinion* to have (though they may do that too), but that they tell you what you're going to get. Right upfront. Take a look at Figure 5. There's no procrastination, no "once upon a time" pantomime.

Figure 5 *The tabloid approach. A typical front page telling customers in less than a second what they are being asked to think about. Stars (who) flee (what they did) palace (where) fire (what happened). Reproduced by kind permission of News International.*

With the tabloids it's straight to the punchline every time. If *The Sun* had been around the day the Cinderella story broke, it would have been: "SHOE FITS: CINDERS QUEEN." Boom.

Shoe fits: Cinders Queen. It's all you need to know. And it's not the language that matters here (though short words do work better[7]), it's the reverse storytelling technique that is so effective. You get the last line of the romance in the headline. That's the key information you need so you can decide in seconds whether this article is something you want to devote precious minutes to.

I remember having a conversation about headlines with an editor in the Mirror Group. He said:

> **"When it comes to off-the-shelf sales, I effectively have to launch a new product every single day. If the customer can't see at a glance what he's getting, he'll pick up my competitor."**

The corollary for advertisers? Identify yourself to your customer. Tell them what you want them to think about. They're almost certainly interested — so help them with the navigation.

Crazytivity

Edward de Bono invented the word "crazytivity" to describe the act of being different just for the sake of being different (and believing that it equals "creativity").

It's not difficult to find ads like this. They make me think of a salesman in fancy dress, who says to his customer: "OK, guess what I'm trying to sell you today?" Give me a break.

In Figure 6 overleaf is an ad (disguised) that I found in a recent edition of *Stuff* magazine. Try to guess what it's for. I've made this more difficult by removing all references to the product.

"Impossible!" you cry. I agree. Upfront, there are few clues to be found. (But it was the same with the real ad.)

At a glance, the main image is actually not that inherently interesting or impactful, and is certainly not informative. The headline is set in a typeface that is rather difficult to read. Added to that, it's written as a riddle that is quite hard to understand, never mind begin to solve.

Even taken together, the headline and the image don't exactly explain one another. You'd be excused for thinking that it's something to do with computer games. At a glance, the body copy is too small to read (so no quick clues available there) and is made more awkward by being set in reverse (white on black), which the eye finds uncomfortable.[8]

Figure 6 *The risk of not telling the customer what to think about. This is a disguised ad, with the same characteristics as its real counterpart. At a glance this ad provides almost no navigation clues.*

The only direct reference to the subject of the original ad — *what the advertiser wants you to think about* — is a well-camouflaged image, a dark object on a black background about 3cm x 3cm in real size, placed down in a corner where the eye won't naturally go at a glance. Even the brand name — one of the best in the business and sure to have given the reader a helping hand — took some finding.

I have used the expression "at a glance" several times. This is to emphasize what for me is the key navigation issue. The averagely busy reader of *Stuff* magazine has to deal with some 50 ads and 100-odd pages packed with endless new gadgets. If you're placing an ad, "at a glance" is about the most you should plan for.

Your customer is whizzing past. Sure, they're actively searching for information in your product category (else *I* wouldn't be calling them your customer and *you'd* be wasting your time trying to speak with them) — but if they can't tell at a glance that this *is* your product category, why would they stop to read your ad?

Perhaps viewed in the splendid isolation and time-rich environment of the boardroom, the ad was considered to be imaginative, intriguing, and distinctive. That's fine. But if the boardroom isn't the same as when customer meets marketing, it's a dangerous place to take your artwork.

In a simple browsing test that I use to check out points like this, the real version of this ad got a score of under 20 percent versus an ad for a similar product placed nearby in the same magazine.[9] I won't pretend that this method is scientific or comprehensive, but when five people understand your competitor's ad for every one that notices and understands your own, I think alarm bells should begin to ring.

The lesson? If you decide on an obtuse approach to your customer, you need to be extremely confident that your graphics and headline will stop them in their tracks — and engage their minds.

If they don't know what you want them to do (in this case, what to think about), are they really going to expend valuable time trying to find out? More likely they'll pass you by.

Straight talk

Now compare the ad shown in Figure 7 with that discussed above. This was also placed in *Stuff* magazine.

Does it tell you — at a glance — what to think about? Of course. Does it tell you — at a glance — whom it represents? Certainly. (Look at the size of the logo.)

In fact, from the simple feature/benefit headline to the exploded-diagram technique linking the visual and the copy, in my book this ad does a number of things well — and simply. It starts with navigation in mind and sticks to its course.

It's hardly a new or "creative" idea, but does that really have any relevance as an argument? (Think *crazytivity*.) Francis Ogilvy described gratuitous creativity as "skidding about on the slippery surface of irrelevant brilliance."[10] Edward de Bono, meanwhile, insists that any definition of the creative process should include the requirement that it must end with a value.[11]

I come back to the words showmanship and salesmanship. While the former attracts blank looks, the latter attracts blank checkbooks.

Websites

Navigation is a word often used in relation to websites. In such a context it concerns finding your way around, but there's a much broader issue at stake.

Recently I read a statistic in a respected business journal suggesting that the typical surfer takes about seven seconds to make up their mind whether your website is for them.[12] It may not sound much, but for the marketer seven seconds is a rare luxury.

Your customer can read about 50 words in seven seconds. And, given that a website is a form of marketing communication that they've *chosen* to look at, that's 50 words that by rights should be swallowed and digested. The customer is in ad-seeking mode.

I have worked on the development of a variety of websites, ranging from the very basic small-firm site to one of the first offering downloadable

Figure 7 *In contrast to the ad shown in Figure 6, this one promptly tells the reader what to think about. In my test five times as many people noticed it and could remember what it was for. Reproduced by kind permission of Nikon UK.*

music in MP3 format (which we invented for the beer brand Miller Genuine Draft as a platform for its music promotions). In my experience — and from my personal observations as a critical website inspector — website visitors might be there on purpose, but they still need to be told what to do and think about.

> **Many people connected with websites are obsessed with how good they look (I mean the websites, although it's sometimes both).** ***This should not be your first priority.*** **Instead, be obsessed with those seven seconds: tell your customer what you offer them and how to access it.**

It's easy to fall into the trap of thinking that the surfers who visit your site will know what it's about. After all, they're clued up. They're internet literate. (Aren't they?)

Maybe. But who says there's a connection between being clued up and understanding a marketing message?

I'll give you a conventional example that you can try out. Pick a country about which you feel quite clued up, but whose language you don't speak. Now go to the travel section of a bookshop and locate the corresponding Michelin Red Guide. (Try Spain, for instance, *La Guia Roja*.) Find yourself a hotel that accepts pets in the center of Barcelona for under 100 euros a night. Not so easy (since, comprehensive though the guide is, it's in Spanish).

I think it's no coincidence that the business end of the Amazon.co.uk homepage sports just 56 words.

Navigation equals *understanding*

Your customer is busy and distracted. If you confront them with the advertising equivalent of a lateral thinking quiz or a foreign-language paper, you know what to expect. Their reaction will range somewhere on the scale between confusion and rejection.

If, on the other hand, you begin by helping your customer understand what you want them to do — what you want them to think about — you should be pleasantly surprised by their response. It's common sense, basic salesmanship — though not always the way things are taught.

Indeed, I have a certain well-regarded marketing handbook that espouses AIDA in the usual enthusiastic terms. Then it lists a series of eight stages you should go through to ensure you create an effective communication. Like to guess what stage 8 says? Correct: "Finally, what is the customer supposed to do?" Aargh!

The next few sections outline precautions to help you make navigation a first thought, rather than an afterthought.

Steps you can take

Write down your desired customer reaction

Desired customer reaction. I'll call it DCR for short. Whether you're beginning with a blank page to design something yourself, or looking at an ad, brochure, or mailing prepared by your agency, the most useful thing you can do is write about your DCR.

Fact: The simpler your DCR, the more likely it is that you can create an effective piece of communication. But don't worry if your draft DCR starts out as a whole page of scribbles or a long list of bullet points. You can soon put them into a common-sense priority order.

Consider the press insert (also used as a door-drop) shown in Figure 8 overleaf. For me, this is an outstanding piece of marketing, not least because it carries such an elegant co-promotion between Cancer Research UK and a coalition of solicitors.

The idea is that you can — if you're aged over 55 — have your will made (or updated) *at no cost* by a local solicitor. Cancer Research UK gains because you might leave it a legacy. Participating solicitors gain by acquiring you as a customer who might buy other services in future.

Figure 8 *A press insert produced by Cancer Research UK, co-promoting with a coalition of solicitors. This illustration shows the outside cover as the recipient would first see it. Reproduced by kind permission of Cancer Research UK.*

OK, what would you include in your DCR? Having had the benefit of examining the insert, here's my list of suggestions (in no particular order):

1 I need to make a will.
2 I need to update my will.

3 I've heard of Cancer Research UK and trust it.
4 Cancer Research UK is a very good cause.
5 I'd like to leave a legacy to Cancer Research UK.
6 This seems like an excellent offer.
7 There isn't any catch.
8 This looks like it's for someone like me.
9 The form seems easy to complete.
10 The solicitor will handle any complex paperwork.
11 I need to phone a local solicitor.
12 My solicitor is already on the list.
13 Any solicitor on the list can do this for me.
14 I'd better do something before the offer closes.

That's 14 points, and you can probably think up a few more. As an aside, it's quite common for agencies to be given what we call "kitchen sink" briefs like this. My advice: Don't be tempted to try to get too much for your money. (And don't be offended if your agency comes back to ask what's the main point — be happy they've noticed.)

Find the navigation point

So if leading with all 14 points is out of the question, where do you start? My answer is that this is when you have to steel yourself and *not think* about gaining attention. Likewise, you must avoid the temptation to focus — for the time being — on the offer.

Instead, engage NEW AIDA thinking. Good salesmanship recognizes that the communication is most likely to fail over a navigation issue. So to set off on the right track to enable this insert to generate an above-average response, I'd be looking for a navigation point.

At such a juncture I always find it salutary to picture a friend of mine who moved to Britain from Texas a while ago. His name's Hal. I think Americans are generally used to a higher standard of customer navigation than us Brits. In an unfamiliar sales environment (it can be as simple as a café where it's not clear whether you go to the counter or take a seat and

wait to be served) Hal's got a great turn of phrase: "Okay, but... waddawa do here?"

When marketing provides no answer, he walks. I can just hear him muttering the same thing at home, moments before he bins his mail, or at his desk, as he wrestles with and then exits yet another uncooperative website — when all he wanted was the navigation point.

Waddawa do here? In order for the Cancer Research UK insert to sell, what the customer needs to do is phone a local solicitor. They must cross a bridge from thought to action. It's the communication crux.

And there it is, number 11 in my list: "I need to phone a local solicitor." This should be the starting point for thinking about the design of the message.

Let navigation lead design

So how does the Cancer Research UK insert shape up?

Take a look at Figure 9. This is what the customer sees on opening the first fold of the insert. Not a repeat of the offer. Not a claim about how much they will save. Not a list of the supporting benefits.

Instead, what the customer sees first is what to do. Bingo! An entire double-page spread is given over to listing all the local participating law firms, with a simple call to action: Choose a solicitor, phone for an appointment.

I wouldn't expect a customer to read this spread in any great detail. But at a glance they'll get the idea, knowing that they can come back to it later. (I think, if anything, they are most likely to check if their present solicitor is on the list.)

Uncertainty minimized, the way is clear. The customer can relax and read more about the offer. The next fold opens out the insert in its entirety — Figure 10 — and what I like about this is the continued emphasis on navigation. Through a mix of position and typography, the eye is led to a further explanation of what to do.

The layout of this Cancer Research UK insert is not "natural." Nine times out of ten in a leaflet such as this you would find the navigation point on the back, or at the end in minuscule type (or missing completely). Happily, navigation has been allowed to lead the design. Great.

Figure 9 *The answer to "waddawa do?" The first fold of the Cancer Research UK insert opens to deal immediately with navigation. This layout achieved twice the response of the control against which it was tested. Reproduced by kind permission of Cancer Research UK.*

Figure 10 *The inside spread of the Cancer Research UK insert, with a strong continued emphasis on navigation. Reproduced by kind permission of Cancer Research UK.*

And navigation *leading* the design doesn't mean navigation *dominating* the design. (The offer is on the outside, front and reverse — exactly where it should be.) It is just that the communication sequence has been constructed to act in harmony with the recipient's thought process.

When I spoke to the marketing team at Cancer Research UK, initially to ask permission to use their insert for a magazine article, I wasn't surprised to hear the response rate: It was *double* that of the control against which it was tested.

Check if your customer already knows what to do

You've probably noticed Figure 11. It relates to the consumption of services of a sort. For a customer involved in this particular buying process, navigation information can be kept to a minimum. It also highlights the role that a visual can play in achieving speedy navigation.

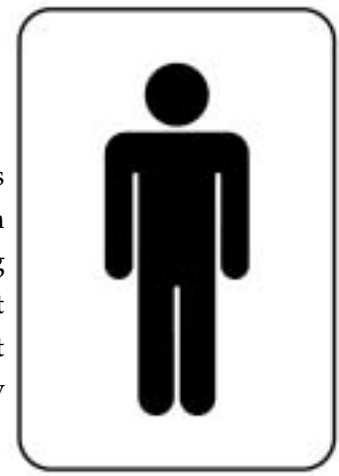

Figure 11 *Little explanation required! Navigating the "forearmed" customer can be quite straightforward.*

However, the point I want to emphasize here is that you will often be communicating with a customer who *already* has a pretty good idea of what to do (or what to think about).

Take the fundraising mailing shown in Figure 12: "Save the capercaillie." This was sent to me by the RSPB, of which I have been a member for many years. During this time I have received scores of similar appeal mailings, and occasionally I have responded.

My experience profile (as a recipient) is probably quite similar to that of other potential donors. This means that initial navigation can be dealt with in a taken-as-read fashion. You could say *implied*, rather than *express*.

I already know why the RSPB exists and about the phenomenal con-

Figure 12 *Navigation "implied" rather than "express." RSPB members are familiar with regular fundraising mailings, so emphasis can shift to making the communication of the central concept as powerful and emotive as possible. Reproduced by kind permission of the RSPB.*

servation work it does. Like a million other members, I pay an annual subscription, which I think of as a general donation. And — as I said — I'm familiar with the society's frequent one-off appeals.

So I don't really need any upfront help with navigation in the "waddawa do" sense. I know what the organization wants me to think about. I know what it wants me to do.

In turn, the RSPB knows it can concentrate on making the communication of the central concept ("magnificent capercaillie nearing extinction") as powerful and emotive as possible. It can cut to the chase and lead with the crisis. Since I know it's an appeal, I don't feel conned into reading it.

Obviously, if the mailing were targeted at new members or first-time recipients, a bit more emphasis on navigation would almost certainly be beneficial.

Don't assume that ad seekers know what to do

Hold up a typical copy of *Yellow Pages* (if you can) and you've probably got 15,000 display ads in the palm of your hand. I doubt your customers read *Yellow Pages* for entertainment purposes. Almost certainly they're ad seekers.

What does NEW AIDA thinking prescribe? Surely your customer knows what to do? Surely you can forget about navigation altogether?

My answer to this is no. Definitely not. Your customers might be ad seekers, but that *doesn't* mean they know what to do.

Consider this: As a teenager, for several years I worked part-time in a local DIY store, where I learned among other things to cut large sheets of glass to size. Bizarrely, it seemed, customers would see our ad and then turn up expecting to buy glass.

We Saturday lads used to joke among ourselves about this. You wouldn't believe the number of times a customer couldn't even tell you the dimensions of the window his son had broken that morning.[13] And if he knew the size, he often forgot the thickness (which can be just as important). Then had he checked his shed to see if he needed nails, and putty, and undercoat, and exterior gloss? (Customer: "I need *nails*?") This predicament led to many lost sales. Customers often couldn't be bothered to come back into town equipped with the right information.

I've made it sound like it was the customer's fault for not being able to buy glass. But you know that's an attitude stemming from poor salesmanship. The lesson is that even an active ad seeker benefits from a few words of direction: The instructions should have been in the ad.

I've taken two examples from the Mortgage Brokers' section of a recent edition of *Yellow Pages*. They provide an interesting contrast and might help you to assess your own communications.

In Figure 13 is an ad for a firm called Financial Tactics Ltd. I like this. It leads with a dominant image and a headline that unravels the visual message. (More about this in Step 4, Attention.) The web address reinforces the accessible tone: Why call it financialtactics.co.uk when you can say askforamortgage.co.uk? For the confident ad seeker, it's a clear and engaging piece of communication.

Figure 13 *For the confident ad seeker, Financial Tactics Ltd provides a simple navigation message. © Reproduced by kind permission of Yell Ltd and Financial Tactics Ltd. ® YELLOW PAGES is a registered trademark of Yell Ltd.*

Now look at the ad shown in Figure 14 overleaf. At first sight this is heavy with words. But what immediately struck me is its emphasis on navigation.

Put yourself in the shoes of a first-time customer and read the subheads. It reminds you that this stuff should have been on the curriculum at school. The novice homebuyer faces a maze of uncertainty — and here's an ad that guides them through it.

All credit to the Mortgage Advice Network. You could say it's done a navigation job for the whole category. But while it might be inadvertently helping its competitors, I'm sure the bulk of extra leads that this perceptive ad generates will flow its way.

Figure 14 *This ad tackles head-on the navigation hurdles experienced by the first-time customer. © Reproduced by kind permission of Yell Ltd and Mortgage Advice Network. ® YELLOW PAGES is a registered trademark of Yell Ltd.*

NAVIGATION — SEVEN TOP TIPS

1 Think navigation before attention.

2 Write down your desired customer reaction.

3 Find the navigation point.

4 Let navigation lead design.

5 Identify yourself.

6 Identify your subject.

7 Check, using the two-second test.

KEY QUESTION

"Does my customer know what to do or think about?"