



Making it Relevant

Customer-Focused Messaging

We all know the story of Little Red Riding Hood, right? The basic elements of the story are a little girl, a red cape, a wolf, a basket, and a grandmother. We know how the story goes. But suppose you gave those five elements to ten different people who didn't know the story and asked them to create a story. How many different stories do you think you'd get? My guess? At least ten, maybe more if you have overachievers in the group! Each person would combine those elements differently according to their imagination, background, and knowledge.

Little Red Riding Hood is a great testimonial of why managing customer messages is so important. If you simply provide the elements of your value story – your products, your services, etc. – to your business development team, you're asking

them to create their own story, again based on their background, knowledge and, most likely, their imagination! With this approach, you end up with each individual telling a different story and each prospect and customer hearing a different value proposition. While I'm not advocating "one size fits all," in customer messaging, you should have a consistent baseline value statement that can be translated per audience, dialing up or dialing down the elements of the story to be relevant to that audience.

Basket
Grandmother
Red Cape
Little Girl
Wolf

You might be asking, "What do you mean, tailor that baseline value proposition to your audience?" Well, let's go back to Little Red Riding Hood. Think about how you might tailor the telling of that story to a 2-year-old versus a 10-year-old. The 2-year-old may be terrified if you spend too much time on the wolf, so you downplay how awful he is. However, 10-year-olds love scary stuff, so you might go into great detail on the wolf's fangs, claws, and evil eyes. You're still telling the same story, but tailored to your audience. Your business value proposition is no different. Ensure your value statement is communicated, but tailor it to be relevant to your audience.

How do you do that? It's not difficult. Simply ask questions of your prospects. What challenges are they facing? What goals would they like to achieve this next year – and beyond? How will they measure success? Now think of how your offering can help them achieve those things and approach your prospect in that manner. This changes the entire dynamic of "sales." Your business development team is more consultative, your proposals are more relevant, and prospects are more receptive.

Applying customer-focused messaging throughout the customer life cycle will ensure your message hits home with your prospects and clients again, and again. This translates to a shorter, more efficient sales cycle, stronger client partnerships and long-term differentiation from your competition. All of this translates to a better bottom-line – and that's an investment worth making.