

## “What do you meme?”

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**These secrets will enable you to get your message across in a way that really sticks...and spreads!**

You know how it is. You're in a meeting or networking somewhere or perhaps you're at a party and *The Question* comes up ...”So, what do you do then?”

How would you like to be able to answer *The Question* in a way that peaks their interest and builds their curiosity? Wouldn't it be great if you could really show them the benefits of what you do? Wouldn't it be even better if they could carry your marketing message away with them and even spread it further for you?

We all know how important it is to market ourselves and our services at every opportunity – whatever our line of business. And typically, a lot of our marketing opportunities happen in “brief encounters” – those fleeting unplanned meetings. So how are you going to behave in these encounters – reactively or proactively?

And what do we mean by proactive here? It's clearly the opposite state to being **reactive** – waiting for the world to come to you. Being **proactive** means taking responsibility for driving your world – creating all the opportunities you need to succeed. That's one of the underlying beliefs in the field of NLP<sup>1</sup>.

So, in answering are you going to drive your world or sit back and let it drive you? Most people answer by giving their job title – merely someone else's description of you. If you're both operating in the same field then there's a chance that your label will mean something.

More likely though your label will be completely meaningless to others – a recent advert in a local supermarket was looking for “Ambient Replenishers” – what are they do you think?

Alternatively your label might be a term of common usage – like estate agent, librarian, car salesman, computer programmer and so on. Now I wouldn't want to suggest for a moment that this list of job labels triggered a series of stereotypical representations in your mind as you read them. Yet, you could imagine that that happens, couldn't you? And it's a natural reaction. All the stereotypes that

society has created around those labels are there in your mind and all the experiences that you personally have had with people in these roles have been built on these stereotypes. And as soon as you hear the job label all those memories, feelings and so on are triggered. It's simply a question of stimulus and response.

So how you answer *The Question* is very important in brief encounters? If you want to avoid your listener associating you with any stereotype then you need to avoid using a label as *The Answer*. After all, you are more than your label, aren't you?

So how do you market yourself to your brief encounter audience in a better way?

First we need to be sure that we've got their attention. You certainly won't get this using a standard label or saying “what I do is...” There's one big reason for this, and it's our first secret to successful personal marketing.

Here's a surprise, people don't wander about looking for opportunities to use your services! They're normally so fully occupied with their own issues, problems and needs that they are only interested in one thing (no not that!).

Most people are tuned into one radio station **WIIFM** - “what's in it for me?” Consequently if you are broadcasting on station **WIDI** – “What I do is” then there's a mismatch straight away – you're simply not on the same wavelength.

They'll pigeonhole you as just another librarian or whatever you've said. They'll believe they instantly know all about you and what you do.

Your answer needs to shine out and resonate with them on a different level – their level. So think for a moment – who do you work with and what's the problem you solve for them?

“I work with [whomever it is] to [solve this problem]” is actually a pretty good opening. If your listener is one of those people then they're immediately interested! Even if not, you have positioned yourself as a problem solver. Furthermore, if you then talk about a problem that they're experiencing then you've immediately linked with them at a visceral level. You've shown that you understand their world,

<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.creatifica.com/aboutnlp.html>

their reality. And that's a great step towards building a relationship. If they're not interested then at least you'll know pretty quickly, and you can be fine with that – someone else will be interested and it's those people that you really want to engage with.

There are lots more techniques for building that all-important rapport with another person but they'll have to wait for another time and face to face work with you.

Once you've got their attention they're going to ask you something like "so, how do you do that then?" The follow on should be **your solution and its benefits** – again keep away from what you do. It's all sounding interesting to them now – not only do you understand their problem, but you have all these benefits with your solution. So they'll ask again "how do you do that?" Give them some **short examples of people you've worked with and the results you've got**. Again, they're going to want to know how you did that.

They're so used to hearing people say what they do using a label – and you're being different. That's the final stage of this process – tell them now about what makes you different.

**What's your unique competitive advantage?**

Think hard about this one – it could be who you work with, the way you deliver your service or the guarantee you give on your results – or something else entirely. Be sure what it is though.

Those four things above are your marketing message. Work them up, practice delivering them until they feel completely natural to you, as they will do very quickly.

Now, you've probably heard the phrase "half of advertising works, we just don't know which half!" – commonly attributed to David Ogilvy. Well, here's our **second secret**: we can apply the same principle to marketing, and we have uncovered some extra insight that suggests that the half of marketing which works is based around *memes*.

Memes have been around since 1976 when Richard Dawkins coined the term. Since then others have worked in the field of memetics (there's even a journal of memetics<sup>2</sup>). Susan Blackmore<sup>3</sup> provides a good definition of memes:

"Memes are habits, skills, songs, stories, or any other kind of information that is copied

from person to person. Memes, like genes, are replicators. That is, they are information that is copied with variation and selection. Because only some of the variants survive, memes (and hence human cultures) evolve. Memes are copied by imitation, teaching and other methods, and they compete for space in our memories and for the chance to be copied again."

We're used to seeing logos associated with companies and products. And we have all kinds of associations with them, so when we see the McDonalds arches we have a certain response inside. Whether it's what McDonalds hope for or not is another matter entirely.

The marketing catchphrases that we're so used to hearing (for example: "Once you pop you can't stop", "Where do you want to go today?") are examples of logos in audio form. They spread around. Guess what – the successful ones are memes.

So, when you give the first part of your answer it's going to be so much more powerful if it's in the form of a meme. How do you construct your phrase that pays? It's certainly a bit of an art, but it's clear that a successful marketing meme has certain characteristics:

- ★ It actively conveys specific information.
- ★ Its benefits are immediately clear and valuable.
- ★ It's really simple.
- ★ It replicates easily from person to person.

So, get your ideas down on paper. Work them around; pare your message down to its essentials. Then, test it out and refine it. Then use it constantly and consistently across all of your formal and informal marketing activities.

A meme is a core component of your marketing message; it's not just a nice to have. Think about it – if you ask me what I do and I say – **"We give information professionals an edge** especially those struggling to demonstrate value to their customers and stakeholders" then, if you're one of those people with that problem you are interested in what else I have to say, aren't you?

What if you decide use this approach at every opportunity? What if you were no longer searching for a client like a needle in a haystack? What if you actually start to burn down the haystack to reveal the clients that want to work with you? That's what it would be like to **get the most out of your brief encounters!**

Oh, and by the way, they're shelf stackers!

<sup>2</sup> <http://jom-emit.cfpm.org/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.susanblackmore.co.uk/memetics/>