

# How to Evaluate Your Marketing Materials

BY NATALIE E. TIMMONS

**M**ost marketing departments are finely tuned machines that race through the corporate environment fed on business objectives, marketing statistics, competitiveness, customer research, creativity, and pure desire. It's a hungry machine. You want a new brochure? You've got it. You need new packaging? Here you go. A data sheet? It's done.

For years now, in fact, you've added new and better marketing programs and materials. In your quest to out-perform management expectations you've kept adding and very rarely have you dropped an approach. It's time now to take a fresh look around at all of your marketing creations. The truth is, we get so caught up in running our marketing machine at high speeds, we sometimes forget to make sure it's still on the right track.

**When to Do It**

Since you're going to be digging around a bit, I suggest you do this project on a Friday. Plan to come to work dressed casually and comfortably. Turn your answering machine on or plan to have someone else take your calls so you can be entirely focused on the job at hand.

**What to Do**

Begin by gathering all your marketing stuff. By "stuff" I mean your marketing collateral and/or anything that has your company name and/or logo on it. This includes brochures, factsheets, proposals, plans, bookmarks, post-it pads, letterhead, business cards, signage, datasheets, pens, fliers, fax cover sheets, direct mail, correspondence, labels, forms (internal & external), presentation folders, etc.

It's important that you dig up everything you can possibly think of that you or anyone in the company is using (even if you didn't produce or authorize it) to market or communicate with your employees and external publics.

Once you've got all of your marketing collateral (i.e. "stuff") out on the table or spread out on the floor, you'll need to re-create the 5 Cs Checklist. The 5 Cs checklist is a tool I designed to visually pinpoint where the weak spots are in a marketing communications collateral program. The basic components of the checklist are an "Item" column where you list all of your individual marketing pieces and

then one column for each of the 5 Cs — Consistency, Credibility, Clarity, Content, Creativity. Then rate each item as to whether or not it meets one of the 5 Cs.

I've provided a sample for what a partial chart for a health care company might look like. You would, of course, put your own items under the "item" listing.

**The 5 Cs Checklist** — © Communications Coach, 1996

Item	Consistency	Credibility	Clarity	Content	Creativity
<i>Company Brochure</i>					
<i>New Service Brochure</i>					
<i>Company Stationary</i>					
<i>Business Publication Ad</i>					
<i>Senior Ads</i>					
<i>Imprinted Pens</i>					
<i>Patient Admission Packet</i>					
<i>New Releases</i>					
<i>Thank You Letters</i>					
<i>Customer Feedback Surveys</i>					
<i>Admission Form</i>					
<i>Fundraising Letter</i>					

S A M P L E

In determining whether or not an item meets each of the 5 Cs, refer to the following descriptions:

**Consistency:** Are company colors, logo, slogan, typestyle & format used consistently? Does the company "speak with one clear voice?" Place a check in the box if the answer is yes.

**Credibility:** Is your message and look believable for this particular item? Do you walk your talk? Place a check in the box if the answer is yes.

**Clarity:** Is the look or message on this item or marketing piece easily understood or is it confusing? Place a check in the box if the item has clarity.

**Content:** Are key (core) messages threaded throughout the piece? Is the content consistent with your key messages? Is the tone appropriate to the audience? Place a check in the box if the answer is yes.

**Creativity:** Here, creativity doesn't necessarily mean fine art, high fashion, or cosmetic. By creativity, I mean clever in that it speaks to the heart of the audience. It speaks to them

personally. They see it or read it and instantly relate to it. The title for the book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People* doesn't appear to be a particularly creative headline—in the award winning advertising sense, that is. But I would argue that it is very creative as it speaks to people's aspirations and the benefit of the book is explicit in the headline. It says, "Buy me and I'll help you make more friends and be more influential." It continues to work and it continues to be a best selling book.

Once you've rated each item, stand back and look at your chart. What areas need to be improved? Are 70% of the boxes in the creativity column empty? Then work on creativity. Creativity requires preparation and

research. It's very difficult to sit down and write a creative marketing letter or advertisement without doing at least a little background research first. A good place to start is by asking your loyal customers what they feel are the benefits of your products and services.

Or, maybe you'll find Consistency and Content need a little work. Whatever you find, this simple exercise will reveal the strengths and weaknesses in your marketing materials and help you determine what areas need attention. Often we have this vague uneasy feeling that some elements of our marketing materials are not quite right, that they could be better or more effective. The 5 Cs Checklist takes the guess work out of the evaluation process and will help you put your marketing machine back on track.

Call (603) 642-4949 for a free copy of the 5 Cs Checklist.

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