

Personalise Your Prose

By Michael Sheridan

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When you write articles on a regular basis, it's always interesting to see which ones produce the greatest response over a given period of time. For me, the one which is currently way ahead of the others features the following paragraph:

"I live in rural Australia and once a week we have a local bush market where you can buy anything and everything, from egg-laying pullets to an Allis Chalmers shackle-pin. My wife and I often go, mainly looking for old plates which my wife turns into mosaics."

What this kind of thing does is breakdown the barriers between author and reader by allowing the latter to get closer to, and identify with, the former. It serves to put both of them on the same level.

The desired thought pattern is 'hey, this bloke's just like me. He does ordinary things. He's not some remote, self-styled guru.'

It's an important technique and the first major step in the person to person marketing process.

Imagine someone entering your social circle for the first time who is a lawyer, or psychiatrist, or even an insurance salesman. There is nearly always that initial element of not quite knowing how to approach that person - is he thinking I'm going to ask for free advice? - will she analyse everything I say? - is he trying to sell me something?

It's not until we find out that the lawyer is a basketball fan, or the psychiatrist plays golf, or the salesman shares our interest in music, that the stereotypes begin to disappear and we start to see other people as acquaintances with whom we feel comfortable.

This is so important in developing business relationships that I can't stress it enough. Because the reality is that what we are actually trying to establish, without even thinking about it, is trust.

We don't quite trust the motives of the salesman, or the feared perception of the psychiatrist, and we worry the lawyer might think we're after free advice. Those are very real human fears and if those three professionals want to make inroads into our social circle for whatever reason, they are going to have to surmount them.

The reason my article on e-books was (and still is) so successful was threefold. In the first place there was a response to the main tenor of the article; people discovered I was Australian and wrote to me on several levels about that. Yet others contacted me to find out how my wife made her

mosaics. Fortunately we were able to tell them, which brings me to another point.

If you do use anecdotal content, make sure it's true! Don't, for example, go on about fishing if you can't tell a catfish from a blue-eyed cod. You'll get caught out and any hope of a trusting relationship will be gone forever. For the same reason, avoid introducing total non sequiturs into your articles - they look and feel artificial. For instance; "As I was riding my trusty old horse Bluey through the foothills of the Great Divide....." just doesn't cut it for most people.

Instead, try to draw on a real life experience that is somehow linked to the subject you are writing about - but don't make it the centrepiece of the article. It's there to add human warmth and break down those barriers we mentioned earlier.

If it helps, and you have not already seen it, you can read my complete article at <http://www.idownline.com/sites/tingirablue/marijuana.htm> or send an email to <mailto:marij@magicbiz.net> and it will be delivered direct to your inbox.

I hope it helps you to see what I am driving at and provides you with lots of inspiration for the future.

Best wishes
Michael

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Michael Sheridan is the editor of The Compleat Advertiser, the free newsletter which builds into a powerful, personalized marketing tool for its subscribers. Subscribe by email to <mailto:tingirablue@magicbiz.net>
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