



Write
Company
Plus

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How to Attract Attention

By Dr. Kathleen Begley, Book Author and Professional Speaker

Note to Readers: Here's another offbeat blogletter on business communication and current events from Write Company Plus, a corporate communications training firm located outside Philadelphia. In respect for your busy schedule, writers and editors have arranged seven at-a-glance ideas at the end of this article. Skip directly there if you lack the time to read the entire document.

Recently, at a business luncheon in suburban Philadelphia, I noticed a woman holding a baby wrapped in a multi-colored blanket. I immediately wondered why any decent mother would bring an infant to a crowded gathering amid widespread concerns of swine flu, recently renamed with a bunch of letters and numbers I'm unable to remember. Upon closer inspection, I realized that the baby actually was a life-size, glass-eyed, bald-headed doll.

The covering on the fake child was called a wrapadoodle, described by artist and inventor Victoria O'Neill as "the blanket that holds your baby." But it's more than that. It actually swaddles newborns so that only their heads peep out, a wrapping known to be extremely comforting to human beings recently and abruptly thrust from mommy's oh-so-cushy womb. Immediately, I approached the woman and ordered a wrapadoodle for a good friend's new grandchild.

The reason that O'Neill, whom you can read more about at www.wrapadoodle.blogspot.com, sold me without saying a single word is that she had mastered the first yet often skipped step of marketing – getting your prospect's attention. Remember, at the moment of your approach, the other individual is busy thinking about a disagreement with the boss, a meeting with the team, the travel itinerary for an upcoming trip, a financial report for the executive committee, dinner plans with the family.

In other words, not you.

Yet, most entrepreneurs and salespeople launch into lengthy explanations of their products and services before ever luring prospects away from internal conversations in their own heads. Job-hunters – who are trying to sell themselves – often make the same fatal mistake. In today's busy and competitive world, few individuals automatically switch off their personal concerns to focus on your self-centered spiel.

Just take a look at a statement about getting attention from Jerry Wilson, author of "Fifteen Quick Ideas to Get New Customers." "You have to do something different, bold, and creative to show your customers that they are valued and accepted," Wilson writes. "Find something unique, fun, and or mysterious to convince your prospects to become your customers."

Here are some ways to profit from this principle, whether you're trying to sell widgets to purchasing agents or your experience to human resource directors:

Expand your thinking. With millions of individuals and organizations hanging on financially by a thread, I suggest it's time to stop wasting your time sending bland sales letters or job inquiries. Forget worries about appearing too offbeat, out there, or off the wall. Years ago, I knew a woman who sent a humorous singing telegram to the head of a prestigious organization she had tried unsuccessfully to reach in more traditional ways. She landed exactly the position she wanted.



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Invest in yourself. Considering how much you spent on your education and how much you'll lose without income, I recommend dedicating your last dime to sell your stuff or your self. I kid you not. If I were looking for an advertising job, for example, I probably would enclose a wad of \$1 bills and say my skills would create many more of the same. By wad, I mean 10 -- just enough to bulk up the envelope. With just \$100, possibly borrowed from your family, you can reach 10 prospects or employers. The odds are in your favor.

Juxtapose images. To be sure, wrapadoodle has a built-in advantage when it comes to a visual used in an incongruous setting. But let's say you happen to have discovered that the decision maker on a position involving multitasking is a rabid tennis player. What to do? I'd seriously consider learning how to juggle several tennis balls -- and, while dressed in your best Joseph A. Bank or Liz Claiborne suit, lightheartedly offering to show your prowess at the interview.

Focus on the other person. According to psychologists, all human beings react to outside messages by turning on an internal radio station with the call letters WIIFM. The acronym stands for "what's in it for me?" If you try to sell a company on hiring you because you've been out of work for six months, you're doomed to failure. Focus on the benefits that you offer the organization. Having proven ability to raise profits is a surefire attention getter -- and keeper.

Start with a question. The first few minutes of any face-to-face encounter are nerve-wrecking. To get over the tension in an initial meeting or interview, prepare yourself with a few queries, hopefully stemming from knowledge about or observations of the other person. One possibility: "What an impressive golf trophy on your desk; what's the key to your success out on the course?"

Listen, listen, listen. Believe me, hanging on the other person's every word is one of the most attention-getting gambits on earth. Besides, listening may give you valuable clues on closing the deal.

Follow up. Sales or jobs rarely become solid with only one encounter. Alas, many people drop the ball too soon. That's why persistence counts. So few individuals follow up on anything that doing so will help get you the attention you desperately want in these uncertain times. On the other end of the Wrapadoodle transaction, O'Neill sent me a thank-you card. And the note made me think of telling her that I and several friends would be interested in buying comforting blankets for old, ailing, and dying dogs -- which hold a special place in my animal-loving heart. I even have thought of a name for the companion product: Wrapapoodle.

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