
MEMORANDUM TO EVERY OFFICE

TO: Everyone
FROM: edmoss@maykit.me.uk
SUBJECT: Watch your language!
DATE: Today
CC: Everyone else who might otherwise miss it



Watch your language and your spelling

Regardless of how good your product or service is, you really have to be very meticulous regarding your use of language and spelling. In this respect, the little things do **not** take care of themselves.

The language you use in your marketing and materials should be legal, decent, honest and truthful as well as respect diversity. Any claims you make about what you or your business does should be achievable.

The over-use of “leading” is now getting to the stage where it is utterly ridiculous – for example, almost every recruitment consultant in the land now works for a ‘leading’ client – if you can’t back it up with solid facts that you are leading - or No 1 - then don’t say that you are!

Providing “solutions” for people shows a total lack of creativity on your part. Solutions are solutes dissolved in a solvent, not a business function.

Similarly, you should drop any fascination with using “pre” for everything. For example, it is not physically possible for customers to “pre-order”. Expect your customers to simply order something, or not to order something from you. Pre-order is similar to saying that sneezing is a “pre-cold”. “Pre-owned” is nothing more and nothing less than ‘used’ or ‘second-hand’, and no amount of dressing it up with this contrived and totally meaningless terminology will disguise this.

And “pre-loved” is nothing but utter nonsense, making you look rather stupid.

In this day and age of high-end word processors, there is also no excuse for bad spelling. Don’t be ashamed that you might not have a great writing flow – remember that it’s each to their own area of professional expertise. However, there is no excuse for not using a spell checker and/or having a third party read over what you have written. I remember a very expensive perfect-bound, glossy booklet being produced for a company celebrating its (and not “it’s”!) centenary, where they proudly announced they were “proud of there (sic) tradition”.

This escaped the notice of the agency people producing the brochure, the organisation marketing director and the brand managers, and resulted in a £70,000 scrapping exercise! In fact, as I write this, my Word software has picked up the incorrect “there” in the previous paragraph as an error, by underlining it in blue.

The sure-fire way is the KISS principle - "keep it simple, Stupid, "keep it short and simple" or "keep it simple and straightforward". Unless you are a company such as, for example, a biochemical manufacturer producing something for biochemists, there is no point in using industrial techno-speak or jargon. People will not understand you and you’ll have great difficulty in getting your point across.