



## Words I Never Want To Hear Or See Again!

### Platitudes and Clichés Can Make Your Marketing & Advertising Invisible

"We Go The Extra Mile For You"

"We Treat You Like Family"

"We're Professionals"

"You Tried The Rest, Now Try The Best"

We've Been In Business Since 735 B.C."

**"G**ive me a break!" If I hear or read these words one more time in the advertising of otherwise fine businesses, I'm going to scream.

Why is it that when asked to make a logical case for why you should choose to do business with them, far too many owners, managers, and yes "professional" copywriters fall back on the most trite, hackneyed, overused, and totally meaningless platitudes which no one believes? (*Platitude is defined as "a flat, dull, commonplace, or trite remark uttered as if it were true and profound"*.)

The probable answer is that they couldn't – or they neglected to – develop a compelling message that would differentiate them from their competitors. Differentiation is almost certainly the most important element in effective marketing. And without differentiation you're almost invisible.

Acclaimed marketing guru Jack Trout titled his new book "Differentiate or Die". Overstatement? Not by a long shot.

So, use meaningless platitudes and clichés at your own risk. But before you spend any of your good money to print and communicate your marketing piece, at least put it through these four simple tests.

**"Well, I Should Hope So"** Check your piece for phrases that trumpet as extraordinary what your prospects take for a given. When a printer advertises "*Black & White and Full Color Processes*", "*Folding and Packing*", "*Your Choice of Paper*", the prospect mentally responds "Well I should hope so. You're a printer. That's what printers do." Obvious now, isn't it?

**"What Else Is There"** Take the Movers who are proud to tell you that they do "*Residential and Commercial*", "*Local and Long Distance*", and "*Large and Small*" moves. Well, what else is there?!? If you have these kinds of claims in your ads and brochures, you're wasting valuable space or times where you could be selling. Just for fun, look under "Movers" in your Yellow Pages – that platitude filled book – and see for yourself.

**"Prove It"** Whenever you see a platitude or cliché in an ad, just add "Prove It" and it will take on a whole new meaningless meaning. "*5 Star Customer Service*" – Prove It!

"*The Quality Leader*" – Prove It! "*The Lowest Prices In Town*" – Prove It! If there's no proof, there's no ad.

**"Cross Out – Write In"** When your marketing piece contains generalities, platitudes, and clichés, it is near to impossible to differentiate your business from your competitors. To prove the point, try this exercise. Take your ad, cross out your name, address and phone, and write in your competitor's. Is the ad still mostly valid? If so, there's no meaningful differentiation. Try again.

When you examine ads, brochures, websites, and other marketing tools by using these four simple tests, you'll begin to understand what words and phrases work and which are just pure nonsense. And when you hear them or see them – in your pieces or in those of others – you may just want to scream.

By Alan L Tarr

