

Great copy comes from great ideas

Of course great ideas will stimulate you into producing copy that rises above the ordinary, but in this article, we look at how to stimulate the mind into the plane where great ideas are born.

Before you start to gear up the brain into overdrive looking for the fascinating and unique aspects of your product or service, let's start by setting out the ground rules and the playing field.

To start with, look at the facts as they are presented to you. What have you actually got? Look for the unique points, and how they could relate to your target audience. Take (by way of an example) a potato - this is now your product. What is it? Where does it come from - both historically and geographically? Who grew it? What can it be used for? I think you probably get the idea.

Start making a list. Write all your ideas across the top of a page of A4 landscape, and list thoughts on each topic in a single word or simple phrase under them in the form of a column. Pretty soon you're going to get side tracked off into some tangential thought, and start coming up with some original views on the humble potato!

This is a process for idea generation if you happen to be working on your own, which we invariably tend to be I know; but what if we had the luxury of company? Brainstorming is a long practised exercise, and with good reason. Bouncing ideas around is a great way to discover new ideas; and not just for professional think tanks. In the good old US of A, it's quite rare for one person to write a script in the entertainment world - far more likely to be a team of writers, and it would appear to be working very well.

But try taking this one stage further. Have you ever heard of synectic sessions? Again this is something that was developed in America, and is more or less the same as brainstorming, only the participants are deliberately chosen to be diverse, and with no connection to the product, company, or to the other participants. With this eclectic mix, ideas are coming off the wall, and with a good invigilator (or you, if you want to try this for a particular product you need to create copy for), who steers the group back on track if they veer too far off course, all the "new thinking" can be analysed and expanded on later.

I know, it's rarely possible to given this sort of luxury - but you might try it with some friends in the pub tonight, and stealthily scribble some pearls down on to a piece of paper. You could always call this "research", and see if you can claim the drinks back off tax!

Failing all else, if you come to a halt (mentally), try not to be too concerned. It happens to everybody. Do something else for a while - take the dog for a walk; go and borrow a cup of sugar from your neighbour; mow the lawn. When you come back to the copy, start afresh, and it won't be long before the creative juices are flowing once again.