

**EVEN  
MORE OF A  
BARGAIN**

**CLEARANCE  
CLEARANCE**

**FREE**

**25%  
Off**

Master your media  
and stop paying for  
bad advertisements

*By Gabe Trahan*

People who create advertisements for a wide range of industries are mostly good at what they do. However, it's very difficult to find an advertising writer who understands pharmacy as well as a pharmacist does. No one can convey your passion, expertise, values, and conviction as well you can. Any attempt to do so would simply fall short. That's what happens when someone other than you tries to tell the story of your pharmacy. Too often the advertisement underwhelms and the end result is a well-intentioned, smooth sounding but ultimately poor advertisement. Here is an example of an all too familiar advertisement:

ART: ROBERT LEWIS

# Making Your Message Count

*“Joe’s Family Pharmacy has been family owned for over 25 years. For a quarter of a century Joe and his great team have been attending to the community’s needs with prescriptions at competitive prices, offering outstanding customer service, prompt free home delivery, happily accepting most insurance cards, offering a huge variety of health and beauty care products, durable medical equipment, a stunning selection of Greeting Cards and hard to find unique gifts all under one roof! Come visit Joe’s Family Pharmacy, at the corner of Main and Oak streets. We have a smile waiting for you. 802-444-5678 Open 8 to 5:30 Monday through Friday, 9 to 1 on Saturday and Closed on Sunday.”*

This advertisement is typical, predictable, smooth, enormously common, and mind numbingly boring. Most people wouldn’t even finish reading or listening to it. Sadly they have heard it too many times and what little parts they pay attention to, they don’t believe. *Outstanding customer service?* Yeah, we’ve never heard that before. Prompt, happily, huge variety, stunning, hard to find, unique, and a smile, covers just about every promise given under one roof, including the roofs of sandwich

shops, car dealerships, furniture stores, gas stations, banks, bowling allies, and tattoo parlors. A predictable advertisement is a forgettable advertisement. Tip: here is an easy litmus test for an advertisement that you may be thinking of running. Cover your store’s name, insert your competition’s name, and if the advertisement still makes sense, then dump it. Your advertisement needs to single you out, not make you sound like everyone else. Just dump it.

## **Avoid the Sale! Trap**

There are two types of advertisements out there. The one mentioned previously is meant to flatter the store owner, boosting the advertisement’s acceptance in the eye of the store owner, but it still remains ineffective and is a waste of funds. The other kind of advertisement promises to send hordes of customer traffic into your store. It screams “Sale! Sale! Sale!” It’s easy to increase customer traffic; just run an advertisement promoting Clorox for 99 cents, paper towels at two for \$1, Campbell’s Chunky soup with a “buy one get one free” offer (always helps to add FREE), and Suave shampoo for 69 cents. There you go. It’s done. Offer it and they will come. This will increase customer traffic to your door. Unfortunately, it will only be for about three days. Some will actually call this type of an advertisement

a success. There are just a few problems. Run out of the soup or Clorox, and you have angered your customer, possibly so much that they may never bother to shop your store again. If you have some soup inventory left over, you will eventually have to take it home. Here's a bigger problem. That is, increased customer traffic shopping for bargains almost never equates to increased loyal pharmacy customers. (I've been there and done that.) This type of wrong advertisement is easy to create: just add paper towels, Clorox, and stir.

### **Focus on the Customer**

Instead of allowing others to ineffectively promote your pharmacy, go ahead and write your own advertisement. Write one that focuses on your customer needs and how you will fill them. Don't bother telling customers a story about you. Customers want to hear and see the lovely word "Me." What's in it for me and my health? Jot down the concerns and fears that customers may have when picking up their prescription. The list should address the following questions from customers: Will I get the right medicine? How long will I have to wait? Are they willing to talk to me about my prescription in terms I understand? Is a pharmacist filling my prescription or is it one of his/her helpers? Is the pharmacy familiar with my insurance card? Will I be overcharged? Will there be a place to park?

### **A Few Examples**

The following are a few examples of advertising styles that traditionally have been effective. They are geared toward customers, address their questions, and provide plenty of information.

#### ***"Sorry, we are out of beer"***

*Well, actually we never had it. What we do have is the finest pharmacy team in the area. Yes, the finest. With a team whose only focus is to provide you the right medication. Your prescription is checked six times before it reaches you, all in the right amount of time, as we know your time is valuable. Come experience Joe's Family Pharmacy. Bring all of your medication bottles full, half full or empty to our store. We don't care about where the medications came from. We do care that you are taking them correctly and have all your questions answered. Joe's Family Pharmacy doors are open to you from 8 to 7; you can find us at the*

*corner of Main and Oak streets. Put our number in your speed dial. It's 802-888-7732. See you soon.*

"What we do have is the finest pharmacy team in the area." Did that line make you a little uncomfortable? If you believe that you are the finest team, then use it! If you don't believe it, then it's time to fix your team.

#### ***"We don't let just anyone fill your prescriptions"***

*Ever wonder who really is filling your prescriptions? Well, at Joe's pharmacy only professional, trained, focused, and experienced pharmacists fill your prescription; we wouldn't have it any other way. But it doesn't end there. After your prescription is filled, it is then looked at by three more professionals who, check, check, and check again that you are getting the right medication. It's your health! And we take it very seriously. If you think it's important that your pharmacist takes your health seriously, then we will see you at Joe's Family Pharmacy. Open from 8 to 7, you can find us at the corner of Main and Oak streets. Put our number in your speed dial. It's 802-888-7732. See you soon.*

"If you think it's important that your pharmacist takes your health seriously, then we will see you at Joe's Family Pharmacy." Does that line seem a little too bold to you? You do take your customer's health seriously don't you?

Again, write your own advertisements. First, put yourself in your customer's shoes and shine the spotlight on them and not on you. Customers don't care that you have been in business for 100 years or that you have been on the same block for 50 years, and you have a cat named Fluffy. They want to know if you are willing to be the best pharmacist there is. Be sure to understand their frustrations, concerns, and needs. When it comes to health, no one wants to do business with the second best. Use your convictions and the integrity that is synonymous with your profession to inspire you to communicate clearly that your pharmacy should be everyone's only choice. **ap**

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