

5 Steps to the Most Influential Customer Communications

(Enhanced Rule 25 in [42 Rules of Product Marketing](#))

By Michael Cannon

There is over a decade of [research reports](#) from IDG, AMA, etc. that say about 50% of our customer communications, content and sales conversations, are not relevant to their needs, and that over 50% of the content Marketing produces is not relevant to the field/channel sales teams. It's exceedingly difficult to be successful, i.e., to launch, sell, and manage products with great market share and profits, with such a large ball and chain strapped around the Marketing and Sales teams' proverbial ankle.

The problem starts with a typical product launch plan. It contains a list of content deliverables such as a presentation deck, product brochure, whitepaper, application notes, etc. While these are needed, what's often absent are the categories, styles, and types of messaging required for market success. The result, as the research indicates, is that most of the customer communications (content and conversations) are company/product-centric and descriptive. What's missing is content that is customer-centric and persuasive.

The solution is to create the right messaging first, and then deploy it into your go-to-market content, such as collateral, campaigns, sales tools, and Sales/Channel support training, and employ it in the conversations that Sales has with customers.

Use this five-step process to help you implement more influential customer communications:

1. Establish messaging as a separate deliverable. Messaging is a summary answer to the prospective customer's primary and secondary buying questions, a.k.a. the key points that must be communicated in order to convince a person to engage and buy. Messaging is integrated into content via the copyrighting/creative process and integrated into sales conversations via the communicator. Content is the actual words you use, both written and oral, along with support visuals, to persuade a person to do business with your firm. Content can be delivered in the form of documents, audio, and video.

2. Determine the right categories, styles, and types of [customer messaging needed for market success](#). The two messaging styles are descriptive and persuasive. The categories of messaging can include: Company, Solution, Platform, Product, and Market Segment/Role messaging.

As an example, descriptive product messaging is the typical "what and how" content in a product brochure. It answers the customer's secondary buying questions, such as:

- What does the product do?
- How does it work?
- What features are included/optional?
- What are the key benefits?

Persuasive product messaging is the "why" content. It provides clear, relevant, differentiated, provable, business language answers to the customer's primary buying questions, a.k.a. persuasive messaging types, such as:

- "Why should I consider your product?" for demand creation
- "Why should I meet with you?" for meeting creation
- "Why should I change from the status quo to a new solution?" for opportunity creation
- "Why should I buy this new solution from your company instead of your competitors?" for order creation
- "Why should I buy now?" for urgency creation

These “why questions” are at the heart of every prospective customer conversation, be it online or off-line, that both Marketing and Sales must persuasively answer in order to convince a person to engage and buy.

3. Create persuasive messaging. The logic structure to [create persuasive messaging](#) should follow this outline:

- The top three customer business objectives that are a) important to the customer, b) a good answer to the customer’s buying question, and c) solved by your offering.
- For each customer business objective, the 2-3 key underlying problems that must be improved in order to achieve the business objective.
- For each underlying problem, the capabilities or capability advantages of your offering that improve the underlying problem.
- Proof that your offering includes those capabilities, improves the underlying problems, and achieves the customer’s business objectives.

4. Deploy messaging into content. Once you have created your persuasive messaging, you’re ready to deploy it into your go-to-market content, such as collateral, campaigns, sales tools and sales/channel support training. For example:

- Use each reason statement (customer business objective story line) separately in an advertising/demand-generation campaign. Then drive readers to a landing page with more information and proof that the messaging is true.
- In collateral, create a section called “Three Great Reasons to Replace Your Current Solution or Select Us Over the Competition.”

5. Employ messaging in sales conversations. To ensure consistent customer communication, show the field/channel sales teams how the new messaging and go-to-market content is different from what they normally get, and train them on how to effectively employ it in their sales conversations/process, e.g., create/win more deals by more effectively getting a meeting, qualifying a prospect, selling a solution, setting landmines for the competition, etc.

Yes, creating the right messaging first is more work and you already have too much on your plate. The question you have to ask yourself is: “Would I be more successful if I created less, more relevant and influential go-to-market content, using the ideas above?”

The collective answer from your peers is an unequivocal YES. What they found is that getting the messaging right is truly a silver bullet: It’s the only deliverable that instantly improves the effectiveness of all your customer communications—it enables you to engage customers with more influential content and sales conversations, more consistently, across more touch points. The [typical impact](#) is captured in comments like: “We increased our pipeline by over 20% and our win rate by over 10%”, “We were able to take 15% market share from our biggest competitor”, “I now have a lot more credibility with the sales teams and spend less time supporting them too”, “Almost overnight we were able to communicate significant competitive advantage.”

Resources to Implement the Most Influential Customer Communications

- Read [free articles](#) about how to define, create, and deploy persuasive messaging.
 - Register to review persuasive [messaging examples](#).
- Get [The Buyers Guide: Everything You Need to Know to Engage Customers with the Most Influential Communications](#)

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