

Marketers: don't take your script on stage



By [Douglas Kruger](#)

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Here's your challenge: 120 rural women, all over the age of 40, packed into a community hall in the middle of nowhere. They're hot, they're sweaty and they've gathered to hear another speaker, but your bank is sponsoring the event. Get them excited about opening an account with you. Go!

Actually, it is possible, but you'd really have to zero in on their interests and speak to them on a human level. You'd have to capture their imaginations and show them, in practical ways, how they will get something from what you're offering.

Sadly, that's not what happened earlier this year when I watched a presentation with precisely those parameters. The be-suited speaker, glaringly segregated from the group by his outfit alone, spoke passionately about 'onboarding them.' He described, in minute detail, the administrative process they would go through during the 'customer-uptake' stage. They stared uncomprehendingly. So did I.

Did I mention that English was not their first language? To be fair, it wouldn't have helped if it had been. Onboarding is not even in the English dictionary. It's pure, unadulterated marketese; jargon of the most self-indulgent kind.

I've rarely seen a marketing effort fail with quite such spectacular aplomb! He may as well have spoken Russian, described the workings of a nuclear power station and yodeled it all for good measure...with the hall lights off.

So what went wrong? Quite simply this: the actor took his script on stage. Instead of acting the part, he read his cues aloud. He spoke 'Marketing' at them, instead of 'Human Being'.

Are you reading out your script?

True marketing gurus understand that their in-house jargon is incredibly useful. To them. And of precious little interest to their target market.

By all means, when tucked away behind boardroom doors, flood your strategy sessions with 'onboarding,' 'upselling,' 'monetizing' and more. But to use that terminology when speaking to your customers is simply to confuse them; or worse, to reveal that you are aiming a technique at them. Those words are your script. They are your cues. They are not to be read aloud before the audience.

Think of it in terms of a Shakespearian play. The best plays don't look like plays. They are so real, so vivid, so incredibly authentic, that you forget you're actually watching a paid professional go through practiced motions. You become

entranced by the story.

Speaking marketese to your clients is like walking on stage and proclaiming, "I am the character Romeo! Now watch as I walk to stage left, where I shall deliver yonder emotional speech to fair Juliet, the role of whom will be played tonight by Janet Bloggs, from Smalltown, Middleburg. This is gonn'a totally make you cry, I promise!"

Practiced marketers know that their job is to make magic, appeal to people and ultimately sell their products and services. The more real, the more authentic your message, the less people feel they are being 'techniqued' at. Great art is the art of hiding the art.

Your Copernican Revolution for the Day:

Understand that there is a backstage and an on-stage to what you do. When you're backstage, you need to speak like a marketer, think like a marketer, use all that wonderful marketing jargon that tipples off your tongue so satisfyingly.

But when you get on-stage, you must speak a different language. You cannot use Marketese before your audience. You will ruin the play. When the moment arrives, when you take the stage, when they're all watching, that's when the magic must happen.

So search your heart. Search your vocabulary. Seek out and excise all those precious pearls that make you feel like an important marketing mogul and remove them from your speeches, your ads, your scripts, your tweets and your blogs. Your job is not to flatter yourself with displays of linguistic self-love and incestuous references to your own world. Your job is to make magic and sell.

To do that, you must appeal to their minds, their hearts, their imaginations. You must speak powerful 'Human Being'. If you do, they will buy from you. And that is a sign of a true marketing expert.

Hide the script. Speak Human. Be interesting. And happy selling!

ABOUT DOUGLAS KRUGER

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