

5 tips for great English communication

Project a world class image and improve your sales

The famous playwright, George Bernard Shaw, once said: “The single biggest problem with communication is the illusion that it has taken place.” These are wise words to consider when communicating your sales message to an international audience. Compelling your customers to buy your product is difficult enough within your own country. Add cultural and language barriers and the task becomes even more challenging. The following suggestions are food for thought – appetizers, actually – to help you get better results from your international communication.

What’s in it for me?

Regardless of the language you use to communicate, your sales message must compel. The best way to do this in any language is to focus on your *customer* instead of your *product*. Put on your customer’s glasses – join the conversation that’s already going on in his head. All he wants to know is: “What’s in it for me?” Talking about the solution to his problem will be much more compelling for your customer than the details or characteristics of your product itself.

Here’s a simple formula for a successful sales message:

Value (solution to customer’s problem) + Your unique quality (something that makes you better than your competition) = An offer they can’t refuse.

Step up to your greatness

Equality is an important and beautiful aspect of Danish life, but Janteloven (the unwritten rule that warns against thinking you are special or better than anyone) has no place in marketing. Investigate your competition and find out where you excel. Talk to your customers and ask them why they buy your product. And ask them why they chose your product over your competitor’s.

If your product really is fantastic then don’t be afraid to shout it from the rooftops. A timid message is not compelling, and when competing on an international stage it will fade before bolder messages. For example, compare Carlsberg’s tagline “Probably the best beer in the world” to Budweiser’s “King of Beers”. Which would you select off of the grocery shelf – if you had no Danish predisposition to Carlsberg, that is!

Don’t let your sales message get lost in translation

If you want to go global then it makes sense to create your sales material in English right from the start. Your message will be much more powerful if you create it in English than if you write it in Danish and translate it.

It may sound illogical, but consider that the perfect formulation in Danish doesn’t have anything to do with the perfect formulation in English. To pack the optimal punch your text actually needs more than translation. It must be totally reformulated based on the best way to convey the message in English. In fact, it is more difficult to do this if you are already hemmed in by a Danish formulation.

Get active (voice)

A native English speaker can’t *always* write for you – especially when it comes to everyday text like email. Here’s a simple change that will make a big difference on the impact and clarity of your English: use the active voice instead of the passive voice.

What is that, and why does it matter? In an active sentence, the subject is doing the action: “John bakes a cake.” In a passive sentence the target of the action is used as the subject of the sentence: “A cake was baked by John.” The cake isn’t doing anything. It’s just being baked by John. It is a subtle change that makes a big difference. Here are a few more examples:

Active	Passive
Dan hits the ball.	The ball is hit by Dan.
This store sells candy.	Candy is sold by this store.
My friends gave me a gift.	A gift was given to me by my friends.

Since Danish frequently uses the passive voice, Danes have a big challenge avoiding it in English. But, as illustrated by these simple sentences, when used in English it is awkward, confusing and wordy. Clearly, using active voice will tighten up your English text significantly.

Seek professional help

If English isn’t your native language, then get professional help. If you want to project a world class image, your English sales material *must* have the natural flow and quality of a native speaker. Every Dane knows someone who is especially good at English. But resist the temptation to use “your cousin’s roommate’s best friend that studied in London for years” - or whatever the case may be. You’ll never get the same quality of written material from a non-native speaker. And with low quality material you will project a low quality image, making it difficult to compete on the international stage.

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Fluent Communication focuses on small companies because we enjoy working with people who are totally consumed by what they do! From high level marketing strategy all the way down to operational legwork, we love sharing our experience with folks who have a passion for their business. With our unique combination of marketing experience, technical knowledge and native English language skills, Fluent Communication gives their customers exactly what they need, but have difficulty creating on their own: a great marketing message that really sells - in English.

Evi Larsen leads the team at Fluent Communication. Born and raised in the United States, Evi has a Bachelors Degree in Computer Science, a decade of experience in the computer industry and nearly as many years of marketing experience. As a permanent resident of Denmark, Evi is now fluent in Danish and has built a top rate network of collaboration partners - allowing her to meet all of her customer's marketing needs, whether related to graphics, web, events and more.