



THE TOUGH LOVE GUIDE TO TECH MARKETING.

SEPTEMBER 2024



A dimly lit boxing ring with a stool, a laptop on a red cushion, and boxing gloves on the floor. The scene is set in a large, industrial-style gym with a high ceiling and exposed beams. The lighting is a mix of cool blue and warm red, creating a moody atmosphere. The ring is enclosed by red ropes, and the floor is a dark, polished surface. In the center of the ring, there is a tall, dark wooden stool with a red seat. To the right of the stool, a red cushion sits on the floor with a laptop open on top. Several red boxing gloves are scattered on the floor near the cushion. The background shows the structural elements of the gym, including pipes and lights, with a few small red lights visible in the distance.

**YOU'RE NOT
GOING TO
LIKE THIS.**

**SO, YOU'D BETTER FIND A SEAT.
MAYBE MAKE A COFFEE.**

AND TAKE A DEEP BREATH.



YOU'RE DOING IT ALL WRONG

“If a brand was someone you met at a party, then tech brands are the ones who think you care about the impressive mileage of their new EV, or how much they can bench press. You know the ones who pretend they’re listening, but they’re really just waiting to talk about themselves again?”

→ Lara Cory, Head of Content and Strategy

THE 8 BIGGEST PROBLEMS WITH TECH COMMS

01

Tech brands don't talk to their audience. They talk about themselves.

Count the number of times you say 'we' and 'our' on your home page.

Then, count the amount of time you mention your audience 'you, your'.

Let's just let that sink in for a moment.

If the ratio is about 50:50, then well done. You're not doing too badly.

If it's tipped in your favour, then you've got work to do.

02

They're too reductive about the benefits of their solutions.

Your audience wants to know about desired outcomes and yet tech brands rarely talk about HOW the solution can actually help people in any meaningful way.

It's not enough to tout generic benefits like saving money or time or accelerating growth.

It's easy to see why this occurs so often in the tech sector. The inherent nature of tech products and services is to normalise and standardise input to create repeatable, scalable results. It's embedded in the DNA of the sector.

But the trouble is, your audience doesn't see themselves or their unique and complex business challenges as 'input' for your new tech product.

03

They're too reductive about the audience.

It's a fatal mistake to assume all 'business' is the same.

And worse, that all 'business people' are the same.

Your audience cares deeply about their business.

By forcing the audience to think and act in categories that are convenient for you, you're reducing them to a lumpen mass. And they feel it when they visit your website, as they glaze over trying to understand your world view instead of you trying to understand theirs.

Don't ever forget that even though it's called B2B, you're never communicating with a 'business'. You are always, every - single - time, communicating with a human being. They might act on behalf of the business, but they still have human interests at heart.

“We bring together the latest workplace technologies to deliver solutions for your business users.”

→ **Un-named Tech Brand**

04

They overestimate their importance.

Tech is a tool.

It's the means not the end.

And for the audience, it's beginning to feel like tech brands have simply become vendors who have technology that's looking for a problem to solve.

05

They oversimplify the problems.

Business challenges are not a thing you can neatly contain in a bullet point list and manage with a simple, end-to-end solution that costs £XX.99 per month.

We get it, you want as many customers as possible. But when you over-simplify your audiences' needs and challenges to create a convenient 'average customer' you end up appealing to none of them.

“The extreme simplification of communication makes it impossible for users to distinguish which brand category the message belongs to — whether it's banking, education, investment... The brand identities become blurred, and as a result, brands lose their connection with the audience.”

→ Medium

06

They overstate the 'solution'.

What do you mean when you say 'solution'?

Because we certainly don't know.

07

Messaging is lazy and confusing.

Data. Growth. Scale. Future-proof. Solution. Transformation. End-to-end. Innovative. Accelerate. Technology. Empower. Workplace. Legacy. Digital transformation. Deploy.

These are tech sector buzz words.

And no one likes them.

Try harder.

“Delivering a fully automated, user driven, transformation based on data analytics performed against your legacy environment.”

→ **Unnamed IT/Tech brand**

08

Stop talking about ‘humans’.

This ship has sailed. Let’s talk about something else please.

Tech brands love to talk about ‘being human’ and yet their messaging is anything but. Most of us mere mortals won’t ever be able to live up to the epic promise of their tech solutions.

The skills gap is growing day-by-day as tech gets smarter and smarter. This leaves most of us feeling left behind and inadequate in the face of your insistence that we can accelerate, unleash, unlock, enable, empower, increase, transform, improve, and out-perform.

Let’s turn the volume down a bit.

(ps: we all know ChatGPT loves power verbs)

WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

In a crowded market like Tech, the fierceness of the competition has created an excruciating conformity, homogenising the landscape to an unbearable shade of blerrrrgggh.

It's become a race to the bottom. And the results are painful for everyone.

Tech brands are treating their audience and their problems as if they're completely interchangeable.

And the audience ends up thinking that all tech brands and their solutions are completely interchangeable.

It can't go on like this.

WHAT'S THE SOLUTION... ANSWER?

Take a look at all the most memorable tech brands, we're talking Microsoft, Apple, Dropbox, WeTransfer, Mail Chimp... What's the first thing you notice?

Here's a clue, you won't find the 's' word anywhere but the nav bar most of the time. Because these brands understand that their product is a tool, **not** a solution.

The human problem.

The human problem is at the centre of their communications, and they frame their offer in response.

This is how it should be.

It is harder to find that human problem for B2B, when you're trying to solve business problems. But if you put in that extra effort to figure it out, you'll be rewarded.

- Your brand will be stronger because it is more relatable.
- You'll be able to communicate on a more personal level.
- You can market your offer in more meaningful ways.

It can be done.

And there are plenty of tech brands out there making B2B feel less transactional and more relatable; WeTransfer, Accenture, Intercom, Dropbox, Drift, Mail Chimp, Gong and Notion, Figma.

- They understand the value of brand awareness and being top of mind not just now, but when it's time to buy.
- They don't sell product, they sell benefits.
- They talk to humans, not businesses.
- They appeal to our basic and more complex sensory needs; colour, movement, sound, music, narrative, compelling messaging, TOV, clear and well-signposted calls to action, thoughtful UX.

HOW CAN WE DO IT BETTER?

WINNER

Lots of brands believe that to connect with their audience all they need is a signature colour palette, a logo and a strapline.

But the mechanics of brand communication are much more complicated than that.

The classic ice-berg metaphor is used so often because it's a great way of communicating how the most influential elements of a brand remain hidden but perceivable. And, as much as you wish it were so, there are no short cuts to getting this right.

We can understand a lot about a brand from visual clues like colour, shape, font and photography. But deeper, more complex clues about things like purpose and culture (beliefs, goals and values) have to be expressed with words and tone of voice.

A brand should be a response to an audience or societal demand.

It should be positioned amongst its competitors and in the marketplace to help it become less 'interchangeable' with other brands.

Ask yourself, how is your brand trying to respond and connect with your audience?

And how do you differentiate your brand in the marketplace?

“One of our clients doubled-down on this approach and they saw incredible results. Lead gen went up by 40%, win rates soared, and they saw huge growth in their social following and retention rates. Their new brand has helped them become famous in their field.”

→ **Mat Harris, CEO and Founder**



DIFFERENT IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN BETTER

You've heard people talk about it. Marketing experts write books about it. Business empires are built upon this single foundation; **be different.**

Think about it for a moment. If your unique selling point (USP) is about outperforming or undercutting the competition, chances are you won't be able to rely on that as a competitive advantage forever. Someone else can come along at any moment and do it better than you or cheaper than you.

So, what's the one thing they can't compete with or do better at?

Being you.

Having your perspective, your technique and your experience are the intangible qualities that make your business different. And when you're different, you stand out.

“Being different starts with your brand and your brand should always be at the heart of all your marketing activity and communications.”

→ Mat Harris, CEO and Founder

SO, WHAT ARE YOU GOING
TO DO **ABOUT IT?**

TOUGH!

LOVE



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