

# Getting the message across

*Peter Fisk* explores how audiences need to be engaged, and how they need structure and a story

Sometimes, it all just comes out the wrong way. We sit down in front of our customer / audience / participant, open our mouths and start talking about what we want to talk about. We describe the challenges and opportunities as we see them, rather than from the customer's perspective, and in language that makes sense to us, regardless of anyone else.

Yet we know that the starting point is to listen and understand, or at least to start by thinking about the audience and where they are, what's going through their minds, and what matters most to them.

Whether it's a 30-second TV commercial, a half-page press release with some exciting news, a roadside poster trying to catch a driver's eye, a 24-page brochure to take home and dwell on, or a 45-minute pod-cast speech by the artistic director ... they all have an audience to engage, all have a purpose to achieve, a key message to get across.

Audiences need to be engaged by something that is meaningful to them, that they can follow and understand, can empathise and agree with, something that takes them from where they are to a better place. They need structure and a story.

A 'customer script' is used to convey the proposition to the customer in a relevant and compelling way. However, it doesn't jump into 'this is us, and this is what we do'. It starts, not surprisingly, with the customer, and takes them through a logic that will hopefully engage and inspire them to take the actions you seek.

A 'customer script' describes:

- Context – about the customer, the opportunities and challenges they face
- Complexity – what is most difficult, or why their current solution to the context is inappropriate
- Challenge – poses a key question relating to this complexity, and how to solve it
- Core message – proposes a solution, a big idea which you would like to introduce them to.



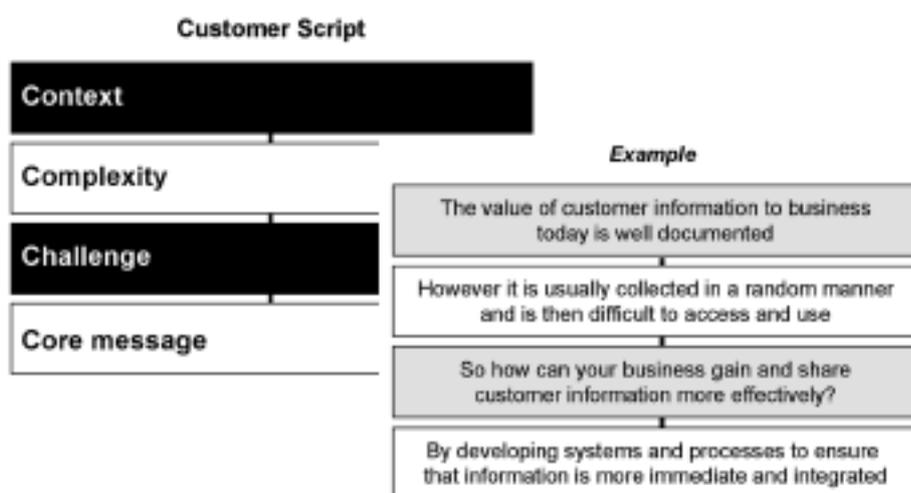
that you want to stick in your audience's mind.

The narrative might then go on to explain 'why' the conclusion is appropriate, or 'how' it can be achieved in a sub-structure of messages often with specific evidence to support the case, or more detailed description as to how it

will be achieved.

The structure can be applied to anything from the copy for the brochure, a script for a TV commercial, or the slides to support a sales pitch. And while it might run to many pages, it should also be possible to capture the essential narrative on one page.

The core message would typically incorporate the proposition that you want to deliver, the solution that you believe is right for them, the big idea



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