

8 Ways to Spot Dominant Emotions Your Prospects Already Have That Could Drive Your Response Rates Through the Roof – PART 2

By Clayton Makepeace

Welcome back to your exclusive glimpse inside my brain. Well, not all of my brain, but at least that part housing my strategies for spotting my prospect's dominant emotions.

Let's get right to my final four strategies ...

5. Ask customers.

O.K. So, focus groups suck. We've all tried them, and we all pretty much agree they're a total waste of time and money for direct marketers.

Customers in focus groups try too hard to give you the "right" answer – the answer they think you want to hear ... or that makes them sound smart or insightful.

Most importantly, because they're not backing up their phony-baloney answers with a check, any opinions about your mail pieces are pretty much worthless.

Judging from response to your promotions and test cells – tests in which prospects put their money where their mouths are – are a far better way to divine how your prospects are feeling.

But for identifying resident and dominant emotions, customer polls – whether conducted through the mail, over the phone or on the Internet – can be extremely helpful.

If you're "*just*" the copywriter (and don't think for a moment that's all you are ... you're a marketing consultant as well), convince your clients to run customer polls. They'll bless you once they learn the power they hold.

I believe in making the questions more open-ended. Multiple choice questions force customers into a box. You'll be able to read the nuances of emotion better if you encourage the customer to ramble as much as possible.



Frankly, I'm surprised how few direct-response marketers do this on a regular, scheduled, disciplined, quarterly basis. I mean – *what's with you guys, anyway?*

Your clients own these names. They originally came from lists they're about to mail again. These polls are GREAT clues to what your prospects are thinking and feeling – and *could* be the key to breaking the bank with a hot new control.

So, why do so many otherwise savvy, sophisticated, even ingenious direct marketers lack the discipline to institute regular customer polling?

Why does the laundry always lose only one of each pair of socks – and where do they go?

Universal mysteries that will probably never be explained. Maybe quantum physics has something to do with it.

New customer surveys can be particularly informative. Tell your clients to ask newbies what made them decide to join them. Ask what they expect your client to do for them. Ask them how they feel about the current environment. Ask them how the client is doing so far.

And for Pete's sake, when your client gets the answers, encourage him to do more than just scan them or even worse, issue a memo with a table showing how many answers fell into which broad category! And encourage him to give the raw responses to you.

The answers you're looking for are as much in the *tone* of the responses as in the words on the page. So, read them carefully. Read between the lines. Let them wash over you. Sleep on them. And then, mine the heck out of them to discover the emotions that drove the tenderfoots to your client.

Finally, pick a handful of the most intriguing responses and follow up with a phone call. Get the customer talking. Listen to the emotion behind his/her words. Dig until you're sure you've nailed the most dominant emotions they have about the problem your product or service solves or the need it fulfills.

6. Ask ANGRY customers.

When customers are complaining, they tend to let their guard down – and tell you what they really think about the client, your product and your whole !@#\$ industry(!).

Encourage your client to *NOT* dodge these calls. Accept them cheerfully. Encourage the customer to vent. And be sure to take copious notes.

These angry customers give you clues to the reasons why at best only a tiny fraction of the names your client rents from others wind up ordering.

Why? Because your client's competitors – the folks they hope to rent a ton of names from – are getting the exact same kinds of calls from the people they're planning to sell their product to!

Read these angry letters or the transcripts of the angry calls. It may just be you'll be exposed to some of the raw emotions your prospects and customers are feeling, but haven't expressed to you. And, subtly addressing those feelings can mean real profit opportunities!

Ask yourself: Is there a way to eliminate these negative emotions in my sales copy *without actually mentioning the complaint*?

7. Divine the answer.

This is a no-brainer, and we all do it, so I'm not going to spend a lot of time on it. But watching your competitors' copy can give you clues to the things they think are driving customers to them.

And, while analyzing your competitors' *controls* line-by-line is "Marketing 101," knowing what they're *testing* can often be even more informative. It gives you valuable clues as to what their market research is telling them as to the types of headlines and emotional appeals that might work even better than their controls.

Oh – and while you're at it, suggest that your client pick up the phone and ask the competitor if he'd mind terribly if they sent a poll to a representative sample of his best customers.

You're laughing. Well, I suggested that Weiss Research do just that. And you know what happened? The competitor said, "Sure!"

And, why not? He wants to rent your client his names. ALL of his names. As often as is humanly possible. And for that to happen, your promotions have to work well when mailed to those names. So, why not go Dutch on a survey sent to *both* of your files – and share the results?

And, don't forget to also pay attention to what non-competitors in similar fields and even businesses in completely unrelated industries are doing.

Whenever you're looking at a successful ad, direct-mail package, or any other marketing communication, have your feelers out. Which resident emotions are the companies behind them appealing to?

8. Check the polls.

The Internet may not be all it's cracked up to be – but it *is* a great source of free research into your prospects' state of mind and emotions.

My friend Carline Anglade-Cole, a crackerjack copywriter in her own right, absolutely loves doing Internet research. "I Google EVERYTHING," she says.

And, when Carline says, "Everything," she means everything about her prospect, the products that are competing with the product she's selling, every topic covered in her sales copy, EVERYTHING!

So, go ahead: Ask Jeeves. Google to your heart's content. Yahoo! your brains out. It's free. You might learn something. So, why not?

And, while you're on-line, don't forget to check out the great consumer sentiment research sites. They've been asking your prospects many of the same questions you have – about their fears, desires, and more.

Do any of the above, and you'll get great clues to the emotions that are driving your prospects now.

Do all of them – regularly – and you'll become a master of your market.

You'll also be the first to know when the dominant emotions in your marketplace begin to change. And, you'll be one of the first to identify and profit from the new trend – *whatever* it turns out to be.

Published: April 13, 2015

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annie i comeup this by accidentit so wonderful i could not stop puting me in it i get so excite thaing some day i can do this see i adopt a little boy with cp he wes just a baby he 14 at this i love him so much iwont to do all i can for him thank you so much for any help

annieD – over a year ago

Hi Clayton..

In #6; I just need to know, so as to grasp and process the concept. Why should we not mention the complaint?

soarbolde – over a year ago

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