

# Writing a Winning Concept

## ■ Guidelines

Prepared by David Nolan New Paradigms Research Ltd.

[dnolan@npresearch.com](mailto:dnolan@npresearch.com)

Tel 07966 226 565

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PARADIGMS  
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# Why is concept writing so important?

- Concepts are used to evaluate consumer interest in an idea and drive go/no go decisions
- The purpose of a concept is to express a new business idea in consumer language in order to assess consumer appeal
- If we have a great idea, but if it is not translated well into a concept, we fail in capturing the value behind our ideas and it won't test well.
- Consumer concepts are not internal selling tools or R&D Projects

# What is the difference between a concept and an idea?

- A concept is an idea expressed in a way that a customer can understand what is being offered and can make a yes/no purchase decision.
- A concept is an idea that has been
  - “Brought to life”
  - “made concrete”
  - “Given clothes”
- The core of a good concept is ...a good idea.
- A good idea can be expressed in several concepts. E.g.
  - If the idea is ... “We use solar power” it can lead to many different concepts =
  - solar panels, solar reactive windows, biofuels, thermal exchangers, hybrid motor cars, street lights, or
  - Our latest coal-burners come without carbon filters can produce even more greenhouse gases, trapping more solar radiation thereby increasing global warming .....



# FOUR Key elements of a concept

1. Benefit. A clear statement of promise – What is in it for the customer?
2. Insight/Empathy – Shows you understand them and can therefore solve their problem

Strong insight *“That’s so Me!” “I get it.” “I love it.”*

Weak insight *“That’s not me.” “That’s true, but it doesn’t really speak to me.”  
“Yeah, I can see how that works for others.” “No, I have never really thought about that before”*

3. Reason To Believe – why you can believe us.
4. Illustration/example/ – Visuals can help.

# Benefit

- A Benefit is the promise of what the new product will do for the consumer
- **“What’s in it for me?”**
  - The benefit pays off the insight
  - Reveals why the consumer should care
  - Creates interest in its uniqueness

# Insight/empathy

- Here are some “good” examples:
  - *Sometimes the foods I eat in the evening to relax, cancel out all the good eating I’ve done that day.*
  - *Family time is too precious to spend a lot of time in the kitchen, but I want to feed my family well.*
  - *I know it isn’t good for my skin to keep makeup on overnight, but sometimes I am just too tired to wash it off.*
  - *Hardwood floors look great but they are challenging to clean*



# Reason to Believe (RTB)

- Reason to Believe Statements provide the credibility for the consumer to trust your promise (Benefit).
- *“Why should I believe it?”*
  - RTBs are generally factual or descriptive information
  - They help to eliminate skepticism or concern that may create a barrier to the idea.
  - RTBs can enhance clarity with the inclusion of some descriptive language about the product itself

# Example of a good concept

- **BENEFIT:** I promise you: An up and running nursery from day one.
- **EMPATHY:** You want to arrive on day one and find the nursery completed and can proudly show the new mums around....
- **REASON TO BELIEVE:** Award-winning nursery and primary school architects designed this after taking in account the views of Early Years consultants, LEA's, parents, teachers and DFES.
- **Any other necessary information:** Visuals show it can comfortably accommodate up to 60 children. Available in a range of sizes. Has a covered entrance, spacious activity room, a quiet room, sheltered external play area and all necessary utilities including child-level toilets, shower and sinks with kitchenette and staff toilet.
- **To Summarize, I promise:** Lilliput nursery – A nursery building tomorrow





# Example of a weak concept – spot the areas needing improvement!

- **Benefit:** I promise you will be able to readily transport our new Peacemaker building on a suitable lorry.
- **Empathy:** I know that's important to you because you may want to transport it yourself.
- **RTB:** It comes with a Handbook detailing a complete guide to the specification, a certificate of 50 year structural life, and all building services documents. It meets Building Regulations, BSTA Standards and ISO 9001.
  
- **Any other necessary information:**
  1. The telescopic Lodastrut leg system enables Peacemaker building to be positioned by one person with suitable training.
  2. The PEC200 model should be handled using the “Top lift spreader” and “top lift sling” methods. If in doubt, do not operate as serious injury can occur
  3. If you are not satisfied, we will let you have it for a further week at no extra charge (terms and conditions apply)



# Consumer Concept Example

**Introducing Swiffer Sweeper,**

1. **Headline at the top**  
Includes a brief benefit summary

**Gives you a deep clean on virtually any surface in your home**

2. **Understanding statement**

Hardwood floors look great but they are challenging to clean

**New Swiffer Sweeper** gives you a deep clean on virtually any surface in your home.

3. **Benefit**

**Swiffer Sweepers** dry cloths use a dirt grabbing texture to pick up 50% more dirt, dust and hair than a broom or mop, so you get a deep clean for your floors.

4. **RTB**

**Swiffer** cloths come in the following sizes and can be found in the grocery store next to your favorite home cleaning products

16 count for \$2.99

48 count for \$5.49

96 count for \$9.99

5. **Varieties**  
-include price  
-location



**Pack Shot**  
Shows Lead SKU or Family or Products

# Concept writing template

*Imagine yourself talking to a friend. You speak this friend's language and you understand a need they have. Write your concept by filling in the blanks.*

1. I promise you/I promise you will: .....
2. I know that's important to you because:.....
3. You can believe and trust my promise because:.....
4. Any other necessary information/visual (use reverse of sheet if necessary).....
5. To Summarize, I promise.....



# Guidance on concept writing/wording

## Overall

- Be positive: don't let a "problem" be stated too negatively
- Be as focused and concise as possible
- Avoid jargon; use consumer language
- Avoid using absolutes "always". Soften statements "sometimes", "often", "can be".

## Insight

- Insight captures the consumer problem, conflict or tension
- Tap into consumers' behaviors, decision-making patterns, beliefs or emotions
- Don't tell them how they think and feel (can alienate)
- Avoid "You" and "I"; if must, choose "I" / Try to avoid the first word of the Insight being "You"

## Benefit

- Tell consumers what's in it for them (functionally and/or emotionally)
- Strive for uniqueness (differentiated)
- Be single-minded (avoid multiple benefits)
- Don't over-promise

## RTB

- Be judicious about which facts to include:
- Choose the RTBs that best support your insight/Benefit story
- Use descriptive language to build uniqueness and credibility
- Describe the great taste; don't just say "great taste"
- Avoid the introduction of new Benefits in the RTB

# After concept is written ... Do a Sanity Check before consumer testing

- Does the concept have a singular, focused idea?
- Are the components logically linked together?
  - Does the Insight set up the Benefit? Does the Benefit pay off the Insight? Is the Benefit supported by the RTBs?
- Is the crux of the idea clear?
- Are there too many ideas?
  - Underline each idea in the concept as a test. If more than one idea then produce separate concepts
- Does it solve a consumer problem?
- Can you really execute the idea?
  - Can you communicate this on the package? Can you communicate this in a 15 or 30 second TV commercial? In a print ad?



# Guidelines in summary

1. Seek a single-minded statement of the benefit. Avoid tendency to pile on the benefits in the hope of increasing the concept's appeal. If a product offers several benefits, then write one concept for each benefit.
2. Use Laddering technique. Ask yourself "And why would that be important?" three times
3. Empathy. Look at it from the customers view-point rather than from the brands perspective.
4. Reason to believe. This is the support. It should not be confused with the benefit.
5. Describe the benefit, not just features. A feature is what it looks like, a benefit is what it delivers.
6. Focus on what is unique to the customer about this idea. Avoid describing generic category benefits
7. Short and simple sentences. A picture/drawing can help.
8. Avoid circular discussion, debate and word-smithing. Get it down on paper!