



WRITING 'ON-BRAND' RECRUITMENT ADS - IN YOUR OWN STYLE.

Many people looking to write a recruitment ad often agonise over the extent to which they should 'be themselves' when writing what is, in effect, a key company communication.

What's the balance between the 'personal' and 'the corporate'? There are some definite 'Do's' and 'Don'ts' when writing any company communications - profanity is a no-no and grammar is important - but it's reassuring to know that, just like design, copywriting is subject to the personal tastes of the writer, the mindset of the audience and the purpose of the ad itself.

So what are the key steps you need to follow to write an engaging ad that 'sells' your organisation as an employer to the candidates you want to attract - without selling your own soul to the platitudes of jobspeak?

Research what you're going to Write.

Before immersing yourself in writing your recruitment advertisement, you need to be conversant with your own 'corporate story' (if you have one). If you're a large organisation, you may have **Brand Guidelines** and **Tone of Voice** documents already created by your Marcomms team. If you're fortunate enough to have these, they'll give you a steer on the overall corporate messaging and 'business vocabulary' that can be incorporated into your ad.

However, a guide is just a guide. It's something to be used - or not used - judiciously; and might not have been constructed with recruitment communications in mind.

So any enterprise - large or small - needs to create an employment narrative that's current, cogent and crafted to attract every skillset and candidate community you're looking to engage with. That's why researching your organisation's **latest facts, figures, news and updates can often be the best possible source of information for your ad.** Something highly topical - such as team achievements, new products and services, industry awards, record profits, highest-ever NPS - could be the most interesting and relevant thread to the storyline you need to create to capture your audience. So take and use whatever's available 'right now' to sell your proposition to the candidate(s) of your dreams.

"Even the smallest enterprise can create a brilliant recruitment ad"

Given this approach **even the smallest enterprise can create a brilliant recruitment ad.** Simply picture your ad as a platform to launch your employment story, rather than a straitjacket to fill with words, and you'll be able to connect with anyone, anywhere - and 'be yourself' with the words you choose to use, especially if you use a tried and tested advertising model called 'AIDA.'

One-to-One vs Corporate Communication

Language changes every year and, to a lesser degree, so does grammar. The only time we really notice it is when something 'controversial' is added to the dictionary, (like 'LOL'), but it happens far more often than we realise.

Likewise, there are often two (correct) spellings of a word and more than one execution of a punctuation rule. And those rules can change in the context of a sentence, or in the style it's written in, or the medium it's intended for. This is an important consideration when we're writing a recruitment ad - because in essence we are writing a **One-to-One Communication** (i.e. between You and Your Potential Candidate). It's not a legal document. It's not a public notice. It's not a job description. It's a human message looking to connect. So it has to be interesting. In fact, the best recruitment ads are a joy to read, so we don't need to be intense in our writing style or Victorian in our grammar. We can be colloquial and conversational. **But. Every. Single. Word. Must. Matter.**

"The best recruitment ads are a joy to read"

Of course, it's important to know and respect the rules of grammar. But when you're writing an ad, it's also important to know how and when to play with them. You can bend the rules if it enhances understanding or helps with clarity. As long as the message is communicated clearly to your target audience, in a language that engages with them - and doesn't smash to smithereens the boundaries of your brand.

There are examples of this all around us. Apple's "Think Different" should strictly speaking say: "Think Differently". But it wouldn't be anywhere near as memorable, would it? McDonald's "I'm lovin' it" should read: "I am loving it", but that would take away the personality of a strapline that's working across the world. And many an English teacher must despair at Honda Civic's "To each their own" - but where's the charm in a line that says: "To each his/her own"?

We all have a tone of voice, whether we realise it or not. Accents aren't limited to the spoken word. Each of us has subtle habits, preferences and tendencies that we project onto the written word. Some people excess in use of the exclamation mark. Others are addicted to the semi-colon. Many of us veer all too readily to the bullet point. The simple question is: **Does It Work?**

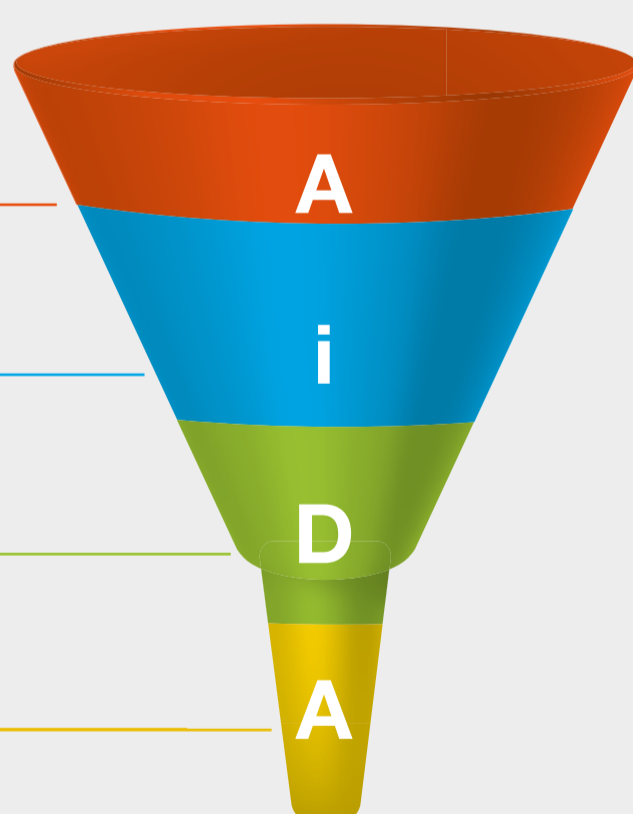
The AIDA model is a wonderful framework that both helps and disciplines you to write impactful copy. It's not necessarily about being 'creative'. It's about creating the right result. And this is how it works:

ATTENTION

INTEREST

DESIRE

ACTION



It either works. Or it doesn't.

Ultimately, creative copywriting creates the right response. It either attracts the 'right' people or it doesn't. Your style, vocabulary and punctuation is good as long as it works - and it's working if your copy is 'selling', because copywriting is ultimately selling a proposition. So your copy needs to sell, which is the difference between:

The best software opportunity you'll ever have...
The best software opportunity you'll ever have.
The best software opportunity ever.
The best software opportunity, ever.
The best software opportunity. Ever.
The best software opportunity you'll EVER have!
BEST. SOFTWARE. OPPORTUNITY. EVER.
BEST software opportunity you'll EVER have!!
Simply apply now!!
SOFTWARE OPPORTUNITY.
Email: john@thesoftwarecompany.com

Adding a comma or a full stop in a single sentence makes a huge difference in terms of impact and tone of voice. And choosing the right words changes the game. It's not about avoiding mistakes. It's about making your job is about matching a voice as a copywriter, your job is about matching a voice to a message. And fortunately, there's a tried and tested method for sense-checking your ad.

"Your job is to sell a message - and match the message to a tone of voice"

Sense-checking your Writing.

The human brain does an unusual thing when we read our own words back, especially immediately after they've been written. Our verbal memory knows what is supposed to come next, and fills it in - with our brains subconsciously predicting the next word (and grammar) as we mentally hop and skip through the glorious words we have just written.

We may think we have read it, but our brains are filling in gaps, whether the words we think we're reading are on the page or not. That's why the general rule is that you should wait at least 24 hours before proofreading your own ad.

If you don't have 24 hours to wait - or even if you do - try reading out loud your copy. You'll begin to hear what you've really written. Then read it out loud for a second time - ideally to a colleague who understands the candidate you are trying to attract and the proposition you are trying to sell.

Next time your hard-pushed brain has to construct a compelling piece of candidate communications, try the AIDA model - writing on-brand and in your own style.