

The Write Stuff for 2012

 By [Lindsay Grubb](#)

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In talking to a fellow writer recently, we got onto the topic of client trends that came out of 2011. One of the most noticeable for us was that clients are on the lookout for something different from their agency/writer/creative.



The days of offering your client a standard advert/blog/article are over. Clients need to stand out from the clutter and general advertising methods aren't cutting it anymore.

Existing and new clients also appear to be focusing on producing the best quality written content they can for their customers. Regardless of the chosen medium, the focus has definitely begun to shift towards unique, personal, high-quality, informative, relevant and useful information.

In terms of trends for 2012, I would put the following at the top of my list:

1. Tighter briefs

In 2011, there were a few clients who missed the boat with their briefs because their team wasn't all on the same page in terms of target audience, message content, tone and style.

I believe in 2012 greater efforts will be made by clients to spend more time putting together tighter briefs with more detailed information which speaks directly to their desired outcomes (ok - so maybe this one is a hope, rather than a foreseeable trend.)

2. Increase in content marketing budgets

I believe that clients are starting to see tangible returns on their content marketing spend and will therefore factor this into their marketing budgets for 2012 (if they haven't already done so).

According to the [Content Marketing Institute](#), 60% of respondents in its recent survey plan to increase their content marketing budgets over the coming year.

3. More focused communications

In 2012, I believe it will be even more critical to focus your company's communications on specific niche groups which are a part of your overall customer base.

How well do you know your customer? The more I know about your customer, their habits and their reasons for choosing your company/brand, the more capable I am of producing targeted communications which are more relevant and successful for you.

4. The embracing of your company's sparkling personality

I predict companies/brands will be getting a "life" - a personality - in 2012. While your communications should always be professional, it's time to set yourself apart and share your company/brand's personality with them. The perfect place to do that is in your written communication.

Again, it's important to really know your customer so you know what boundaries can be pushed and what tones can be used, but the successful communication of a brand's personality goes a long way to generating customer loyalty -

just ask Nando's and FNB which got it right last year - or Shoe City, which didn't.

5. Interaction satisfaction

Let's be honest, you're not looking for a quick fling with your customers; you're looking for something deeper and more meaningful. This year, I believe, more companies will be braving the social scene, getting to know their customers, sharing experiences and information with them, growing together and building lasting relationships.

I see SMMEs and bigger corporates getting on board and having a professional handling these interactions to achieve a more interactive and satisfying experience for both the business and the customer.

6. Saying sorry *and meaning it too*

There is nothing quite like an angry customer with a Facebook or Twitter account. Be mindful of the messages you send. Contribute, generalised messages only raise the angry customer's blood-pressure and send them back to Facebook and Twitter.

I see less companies sending out quick fixes and more companies compiling carefully considered and well-written apologies - where they accept responsibility and offer a solution, rather than shifting the blame.

7. Harnessing the power of up-and-coming thought leaders

We have a whole new generation of thought leaders making their mark. By identifying and engaging with these thought leaders in a meaningful manner, you will reach a whole new audience.

8. Greater honesty

I see a definite trend towards more open and honest communication from my clients. They are embracing who they are, what they offer, and what they're good at, and sharing that with their customers - and this seems to be working well for their overall business strategy, too.

Rather than spreading themselves thinly, they're focusing their efforts on their core competencies.

9. Simplicity

Already in 2011, there was a focus on getting to the heart of the message in a shorter time frame -so keep it up, stop the waffle and get to the relevant point quickly and cleanly.

10. More companies using strategic editorial calendars

Planning ahead makes things easier for you. Identifying those important times of year for your company and aligning your messages ahead of time takes the pressure off your team and your writer and gives you time to perfect the message.

11. Cross-education

We all survive best on a well-balanced diet. For your customers' benefit, why not share information on complimentary products, services and events that will add value to their daily lives?

12. Plain English

I'm already seeing a trend to communicate in a language everyone can understand. Companies worldwide are

dropping techno babble in favour of terms the end user can understand and appreciate.

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ABOUT LINDSAY GRUBB

I am a Johannesburg-based freelance writer and editor with a talent for crafting well-researched, strategically aligned, and professionally written communications and searching out and telling interesting brand stories that create interest in and loyalty to brands. I have worked with local and international clients for the past 20 years.

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