

## WATCH WHAT YOU SAY

# Are you speaking your clients' language?



*By Mike Blinder*

I remember as a radio sales manager, I read research from a Radio Ad Bureau advertiser study that stated that "clients hate the language ad reps use." This was eye opening to me at the time, since I always enjoyed using "media speak" within the confines of the radio station, so why not show it off in front of clients as well? I was always using terms like flight, spots, remote, copy, tag, donut, etc.

Clients would obviously nod their head during sales calls when I used these slick phrases in conversation, so they did not appear un-savvy. However, what I was really doing was building a wall between the client and myself and that wall helped destroy our rapport and reinforce myself as an outsider, not as a partner in their business.

Today, as I work mostly with newspaper reps, I hear the same mistakes made during sales calls I am joining. We banter as an industry with terms like column inch, pick-up, modular, tab, broad-sheet, double-truck, and other such media speak. This just helps to alienate the customer. Also, it may not surprise you that our industry rate cards are the hardest to interpret and the most difficult to use of any media choice available.

We should make it a point for our reps to work toward toning down the media speak, while consciously turning up the use of "advertiser

speak." Our reps should be referring to potential customers at car dealerships as "ups" to build better rapport with our automotive clients. In retail settings, we should be asking about "sales per square foot" and "product turns." In front of service clients, we need to ask about "average ticket" sales and "markups."

When we are presenting our products to clients, we need to be aware of our language and use common terms when we refer to our products. For example, rather than suggesting to a customer "I want you to 'pick up' that ad in our Sunday health 'tab,'" we should say "I'd like to place that same effective ad in this Sunday's special section featuring health content."

Building rapport with advertisers is tough enough without erecting more walls between us and the client through the language we use. Perhaps we should put a jar in the sales department that requires reps, through an honor system, to insert a quarter each time they use media

speak with a client.

Of course, when we are dealing with agency buyers, you can use media speak to your heart's content, because that is their language of choice. However, I am willing to bet you that when that agency's account executive calls on the client, he does not speak in media tongues but unrelatable advertiser language when

describing the campaign they are about to deploy in your newspaper.

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