

Suggested Outline for an Evidence-based Advertising Proposal

This outline is to be used in conjunction with the evidence-based procedures for presenting persuasive [oral](#) and [written reports](#). A good point of departure is to think about how the client might evaluate the report. Let's assume that they agree with the evidence-based approach. So make it easy for them to rate your proposal when they use [How to Select an Advertising Agency: A Structured Approach](#).

Executive Summary (limited to one page)

Provide the recommendations in actionable terms. Assume that this is all that some people will read and they should have enough information to implement your recommendations. In addition, describe the benefits for the stakeholders (e.g., Return on Investments, lives saved, votes gained, and so on). Describe the risks. Say how you did this without using jargon. Remember that specifics sell. This is the most important page and it is difficult to do well. Every word should count.

Conditions

Describe the basic conditions and the sources. Put all important information in the body of the report.

- 1) *objectives*: Also show how you identified them. (Use the guidelines for objective setting from Persuasive Advertising.)
- 2) *product*: Details about the product might be obtained from product descriptions in materials from the seller (often provided on websites).
- 3) *target market*: Use available company materials about intended target market and any relevant target market research that they might have done. In addition, describe any target market research that you did in enough details to persuade the client (and with full disclosure of the research materials such as the sampling plan, administrative procedures, questionnaires that were helpful in determining what information the target market needs, and your analysis.) Target market research is especially important for ads with substantive news

Copy

- Show the ads (do not bury them in an appendix)
- Offer alternatives to your recommended choice.
- Describe how each of the ads employs the evidence-based principles (use cut-outs to do this on the ad, but remember to describe the changes in the text by focusing on the key elements). Organize by using “key recommendations” and “other recommendations.”
- Provide sources to support the key elements of your ads. Cite the original research and link to each source. If you cite a paper, at least one of you should have read the source. (This should be certified in your ethics statement.)
- Describe specific techniques that you used in developing the ads when you think you can present them in an understandable and convincing way (again, no jargon).

Testing the copy

- Describe specific techniques for evaluating the ads (e.g., [Delphi](#) for screening ads, in which case you should provide the output from the Delphi program)

- Provide results from the [adprin audit](#) by reporting who did the coding, whether the coders were unbiased (e.g., external to your group and given no information about your hypotheses), the number of coders for each ad, when the codings were done, the average ratings, and the level of agreement across raters. The recommended ads should be compared with benchmarks including the original ad and an *excellent* competitor's ad (the purpose of this is to motivate your client). The same coders should be used for each ad to remove concerns over the fact that coders differ.
- Provide the findings from your copy testing. Provide full disclosure of the procedures used, including the:
 - questionnaires (use Don Dillman's *Mail and Internet Surveys*. It is the bible.)
 - written procedures used to administer the questionnaires,
 - who was in the sample,
 - when the testing was done, and
 - how the results were analyzed.

Media alternatives and evaluation

- List the media that were considered, describe how the list was generated, and explain how the list was narrowed.
- [Present a recommended total budget for the ads \(and by media and time if relevant\)](#) along with the methods you used to estimate the ROI along with some estimate of risk. Provide full disclosure here along with sources that you used, and explain the analysis in a simple manner.
- Provide choices among media and consider using a number of media to reduce risk.
- Do the numbers to analyze your recommendations.

How the client will be protected against unintended side-effects from the campaign

- Present your code of ethics and describe how you used it to protect your client against legal or ethical challenges.
- Provide evidence that the ads will not offend stakeholders or others.
- Show what you did to ensure that the ads will not offend people, and, if that is not possible, explain how you will handle complaints

Team capabilities (This should go at the beginning if you are a well-known and well-respected advertising agency.)

- Persuade the client that your team has the capability to develop a persuasive campaign. (Avoid weak arguments.)

Conclusions

- *In the oral version*, return to your recommendations and then ask what questions they have about them. Seek action steps. If they do not agree to your major actions step, have a smaller step to suggest (e.g., further research that you would specify to them and justify why this would be beneficial).
- *In the written version*, return to the actions steps, ask them to read the written report, and specify when you will contact them about the next steps.

J. Scott Armstrong, April 28, 2011