

Drayton Bird

Never Assume



I thought you might like a little international flavour every now and then, so here is an ad I saw when I was in Bulgaria a while ago - aimed at visitors. See what you think about it.

While I was in Sofia, I was interviewed by a magazine.

Unless you speak Bulgarian (which I certainly don't) you won't appreciate the intellectual depth, uncanny perception and wit of my responses to a number of questions.

One of them, however, was: "Have you ever failed in something; what was it, and what happened?"

I answered that there probably wasn't space in their magazine to list all my failures, let alone describe them in the exuberant, comic detail they merit.

However, many were due to what that wonderful retail (and direct marketing) expert Murray Raphel called "the curse of assumption".

He pointed out that all too often we assume people know all about what we are selling when they don't. And if people don't know what you're selling, they are hardly likely to buy it, are they?

Because we live with what we sell all the time and think about it constantly, we presume that others do. As a result we fail to mention things we know which are actually crucial and without which people simply will not buy.

For instance I once wrote a mailing for Management Today which was wonderful in every respect except that it failed to say whether it was a weekly or a monthly magazine. The mailing did reasonably well because what they were doing before was so dire. But still, pretty damn stupid, eh?

So look at the tasteful, elegant ad I reproduced at the top. It gives you three useful phrases in Bulgarian. Very helpful.

Except there is no translation. Very silly.

The moral is, always show your stuff to someone who knows nothing about it and ask if they understand. You'll be amazed what you can miss out or ignore.

Once practical thing to do that is very boring but utterly necessary is to describe your offering in complete detail before you start.

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About the Author

In 2003, the Chartered Institute of Marketing named Drayton Bird one of 50 living individuals who have shaped today's marketing. He has spoken in 53 countries for many organisations, and much of what he discusses derive from his work with many of the world's greatest brands. These include American Express, Audi, Bentley, British Airways, Cisco, Deutsche Post, Ford, IBM, McKinsey, Mercedes, Microsoft, Nestle, Philips, Procter & Gamble,



Toyota, Unilever, Visa and Volkswagen. In various capacities – mostly as a writer – Drayton has helped sell everything from Airbus planes to Peppa Pig. His book, *Commonsense Direct and Digital Marketing*, out in 17 languages, has been the UK's best seller on the subject every year since 1982.

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