

# Step Three

Module Two

Mini Lesson Guide

the  
marketing  
Democracy™

# Welcome!



Marketing messages are a dime a dozen. They come and go and they often aren't very memorable. Big Ideas are something special. They can unify years' worth of marketing messages into lasting associations between your customers and your brand. But Big Ideas aren't easy to come by. They take time, effort, strategy and creativity. Don't short-change this process. Investing in a Big Idea will yield big dividends for years to come. This module will introduce you to the key ingredients of a Big Idea and provide you with the tools to set the strategy for your Big Idea.

- Judy

## Module Overview

In this module, we are going to focus on four key ideas:

- In [Lesson One](#), you will learn the critical difference between "ads" and "ideas."
- In [Lesson Two](#), you will learn the key ingredients of a Big Idea.
- In [Lesson Three](#), you will learn about setting the strategy for your Big Idea. The idea brief may be one of the most important tools in the toolbox.
- In [Lesson Four](#), you will learn to seek feedback from stakeholders at the strategy phase to guide the development of your Big Idea.

To help you set a strategic vision for your Big Idea, you can purchase an "Idea Brief." This downloadable PDF is fully functional if you open it in Adobe Acrobat Reader. Be sure to click on the "listen" icon in the lower right-hand corner to learn more about this helpful tool. And, for additional inspiration, you can watch the real-world example video to see this lesson in practice.

Congratulations on taking this important step in your journey to developing world-class marketing for your business.



# Lesson One

Ideas, Not Ads!

## Why This Matters

World-class marketers have shifted away from advertising and toward big ideas. But what does that even mean? Is a big idea simply jargon for a big ad campaign? Not at all! Ideas are truly something different. In a customer-centered marketing approach, there isn't room for advertising that tries to push products and services down the customer's throat. In this lesson, you will learn the crucial difference between advertising and big ideas and why big ideas are so much more productive for growing your business. Once you understand these key differences, you can make the critical shift toward developing a big idea for your business.

## 5 Key Takeaways

- Advertising persuades while ideas solve problems. Advertising was developed as a form of persuasive communication. As we move away from selling stuff to solving problems in our customer's lives, we require a different, solution-based communication approach.
- Advertising is specific while ideas are broad. In order for advertising to work, it has to be focused and specific. That's not a bad thing; but it can be limiting when you have more to say.
- Advertising is formulaic while ideas inspire creativity. Advertising is an art and a science. But the science of advertising has made it highly formulaic and easy to copy. Ideas inspire creativity which makes them more unique and ownable.
- Advertising wears-out over time while ideas endure. Advertising can only be seen/heard so many times before it wears out its welcome. We can actually model the decay rates of ads. However, ideas have lasting power that can endure over time.
- Advertising is confined to certain media while ideas can travel anywhere. Advertising simply cannot show up unannounced. The FTC mandates that ads are clearly labeled and placed only in ad-supported media. Ideas can find their place anywhere in culture.



## Ask Yourself

**Before moving on to Lesson Two, take the time to reflect on this lesson.**

Do you understand the five key takeaways that were presented at the beginning of the lesson?

Can you explain the key differences between ideas and ads?

If you were to create a spectrum with big ideas at one extreme and ads on the other, where would your current marketing communications land?

As a starting point, what unifying theme unites your marketing communication over time and across channel? If you don't have a unifying theme, you need a big idea to create this for you.






# Lesson Two

## The Key Ingredients of a Big Idea

### Why This Matters

In lesson one, we illustrated the difference between advertising and big ideas. We established why big ideas are far more valuable for your business. So what makes a big idea a “big idea”, and how do you know when you have one? While big ideas are as diverse as the customers and brands they serve, they share common ingredients. This lesson will outline and explain the key ingredients of any big idea. If you can recognize them and shape your big idea to deliver upon them, you will have a lasting platform for successful marketing communications for years to come.

### Key Takeaways

-  When evaluating whether a Big Idea is the right idea, justify it on both a rational and an emotional level. Don't follow your gut without doing the proper due diligence. Likewise, trust your instincts. You know your business better than anyone else.
-  A Big Idea should be simple. It shouldn't require a long explanation for others to get it. A simple idea provides clear direction on how to bring it to life in the marketplace.
-  A Big Idea should be solution-oriented. It should provide a clear answer to a consumer problem and lead to consumer actions that will solve your business problem.
-  A Big Idea should be flexible to handle various tactical initiatives across time and marketing channels.
-  A Big Idea should be differentiated. It should bring your brand to life in a way that will cut through the clutter in your category and reinforce your brand promise in the marketplace.



## Ask Yourself

**Before moving on to Lesson Three, take the time to reflect on this lesson.**

Do you understand the five key takeaways that were presented at the beginning of the lesson?

When evaluating your marketing communication, does it check all the boxes? Or, does it make you excited to put your name on it? You should opt for both.

Can you clearly see a solution to a customer problem in your big idea? If you can't see it, your customers won't see it, either.

Can you replace your business name with a competitor's name in your marketing communication? Your marketing communication should be uniquely "you."

# Lesson Three

## Own Your Vision: The Idea Brief

### Why This Matters

Big ideas don't happen spontaneously. Big ideas are not developed by brainstorming on the back of a napkin. Rather, they are carefully constructed based upon key inputs that identify and describe the job to be done. They require a disciplined development process that all starts with an idea brief. This lesson is going to introduce you to a brief format that was developed just for you. It will help you to focus on the challenge at hand and it will provide you with a compass that will guide the development of a big idea--whether you are developing the idea yourself, or whether you are entrusting the creative process to someone else.

### Key Takeaways

- Regardless of whether you develop your own marketing content, or whether you outsource content development, you need to own the vision for this process.
- The Idea Brief will ensure that the storytellers know the story to tell. The Brief provides critical insight into the job to be done.
- Many in the industry still use the "Get/Who/To/By" briefing format. We believe it's past its prime. This format is left over from push marketing that attempts to tell consumers what to do.
- The simpler, the better. It may seem counterintuitive, but creativity thrives "inside the box." Open-ended briefs lead to confusion.
- Creativity and creative solutions arise from a great challenge. Provide the obstacles that are standing in the way. They create tension for creative problem solving.



## Ask Yourself

**Before moving on to Lesson Four, take the time to reflect on this lesson.**

Do you understand the five key takeaways that were presented at the beginning of this lesson?

Do you currently use some form of a brief to guide your marketing communication--even if you are the one developing it?

In every good story, there's a challenge (or a problem) to overcome. What challenge can you identify that will inspire your marketing story?

Is your brief simple enough? Or, have you created a mile-long "to-do" list for the storytellers to solve? Remember, simple briefs inspire creativity.



# Lesson Four

## Seek Input and Feedback Before Producing Anything

### Why This Matters

There is so much riding on your big idea. Don't leave anything to chance. It's important to seek input and feedback from the customers that you are trying to inspire. However, waiting until the end of the development process to show them fully produced marketing communications is far too late. It's important to seek the right kind of feedback at the right stages of the development process so that you don't waste time or resources. This lesson will help you to create a feedback plan that can help you evaluate the potential of your big idea before you produce any communication materials.

### Key Takeaways

- Seek input at the right time(s) in the process. Learn whether you have the “right” Idea before you produce any marketing content for the idea.
- Concept testing is a valuable step in the process to help you determine whether your customer segments understand the Idea and whether they find it motivating. Writing concepts isn't hard to do: it usually entails a paragraph or two with a couple key visuals.
- Once you have a winning Idea, you can then explore different creative ways to bring the Idea to life. You should run these different creative approaches by your customer segments for their feedback before going to full production.
- Take feedback on creative direction with a grain of salt. It seems as though everyone's a critic when it comes to marketing content. Seek objective input and leave the creative development and edits to the professionals.
- It's crucial to seek feedback from the right people. The only feedback that you should heed is the feedback from the customer segments for whom the marketing communication is intended.

# FEED BACK

## Ask Yourself

**Before moving on to the action plan, take the time to reflect on this lesson.**

Do you understand the five key takeaways that were presented at the beginning of the lesson?

Do you currently seek feedback from your customers before placing your marketing communications into the marketplace? If the answer is no, what steps can you take to correct this?

Can you think of different ways to seek feedback? It doesn't have to be timely, costly, or overly complicated to get the opinions from your desired customer segments.

Everyone is a critic! What will you do with the feedback you receive? How can you distinguish between valuable feedback and the arm-chair creative's two-cents?