

# **THE LITTLE KNOWN SECRET TO CREATING INFORMATION PRODUCTS**



A BullBusters' Guide

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## **BullBusters' Guides**

I strongly believe that the best kind of guide is one that someone can read, watch or listen to in an hour or less. The people I talk with tell me that they are looking for concise solutions, not 10 hour video series. And my personal experience backs this up - if I buy something and find it's a 10 hour video series, I'll delay watching it "until a better time". The thing is, that time never seems to materialise, or I forget about the product!

Hence the **BullBusters' Guides** - as Dennis Becker is fond of saying "No hocus pocus, just focus". In other words, no padding, just actionable content to help you solve your problems.

And my promise to you - I won't sell your details, lie, cheat, disappear, pawn you off to a \$2 worker in some foreign country who can hardly write or speak English, or anything else like you've seen other people doing.

Each Guide will contain a Resources section listing products of mine that others have bought or that are relevant to the content of the Guide.

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# Introduction

*"Your customers are exposed to over 5,000 marketing messages per day. Are your messages cutting through the clutter and making impact?" Joe Pulizzi*

There's a lot of rehashed bull\*\*\*\* on the internet about creating information products. Most of it seems to fall into the "Write it and they will come" philosophy, but anyone who has tried to sell any kind of info product online will know that this just isn't the case!

And a lot of information products focus on themselves and their writers rather than on the reader and the benefits the reader will get from absorbing the contents of the product.

Let's begin by immediately destroying a few of the myths surrounding creating and marketing information products, so we can then start with a fresh slate! We'll then move on to look at something vital that few information product creators are aware of: the concept of Learning Styles.

# 1. The Myths

## Myth #1. People Buy Your Product.

Sorry! No matter how well-written or produced your information product may be, people don't buy it. Instead, they buy the results it generates. For example, you don't buy a drill, you buy the result - the ability to make a hole into which you can put a hook so you can hang your favourite picture.

It follows then, that if people buy results, you need to know and then address their needs, wants, expectations and values. Which means, in turn, you have to write it from their perspective, not yours. This is why competent salespeople know that they have to focus on benefits to the customer, not the features of the product.

## Myth # 2. One Size Fits All.

Wrong! Different people absorb material and learn in different ways. Peter Honey and Alan Mumford created the Learning Styles questionnaire in the early 1980s but information marketers still haven't caught on.

There are 4 Learning Styles:

**Activists** - learn by doing.

**Theorists** - learn by asking questions and by fitting the new information in with what they already know.

**Reflectors** - learn by listening.

**Pragmatists** - learn by understanding the practical application of what they are learning.

We'll look at this in more detail in the next section but for now it's important to remember that your information product has to cover all 4 Learning



Styles. If you don't, you'll end up marginalising people or even worse, getting negative feedback from the people whose Style you haven't covered and who therefore consider your product to be weak or irrelevant!

### **Myth # 3. Traditional Techniques Still Work**

Wrong again! Traditional marketing focuses on telling potential customers how great you are. Information marketing is about proving it! Traditional marketing is also done to the market whereas information product marketing is about engaging the market in conversations.

### **Myth #4. Buyers Will Be Loyal To You**

I wish! It's not quite as easy as that. You have to deliver valuable, consistent, interesting information to people on an ongoing basis in order to stand a chance of them buying from you on a regular basis. Myth #5. Build It And They Will Come.

A lot of people have created wonderful information products that nobody has bought. Why? Because if people don't know it exists and/or don't understand the problem it solves, they won't buy. Look, business professors, internet marketing guru, authors etc overcomplicate the business.

In essence, you only need to do 3 things:

1. Target your market with the right offer at the right time and in the right way;
2. Always focus on adding value; never settle for average;
3. Give your clients the chance to solve their problem(s).

## Myth #5 - Marketing Is Aimed At Clients

Old school marketing, based on a philosophy that the selling company knows best, was aimed **at** clients.

Information Product Marketing is a conversation **with** clients, based on CEST:

**C**onnect with your target market

**E**ngage people in meaningful conversations

**S**hare valuable, high quality content with them, so that you build

**T**rust

## 2. Learning Styles

Having demolished some of the myths surrounding creating and marketing information products, let's look at Learning Styles in more detail.

First, a little background. In developing their Learning Styles model, Honey and Mumford relied on earlier work by Kolb. Kolb saw learning as a series of experiences in a circular process. He described learning as a sequence that began with Concrete Experience, moved on to Reflection (thinking about the experience), then to the drawing up of Generalisations about the experience which are then tested through Experimentation.

And of course, the Experimentation could lead to new Concrete Experience and so the circle begins again!

Honey and Mumford were the first to recognise that different people prefer to enter this circle in different place - some are better at reflecting, others at creating generalisations etc. They also stated that it was important to know how you learn best as it will lead you to:

- ☒ Choose the best learning activities for your preferred Learning Style;
- ☒ To avoid those experiences that conflict with your preferred Learning Style;
- ☒ Plan learning goals and the best way to achieve them;
- ☒ Identify areas that need strengthening.

To explain this last point, in 1986 I moved from a job in industrial relations, where there was a heavy emphasis on "doing", which were then my key strengths. My preferred Learning Styles were without a doubt Activist and Pragmatist.

I moved to a job as a management trainer. In order to thrive in the new job, I had to be able to answer course participants' questions - I couldn't get away with "don't worry about that, just do it"! I had to develop my Theorist and Reflector Learning Styles - it took a while but I managed it, by focusing on activities suited to the Theorists and Reflectors.

Which leads us to the obvious questions, how does each learning Style learn best?

### 3. Activist Learning Activities

Activists learn best when:

- ★ They can learn from *new* experiences (to an Activist, new = exciting!)
- ★ The activities are short, here and now tasks that reflect the realities of their work place and job;
- ★ They can take the lead;
- ★ They can fly by the seat of their pants, generating ideas as they go along;
- ★ They can bounce ideas off other people;
- ★ The learning is practical rather than theoretical and/or abstract.

They dislike learning activities that require them to:

- ★ Do a lot of listening, watching or reading;
- ★ Observe rather than take part;
- ★ Analyse and/or interpret data;
- ★ Work on their own;
- ★ Accept theory without testing it;
- ★ Do a lot of practising;
- ★ Follow precise processes that leave them little room for experimentation;
- ★ Focus on a lot of detail.

## 4. Reflector Learning Activities

Reflectors learn best when they can:

- ★ Observe and think about what is happening;
- ★ They can think and plan before doing anything;
- ★ They can carry out research so as to fully understand what's required;
- ★ Produce analyses and reports about the situation;
- ★ Take part in a structured learning experience;
- ★ Be free from deadlines and time pressure;

They dislike learning activities that require them to:

- ★ Be forced into the limelight;
- ★ Act without planning
- ★ Do something at very short notice with insufficient information;
- ★ Act under time pressure;
- ★ Take shortcuts or do a superficial job. They want to write a report, not give a list of bullet points!

## 5. Theorist Learning Activities

Theorists learn best when they can:

- ★ See how what they are learning fits in with their existing concepts, theories and models of the world;
- ★ Explore the connections, the links between differing concepts
- ★ Question the logic and/or assumptions and look for inconsistencies;
- ★ Understand the purpose and objectives behind what they are learning;
- ★ Understand the logic of the content being learned;
- ★ Take part in complex situations.

They dislike learning activities that require them to:

- ★ Act without understanding the context and/or purpose;
- ★ Be in situations dominated by emotions and feelings;
- ★ Take part in unstructured activities;
- ★ Be spontaneous, to learn as they go along;
- ★ Make a decision without any data, principles or policies to fall back on;
- ★ Be in an ambiguous situation;
- ★ Deal with superficial, shallow or gimmicky situations;
- ★ Deal with a lot of Activists!

## 6. Pragmatist Learning Activities

Pragmatists learn best when they can:

- ★ See the link between what they are learning and a problem, challenge or opportunity at work;
- ★ Understand how what they are learning will help them to be more effective and/or more efficient;
- ★ Try things out and get feedback from someone they acknowledge as an expert;
- ★ Model someone who is successful, who has a proven track record;
- ★ Quickly apply the learning;
- ★ Can concentrate on practicalities.

They dislike learning activities that require them to:

- ★ Learn things that they can't use;
- ★ Whoever is leading the learning takes a theoretical approach, not rooted in reality;
- ★ Dispense with practice;
- ★ Progress slowly;
- ★ Sacrifice what is right to "political constraints".

From the last 4 pages, we can summarise the strengths and weaknesses of each Learning Style as follows:



## **Activists**

### *Strengths:*

Open minded;  
Flexible;  
Happy to experiment;  
Happy to be exposed to new situations;

### *Weaknesses:*

Chooses the obvious solution without exploring other options;  
Likely to take unnecessary risks;  
Tendency to want to be centre-stage;  
Act without sufficient preparation;  
Get bored with detail;  
Get bored with consolidation.

## **Reflector**

### *Strengths:*

Careful;  
Methodical;  
Detailed;  
Listening Skills;  
Assimilating information;  
Slow to jump to conclusions.

### *Weaknesses:*

Refrains from active participation;  
Slow to make decisions;  
Extremely cautious and risk averse;  
Unassertive.

## **Theorist**

### *Strengths:*

Logical;  
Rational;  
Questioning skills;  
Disciplined and focused approach.

### *Weaknesses:*

Difficulty with lateral thinking;  
Dislikes ambiguity, uncertainty;  
Suspicious of the subjective or of anyone using intuition;  
Constrained by "musts, shoulds and oughts".

## **Pragmatists**

### *Strengths*

Wants to test things out;  
Practical;  
Realistic;  
Gets straight to the point;  
Happy to embrace new tools and techniques.

### *Weaknesses*

Dismisses anything lacking an apparent practical application;  
Uninterested in theory/abstract concepts;  
Quick to latch onto expedient rather than the best solutions;  
Impatient with small talk;  
Task focused and may ignore people focused tasks.

## 7. The Challenge For Information Product Creators

The major challenge for information product creators is that we tend to default to producing content that reflects our own preferred Learning Style(s). In fact, unless we are aware of the different Styles, most people fall into the trap of assuming that whatever appeals to them will appeal to everyone else! You now know different!

To help clarify things further, let's take a look at how each Style is reflected in the way people create information products.

### Activist Product Creators Tend To Create Content That:

- ★ Is overly optimistic and enthusiastic about the success of new opportunities;
- ★ Is full of their own positive, enthusiastic example;
- ★ Baffles with Bull\*\*\*\*;
- ★ Focuses on the need to be active rather than on being effective;
- ★ Provides relatively unstructured content;
- ★ Can be launched and then left so they can move on to the next exciting idea, often skimping on customer support;
- ★ Emphasises learning by doing - will tell people to "just try this..."
- ★ Avoid the creator having to be a good role model of planned learning behaviour;
- ★ Contains short videos, mp3s, pdfs with lots of bullet points in the latter.

## **Reflector Product Creators Tend To Create Content That:**

- ★ Provides activities that people can learn by watching or listening;
- ★ Gives advice on the best way to observe the activities;
- ★ Goes into an in-depth analysis of what may happen and what has happened;
- ★ Gives lots of advice about how to plan before taking action;
- ★ Emphasises the importance of research and of analysing the data unearthed by the research;
- ★ Offers in-depth responses to customer's requests for help;
- ★ Avoids having to act quickly - sometimes they can go so far in the other direction that they appear to be victims of paralysis by analysis;
- ★ Paralysis by analysis can sometimes take the form of "I just need to learn one more thing/read one more book etc.";
- ★ Is risk averse;
- ★ Is "perfect" before launching.

## **Theorist Product Creators Tend To Create Content That:**

- ★ Focuses on intellectual concepts and grand ideas;
- ★ Gives in-depth explanations of underlying root causes for situations;
- ★ Emphasises processes and/or systems;
- ★ Contains logical, step by step content;
- ★ Describes or create theories;
- ★ Avoids focusing on emotions or feelings;
- ★ Avoids conflicts with their own theories and models of the world;
- ★ Rejects appealing to a wider audience if it means diluting the intellectual level of their content;

## **Pragmatist Product Creators Tend To Create Content That:**

- ★ Focuses on solving specific problems;
- ★ Offers practical tools and techniques that can be used immediately;
- ★ References role models of other people who have been successful in solving similar problems;
- ★ Emphasises relevance; their content contains very little fluff or padding;
- ★ Encourages their customers to create action plans;
- ★ Offers short cuts, practical tips etc.;
- ★ Avoids theory;
- ★ Is full of their "stories from the trenches";
- ★ Gives clear guidelines on how to overcome likely obstacles;
- ★ Has a positive effect on the bottom line, whether increased sales, promotion, landing a new job, increasing frequency of sales etc.



## Conclusion

So, how can you use this for profit?

First of all, look at the characteristics of the 4 Learning Styles and see which one(s) are most typical; of you. Each of has is a mixture of these Learning Styles - however, one or two will tend to dominate.

Then, make sure that when you are creating content, you focus on the needs of the Styles that are **least** like you. Why? Because you will automatically address the needs of your preferred Learning Style. After all, it's the way you most like to learn.

The ideal is to create balanced content that appeals to all Learning Styles. The only exception to this is if you are trying to create something like the Dummies Guides, which deliberately focus on the "Doing" Learning Styles, the Activists and Pragmatists.

However, armed with the information in this e-book, you will avoid the trap most product creators fall into of only addressing the needs of those whose preferred Learning Styles match their own.