

## Marketing communications: keep it simple

Authors: Sol Teague

The urge to overcomplicate things in your marketing communications can be irresistible.

When it comes to writing your marketing deck, the intention, of course, is always to clarify, rather than overcomplicate. You want to provide detail so investors can properly understand your strategy. Your strategy is complicated – if it wasn't, anyone could do it, and you wouldn't be relevant. We get it.

You need to communicate what makes you different from the multitude of other managers competing for investor attention. That means going into a bit of detail, right? Detail is transparency, and investors love transparency, right?

**The problem is that investors reading your deck will not have the time, patience, or, frankly, attention span to ingest and digest the kind of highly detailed information often provided to explain how fund strategies work.**

Think about just about every courtroom drama you have ever seen. The plucky, underdog lawyers have just received the vital information their case hinges on, and which their giant, super-rich opponents have been so reluctant to provide. But there is a problem: there are now hundreds of boxes stuffed full of papers, and the one document they need is buried amid reams of irrelevance. There are only two lawyers to go through it all and the case starts tomorrow! How will they find what they need in time?

When you overcomplicate your deck, you are essentially doing the same thing. It's another case of too much information and too little time. Only, the plucky lawyers are singularly focused on winning their case and will put in an all-nighter to find what they need. The investor looking at your deck has a whole pile of others to look at and probably (definitely) won't.

Charts are perhaps the best example of how fund managers overcomplicate things within their marketing communications. They say a picture is worth a thousand words, and that is their greatest strength – unless understanding the chart takes as long as reading a thousand words. In that case, the chart is of little use in a deck that is likely to be skim-read by most people who look at it.

My colleague JD often says that if it takes longer than five seconds to work out what a chart is saying, it shouldn't be in your deck. Five seconds is about how long someone will spend trying to figure a chart out. Therefore, a chart that takes longer to understand will not help you, even if it presents information that strongly supports your investment case.

The priority for your deck – or any of your marketing communications, for that matter – is that it is compelling, and to be compelling it must be easily intelligible. That makes a simple chart better than a comprehensive or even a precise one – and the same goes for any other information you include.

There will certainly be a time and a place for providing detailed information about your strategy or investment case – but your marketing deck is not it. Think of your deck as a first date: the aim is not to learn everything about each other, but to get a sense of whether there is any chemistry between you. If there is, you can get to know each other better over time. We know the urge to go into detail can be irresistible – but resist you must if you want your message to cut through.

Tags: investor relations , marketing , marketing communications , marketing deck , marketing strategy