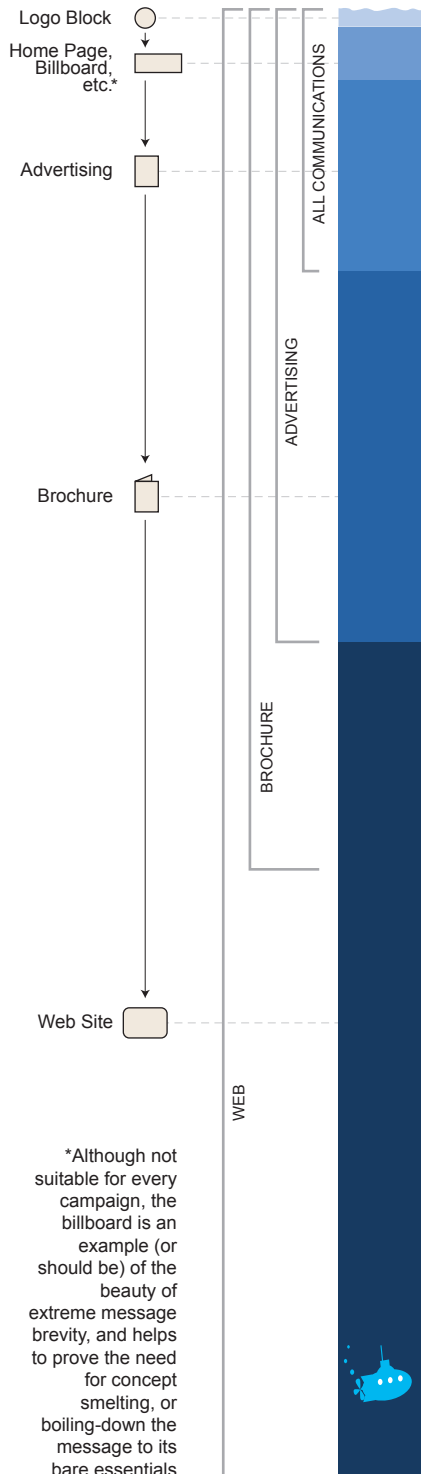




The Content Depth Gauge

Understanding Message and Information Hierarchy



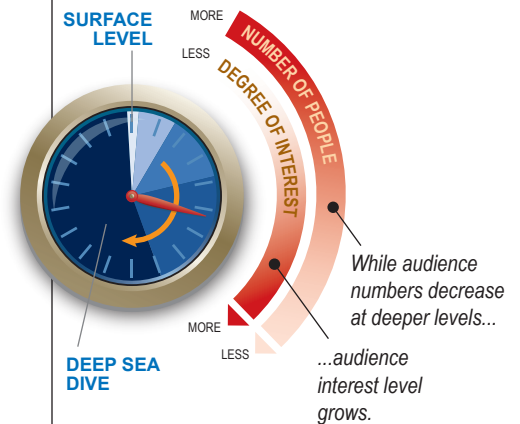
The Content Depth Gauge is a handy communications safety tool to remind communicators about the amount of information appropriate at the five levels of audience interest or commitment.

- 1. On the Surface:** The visual identity. This is "messaging at a glance," and includes the product name. Your audience may not even be looking for anything.
- 2. Snorkeling:** There is a little curiosity from your audience now, and here they will find a thin layer of highly important information, such as candy bar descriptors,** slogans, or URLs. Your audience has noticed you, like something sparkling just under the waves.
- 3. The Initial Dive:** At this deeper level, your audience has made the decision to spend a little time examining your message. You have their attention, and they want to know if you warrant further commitment. Here they might discover your mission and/or vision statement, your philosophy, and perhaps even your media boilerplate for press releases.
- 4. The Exploratory Dive:** Your audience is now ready to swim down into deeper content waters in hopes of discovering something substantive about you, and what you might mean to their lifestyle. Here they will discover more detailed descriptions of products or services, brief but compelling testimonials, copy that is more than one click deep on a web site, or information about how to purchase your goods or services.
- 5. The Deep Sea Dive:** The audience is no longer counting clicks on your site, they have made the commitment to invest meaningful time with your message, and they may even be requesting more content such as a newsletter subscription. It no longer concerns them that the light from the surface is not getting through: they are looking for direction from your content now. They have come to associate, to some extent, their own identity with that of your institution, products, or services.

Audience Interest Level Vs. Message Crafting Artistry

At the shallower levels, audience interest level is generally low. Your audience must be reached with brief but extremely well-crafted messaging. At deeper levels, you've hooked a small number of people into wanting greater amounts of relevant, professionally presented information. While still important, message crafting artistry is slightly less critical at deeper levels.

Audience numbers decrease, but interest increases, as your audience dives deeper into your content.



As the audience consciously chooses to dive deeper into your content, they have given you permission to expose them to an increasing amount of information about your product, service, or brand.

If you provide too little information in the deeper levels, the audience will not find what they are looking for and will move on. If you provide too much information in the shallow levels, the audience will experience too much detail too soon, and may become overwhelmed with disinterest.

*Although not suitable for every campaign, the billboard is an example (or should be) of the beauty of extreme message brevity, and helps to prove the need for concept smelting, or boiling-down the message to its bare essentials.

**Ask Bidlack about these—they are cool.