

The Suit: Don't touch unit trusts

By [Jason Harrison](#), issued by [M&C Saatchi Abel](#)

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The day the first ad I ever made ran in the *Sunday Times*. Full Page. Full colour. It was glorious (as a suit, there is nothing quite as thrilling or terrifying as signing off a final DTP laser and then waiting for it to appear in the national newspapers). It was for Old Mutual Unit Trusts.

At the time, Old Mutual Unit Trusts was going through a difficult trading period, with a lot of investors wanting to pull out at a low point in the fund's performance. It was a totally counter-intuitive move over the long term, which my client, Helen van der Rede, had foreseen and briefed me to sort out as her new account executive. Armed with some fancy graphs and not a clue what a unit trust actually was, I ran down to the creatives to brief it in.

Stopped me in my tracks

Exactly three days later, the copywriter, Gordon Ray, called me to say the ad was done and I was to present it to the client tomorrow as he couldn't. I sprinted down and, the closer I got to his desk, the more horrified I became because there was a crowd of very excited creatives all crowding around the work oohing and aahing. The headline stopped me dead in my tracks:

"At the moment, everybody is saying don't touch unit trusts. We couldn't agree more".

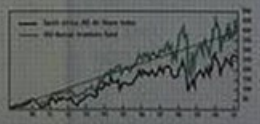
AT THE MOMENT EVERYBODY IS SAYING DON'T TOUCH UNIT TRUSTS.

WE COULDN'T AGREE MORE.

*How are you feeling about your Unit Trusts right now?
The Markets are volatile and everyone is a little unsure of
what to do. Perhaps you are too. Do you Buy? Do you Sell?
Do you Switch? We recommend you don't touch them.*

*Take a step back. See the bigger picture. Market fluctuations
are normal. They come and go. The key thing to remember is
that Unit Trusts are a medium to long-term investment.
Take a look at the graph below. It clearly shows that despite
highs and lows in the market, the general trend is upward.*

*Also, if you sell your
units when the
market's low, you're
more likely to make
a loss. It's common*



*sense really - 'Buy low, sell high'. So right now, the thing to
do is sit tight, relax. And just remember when you're looking
at your Unit Trust investment, take a long-term view.*

*For more information call your broker, Old Mutual Financial
Adviser, our service centre on 0860 234 234 or visit us at
www.oldmutualunittrusts.co.za*

OLD
MUTUAL
UNIT TRUSTS

Now surrounded by the whole creative studio, I started to explain that there must be some kind of misunderstanding. This is a unit trusts ad. The client is expecting a really big graph showing the long-term upside of unit trusts. The answer back was simply, "It's FRESH — she will buy it" and I was handed the porti bag.

After a completely sleepless night spent rehearsing how to tell her why the graph was so small I met with Van der Rede the next morning. I pulled out the 54x10 board and placed it on the table facing up (rookie error) as I prepared my 'sell'. But before I could even start, she grabbed the board, read the headline and said, "Now this is completely FRESH. I LOVE it. We HAVE to make it." Then she picked up the layout, told me to follow her and walked into her boss's office next door and said, "This is the work I want us to make." And they did, because she had total conviction for a brave, category-challenging

idea.

Two key lessons

I learned two key lessons that day:

1. Great clients make great work, not just great agencies.
2. FRESH was actually a common and shared acronym to evaluate creative work.

As a junior suit assessing creative work, I had never considered anything deeper than “I like it and it answers the brief” which, by every conceivable measure, is woefully inadequate. We make the intangible tangible, so surely judging if we’ve been successful needs some clear and objective measures?

What I found out after the presentation when I returned to the office (#thanksofthatchaps) was that FRESH stood for: **F**irst, **R**elevant, **E**ngaging, **S**ingle-minded and **H**ot.

- **First:** Does this work actually tap into a cultural insight or category truth that feels completely new?
- **Relevant:** Will this work bridge the gap to consumers hearts and minds to change how they think?
- **Engaging:** Does this work really make me feel something after seeing it?
- **Single-minded:** Is the selling message clear and have we stripped away everything unnecessary?
- **Hot:** Is this work disrupting the category or challenging the consumer in an interesting, inspiring or intriguing way?

Shared ambition

Obviously, just because the work is FRESH doesn’t always mean the sell is easy. As suits, the planning, approach and alignment to the strategy are critical to get it across the line. And not every piece of work will tick all the boxes every single time, but it should always be our shared ambition to ensure the things we put out there stand up to some kind of rigour to make it the best it can possibly be.

It’s certainly been a useful and simple framework that’s stood the test of time to evaluate creative work in all its shapes and forms, helped pay due respect to all the hard work that has gone into creating the idea and given it the best possible chance of seeing the light of day.

Ultimately, for that unit trusts ad on 25 March 2001, both the creatives and the client knew that it ticked all the right boxes and were utterly convinced it was the right thing to do.

That is how it should be, because great work, when meticulously planned, sells itself.

P.S. That piece of work is still in my porti. I fished it out 17 years later. The paper has faded completely. It’s still one of my proudest.

As appeared on MarkLives.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jason Harrison is the Managing Director at M&C Saatchi Abel.

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