All this recession stuff is seriously getting to me. Anyone able to use Microsoft Word is writing about surviving the recession and coining phrases left and centre; longevity is the new luxury, recession-proof your brand...you get the picture!

This is attention grabbing stuff, however I see it as a golden opportunity for things to return to normal. The boom times were good to bottom lines but they also bred some complacent marketers, easily seduced by the latest buzz-words like customer centricity, best of breed, integrated solutions etc. All an agency needed to do was present some mediocre work, give it a catchy name and clients coughed rands.

All of a sudden marketers have got to make every cent work, and work hard!

How are we to cope? It’s back to basics; marketing 101. Yes that’s right, dust off Kotler and toss out most of the fluff that’s been written in the past while.

The fundamentals haven’t changed. Start with the customer, seeing as they are the ones actually paying the salary of said complacent marketer. Do some research, understand who they are, why they buy the things they buy, and get some insight into what their real rational and emotional needs are.

Armed with this intelligence, take a look at your product/service. Is it hitting the hot buttons of your target market? Are you delivering on the things they value in your offering? Some of these will be “hygiene factors”. These are factors that are expected in the product/service for it to even be included in the decision set. The tricky part: find out what makes your product/service different to competitors and make sure that what makes it different, really matters to the customer.

If you have a real cracker of a benefit that no one has and people really need, then you can probably justify a price premium, otherwise look to price a little more modestly.

Next up decide where you want to sell your products. Once again, common sense prevails. Selling high-end audio visual systems through Shoprite is a no-no. Go back to your research and find out where your market shops and sell your product there.

Finally, you need to tell people all about your amazing product/service. Hire an agency, give them a tight brief and budget (this will irritate them but cause them to think innovatively). Then measure the creative using AIDA – does it Attract, hold Interest, arouse Desire and finally present a call to Action.

And there you have it, a recipe for success. Sound achingly familiar? Understand your market’s needs then design your product, price it reasonably, decide what place you want to sell it in and finally, promote it with appropriate messaging. Did I hear 4Ps somewhere?

Otherwise I could also have told you to conduct an in-depth market analysis and metric programme, followed by the development of a credibility/differentiation matrix to unlock the underlying consumer value equation resulting in a brand blueprint, overlaid with a price-point portfolio management technique and rounded off with the ever effective experiential 360° touch point-specific communication campaign.

The Brand Union’s Gary Bryant occasionally buys his groceries at Shoprite.